

Tritiya-Prakriti:

People of the Third Sex



Tritiya-Prakriti: People of the Third Sex

*Understanding
Homosexuality, Transgender Identity
and Intersex Conditions Through
Hinduism*

(Abridged Version)

Amara Das Wilhelm

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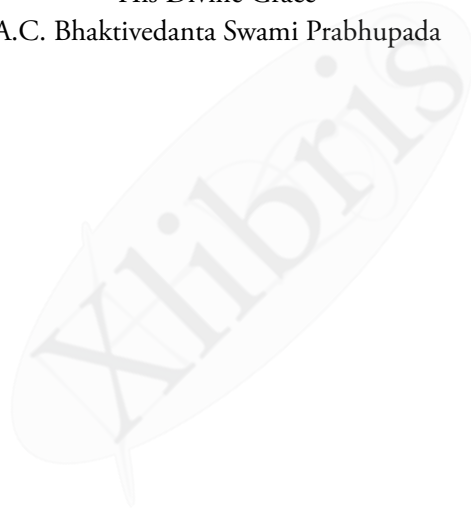
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Dedicated to
my *Sri Guru-pada-padma*

His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada



FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that GALVA-108 presents this new abridged version of *Tritiya-Prakriti: People of the Third Sex*. In the year 2000, when we first began collecting Sanskrit references to the third gender (LGBTI people), we had no idea it would amount to such a large volume of material. The general notion at the time was that homosexuality and LGBTI people were only rarely mentioned in the Vedic or ancient Hindu scriptures, if at all. As the various explicit and related references accumulated, however, it was clear that India's Vedic texts described sex and gender variations quite thoroughly. This became especially evident with the realization that references to *kliba*, *shandha*, *napumsaka*, etc. did not describe nonexistent or irrelevant beings of a past era but rather the same sex and gender minorities we are so familiar with today.

Our initial publication was 263 pages but grew over the course of ten years to 593 pages. The book included every Vedic reference we could find concerning homosexual, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, as well as instances of sex change, crossdressing, gender levity and same-sex love. It referenced all the available English translations of Sanskrit law books, medical books, books of commerce, astrological texts, dictionaries, histories (*Puranas*) and, of course, the Kama Shastra or Vedic texts describing the art of lovemaking. Each text either mentioned or in some cases explicitly described gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual and intersex people and how they were viewed in ancient Indian society. Our book presented evidence for a third sex around the world and throughout time, discussed recent misunderstandings along with more modern, liberal approaches and concluded with an appreciation for natural diversity and the cultivation of spiritual transcendence.

As the original book grew in size, there arose the need for a more condensed, easy-to-read version containing all the essential information and knowledge. This was especially true when we considered how many people were either too busy

or too little concerned with the topic at hand to read such a large book on the subject. We are therefore hopeful this new abridged edition will fulfill that need. It summarizes all the important references and provides resources to the reader who may, if interested, pursue the subject more deeply. We especially hope this book will improve attitudes among our heterosexual peers—Vaisnavas, Hindus and anyone in need of a more positive approach toward the world's LGBTI community: people of the third sex.

Amara dasa

Sri Vyasa Purnima, July 8, 2017

Honolulu, Hawaii



PREFACE

I offer my humble *dandavats* unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master, *nitya-lila pravista om visnupada paramahamsa astottara-sata* Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. By his mercy and inspiration only, I attempt to write this book in the service of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and the Vaishnavas, even though I am completely fallen and unqualified.

Many years ago, at the age of eighteen, I was cooking chapatis in the kitchen of a Hare Krsna temple in rural Virginia when I heard a most curious and interesting tape recording. It was a discussion between my Guru Maharaja, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, and one of his disciples, Hayagriva dasa. On that recording, Srila Prabhupada mentioned a class of men in India who were “neither man nor woman” by nature, but rather a combination of both. These people, he described, kept their own societies, bestowed blessings, and were well known as dancers and performers. They even performed before Lord Caitanya, an important incarnation of Krsna, and blessed Him when He first appeared in this world. Srila Prabhupada spoke about this class of people in a positive way, yet he was somewhat frustrated in his attempt to define them in Western terms.

But I understood Srila Prabhupada perfectly well. He was talking about people like me. You see, in addition to having joined the Hare Krsna movement at the age of seventeen, I was also gay. I had been gay ever since I could remember and had never experienced any attraction for women. As a child, I was more inclined to play with girls and never enjoyed boyish things like sports or fighting, and upon reaching puberty I found my sexual orientation to be entirely homosexual. Moving into adulthood, I excelled in traditionally female tasks like cooking, cleaning, sewing, etc. In this way, I was always aware that I had both male and female qualities, but at the same time I did not fit neatly into either role.

Listening to this tape was like a breath of fresh air. I listened to it over and over again. Yes, I thought, there was a place for people like me in Hindu culture

and within the Krsna religion. My spiritual master was acknowledging this, and by the Lord's arrangement I had found this tape recording at the bottom of an overlooked shoebox full of old cassettes.

Many years later, after a lifetime of celibacy, asceticism, and devotion to Krsna, I found myself at the age of forty, wondering what special service I might be able to perform for my spiritual master, who had left this world many years ago in 1977. At the same time, I had read some articles and books written by my Godbrothers that were very derogatory and even demonizing of gay and lesbian people. How strange, I thought, that members of a movement as compassionate and merciful as Lord Caitanya's, and a religion as diverse and multifaceted as Hinduism, should speak so ill about other types of human beings, prejudging them. Most of the statements were ignorant and uninformed, and many were even completely untrue. Others were blanketed in a type of insincere pity for a class of people whom they mistakenly labeled as especially degraded, unfortunate, or somehow "lower" than everyone else. Some even suggested that there was no place for homosexual people within Hinduism. I found these misunderstandings to be perpetuated throughout all branches of the religion, and they were often accompanied by collective acts of mistreatment, ridicule, exclusion, or outright cruelty. I personally witnessed many gay adherents of the Krsna faith suffer from emotional isolation, depression, and even suicide as a result of all of this lack of understanding about third-gender people.

None of these negative and destructive attitudes made any sense to me, especially when I held them up against the statements I had heard so long ago from Srila Prabhupada on that tape. Nor did they make any sense within my own personal experience as a gay Vaishnava and devotee of Lord Krsna. So I decided to investigate further and delve deeply into all of the ancient Sanskrit texts and Vedic literatures. I decided to research this thoroughly and find out exactly what Hinduism taught about homosexuality.

What I quickly found out was quite surprising. Hinduism acknowledged a "third sex," or people who were by nature a combination of male and female, and such people were considered special in many ways. They were thoroughly described in the Kama Shastra and were not punished under the rigid laws of the Dharma Shastra. People of the third sex were described as homosexual, transgender, and intersexed persons; they were such by birth and consequently allowed to live their lives according to their own nature. Gay males were never expected to marry women, as they are almost always forced to do today in modern Hinduism, and in fact, Sanskrit texts specifically forbid this. Similarly, lesbian women were not forced to marry men but were allowed to earn their own livings independently. Even gay marriage, such a controversial issue at the

time of this writing, was acknowledged in the Kama Shastra many thousands of years ago.

The recognition of a third sex in ancient India and Hinduism is highly relevant in many ways. Our own modern-day society has only recently begun to understand sexual orientation, gender identity, and intersex conditions, and our legal and social systems are just beginning to catch up with and accommodate such people in a fair and realistic way. As modern civilization becomes more open and informed, it will be impossible to ignore and mistreat these types of people for much longer. We are seeing the impact of this new attitude of social awareness in our everyday lives, yet ancient India had already addressed and previously resolved this issue many thousands of years ago in the course of its own civilization's development. Indeed, there is much we can learn from ancient India's knowledge regarding the recognition and accommodation of a "third sex" within society.

There is to date a proliferation of books on all aspects of gay and lesbian studies, even in regard to various religions, but there is very little information concerning homosexuality and Hinduism. This is a shame since Hinduism has so much to say about this topic; more so, I believe, than any other religion. While there are a few good books available, they are often only written from a heterosexual perspective, and heterosexuals notoriously misunderstand homosexuality. On the other hand, some books have been written from a gay perspective, but the authors themselves were not fully devoted or immersed within the practice of Hinduism. It is my wish to offer a more complete perspective on this topic by being both a person of the third sex and a lifetime devotee of the Hindu faith.

Admittedly, Hinduism encompasses a wide spectrum of traditions and beliefs, and my own particular calling is to the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition of Bengal. Nevertheless, since homosexuality and gender are by nature secular topics of science, this should not present a problem. The basic nature of human sexuality is the same in any case, and only the various methods of how a person expresses or suppresses his or her sexuality will vary from path to path. For instance, the Vaishnava and Brahmavada systems advocate celibacy and sexual restraint, whereas the Shakta and Tantric systems are much more sexually expressive. The information about the Vedic concept of *tritiya-prakriti* or people of the third sex, however, will be useful and pertinent to all schools and branches of Hinduism whether they subscribe to a path of renunciation or enjoyment.

In addition to ordinary Hindu references from the *Kama Sutra* and *Manusmriti*, I also cite sources in this book from Gaudiya Vaishnava literature since that is my area of expertise. Similarly, I analyze statements expressed by my spiritual master, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, about the third sex and examine

his dealings with homosexual people and disciples. He is actually an excellent example in this regard; not only because of his renowned scholarship and lifetime devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa, but also as a spiritual leader forced to confront these issues in the West for the first time. In one sense, Srila Prabhupada is the perfect bridge builder, and he was simultaneously both conservative and liberal. Growing up in Victorian, turn-of-the-century India, his teachings and mission blossomed only after moving to America, penniless, during the turbulent and revolutionary 1960s. Srila Prabhupada's challenge was to make traditional Vaishnava teachings relevant and workable for his newfound Western audience.

Sometimes people misunderstand that by accepting the existence of a third gender, Hinduism is therefore sanctioning loose sexual behavior and promiscuity. This is not the case, however. Accepting homosexuals as a social class is not about their sexual behavior—that will vary from person to person. Homosexual people can be celibate, monogamous, or promiscuous, just as heterosexuals can be celibate, monogamous, or promiscuous. In Vedic society, many gay people lived in complete celibacy and served as temple priests. At the same time, homosexual couples were known to marry “with complete faith in one another,” as mentioned in the *Kama Sutra*, while others worked as prostitutes. In this book we wish to portray all aspects of third-gender behavior in ancient Indian society, both religious and secular. Most Hindu religious texts promote celibacy and sense control, with monogamy in marriage being a type of “second-best” concession. In a similar way, religious leaders can encourage celibacy and monogamous marriage among people of the third sex, in a manner that is practical and relevant for them, and this was apparently done during Vedic times.

Readers will find that I generally prefer to use the term “Vedic” rather than “Hindu” in my writings. “Vedic” refers to ancient Hinduism, or the indigenous religion and culture of India prior to any foreign influence, based on traditional *veda* or “knowledge.” “Hindu,” on the other hand, is not a Sanskrit term; it is a word given by foreigners to denote the people and culture living across the river Sindhu. I normally use this word only in a modern context. In regard to the third sex, my interest is to portray the concept as it was originally understood and expressed in ancient or Vedic India, prior to Christian, Islamic, or even Buddhist influences. In accordance with scriptural teachings, we do not accept the modern theory that Vedic culture was introduced from outside India by invading Aryans to the northwest. Similarly, timelines in this book will differ somewhat from that of modern archaeologists and historians. According to the scriptures themselves, the Vedic Age ended just over five thousand years ago, or about 3000 B.C., with the dawn of the *Kali Yuga* era. Most modern historians place this date much later, at about 1500 B.C.

Perhaps the most significant contribution this book will make is that it reads and understands Sanskrit texts from within the tradition itself, employing the original Vedic “three-gender” system. In ancient Hinduism there were three sexes—heterosexual males, heterosexual females, and people of the third sex—and each category had its own individual role to play in society. For instance, males (*pums* or *purusa*) were generally expected to marry women and beget children, and this is stated as their religious duty. However, if we assume that gay men (*napums*) are the same as first-gender males and condemn them for not marrying women or begetting children, then we are misinterpreting scripture by failing to acknowledge their third-gender status. Gay males were never expected to marry women and beget children, and this is even specifically forbidden in scripture like the *Narada-smṛiti*. It was understood by ancient Hinduism that such behavior was not natural or even recommended for people of the third sex, and it is important not to confuse quotes referring to ordinary males or females and mistakenly try to apply them toward homosexuals. This type of confusion was very common among British translators, and it remains a problem today for people accustomed to viewing the world from the current “two-gender” system, where everyone is either male or female, with nothing in between.

Finally, I would like to personally thank and honor all of my relatives, friends and fellow devotees who have encouraged and treated me with kindness over the years. There have been so many that I take this to be a good sign! I would like to thank everyone who understands and practices simple human kindness and respect—those who see and treat everyone equally. May the Divine Couple, Sri Radha and Sri Kṛṣṇa, bless you, and may we all come to know a world where the only important thing is love, and where everyone is welcome and included within that love.

INTRODUCTION

HOMOSEXUALITY, HINDUISM AND THE THIRD GENDER: AN OVERVIEW

Ancient Hindu scriptures have much to say about homosexuality, both explicitly and as part of a broader third-gender category that includes all types of people described as impotent with the opposite sex. Despite recent attitudes of taboo and the criminalization of homosexuality in India, traditional Hinduism was demonstrably far more understanding and liberal in its approach.

Scriptural Terms

Several Hindu scriptures explicitly describe people with a homosexual nature. Among these, three stand out—the *Narada-smṛiti* (a first-century B.C. text of religious codes attributed to the sage Narada), the *Sushruta Saṃhita* (a 600 B.C. medical text compiled by the sage Sushruta) and the *Kama Sutra* (a third-century A.D. text on the art of lovemaking by the sage Vatsyayana). In its list of fourteen different types of *panda* (men who are impotent with women), the *Narada-smṛiti* includes the *mukhebhaga* (who has oral sex with other men), the *sevyaka* (who is sexually enjoyed by other men) and the *irshyaka* (the voyeur who watches other men engaging in sex). All three types are declared “incurable” and forbidden to marry women.¹

The *Sushruta Saṃhita* similarly lists five types of men who are impotent with women and known as *kliba*: the *asekya* (who swallows the semen of other men), the *saugandhika* (who is aroused by smelling the genitals or pheromones of other men), the *kumbhika* (who takes the passive role in anal sex), the *irshyaka* (the above-mentioned voyeur) and the *shandha* (who has the qualities and behavior

of a woman). Sushruta states that the first four types of *kliba* have semen and male characteristics whereas the fifth (*shandha*) is completely devoid of these. Furthermore, all of the first four become aroused only by “sucking the genitals and drinking the semen of other men.”²

In its discussion of oral sex between men, the *Kama Sutra* uses the term *tritiya-prakriti* (third sex or nature) to define men with homosexual desire and describes their practices in great detail. It divides such men into two types: those with a feminine appearance and demeanor, and those having a manly appearance with beards, mustaches, muscular builds, etc.³ The *Jayamangala* (a twelfth-century A.D. commentary on the *Kama Sutra*) equates the term *tritiya-prakriti* to *napumsa* (impotent)⁴ and the *Caraka Samhita* (a 200 B.C. medical text compiled by the sage Caraka) lists eight types of *napumsa*, one of which is the *samskaravahi* (who is aroused according to previous life impressions).⁵ Cakrapani Datta, an important eleventh-century A.D. commentator on the *Caraka Samhita*, equates the *samskaravahi* to the homosexual *kliba* described by Sushruta.⁶

The *Kama Sutra* furthermore describes the *svairini* (independent woman) who engages in aggressive lovemaking with other women.⁷ Lesbians and women who are either masculine or impotent with men for a variety of reasons are mentioned in the Hindu scriptures under terms such as *nastriya*, *stripumsa*, *shandhi*, etc. Similarly, bisexuals (*kami* or *paksha*), transgenders (*shandha*) and intersex types (*nisarga*, *vakri*, *trnaputrika*, etc.) are all mentioned and described in the voluminous Hindu scriptures of India.⁸

Homosexuality as Inborn

Hinduism honors the two primary genders—potent males (*pums*) and fertile females (*stri*)—but also acknowledges a third, less common sex (*tritiya-prakriti* or *napumsa*) considered to be a natural combination of the male and female natures resulting in impotence. Many verses throughout the Hindu canon affirm that the sex of the living entity is determined at the time of conception. They state that if the male sexual fluids (*sukra*) predominate at the moment of conception the child will be male, and if the female sexual fluids (*sonita*) predominate the child will be female. If both are equal, either male and female twins or a child of the third sex will be the result.⁹

Both the *Sushruta* and *Caraka Samhitas* confirm this fact and the former text goes even further. Sushruta describes how the homosexual *asekya* is conceived when the father’s semen is scanty and the transgender *shandha* is conceived when the father and mother reverse roles during intercourse (*purushayita* or “woman on

top”). Several similar examples are cited for the other types of *kliba*.¹⁰ Both texts assert that all three natures—male, female, and third sex—are determined at the time of conception and develop in utero up until the end of the second month of pregnancy. After that time the basic sexual nature or *prakriti* of the living entity cannot be changed.¹¹ For this reason, Narada declares the homosexual *mukhebhaga* and others to be “incurable.”

Social Roles

With this basic understanding in mind, ancient Hindu or Vedic culture did not punish or attempt to correct homosexuals of the third sex but rather accepted their nature as it was and incorporated them into society accordingly. Hindu texts such as the *Kama Sutra*, *Mahabharata*, *Artha-sastra*, etc. mention third-gender men working as domestic servants, go-betweeners in the affairs of men and women, barbers, masseurs, florists and prostitutes.¹² The *Kama Sutra* also mentions homosexual marriages based on “great attachment and complete faith in one another.”¹³ Transgenders are described as especially talented in the feminine arts of music playing and dancing,¹⁴ and lesbians are mentioned as skilled *vaisyas* (businesswomen), armed military guards, domestic servants and courtesans.¹⁵ Third-gender citizens were renowned for their special talents and often served in the homes of wealthy landholders, generals and kings.

Another role held by homosexuals, transgenders and other third-gender people in traditional Hindu society was their special nonprocreative status and association with supernatural powers. Revered astrological and omen-reading texts such as the *Brihat Jataka* and *Brihat Samhita* all mention planetary alignments at the time of conception that indicate a third-gender birth. Such births are associated with the three *napumsa* planets (Mercury, Saturn and Ketu) and indicate intelligence, mastery of the arts and sciences, detachment from family life, and clairvoyant abilities.¹⁶ In Hinduism, people of the third gender are believed to hold special powers that allow them to bless or curse others, and this traditional belief can still be seen in India today.¹⁷

Several codes in the ancient Hindu law books protect homosexuals and other citizens of the third gender from abuse by the general public. For instance, the *Narada-smriti* states that people of the third sex should never be fined¹⁸ and the *Artha-sastra* enjoins that parents must provide basic necessities (food, clothing, etc.) to their third-gender offspring. In cases when there are no relatives, the king is responsible for such provisions. The *Artha-sastra* also declares it an offense to vilify or publicly mock any man or woman of the third gender (*kliba*) and punishes such offenses with various small fines.¹⁹

Homosexual Behavior among Ordinary Males and Females

While no law in the Hindu scriptures explicitly punishes homosexual behavior between men or women of the third gender (*napumsa*, *kliba*, etc.), homosexuality among ordinary, twice-born males (*pums*) and young, unmarried females (*kanya*) is listed as a minor offense with various atonements prescribed. Homosexual behavior among twice-born (*dvija* or duly initiated) males is remedied by taking a ritual bath or paying a low fine; if the offense is not atoned for, loss of caste or twice-born status is the result.²⁰ The sexual violation of young, unmarried girls by other females is punished with even lower fines or, in some cases, corporal punishment.²¹

Homosexual behavior among the *kliba*, uninitiated males and adult females is not cited as a punishable offense in traditional Hinduism because apparently such acts were considered relatively harmless and discouraged only among the brahminical class, which is held to higher standards of behavior. In brahminical culture, *viyoni* and *ayoni* sex are explicitly forbidden. *Viyoni* refers to intercourse in an “improper vagina” (with a prostitute, lower-class woman, non-wife, animal, etc.) and *ayoni* refers to nonvaginal sex (masturbation, using the mouth or anus, etc.). Such acts are considered in the mode of passion, or passion mixed with ignorance, and brahmanas are expected to cultivate the higher mode of goodness (having sexual intercourse only according to religious principles, within marriage, for procreation, etc.).²²

Hindu Gods and Gender Levity

In Hinduism, the gods and sacred deities are not bound by human codes and can often be found breaking the above-mentioned restrictions. They commonly bend gender norms and manifest multiple combinations of sex throughout the sacred Hindu texts. There are Hindu deities that are male, female or third sex; deities that manifest all three; male deities who become female and female deities who become male; male deities with female moods and female deities with male moods; deities that crossdress; deities born from two males or from two females; deities born from a single male or from a single female; deities who self-manifest; deities that avoid the opposite sex, and deities with principle companions of the same gender. All of these different combinations demonstrate the remarkable gender diversity found among the Hindu gods and it is said that everything in this world is a reflection of the original subtle and spiritual reality.²³

Nevertheless, there are relatively few explicit examples of homosexuality found among the Hindu gods. Some of the best known instances involve the water-gods Varuna and Mitra, the latter of whom is described in the ancient *Shatapatha Brahmana* text as “implanting his seed” in Varuna on every new moon night in order to secure the moon’s waning.²⁴ Another account from the *Skanda Purana* involves the fire god Agni, who on one occasion swallows the semen of Siva while disguised as an ascetic. In a narrative found in both the *Padma Purana* and *Krittivasa Ramayana*, the god Siva commands two queens to make love together and blesses them to thus conceive a child. And at the Jagannatha Temple in Puri, a popular ceremony is performed wherein a young boy dressed in female attire dances before and seduces Lord Baladeva, one of the temple’s three principal Deities.²⁵

More important than explicit examples of homosexuality in the Hindu scriptures are the very deep, loving same-sex relationships expressed between many of the Hindu gods and their unalloyed devotees. In the eternal friendships of Krsna and Arjuna, Ayyappa and Vavar, Kartikeya and Visakha, Yellamma-devi and Renuka, etc., the bonds of affection and attraction are declared to be greater than those held for family members, spouses, the entire world or even their own lives.²⁶

Devotional Scriptures

The *bhakti* or devotional scriptures include the most popular and well-known Hindu texts such as Bhagavad Gita, *Srimad Bhagavatam*, *Sri Isopanisad*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, etc. While these texts do not explicitly address homosexuality, their important teachings are equally applicable to all classes of men. The third gender appears briefly throughout these texts but is never explicitly defined or described in much detail.²⁷

In the *Mahabharata*, Arjuna’s well-known stint as the crossdressing transgender, Brihannala, serves as a particularly notable example of the acceptance of third-gender people in ancient Hindu or Vedic society. Brihannala’s traditional role as a skilled teacher of the fine arts and her acceptance by Maharaja Virata into his kingdom are all truly exemplary.²⁸ In the same light, Lord Krsna stresses throughout the Bhagavad Gita that everyone should work for God according to their respective nature (*svadharma*), even if performed imperfectly. “To follow another’s path or to artificially suppress one’s nature,” He says, “is dangerous and ill advised.”²⁹ Bhagavad Gita also teaches that a person’s character is determined

by individual behavior, not body-type, and that all kinds of men can attain the supreme destination. It affirms that God does not hate anyone and that spiritually advanced persons view all living entities equally, treating everyone with friendship and kindness.³⁰

The *bhakti* scriptures furthermore emphasize qualities such as truthfulness, honesty, revealing one's mind in confidence, compassion, inclusiveness, and so on. *Sri Isopanisad*, one of the most ancient *bhakti* texts, declares: "those who see the Supreme Lord within everything never hate anything nor any being,"³¹ while the *Jaiva Dharma*, a more recent text compiled by Vaishnava visionary Bhaktivinoda Thakura, stresses that a Vaishnava "does not adhere blindly to the rules and prohibitions of the scriptures but follows them only when they are favorable to his practice of *hari-bhajana* (worship of God). If they are unfavorable, he immediately rejects them."³² In this way, homosexuals and other third-gender people are not excluded from devotional culture but encouraged to embrace it in ways practical for them.³³

Negative Attitudes

In contrast to the enlightened principles expressed above, there are nevertheless also negative attitudes about homosexuality within Hinduism, especially nowadays. Such attitudes can generally be traced to religious fundamentalism or a lack of genuine spiritual advancement, both within Hinduism itself or from religious teachings introduced from outside India.

Among Hindus there is a class of priests known as the *smarta* or caste brahmanas. Such priests—and those who share their views—typically follow a rigid interpretation of Hinduism that places strict religious codes above higher principles such as compassion and human kindness. *Smarta* brahmanas adhere to a strict caste system based entirely on birth and look down upon anyone considered "lower." Women, *sudras* (workers), merchants, artisans, dark-skinned people, homosexuals and countless other types are all viewed as lower and in some cases "untouchable" by the caste brahmanas.³⁴ Such men typically emphasize materialistic family life, the production of offspring, promotion to the heavenly planets, etc. and worship the gods only to attain such things. *Smarta* brahmanas and their views have existed since time immemorial but are especially prominent in the present age of Kali, a less fortunate era marked by quarrel and hypocrisy.

Another influence on Hindu attitudes toward homosexuality is Islam, which dominated northern India for over six hundred years from the eleventh to the seventeenth century A.D. The prevailing attitude of medieval Islam was to publicly disavow homosexual behavior while privately looking the other way or

even engaging in it oneself. Indeed, homosexuality flourished during Islamic rule although not very openly. Another practice introduced under Islamic rule was the custom of castrating domestic manservants and slaves. Male castration was widespread during the Islamic period³⁵ and even today the most familiar word for eunuch in India is *hijra*—an Arabic term referring to immigrants fleeing western Asia. In traditional Hinduism, effeminate men of the third gender (*shandha*) would dress up as women and tie their genitals against the groin with a *kaupina* (cloth undergarment) but did not practice castration. This traditional system is still prevalent in South India. By the time the British arrived, however, the Muslim practice of male castration was still very prevalent and scholars thus mistranslated words such as *kliba*, *shandha*, *napumsa*, etc. into simply “eunuch.” Even today, Sanskrit-to-English terms for the third gender are typically limited to the archaic word eunuch, albeit erroneously.³⁶

The Christian British left the most significant, lasting mark on Hindu attitudes toward homosexuality—attitudes that were viciously negative and remain prominent in Hinduism up to this day. The British penalized homosexual behavior in India first by hanging and then with life sentences, incorporating Section 377 into the Indian Penal Code in 1860. They also constructed educational facilities and colleges across the subcontinent that indoctrinated upwardly mobile natives into a very dark, criminal view of known or suspected “sodomites.” Nineteenth-century attitudes dubbing homosexual behavior as “unnatural,” “perverted,” “demonic,” “a mental illness,” “a chosen vice,” “shocking,” a “growing modern menace,” etc. are all Christian ideas with no foundation in traditional Hindu dogma or scripture.³⁷ The British also criminalized crossdressing, castration and collecting alms under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 in an attempt to eliminate the *hijra* and third-gender sects found all over India. Unfortunately, many of these harmful misunderstandings and attitudes have become ingrained into the modern Hindu psyche.

Modern Developments

In the 1990’s, LGBTI Indians and Hindus began a public dialog in Indian society, openly questioning their mistreatment and demanding equal rights and inclusion. Pioneers such as Ashok Row Kavi, founder of India’s first gay magazine *Bombay Dost*, openly declared both his homosexuality and his faith in Hinduism. Thus began the long process of reeducating Hindus about their formerly tolerant and noble past in regard to homosexuality and the third gender.

In 1999, India’s first small Gay Pride march took place in Calcutta. It would soon be followed by others of increasing strength and number. In 2001, the Gay

and Lesbian Vaishnava Association was founded to provide positive information and support to faithful LGBTI Vaishnavas and Hindus all around the globe. The Delhi High Court effectively struck down India's laws against homosexuality (Section 377) in 2009 but they were reinstated by the Supreme Court in 2013 at the petition of various anti-gay Christian, Muslim and even Hindu organizations. This controversial decision is currently being reviewed under a curative plea. In 2014, the Supreme Court granted legal recognition and equal constitutional rights to all individuals identifying as "third gender."³⁸ The justices cited India's historic tradition of respecting such people and even questioned the compatibility of their verdict to Section 377 and the rights of other sex and gender minorities such as homosexuals. Thus the legal situation of LGBTI people in India remains under review.

In today's world, traditional Hindu teachings on homosexuality and the third gender shine new light whereas the intolerance and mistreatment of recent centuries continues to fall by the wayside. Indeed, the chief instigators of homophobia in India, the Western colonialists, have long since packed their bags and even purged their own societies of the practice. If one were to ask various Hindu swamis and leaders about their opinions on homosexuality and the third gender, one would inevitably hear a wide range of views, both good and bad. As with other faiths, Hinduism and its scriptures can be read and interpreted variously. Nevertheless, higher qualities such as love, kindness and compassion should always be emphasized above the lower qualities of hate, cruelty and fear. That is an eternal truth and good advice for everyone!

Om tat sat.

Endnotes

- ¹ *Narada-smriti* 12.15: "These four—*irshyaka*, *sevyaka*, *vataretas*, and *mukhebhaga*—are to be completely rejected as unqualified for marriage, even by a wife who is no longer a virgin." *Vataretas* refers to men with no discharge of semen.
- ² See *Sushruta Samhita* 3.2.38-45 in the chapter entitled "The Purification of the Male and Female Reproductive Fluids."
- ³ *Kama Sutra* 2.9.2: "Those with a feminine appearance show it by their dress, speech, laughter, behavior, gentleness, lack of courage, silliness, patience, and modesty."
Kama Sutra 2.9.6: "Those who like men but dissimulate the fact maintain a manly appearance and earn their living as barbers and masseurs."
- ⁴ "The third sex is also termed *napumsaka*." (*The Complete Kama Sutra* by Alain Danielou; *Jayamangala* commentary by Yashodhara, p. 183)
- ⁵ See *Caraka Samhita* 4.2.17-21 in the chapter entitled "Embryological Development."

- ⁶ See *Caraka Sambhita* by P.V. Sharma, Volume III, Critical Notes, p. 358.
- ⁷ See *Kama Sutra* 2.8, in the chapter entitled “Virile Behavior in Women.”
- ⁸ For a complete list of 48 terms for the various types of third-gender men and women, along with their sources in Sanskrit texts, see *Tritiya-Prakriti: People of the Third Sex* by Amara Das Wilhelm, pp. 39-58.
- ⁹ To cite one example, *Manusmriti (Manu Sambhita)* 3.49 states: “A male child is produced by a greater quantity of the male sexual fluids, a female child by the prevalence of the female; if both are equal, a third-sex child (*napumsa*) or boy and girl twins are produced; if either are weak or deficient in quantity, a failure of conception results.” See also *Sushruta Sambhita* 3.3.4.
- ¹⁰ *Sushruta Sambhita* 3.2.38: “If the parents have exceedingly little generative fluids, their male offspring will be an *asekya* who will undoubtedly become aroused only by swallowing a man’s semen.”
Sushruta Sambhita 3.2.42-43: “If, due to illusion, a man engages with his wife during her fertile period as if he were a woman, then a *shandha* will be born who behaves like a woman. Conversely, if the woman engages in sex like a man during her fertile period, then, should a girl be born, that girl will behave like a man.”
- ¹¹ See *Caraka Sambhita* 4.4.10 and 4.8.19.
- ¹² See *Kama Sutra* 2.9; *Mahabharata* (Virata Parva, Ch. 3), and *Artha-sastra* 1.21.1, 1.20.21 and 1.12.21.
- ¹³ *Kama Sutra* 2.9.36: “There are also third-sex citizens, sometimes greatly attached to each other and with complete faith in one another, who get married together.”
- ¹⁴ See *Mahabharata* (Virata Parva, Ch. 3).
- ¹⁵ The various professions of lesbians are especially mentioned in the *Kama Sutra*.
- ¹⁶ For numerous astrological references on the third gender, see *Tritiya-Prakriti: People of the Third Sex* by Amara Das Wilhelm, pp. 103-123. Two examples from *Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra*: “If Venus occupies the seventh house and is in a sign or *navamsa* (one ninth of a sign) ruled by Saturn or occupied by that planet in any way, the native will ‘kiss’ the private parts of other men.” (18.13) “When a woman’s ascendant is Taurus or Libra, her rising *navamsa* Capricorn or Aquarius, and the planets Venus and Saturn aspect each other or occupy one another’s *navamsa*, the woman will be of great passion and satisfy herself through other females acting as men.” (80.50-51)
- ¹⁷ This belief is well known in India and His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada cites an interesting example wherein “eunuchs” bless the baby Nimai, an incarnation of Radha and Krsna, over 500 years ago in Mayapura, West Bengal. See *Outline of Lord Caitanya Play*, Part One, Tape no. 67-002 and *Sri Caitanya-caritamrta* 1.13.106, purport.
- ¹⁸ *Narada-smriti* 15.15.
- ¹⁹ *Artha-sastra* 3.5.32 and 3.18.4-5.

- ²⁰ *Manusmriti* 11.68 and 11.175; *Artha-sastra* 4.13.40.
- ²¹ *Manusmriti* 8.370 and *Artha-sastra* 4.12.20-21.
- ²² The *Apastambha* (1.26.7), *Gautama* (25.7), *Baudhayana* (3.7.1-7; 4.1.19; 4.2.13), and *Vasistha Dharmasutras* all admonish *snatakas* (purified brahmanas) who engage in *viyoni* or *ayoni* sex and variously prescribe a ritual bath, fasting, or reciting prayers as atonement. The *Narada-smriti* (12.75) and *Yajnavalkya-smriti* (293) both offer low fines as alternatives to such atonements.
- ²³ In a purport to *Sri Caitanya-caritamrta* 1.4.29, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami states: “One should know for certain that nothing can exist in this cosmic manifestation that has no real counterpart in the spiritual field. All material manifestations are emanations of the Transcendence. The erotic principles of amorous love reflected in mixed material values are perverted reflections of the reality of spirit, but one cannot understand the reality unless one is sufficiently educated in the spiritual science.”
- ²⁴ The *Shatapatha Brahmana* (2.4.4.19) states: “Mitra and Varuna, on the other hand, are the two half-moons: the waxing one is Varuna and the waning one is Mitra. During the new-moon night these two meet and when they are thus together they are pleased with a cake offering. Verily, all are pleased and all is obtained by any person knowing this. On that same night, Mitra implants his seed in Varuna and when the moon later wanes, that waning is produced from his seed.”
- ²⁵ All these pastimes and more can be found in *Tritiya-Prakriti: People of the Third Sex* by Amara Das Wilhelm, in the chapter entitled “Hindu Deities and the Third Sex.”
- ²⁶ In the *Mahabharata* (Sauptika Parva, XII), Lord Krsna states: “I have no dearer friend on earth than Arjuna, and there is nothing that I cannot give to him including my wives and children.” In the Drona Parva of the same text, Krsna reiterates: “O Daruka, I shall not be able to cast my eyes, even for a single moment, on the earth bereft of Arjuna... Know that Arjuna is half my body.”
- ²⁷ To cite one typical example from the *Bhagavata Purana*: “Any cruel person—whether male [*pums*], female [*stri*] or third sex [*kliba*—who is only interested in his personal maintenance and has no compassion for other living entities may be killed by the king.” (4.17.26)
- ²⁸ See *Mahabharata* (Virata Parva, Ch. 3).
- ²⁹ Bhagavad Gita 3.33, 35; 18.45-48.
- ³⁰ See the 16th Chapter of the Bhagavad Gita entitled “The Divine and Demonic Natures.” See also Bhagavad Gita 9.32, 9.29, 5.18, 11.55 and 12.13-14 respectively.
- ³¹ *Sri Isopanisad*, verse 6.
- ³² *Jaiva Dharma*, Chapter 3 entitled “Naimittika-Dharma Is To Be Relinquished,” p. 54.

- ³³ The *Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta* 1.9.29 states: “Not considering who asked for it and who did not, nor who was fit and who unfit to receive it, Caitanya Mahaprabhu distributed the fruit of devotional service.” See also Bhagavad Gita 12.9-12.
- ³⁴ For a complete list of all the types considered impure by *Smarta* brahmanas, see *Manusmṛiti* 4.205-222. A similar list of persons considered unqualified to bear witness can be found in *Narada-smṛiti* 1.159-169.
- ³⁵ Slavery and male castration under Islamic rule reached its peak in India around the fourteenth century A.D. At that time, Firuz Shah Tughlaq of the Sultanate of Delhi is reported to have held more than 180,000 slaves, many of whom were castrated eunuchs. See *Same-Sex Love In India* by Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai, p. 109.
- ³⁶ In his article *Homosexuality and Hinduism*, Arvind Sharma expresses his doubt about this word definition as follows: “The limited practice of castration in India raises another point significant for the rest of the discussion, namely, whether rendering a word such as *kliba* as ‘eunuch’ regularly is correct.” In his English rendition of *Narada-smṛiti*, Richard W. Lariviere writes: “I translate the term *pandaka* as ‘impotent’ rather than the conventional term ‘eunuch.’ A eunuch would be easily identifiable by a simple physical examination. The term must be taken to mean, broadly, a male who is unable to impregnate a woman.”
- ³⁷ Some excellent examples of negative, colonial-era attitudes toward homosexuality in India can be found in the book *Same-Sex Love in India* by Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai. See especially the chapters entitled “The Kamasutra in the Twentieth Century” and “Hakim Muhammad Yusuf Hasan: Do Shiza (Urdu).”
- ³⁸ There is to date no legal definition for “third gender” under Indian law other than one’s own identity as such. In the twentieth century most Indians conceived of third-gender people as castrated eunuchs or hermaphrodites (intersexed), while nowadays they are generally classified as transgenders. Homosexuals are mostly perceived as disordered males or females and not part of the third gender. However, by definition of Hindu scripture, all sex and gender minorities (LGBTI) are included and protected under the third-gender banner.

CHAPTER ONE

TRITIYA-PRAKRITI: PEOPLE OF THE THIRD SEX

Introduction

Let me first offer my respectful obeisances unto my beloved gurudeva, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. Mindful of his desire to see all classes of human society included within the Vedic system of spiritual upliftment, I humbly attempt to write this book. It is also my desire to help steer readers away from the pitfalls of discrimination and hate based upon bodily distinctions, so often the trap of mundane religionists.

In modern times, there has been much controversy concerning the position and rights of gay and other third-gender groups within society. Should they be feared and eliminated as a harmful, corruptive force within our midst? Should they be ignored and hidden away, being denied the basic rights and privileges that other citizens enjoy? Or should they be welcomed as simply another color within the rainbow of human variety? The answer to these questions can be found in the ancient Vedic literatures of India, which have thoroughly analyzed and recorded all aspects of human behavior and knowledge since time immemorial.

After the Vedas were issued forth from Brahma at the beginning of creation, Manu set aside the verses concerning civic virtues and ethics, thus compiling the Dharma Shastra. Similarly, Brhaspati set aside the verses concerning politics, economy, and prosperity to compile the Artha Shastra. Nandi, the companion of Lord Siva, set aside the verses concerning sense pleasure and sexuality, thus compiling the Kama Shastra.¹ The great sage, Svetaketu, put this Kama Shastra into writing approximately five thousand years ago, abridging it into five hundred

chapters.² It was then subsequently divided into many parts and almost lost until recompiled by the brahmana sage, Vatsyayana, during the Gupta period or about 300 A.D.³ The result was the famed *Kama Sutra* or “codes of sensual pleasure.” Although commonly presented to Westerners in the format of an erotic sex manual, the actual unabridged *Kama Sutra* gives us a rare glimpse into the sexual understandings of ancient Vedic India.

Three Categories of Gender

Throughout Vedic literature, the sex or gender of the human being is clearly divided into three separate categories according to *prakriti* or nature. These are: *pums-prakriti* or male, *stri-prakriti* or female, and *tritiya-prakriti* or the third sex.⁴ These three genders are not determined by physical characteristics alone but rather by an assessment of the entire being that includes the gross (physical) body, the subtle (psychological) body, and a unique consideration based upon social interaction (procreative status). Generally the word “sex” refers to biological sex and “gender” to psychological behavior and identity. The term *prakriti* or nature, however, implies both aspects together as one intricately woven and cohesive unit, and I will therefore use the two words more or less interchangeably in this book.

People of the third sex are analyzed in the *Kama Sutra* and broken down into several categories that are still visible today and generally referred to as gay males and lesbians. They are typically characterized by a mixed male/female nature (i.e. effeminate males or masculine females) that can often be recognized within childhood and are identified by an inherent homosexual orientation that manifests at puberty. The homosexual behavior of these people is described in great detail within the eighth and ninth chapters of the second part of the *Kama Sutra*. While gay males and lesbians are the most prominent members of this category, it also includes other types of people such as transgenders and the intersexed.

The third sex is described as a natural mixing or combination of the male and female natures to the point in which they can no longer be categorized as male or female in the traditional sense of the word. The example of mixing black and white paint can be used, wherein the resulting color, gray, in all its many shades, can no longer be considered either black or white although it is simply a combination of both. People of the third sex are mentioned throughout Vedic literature in different ways due to their variety of manifestations. They were not expected to behave like ordinary heterosexual men and women or to assume their roles. In this way, the third-sex category served as an important tool for the recognition and accommodation of such persons within society.

People of the third sex are also classified under a larger social category known as the “neutral gender.” Its members are called *napumsaka*, or “those who do not engage in procreation.” There are five different types of *napumsaka* people: (1) children; (2) the elderly; (3) the impotent; (4) the celibate, and (5) the third sex.⁵ They were all considered to be sexually neutral by Vedic definition and were protected and believed to bring good luck. As a distinct social category, members of the neutral gender did not engage in sexual reproduction. This nonreproductive category played an integral role in the balance of both human society and nature, similar to the way in which asexual bees play out their own particular roles in the operation of a hive. In Hinduism there are no accidents or errors, and everything in nature has a purpose, role, and reason for existence.

Third-Gender Citizens

Vedic society was all encompassing, and each individual was seen as an integral part of the greater whole. Thus all classes of men were accommodated and engaged according to their nature. Third-gender citizens were neither persecuted nor denied basic rights. They were allowed to keep their own societies or town quarters, live together within marriage and engage in all means of livelihood. Gay men could either blend into society as ordinary males or they could dress and behave as females, living as transvestites. They are especially mentioned as being expert in dancing, singing and acting, as barbers or hairstylists, masseurs, and house servants. They were often used within the female sections of royal palaces and also engaged in various types of prostitution. Transvestites were invited to attend all birth, marriage, and religious ceremonies as their presence was a symbol of good luck and considered to be auspicious. This tradition still continues in India even today.⁶ Lesbians were known as *svairini* or independent women and were permitted to earn their own livelihood. They were not expected to accept a husband. Citizens of the third sex represented only a very small portion of the overall population, which most estimates place at approximately 5 percent.⁷ They were not perceived to be a threat in any way and were considered to be aloof from the ordinary attachments of procreation and family life. In this way they were awarded their own particular status and welcomed as a part of civilized Vedic society.

A Matter of Semantics

There is a strange being described within early British translations of Vedic literature. These beings are comic, mythical creatures that appear to have lost

their relevance in modern times. They are described as neither man nor woman, or sometimes as both man and woman. They are compared to the *gandharva* or fairy and are believed to be asexual or without sexual desire. Even Arjuna, the eternal companion of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the hero of the *Mahabharata*, became one of these beings while hiding during his last year of exile,⁸ according to the Lord's plan. There, dressed as a woman, he wore his hair in braids, behaved in a feminine manner, and taught dancing and singing to young girls with no attraction for them.

Welcome to the world of the so-called Vedic eunuch, a term so archaic and disingenuous it provides a good lesson both in semantics and social denial. First of all, there is no recorded evidence of any system of male castration in ancient Vedic India.⁹ Castration among servants and slaves was only introduced into medieval northern India with the arrival of foreign Islamic rulers, sometime around the eleventh and twelfth centuries A.D.¹⁰ Even then, it was quite often homosexual males who endured the dark and gruesome practice. The English word "eunuch," or castrated male, is Greek in origin¹¹ and was commonly used to refer to both homosexuals and castrated men during the Middle Ages. When the term "homosexual" was first coined with the advent of modern psychiatry in the late nineteenth century, British writers continued to cling to the word "eunuch," which was considered more polite by Victorian standards. Thus they used the word loosely to describe both homosexual and castrated men all over the world in regions ranging from Greece, Persia, India, China, Polynesia, etc. During the nineteenth century, when Great Britain was the major world power and had subjugated India, homosexuality was considered a sin so horrific it was not even to be mentioned, let alone discussed. This resulted in the use of vague, inappropriate terms to describe homosexual people such as eunuch, neuter, impotent, asexual, hermaphrodite, etc. While these different types of people exist to some degree and are included within the third-gender category, they hardly would have made up its mass. Rather, by behavior and as described in the Kama Shastra, the so-called eunuchs of ancient India engaged almost exclusively in homosexuality.¹²

The avoidance of this fact has led to an erroneous understanding of the "Vedic eunuch" and his relevance to modern times. Words used to describe gay and lesbian citizens in Sanskrit were inaccurately translated to skirt homosexual issues and impose puritan ethics upon Vedic literatures where they did not otherwise exist. There are many examples of this, the most common of which is the Sanskrit word *napumsaka* (literally, "not male"), which is used to refer to a man who has no taste for women and thus does not procreate. While this may technically include diseased, old, or castrated men, it most commonly refers to the gay or homosexual male, depending of course upon the context and behavior

of the character being described. Other Sanskrit words for people of the third sex include *shandha* (a man who behaves like a woman) and *kliba* or *panda* (impotent with women). These words appear to be somewhat interchangeable and, like most Sanskrit terms, have several different meanings. Nevertheless, they are plainly used to describe homosexuals and other types of third-sex people in Vedic texts. It is foolish to assume that Sanskrit words like *napumsaka*, *shandha*, and *kliba* only refer to castrated men or neuters, especially when we consider that castration was not systematically practiced in ancient India.

Another good example of inaccurate translating can be found in the Sanskrit word referring to lesbians or *svairini*. Literally meaning “independent woman,” this word was commonly mistranslated by early British scholars as “corrupt woman.”¹³ And when mentioning *maithunam pumsi*, or simply “sexual union between males,” the so-called scholars have chosen as their translation “the unnatural offense with a male.”¹⁴

Mistranslations such as these have only served to confuse and cover the acknowledgement of gay and lesbian people within Vedic literature, people who were nonetheless clearly recognized and defined in the Kama Shastra. In many instances, such persons were even demeaned or vilified by foreign commentators who did not understand or accept the Vedic concept of a third gender. We can only hope that future scholars and translators will be more accurate and forthright in their work.

Third-Gender Roles

The Vedic literatures are comprised of voluminous Sanskrit texts numbering in the thousands, and their priestly authors were renowned for their detailed descriptions of all sciences, both godly and mundane. To obtain a clear understanding of human sexuality, behavior, and practice, one is advised to consult the Kama Shastra, which thoroughly covers this field. It is within these texts where the most information is found regarding the third sex and its members, behavior, practices and roles within society. A brief description will be given here, taken mostly from the eighth and ninth chapters of the second part of the *Kama Sutra*:

People of the third sex (*tritiya-prakriti*) are of two kinds, according to whether their appearance is masculine or feminine.¹⁵

(*Kama Sutra* 2.9.1)

Members of the third sex are first categorized according to whether their physical characteristics are either male or female. These are known as *kliba*, or gay males, and *svairini*, or lesbians. Each of these categories is then divided into two, depending upon whether their behavior is either masculine or feminine. They are then further divided into many subcategories.

Homosexual people are the most prominent members of the third sex. While appearing as ordinary males and females, their third-nature identity is revealed by their exclusive romantic and sexual attraction for persons of the same physical sex. Gay men experience the attractions ordinarily felt by females, and lesbian women experience the attractions ordinarily felt by males. Such people commonly exhibit other types of “cross-gender” behavior, but not always.

Lesbians (Svairini)

Under the heading of *tritiya-prakriti*, or people of the third sex, the lesbian is first described in the chapter of the *Kama Sutra* concerning aggressive behavior in women (*purushayita*).¹⁶ The Sanskrit word *svairini* refers to an independent or liberated woman who has refused a husband, earns her own livelihood, and lives either alone or in marriage with another woman. Her various types of homosexual behavior and practices are described in great detail within this chapter.

Lesbians were more likely to marry and raise children than their male counterparts and were readily accommodated both within the third-gender community and ordinary society. Those who did not produce children were sometimes known as *nastriya* or “not female.” Women of the third sex were engaged in all means of livelihood including trade, government, entertainment, as courtesans or prostitutes, and as maidservants. Sometimes they would live as renunciates and follow ascetic vows.

Gay Men (Kliba)

The word *kliba* can refer to any type of impotent man, but in this instance it is specifically used to describe men who are completely impotent with women due to their homosexual nature. Gay men are thoroughly described in the chapter of the *Kama Sutra* concerning oral sex (*auparishtaka*).¹⁷ Oral sex is not recommended for heterosexuals and is forbidden to brahmanas (priests), but it is acknowledged as the natural practice among those of the third sex who are not otherwise engaged in celibacy. Homosexual men who take the passive role in oral sex are specifically known in Sanskrit as *mukhebhaga* or *asekya*.

Gay men with feminine qualities are first described:

Those with a feminine appearance show it by their dress, speech, laughter, behavior, gentleness, lack of courage, silliness, patience, and modesty.¹⁸

(*Kama Sutra* 2.9.2)

Gay men with feminine qualities are the most recognizable members of the third sex. For this reason, they have often kept their own societies within all cultures of the world. They generally keep long hair and arrange it in braids or in a womanly fashion. Those who dress up as females are known as transvestites. Feminine gay males were often professionally employed by aristocratic women and commonly served within the royal palace. They are proficient in the arts, entertainment, and most notably, dancing. As mentioned earlier, their presence at marriage and religious ceremonies was considered to invoke auspiciousness, and their blessings were much sought after.

The masculine gay male is next described:

Those who like men but dissimulate the fact maintain a manly appearance and earn their living as barbers or masseurs.¹⁹

(*Kama Sutra* 2.9.6)

The masculine gay male is not as easily recognizable and would often blend into ordinary society, living either independently or within marriage to another man. Some were known to become professional male prostitutes who worked as masseurs. The technique of these masseurs is described in much detail. While effeminate gay men would keep smooth skin, apply makeup and sometimes don breasts, the masculine gay male would keep bodily hairs, grow moustaches or small beards, and maintain a muscular physique. They would often wear shiny earrings. Gay men were talented in many different ways and were engaged in all means of livelihood. They often served as house attendants to wealthy *vaishyas* (merchants) or as chamberlains and ministers to government officials. Such men were renowned for their loyalty and devotion. Sometimes gay men would live as renunciates and develop clairvoyant powers. Those practicing celibacy were often used as *pujaris* (temple priests).

Gay males typically engaged in fraternal or casual love but were sometimes known to marry one another:

There are also third-sex citizens, sometimes greatly attached to each other and with complete faith in one another, who get married (*parigraha*) together.²⁰

(*Kama Sutra* 2.9.36)

There were eight different types of marriage according to the Vedic system, and the homosexual marriage that occurred between gay males or lesbians was classified under the *gandharva* or celestial variety. This type of marriage was not recommended for members of the brahmana community but often practiced by heterosexual men and women belonging to the other classes. The *gandharva* marriage is defined as a union of love and cohabitation, recognized under common law, but without the need of parental consent or religious ceremony.²¹ In the *Jayamangala*, an important twelfth-century commentary on the *Kama Sutra*, it is stated: “Citizens with this kind of [homosexual] inclination, who renounce women and can do without them willingly because they love each other, get married together, bound by a deep and trusting friendship.”

Transgenders (Shandha)

The Sanskrit word *shandha* refers to men who behave like women or whose manhood is completely destroyed (the word *shandhi* similarly applies to women). This can refer to many types of third-gender people but is perhaps most commonly used to describe those with complete transgender identity. Such people do not identify with their physical sex but instead consider themselves and live their lives as members of the opposite sex. Male-to-female transgenders identify and live as women whereas female-to-male transgenders identify and live as men. They are also sometimes called transvestites or transsexuals and differ from gay males and lesbians in that they do not usually identify as homosexual and are less common.

It is possible that in ancient India, male-to-female transgenders may have sometimes castrated themselves in order to become feminized. More likely, however, since self-mutilation is greatly discouraged in Vedic culture, men of the third sex who identified as women would have tied their genitals up tightly against the groin with a *kaupina*, a practice that is still common in southern India and also found in various other world cultures. In a similar way, female-to-male transgenders would have strapped their breasts tightly against their torsos. Nowadays, however, such people often undergo hormone treatment and transsexual operations, especially in the West. Vedic culture allowed transgender people of the third sex to live openly according to their gender identity, and this is demonstrated in the *Mahabharata* story of Arjuna as Brihannala.

Castration was not a common or accepted practice of ancient India, and mutilation of the body is discouraged in Vedic texts and considered to be in the mode of darkness.²² Its current illegal practice in northern India among the *hijra* or eunuch class can be attributed to the former centuries of Muslim rule that once encouraged the practice among servants and slaves who were homosexual by nature. In South India, largely spared from Islamic rule and influence, there is a third-gender class similar to the *hijra* known as the *jogappa*, but they do not practice castration.²³

The abused *hijra* class of modern-day India is the sad result of cruel social policies directed against people of the third sex for almost a thousand years. Rejected by foreign overlords who ridiculed and condemned any form of gender-variant behavior as intrinsically evil and unnatural, these citizens were abandoned as social outcasts. Homosexual and transgender males could join the *hijra* class by castrating themselves but were otherwise forced to marry women and pretend to live as ordinary men. Unfortunately, this stifling social policy still remains dominant in India today and has become accepted by most modern-day Hindus.

Intersex (Napumsa)

The word *napumsa* can refer to any nonreproductive person of the third sex. Sometimes it specifically implies people born with ambiguous genitalia (the intersexed). Such people may be homosexual, heterosexual, or sexually undefined by nature, and their degree of impotence can vary greatly. Those born without proper sex organs are called *nisarga* in Sanskrit and typically have a chronic physical condition caused by the biological combination of the male and female sexes known today as intersexuality. This condition, formerly known as “hermaphroditism,” leaves its members sexually dysfunctional, unusually formed, or sterile. According to Vedic texts, people are born this way, at least in some instances, due to past sinful activities.²⁴ Nevertheless, such people were respected for their *napumsaka* status and treated kindly by Vedic society. They were accepted according to their nature and typically lived within the larger third-gender community where they shared similar roles.

In modern biology, the study of intersexuality and its various conditions is relatively new. The concept of the male and female sexes combining on a biological level, however, was already known by Vedic science many thousands of years ago and corresponds with the *tritiya-prakriti* category. Most modern researchers now suspect that biology, including genetic or inborn hormonal factors, plays a significant role in determining not only a person’s physical sex but also their

sexual orientation and gender identity.²⁵ Indeed, homosexuality and transgender identity may very well be some of the most common forms of intersexuality we know, and this would explain why Sanskrit words describing people of the third sex are often used interchangeably and why homosexuals, transgenders and the intersexed are classified together.

It is a commonly held myth among some people that the third sex mentioned in Vedic texts refers only to the physically intersexed and not to homosexuals. While this view is clearly contradicted in the Kama Shastra, it is also important to note that intersex conditions are much less common within nature than homosexuality. On average, chronic intersexuality occurs in approximately one out of every 36,600 births,²⁶ and transgender identity in about one out of every three thousand. When this figure is compared to the estimated homosexual population of 5 percent or one out of every twenty births, it makes only one intersexed and twelve transgender persons for every 1,830 gays and lesbians. This disparity clearly demonstrates the predominate role of homosexuals within the third-sex category and indeed, Sanskrit lists of the third sex clearly include them among the various types cited.

Bisexuals (Kami)

The *Kama Sutra* thoroughly describes all types of sexual behavior and practices between heterosexual or first- and second-gender men and women. This is by far the major portion of the text. Within these chapters, bisexuality is occasionally mentioned. Apparently, in Vedic times, bisexuality was considered to be more of a variation for men and women who were so inclined, and not as a category of the third sex. Because bisexuals engaged in the procreative act, they did not possess the *napumsaka* nature of the third sex and other sexually neutral people. The Sanskrit word *kami* indicates that such persons were especially fond of lovemaking and that they displayed this fondness in a variety of ways. *Kami* includes people who are simultaneously attracted to both men and women or who engage in homosexuality for reasons other than natural attraction. Those who periodically switch back and forth between heterosexuality and homosexuality are sometimes known in Sanskrit as *paksha*.

Bisexual feelings within heterosexual or homosexual people usually occur at a rate of about 10 or 15 percent for either group.²⁷ These feelings may range from very mild ones that are easy to ignore, on up to stronger ones that require satisfaction. Bisexuality is a curious nature in that it can move back and forth, thus involving the question of choice, which is normally not an issue with heterosexuals or homosexuals. Heterosexuals often confuse the homosexual

nature with bisexuality, falsely considering homosexuality to be merely a “choice” or “tendency.” They are unaware that the vast majority of homosexuals, or roughly 90 percent, have absolutely no attraction, natural or otherwise, for members of the opposite sex. Bisexuals themselves are often uncertain about their own sexuality, especially during adolescence. In one survey, 35 percent of all bisexual people reported to have previously identified as gay or lesbian earlier in life.²⁸

In any case, bisexuals were typically accommodated within ordinary heterosexual society but would also frequent the third-gender communities where they were similarly welcomed. Topics discussed in the Kama Shastra pertaining to them include: men who visit transvestites or masseurs working as prostitutes, men in the company of lesbians, transvestites within the king's harem, women of the harem satisfying themselves in lieu of the king's absence, and male servants who practice homosexuality in their youth but then later become inclined towards women.²⁹

Bisexual women (*kamini*) are mentioned in the *Srimad Bhagavatam* within the chapter describing heavenly realms situated below the earth.³⁰ In those beautiful regions, within celestial gardens and accompanied by lesbians and nymphs (*pumscali*), bisexual women would entice men with a cannabis beverage and enjoy sex to their full satisfaction.

Sexual Accommodation Versus Puritanism

In the Vedic system, different standards of behavior and sexual conduct are prescribed for different classes of men.³¹ For example, the priestly order was held to high standards of conduct, followed by the government officials. Merchants and farmers were given more leniency, and ordinary workers and artisans, who made up more than half of the population, were given more leniency still. This contrasts greatly with most modern systems whereby all citizens are expected to follow the same laws. The advantage of the Vedic system is that it is able to accommodate all varieties of men within society according to their different natures.

It should be understood that the sexual behaviors described in the Kama Shastra are intended for the Vedic citizen pursuing worldly enjoyment, which is generally the aim of most people. They are not intended for those engaged in vows, austerities, and other penances that are recommended in the Vedas as a means of attaining *moksha* or liberation from material bondage. For this class of men (the spiritualists and brahmanas) only celibacy is prescribed, even within marriage, and this is considered to be the highest standard of conduct for those in the human form of life. However, Vedic culture is all encompassing and thus,

while ultimately encouraging renunciation, also realistically accommodates other standards of behavior among common men.

In modern times, laws are drawn which artificially attempt to force all citizens to adopt standards of conduct that are normally assigned to the priestly class. From the Vedic perspective, however, sexual restraint is only effective when it is voluntary. Laws were used to regulate “vice” by establishing designated areas within the city or town and prohibiting it elsewhere, such as in the brahmana or temple districts. Responsible family life and celibacy were publicly encouraged and promoted by the government, but at the same time other forms of sexual behavior were acknowledged and accommodated accordingly. These include a wide variety of activities such as prostitution, polygamy, sexually explicit art, homosexual practices, the keeping of concubines, courtesans, etc. Anyone familiar with Vedic literature will be well aware that these activities were allotted a limited space within its culture.³² They also continue to flourish even in modern times despite centuries of prohibition. The puritanical concept of total prohibition of vice is a failed, unrealistic system that causes widespread hypocrisy, disrespect for law, and injustice for many citizens. People of the third sex have especially suffered under this system.

The Third Sex and Scriptural Law

The sage Vatsyayana recognizes that sexual behavior varies from country to country. People of the southern and western regions tend to be more relaxed in their attitudes concerning sexual variation. *Adhorata* (anal intercourse), for instance, is particularly practiced by people in the southern regions.³³ While acknowledged as being occasionally practiced by all three sexes, it is not recommended for any of them, including members of the third sex, and is of course forbidden to brahmanas. Its practice is said to divert the life-air downwards and cause disease. Homosexual men who take the passive role in anal sex are specifically known in Sanskrit as *kumbhika*.

Regarding scriptural law, there are no verses in the Dharma Shastra that specifically prohibit sexual behavior among people of the third sex. Two verses admonish sexual intercourse among ordinary males (*pums-prakriti*), but the atonement set is a mere ritual bathing and applies only to brahmanas or those of the twice-born class:

A twice-born man who engages in intercourse with a male, or with a female in a cart drawn by oxen, in water, or in the daytime, shall bathe, dressed in his clothes.³⁴

(*Manusmriti* 11.175)

Another verse states:

Striking a brahmana, smelling obnoxious items such as liquor, cheating, and engaging in intercourse with a male are declared to cause the loss of caste.³⁵

(*Manusmriti* 11.68)

This loss of caste was not permanent since it could be atoned for, but it is generally accepted that unmarried brahmanas should always practice celibacy. Even married brahmanas were discouraged from having any sexual contact with their wives unless specifically engaged to produce a child in accordance with the *garbhadhana-samskara* process.³⁶

There are similarly no laws in the Dharma Shastra prohibiting sexual acts between women except for two that involve the violation of young, unmarried girls (aged eight to twelve).³⁷ In the Artha Shastra relatively minor fines are given as punishment for homosexual acts committed by twice-born males or involving young, unmarried girls. The fines for men are approximately four times the fines for women and girls.³⁸ It is also interesting to note that heterosexual crimes such as adultery and the pollution of women are punished quite harshly in the Dharma Shastra, usually by corporal punishment or death. In comparison, the same texts take little issue with homosexual behavior and seem to view it as rather harmless.

Other topics mentioned in the Dharma Shastra pertaining to people of the third sex include: their excusal from ancestral worship and oblations (*sraddha*); their omission from family inheritance (unless they had progeny); the recommendation that they, as well as women, should avoid offering food into the sacrificial fire; and that ritualistic priests (*smarta-brahmanas*) should not partake of such offerings.³⁹ Most of these injunctions relate to the fact that people of the third sex did not appease their forefathers and ancestral gods by producing progeny and were therefore treated as ascetics. Fire sacrifices and other ritualistic ceremonies are mostly intended for householders and not for renunciates or people of the neutral gender.

Sometimes, in the absence of women, heterosexual men engage in homosexual behavior against their nature with other men. This practice, known in Sanskrit as *purushopasripta*, is condemned by Vedic literature. In the *Srimad Bhagavatam* it is narrated that at the beginning of creation Lord Brahma generated the godless class of men from his buttocks who then forcibly approached him for sex.⁴⁰ To appease them, Lord Brahma created twilight in the form of a beautiful woman who completely captivated their lusty desires. This point of the story is important to note because it clearly demonstrates that the demons were not members of the

third sex. This type of apparent homosexual behavior between first-gender males, as seen in prisons for instance where there are no females available, is considered “demonic and is not for any sane male in the ordinary course of life.”⁴¹ It should not be confused with the natural homosexuality described in the Kama Shastra and practiced by people belonging to the third sex, acting according to their nature and with affection.

Men who indulge in all types of sexual intercourse without restriction are known in Sanskrit as *sarva-abhigama* (SB 5.26.21). In a verse from the *Mahabharata*, Lord Siva explains to Goddess Parvati why some men are born with severe physical handicaps such as blindness, chronic illness, or without proper sex organs (as neuters). In his answer to the latter category, Lord Siva describes the fate of heterosexual men who engage in unrestricted sex:

Those foolish males who have intercourse in the wombs of lower-class women or animals (*viyoni*) are born again as neuters.⁴²

(*Mahabharata* 13.145.52)

A similar verse from the *Narada Purana* states that first-gender males who have intercourse in non-wombs (*ayoni*) take their next births as neuters after suffering in hell. The idea is that heterosexual males (*pums*, *purusa*) have the prescribed duty in life to marry women and produce offspring, and any neglect of this duty is said to incur sin. This is not, however, the duty of men belonging to the third sex (*napums*) because they are impotent with women by nature and therefore not expected to procreate. The *Narada-smriti* (12.15) specifically states that homosexual men are “incurable” and should not be married to women. Procreation was not their prescribed duty or “dharma” under Vedic scriptural law.

Social Morality

It is said that a society can be judged by how it treats its minorities and gentler classes. In Vedic civilization the cows, the brahmanas, the women, and those belonging to the neutral gender (children, the elderly, the impotent, the celibate, and the third sex) were all offered protection as an important social principle.⁴³ In modern times, however, everything is topsy-turvy and thus these groups are now ridiculed, exploited, persecuted, and even killed, often under government sanction.

In Vedic society, people were familiar with the third sex and could normally recognize its characteristics within their offspring. Since everyone

was accommodated under the Vedic system, third-gender youths could find their place within society according to their nature and thus grow healthfully into adulthood. In modern society, however, people are afraid to even discuss third-sex issues. Parents deny that their children are gay and try to force them to be “straight.” This causes psychological harm because it is against the child’s nature and creates friction and the fear of disappointing the parents. In school, third-gender children are ostracized by others and abused both verbally and physically. During adolescence, when others are dating and learning how to form relationships, third-gender youths are isolated and forced to hide their nature out of fear or shame. Alienated and confused in this way, they contemplate suicide, and it has been found that the suicide rate for gay teens is four times higher than that of their heterosexual peers.⁴⁴ Those reaching adulthood are discriminated against in the workforce, legally denied housing, scorned when they couple, and forbidden the joys of marriage. Shunned by both their relatives and society at large, people of the third sex are forced into self-denial, often under the threat of criminal prosecution.

The most remarkable aspect of this gross mistreatment of third-sex people in modern times is that it is all being done under the banner of so-called morality and religion. These citizens are rejected as immoral and undeserving of human rights solely on the basis of their romantic and sexual nature, which many people mistakenly consider to be merely a “choice.” This type of social rejection and mistreatment is due to ignorance. Not understanding the nature of the third sex, people become suspicious and fearful of their differences. This produces bigotry, which then festers into hatred and eventually violence. The disrespect and persecution of the third sex is a clear sign of *Kali Yuga*, or the modern era of irreligion and hypocrisy described in Vedic literatures. Under the Vedic system, these citizens were symbols of good luck. They were protected and would bestow their blessings upon society. The fact that they are now mistreated and oppressed can be seen as an omen of bad times, and it is a poor measure of our humanity.

It is a common misconception among some that in *Kali Yuga* there is an increase in the ratio of homosexual people.⁴⁵ Having researched this thoroughly, I have yet to find any Vedic verse supporting this claim. Rather, in the *Vayu Purana* it is stated, “In the *Kali Yuga* there will be more women than men.”⁴⁶ The foremost symptom of the *Kali Yuga* described is the marked increase in promiscuity among people of all genders. In the Bhagavad Gita it is stated that when irreligion is prominent, women become exploited and produce unwanted progeny, which then destroy the family tradition and become harmful to society at large.⁴⁷ While homosexual promiscuity can lead to disease for those involved,

heterosexual promiscuity is ensued by disease, adultery, unwanted children, contraception, divorce, broken families, abortion, and so many social problems that directly affect the lives of other members of society. For this reason, the Dharma Shastra and other Vedic literatures strictly enforced the institution of marriage among heterosexual couples for the maintenance of the social structure. Homosexuality, on the other hand, was not taken as seriously under Vedic law and was not considered to be a social threat.

As a natural gender, the third sex has maintained a relatively fixed presence within human society since time immemorial, despite varying social policies. Indeed, its members will exist wherever there are males and females themselves, and this will be true regardless of any fear, rejection, or hate that we may project upon and cause them to suffer. For our own good, therefore, and by following the Vedic example of social morality and acceptance, we should respect and treat all living entities equally, without consideration of gender.

Maharaja Virata's Example

The perfect example concerning the proper treatment of third-sex people can be found in the behavior of Maharaja Virata. This great king was the ruler of the Matsya province in India during the time of Lord Krsna, or just over five thousand years ago. When Arjuna went to approach the king for shelter, he had assumed the form and nature of a male-to-female transgender, a member of the third sex. Donned in a woman's blouse and draped in red silk, he wore numerous ivory bangles, golden earrings, and necklaces made of coral and pearls. His hair was long and braided, and he entered the royal palace with the gait of a broad-hipped woman. According to the *Mahabharata*, his feminine attire hid his glory, and at the same time it did not. He appeared just like the full moon when eclipsed by the planet Ketu.

This portrayal of Arjuna's dress and behavior is very interesting because it clearly reveals his third-sex status. It is the same behavior found in the Kama Shastra describing male-to-female transgenders who dressed up and lived as women. Most English translations use the archaic and evasive word "eunuch" to describe Arjuna, but it should be noted that the castration of heterosexual men does not cause them to adopt the psychological nature of females and behave in such a womanly fashion.

Introducing himself as a professional dancer and musician trained by *gandharvas*, Arjuna explained that he was expert in singing, hair decoration, and "all the fine arts that a woman should know." At first, Maharaja Virata could not believe that Arjuna was actually a "half woman." He had never seen such a

person who was simultaneously so stout and strong yet feminine in behavior. He suspected that Arjuna was a great archer and even offered his kingdom to him, but Arjuna would not relent, saying, “My lord, the only string that I can twang is the string of the *vina*.” After exhibiting his skills before the court, Arjuna was tested by beautiful women to ensure that he was actually third-sexed and thus free from any lust for females. (Had he been merely a eunuch or neuter, the men of the palace could have examined him for testicles.) The king was surprised yet pleased with Arjuna’s manner of speaking and agreed that he should live among the palace women and instruct them in singing and dancing. In this way, Arjuna introduced himself as “Brihannala”⁴⁸ and soon became a great favorite within their chambers. Maharaja Virata instructed his daughter, Uttara: “Brihannala seems to be a high-born person. She does not seem to be an ordinary dancer. Treat her with the respect due to a queen. Take her to your apartments.”

It is important to note that the king addressed Brihannala as a female, accepting her transgender status. He did not ridicule or belittle her, and he most certainly did not have her sent away or arrested. He also did not suggest that Brihannala change her dress and behave as an ordinary male. Rather, he accepted her nature as it was and offered her shelter and employment within his royal palace. This kindness and respect offered by Maharaja Virata to Arjuna in his transgender form of Brihannala is exemplary and should be followed by all government officials and leaders of society.⁴⁹

The Third Sex and Vedic Astrology

In Vedic astrology, the nine planets are each assigned to one of the three genders. The Sun, Jupiter, and Mars are assigned to the masculine gender; the Moon, Venus, and Rahu are assigned to the feminine gender; and Mercury, Saturn, and Ketu are assigned to the third or neutral gender.⁵⁰ These last three planets, labeled *napumsaka*, are considered to be sexually neutral and “hermaphroditic” (possessing both male and female properties) by their influence. This neutrality refers to the fact that their natures are aloof from the business of procreating life as compared to the male and female planets. For instance, Mercury governs children, who have not yet entered puberty and do not become sexually aroused. Saturn governs the impotent and elderly, who are by nature restricted from sexual reproduction. Ketu, on the other hand, specifically concerns those who are sexually fit but have no interest in the act of sexual procreation. These include the celibate and people of the third sex.

Ancient scriptures on Vedic astrology emphasize Mercury as most indicative of the third gender although some texts stress Saturn or Ketu.⁵¹ Mercury refers to

gender-variant people who are clever and multi-talented in the various arts and sciences. They are good managers, young in spirit and highly competent in their fields. Saturn, on the other hand, refers to those who are less fortunate in life, solitary and disparaged by society for their impotence. The planet Ketu is viewed as a *moksha karaka*, or indicator for enlightenment, and its third-gender natives often become psychics, ascetics, monks, nuns, and so on.

Some of the more common indicators of female homosexuality in Vedic astrology include having a masculine ascendant and Moon sign, or Venus in the sign of Virgo.⁵² For men, having Mars or Saturn in the seventh house is a common indicator.⁵³ There are also twenty-seven *nakshatras* or stars that are important in Vedic astrology. Of these, Mrgashira, Mula, and Satabhisa are assigned to the third or neutral gender.⁵⁴

According to Vedic science, the intrinsic nature or sex of the living entity is determined at the moment of conception, not at birth, and for this reason a person's conception or *adhana* chart determines whether they are male, female, or third sex. This is related in the Dharma Shastra:

A male child is produced by a greater quantity of male seed, a female child by the prevalence of the female; if both are equal, a third-sex child (*napumsa*) or boy and girl twins are produced; if either are weak or deficient in quantity, a failure of conception results.⁵⁵

(*Manusmriti* 3.49)

This verse is very significant because it specifically states that the third sex is biologically determined during the earliest moments of conception, a statement also confirmed in Sanskrit medical texts such as the *Sushruta Samhita*. In other words, people of the third sex are born that way, as a fact of nature. They do not “become” third sex later on due to external reasons or causes.

Reproductive Balance and Nature

The mechanisms of biological variation from the normal male and female construct always involve alterations in the standard developmental plan. This is not to say, however, that such alterations are biological “errors” or “mistakes” of nature or God. People commonly assume that every member of human society should be directly involved in the process of sexual reproduction, but we can observe that throughout nature this is quite often not the case. In many highly socialized species, nonreproductive members play unique and important roles. For instance, in a bee colony, the queen alone is the reproductive female while worker

bees are all “third sex” or nonreproductive and sterile. In many mammalian social units, one “alpha male” will typically dominate all of the other males until they either leave the group or submit to him and stop trying to mate with his harem. The remaining males essentially become “eunuchs” and a part of his harem so to speak, enjoying his protection. When these submissive males are examined, they are found to have experienced an actual lowering of their own testosterone levels, and their very survival may depend on this. Such individual and group mechanisms found within nature are specifically orchestrated to sustain the species most effectively.

In addition to the sterile and nonreproductive creatures found in nature, many animals also display homosexual behavior and same-sex pairing. This aspect of animal behavior has been well documented in a wide range of species. In some varieties of birds, for instance, the occurrence of same-sex pairing dramatically increases from its normal baseline under pressures related to overcrowding or environmental duress. Because these same-sex pairs do not reproduce, the population increase is slowed or even reduced without massive starvation or die-off. At the same time, the individual animal’s instincts to pair, nest, and mate are all taken care of. Is this type of same-sex pairing with the animal kingdom a “mistake,” or is it simply a natural adaptation of the species to sustain itself in the most effective way possible?

Within the microcosm, specific mechanisms that account for sterility and homosexual behavior in animals may appear to be “disorders,” “defects,” or “errors,” but if we step back from the proximal causes and view the reproductive health of the species as a whole, and how it changes under different conditions over time in various local and regional environments, then we can see how the nonreproductive “third sex” actually plays an important role in the wider scheme of things. Nature or God does not prohibit such apparent errors because in fact they are not errors at all. In the larger picture, these variations serve a purpose whether we, as humans, are aware of it or not. Human beings are not animals, but our bodies are made of the same elements and obey all of the same basic rules of chemistry and biology. We should stop thinking of our species as being somehow categorically beyond the laws of nature and God. There are reasons and mechanisms for everything in nature, and by understanding them properly we can learn to address human variance with intelligence instead of fear. The Vedic recognition of a nonreproductive “third” gender within human society indicates that ancient India was cognizant of this subtle but significant aspect of biology.

In direct contrast to the three-gender system found in nature is the rigid, artificially imposed “two-gender” one commonly seen in many of today’s cultures. In societies where only reproductive males and females are acknowledged and

valued, there is no room for a nonreproductive third sex. People who do not produce offspring are viewed as failures and delegated to the lowest ranks of human society. Homosexuals and transgenders are pressured to assume heterosexual roles against their nature and intersex babies are forcibly assigned male or female identities through ghastly “corrective” surgeries. Such artificial attempts to negate the third sex against the arrangement of nature and God can be devastating for the individuals involved.

In conclusion, it is not necessary for each and every member of human society to engage in sexual reproduction. Human worth is not measured only in terms of fertility. While homosexual and intersex conditions affect a person’s reproduction and socialization in species like man, they don’t usually affect the individual’s viability. Nonprocreative persons account for a vast number of otherwise healthy, functional individuals who should be encouraged to engage themselves constructively in ways appropriate for them. In Vedic culture, people of the third sex traditionally contributed to society in a variety of useful ways. They utilized their extra time in cultivating the finer arts, sciences, and spirituality and were involved as a part of the extended family by serving and caring for others. The Vedic social system did not neglect or exclude people of the third sex, but rather it accepted and engaged them according to their nature.

Celibacy and Spiritual Life

The practice of celibacy, or voluntary restraint from sexual activity, is an important and much-revered aspect of spiritual life within Vedic religion.⁵⁶ Its practice is said to conserve the stamina of the body, strengthen mental resolve, and direct the life-air upward. It also helps to minimize bodily and worldly demands in order to fully immerse oneself in spiritual rapture. Celibacy is prescribed for the priestly class, the elderly, and for those engaged in study. It is highly recommended for sincere souls who are truly eager to make advancement in spiritual life. According to Vedic tradition, the practice of celibacy does not necessarily have to be lifelong. It may also be practiced within limited frames of time such as one year, one month, one fortnight, etc., according to one’s vow, and much benefit can still be reaped.

One of the advantages for people of the third sex is that the practice of celibacy often comes easily for them. This is due to their lack of attraction for the opposite sex and the subsequent urge to couple, produce offspring, and engage in family life. It can be observed that the ratio of gay and lesbian people living within temples and monasteries is generally higher than it is within the ordinary

population. Many cultures of the world specifically encourage and train their third-gender children to enter into the priestly order.

From a practical point of view, however, it is important to note that most people will not be interested or able to engage themselves in strict, lifelong celibacy, especially during youth.⁵⁷ Such people should not be unnecessarily discouraged or rejected. Those who desire spiritual advancement are advised to avoid sexual indulgence as far as possible, according to their ability. For members of the third sex, this may be accomplished in various ways such as minimizing sexual conduct, committing to a single partner, refraining from practices such as *adhorata*, etc.

It is the duty of the brahmanas to encourage and engage all members of society in the many spiritual practices recommended in the Vedas. This includes people of the third sex. No one is to be excluded or discouraged from these practices because of class, character, social standing, gender, race, etc. These practices gradually purify the heart and remove all bad, unwanted qualities. Their importance exceeds and corrects all personal disqualifications. They promote spiritual upliftment for society as a whole and awaken true love for God in His multitude of forms such as Krsna, Rama, Vishnu, Narayana, etc. These practices include: the chanting of the holy names of God, reading important scriptures like the Bhagavad Gita and *Srimad Bhagavatam*, hearing from self-realized souls, accepting a bona fide spiritual master or guru, viewing the temple Deity, offering gifts and service to the temple Deity, watering the Tulasi plant, visiting holy places of pilgrimage, bathing in sacred rivers like the Ganges, observing festivals connected with the Lord, offering prayers to the Lord, always remembering the Lord, and considering the Lord to be one's best friend or most dearly beloved.

The Appearance of Lord Caitanya

Lord Caitanya is revealed as an avatar (incarnation) of God in the Vedic scriptures, and He appeared in this world in Mayapura, India, in 1486 A.D.⁵⁸ His mission was to deliver the downtrodden souls of the *Kali Yuga* by introducing the chanting of the holy names of God or "Hare Krsna." Although appearing in a male form, He displayed the highest sentiments of love for God by accepting the mood of the supreme Goddess, known as Radhika. This divine combination of supreme God and supreme Goddess in the form of Lord Caitanya is considered to be among the most confidential teachings of Vedic literature.⁵⁹

As He appeared in this world, apparently just like an ordinary child, the full moon was rising above the plains of the sacred Ganges River, accompanied by Ketu, in the form of a lunar eclipse. In all places, the holy names of God were

resounded again and again. The following day, according to custom, all of the area residents crowded around to see the newborn child. Sages and rishis were aware that a great event had just taken place. Many residents brought precious gifts and the father, Jagannatha Misra, also gave profusely in charity to the brahmanas and the poor. Not least among the guests were the dancers of the third-gender community known as the *nartaka*,⁶⁰ who happily performed before the Lord. These dancers were especially used for religious occasions. Historically, people of the third sex have always played a prominent role in the arts and entertainment, not just in India but also around the world. All of these transvestites from the *napumsaka* or gay community were devotees of the Lord, and they prayed to God to bless the child and grant Him a long life, as was the custom. Jagannatha Misra then gave them some precious jewelry and beautiful silks, and they continued with their dancing and singing of Hare Krsna.⁶¹

The *nartaka* dancers are also mentioned in the *Srimad Bhagavatam* during the pastime of Lord Krsna's entrance into Dvaraka. There, along with the dramatic actors, artists, poets, and prostitutes, these dancers enthusiastically performed their art as an offering to the Lord. In reply, "the almighty Lord greeted everyone present by bowing His head, exchanging greetings, embracing, shaking hands, looking and smiling, giving assurances and awarding benediction, even to the lowest in rank."⁶²

These stories, and others such as the year spent by Arjuna as a transvestite during exile, are significant because they demonstrate that not only were people of the third sex present hundreds and even thousands of years ago, but they were present within the Lord's transcendental pastimes as well. It shows that from the Vedic perspective, God does not discriminate against gays but on the contrary welcomes their service and devotion, just as He does for all.

Another important point to note is that people of the third sex were utilized to bestow blessings. Blessings can only be bestowed by people who are auspicious, yet transvestites were well known for their homosexual behavior and often served as prostitutes. The answer to this apparent anomaly is that since they belonged to the third gender, transvestites were considered sexually neutral. In Vedic literature, the strongest bond within this material world is said to be the attraction between man and woman. Combined, they create so many attachments such as home, property, children, grandchildren, etc., all of which entangle the living entity in *samsara*, the cycle of repeated birth and death that is perpetuated through the procreative process. People of the third sex were considered to be aloof from this attachment, particularly gay males. They typically did not engage in procreation or family life, and this was a special quality that made their status unique within civilized Vedic culture.

The traditionally rigid male and female roles as we know them today are consistently broken and altered throughout the Vedic literatures by humans, demigods, and even the supreme Lord Himself. Lord Siva has a very popular half-man, half-woman form known as Ardhanarisvara . . .⁶³ Cross-dressing is quite common among Lord Krsna's most intimate cowherd boyfriends, the *priya-narma-sakhas*, who act as go-betweens in His loving affairs with Sri Radha . . .⁶⁴ An important ritual at the Jagannatha Temple in Orissa involves a sequence in which a young man dressed in female attire seduces Baladeva, the elder brother of Lord Krsna . . .⁶⁵ These countless stories and pastimes are far too numerous to mention herein, but their lighthearted and flexible approach to both gender and gender roles is admirable and well worth noting.

Conclusion

It is important that we appreciate a world filled with variety. There will never be just one race, one gender, one color, one sound, or one anything. The Vedas describe this material world as a reflection of an infinitely beautiful, perfect, and eternal spiritual world that has even more variety than we can imagine. We are all a part of this variegatedness, and we all have our own unique role to play. It is therefore pointless to argue over who is higher, lower, more important, less important, etc.

You may ask someone, "Why are you gay?" and that someone may reply, "Why are you a man or a woman?" In the material world, we are all trying to enjoy in so many ways, and that may be one answer. Spiritually, however, we all have our own individual, intrinsic nature, and part of that nature is that we all serve God (Krsna) in the mood of a particular gender. That loving mood is eternal and full of unlimited bliss.

Endnotes

- ¹ Alain Danielou, *The Complete Kama Sutra* 1.1.5-8.
- ² Among scholars there is some diversity of opinion as to the compilation date of the Kama Shastra by the sage Svetaketu. Some place it just prior to the beginning of the *Kali Yuga*, while others date it to the eighth century BC. Svetaketu is an ancient sage mentioned in several of the Upanisads. (See *The Complete Kama Sutra*, p. 3.)
- ³ Alain Danielou, *The Complete Kama Sutra* 1.1.13, 14 and p. 4.
- ⁴ There are many examples of these three divisions of gender in Vedic literature. See *Srimad Bhagavatam* by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (4.17.26, 8.3.24, 4.28.61, and 10.1, notes); *The Complete Kama Sutra* by Alain

Danielou (2.9.1); *Beneath a Vedic Sky* by William R. Levacy (p. 363) and *The Laws of Manu* by G. Buhler (p. 84, *Manusmriti* 3.49).

- ⁵ These five types of people are assigned to the neutral gender according to all Vedic astrological texts. This is based upon their non-procreative status.
- ⁶ Alain Danielou, *The Complete Kama Sutra* p. 10.
- ⁷ There is some diversity of opinion as to the exact percentage of gays within modern society, what to speak of within ancient India. Although the Kinsey studies are often cited as documenting that 10 percent of the U.S. population is gay, most research with probability samples now place that figure at 3 to 6 percent, with somewhat fewer females (N. California Community Research Group, University of California at Davis.) As far as ancient India is concerned, it can at least be observed that out of the thirty-six chapters of the *Kama Sutra*, two are devoted to addressing homosexuality, which is just over 5 percent of the text.
- ⁸ Kamala Subramaniam, *Mahabharata*, pp. 260-261.
- ⁹ Arvind Sharma, *Homosexuality and Hinduism*, p. 48. “The limited practice of castration in India raises another point significant for the rest of the discussion, namely, whether rendering a word such as *kliba* as *eunuch* regularly is correct . . .”
- ¹⁰ Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai, *Same-Sex Love in India*, p. 109.
- ¹¹ *Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language*, p. 211. [<Gr. “eune,” bed + “echein,” have]
- ¹² See part 2, chapter 9 of *The Complete Kama Sutra* by Alain Danielou.
- ¹³ Alain Danielou, *The Complete Kama Sutra*, p. 6.
- ¹⁴ Arvind Sharma, *Homosexuality and Hinduism*, p. 51.
- ¹⁵ Alain Danielou, *The Complete Kama Sutra* 2.9.1.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.* 2.8.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.* 2.9.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.* 2.9.2.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.* 2.9.6.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.* 2.9.36.
- ²¹ *Ibid.* p. 227.
- ²² Self-mutilation as a form of penance is condemned by Lord Krsna in the *Bhagavad-Gita As It Is* 17.19 and by Lord Siva in *Krsna: The Supreme Personality of Godhead*, Vol. II, pp. 425-427 by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.
- ²³ Serena Nanda, *Neither Man Nor Woman: The Hijras of India*, p. 160.
- ²⁴ *Mahabharata* 13.145.52.
- ²⁵ The American Psychological Association, *Public Interest Report* (revised version, July, 1998).

- ²⁶ This average is based on statistics provided by The Intersex Society of North America, taken from an article by Brown University professor, Anne Fausto-Sterling, reviewing medical statistics from 1955-1998.
- ²⁷ These estimates are somewhat unclear due to the wide range of bisexual feelings themselves. The Kinsey study reported that 15 to 25 percent of women and 33 to 46 percent of men reported experiencing at least some degree of same-sex attraction during their lives.
- ²⁸ This survey was conducted by Dr. Ron C. Fox, a psychotherapist from San Francisco.
- ²⁹ This latter example is given in *Jayamangala* by Yashodhara (*The Complete Kama Sutra*, p. 191.)
- ³⁰ His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Srimad Bhagavatam* 5.24.16.
- ³¹ Instances of this can be found throughout Vedic literature, especially in the Dharma Shastra such as *Manusmriti*, *Manu-sambhita*, etc.
- ³² There are many examples throughout Vedic literature. See *Srimad Bhagavatam*, 1.11.19, and *Krsna: The Supreme Personality of Godhead*, chapter 48 by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada for examples concerning prostitution and sexually explicit art.
- ³³ Alain Danielou, *The Complete Kama Sutra* 2.6.49.
- ³⁴ G. Buhler, trans., *The Laws of Manu*, p. 466 (*Manusmriti* 11.175.)
- ³⁵ Ibid. p. 444. (*Manusmriti* 11.68.)
- ³⁶ See His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada's *Srimad Bhagavatam* 1.4.25, purport.
- ³⁷ G. Buhler, trans., *The Laws of Manu* p. 466. (*Manusmriti*, 8.369-370.)
- ³⁸ Arvind Sharma, *Homosexuality and Hinduism*, p. 58.
- ³⁹ G. Buhler, trans., *The Laws of Manu* (*Manusmriti* 3.150, 9.201 and 203, 4.205 and 206) respectively.
- ⁴⁰ His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Srimad Bhagavatam* 3.20.18-37.
- ⁴¹ Ibid. 3.20.26 purport.
- ⁴² *Mahabharata* 13.145.52.
- ⁴³ The following verses support the principle of protecting people of the third gender, although neuters, the celibate and the third sex are not specifically mentioned. See His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada's *Srimad Bhagavatam* 1.14.41 and 1.8.5, purport. There is also the example of Maharaja Virata, which is described later.
- ⁴⁴ *The American Journal of Public Health* (June 2001). In research conducted by George Washington University, the Center for Applied Behavioral and Evaluation Research in Washington, D.C., and the Massachusetts Department of Education, gay students

were about four times as likely to have attempted suicide as straight students (36.1 percent versus 9.4 percent), and reported threats or assaults almost five times more often (28.3 percent versus 6.9 percent).

- ⁴⁵ *Srimad Bhagavatam* 12.3.37 is often cited as a reference to homosexuality in *Kali Yuga*, but this verse refers to married men who have intimate association with the sisters and brothers of their wives—a clear reference to bisexuality and not homosexuality.
- ⁴⁶ D. R. Patil, *Cultural History from the Vayu Purana*, p. 75.
- ⁴⁷ His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Bhagavad-Gita As It Is* 1.40-43.
- ⁴⁸ The name “Brihannala” can comically be translated as “big rod.”
- ⁴⁹ This narration of Maharaja Virata’s example is adapted from Kamala Subramaniam’s *Mahabharata* and Krishna Dharma’s *Mahabharata: The Greatest Spiritual Epic of All Time*.
- ⁵⁰ See William R. Levacy’s, *Beneath a Vedic Sky*, p. 363, and also B. V. Raman’s *Astrology for Beginners*, p. 6, where the third gender is listed as “hermaphrodite.”
- ⁵¹ B.V. Raman, *Astrology for Beginners*, p. 7 and William R. Levacy, *Beneath a Vedic Sky*, p. 363.
- ⁵² William R. Levacy, *Beneath a Vedic Sky*, pp. 62-63.
- ⁵³ James T. Braha, *Ancient Hindu Astrology for the Modern Western Astrologer*, pp. 148 and 152.
- ⁵⁴ William R. Levacy, *Beneath A Vedic Sky*, pp. 202-203.
- ⁵⁵ *Manusmriti* 3.49.
- ⁵⁶ His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Bhagavad-Gita As It Is* 8.11.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.* Purport.
- ⁵⁸ See His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada’s *Teachings of Lord Caitanya* or *Sri Caitanya-caritamrta*.
- ⁵⁹ This is elaborately explained in His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada’s *Sri Caitanya-caritamrta*, Adi-lila chapter 4 entitled “The Confidential Reasons for the Appearance of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.”
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 1.13.106. The purport also offers a short description of the “eunuch” class.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.* Adi-lila Chapter 13 entitled “The Advent of Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.” There is also an audiotape by His Divine Grace on this pastime produced by The Bhaktivedanta Tape Ministry entitled *Outline of Lord Caitanya Play, Part One*, Tape no. 67—002, San Francisco, April 5, 1967.
- ⁶² His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Srimad Bhagavatam* 1.11.20-22.

- ⁶³ Devdutt Pattanaik, *The Man Who Was a Woman and Other Queer Tales from Hindu Lore*, p. 125. This book contains a treasure trove of stories demonstrating just how mutable sex and gender identity are within Vedic/Hindu texts.
- ⁶⁴ His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *The Nectar of Devotion*, pp. 332 and 387-388.
- ⁶⁵ Serena Nanda, *Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India*, p. 22.



CHAPTER TWO

VEDIC THIRD-GENDER TYPES AND TERMS

The following Sanskrit lists from the *Caraka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Sabda-kalpa-druma* and *Narada-smriti* define various types of men who are impotent with women as described in Vedic literature. These lists refute the common misconception held by some that words such as *napumsa*, *kliba*, etc. cannot refer to homosexuals.

The Eight Types of Napumsa

In a chapter of the *Caraka Samhita* (4.2) discussing embryological development and exceptional births, eight types of *napumsa* are listed and defined as follows:

- 1) *Dviretas*—he has both male and female “seed.”
- 2) *Pavanendriya*—he has no discharge of semen.
- 3) *Samskaravahi*—he is aroused according to previous life impressions.
- 4) *Narashandha*—his manhood is completely destroyed.
- 5) *Narishandha*—her womanhood is completely destroyed.
- 6) *Vakri*—his penis is severely curved or deformed.
- 7) *Irshyabhirati*—he is aroused only by the jealous feelings of seeing other men in the act of sexual union.
- 8) *Vatika*—he is born without testicles.

The *Caraka Samhita* is an ancient Vedic medical text put into writing sometime around 200 B.C. According to this text, all eight types of *napumsa* are produced

by various factors such as previous life impressions, an equal “seed” conception, parental conditions and certain afflictions within the womb. Two other types of *napumsa* are mentioned in Chapter 4.4: the *varta*, whose female “seed” is afflicted in utero, and the *trnaputrika*, whose male “seed” is similarly afflicted. All ten types are described as inborn and incurable. According to Cakrapani Datta, an important eleventh-century A.D. commentator on the *Caraka Samhita*, the *samskaravahi* type includes the five *kliba* described by Sushruta and listed below.

The Five Types of Kliba

In a chapter of the *Sushruta Samhita* (3.2) discussing the conception of progeny, five types of *kliba* are listed and described as follows:

- 1) *Asekya*—he is aroused only by swallowing a man’s semen.
- 2) *Saugandhika*—he is aroused only by smelling the genitals of other men.
- 3) *Kumbhika*—he takes the passive role in anal sex.
- 4) *Irshyaka*—he is aroused only by the jealous feelings of seeing other men in the act of sexual union.
- 5) *Shandha*—he has the qualities and behavior of a woman.

The *Sushruta Samhita* is an ancient Vedic medical text put into writing sometime around 600 B.C. All five types of *kliba* are described as inborn, due to an equal “seed” conception caused by various conditions of the parents. The *Sushruta Samhita* distinguishes the *shandha* from the other four in that the latter are said to possess semen and male characteristics whereas the *shandha* is completely devoid of these. It also mentions that the first four types of *kliba* achieve erections through drinking the semen of other men (3.2.44-45) and describes a type of female *shandha* with the qualities of a man (3.2.43). In the *Sabda-kalpa-druma*, the meaning of the word *shandha* is expanded into twenty different types and cited below.

The Twenty Types of Shandha

The following list from the *Sabda-kalpa-druma* Sanskrit-Sanskrit dictionary describes the twenty types of impotent men known in Sanskrit as *shandha*. The key criterion of a *shandha* is that he is sexually impotent with women, whether in terms of desire, performance or fertility. As evident from this list, a *shandha* can refer to many different types of men. Some are impotent with women by nature (*tritiya-prakriti*) such as the intersexed, homosexuals and transgenders, while

others are ordinary males who have lost their potency due to various physical or psychological afflictions. The term *shandha* is therefore much more inclusive than widely believed and any surrounding context should be carefully considered whenever an interpretation is rendered. Simplistic definitions such as “eunuch,” “neuter,” or “sexless” may not always be accurate and in many cases completely incorrect.

Under the entry *shandha*, the *Sabda-kalpa-druma* dictionary quotes the *Narada-smriti*, which lists fourteen different types of men who are impotent with women. Then it quotes the *Kamatantra*, which lists twenty different kinds. Then it quotes Vacaspati’s fourteenth-century A.D. *Smriti-ratnavali* wherein the twenty types of *shandha* are listed and defined as follows:

- 1) *Nisarga*—he is born without proper genitals.
- 2) *Baddha*—he has no testicles.
- 3) *Paksha*—he is periodically impotent with women (every other fortnight, month, etc.).
- 4) *Kilaka*—he penetrates the woman using another man or some instrument.
- 5) *Sapadi*—he is unable to enjoy sex due to the power of a curse.
- 6) *Stabdha*—his penis is paralyzed, with no sperm.
- 7) *Irshyaka*—he is aroused only by the jealous feelings of seeing other men in the act of sexual union.
- 8) *Sevyaka*—he is sexually enjoyed by other men.
- 9) *Aksipta*—his semen is deficient or does not discharge properly.
- 10) *Moghabija*—his attempts to unite with the woman are fruitless.
- 11) *Salina*—he is too shy or inhibited to even approach women.
- 12) *Anyapati*—he copulates with things or beings other than women.
- 13) *Mukhebhaga*—he performs oral sex on men.
- 14) *Vataretas*—he has no discharge of semen.
- 15) *Kumbhika*—he takes the passive role in anal sex.
- 16) *Panda*—his penis does not respond to (the woman’s) touch.
- 17) *Nasta*—he is without sperm due to disease.
- 18) *Asekya*—he is aroused only by swallowing a man’s semen.
- 19) *Saugandhika*—he is aroused only by smelling the genitals of other men.
- 20) *Shandha*—he has the qualities of a woman; behaving and talking as they do, he may castrate himself.

The *Smriti-ratnavali* is a summary of Vedic law codes written by Ramanatha Vidya Vacaspati in the fourteenth century A.D. Also known as the *Daya Rahasya*, this text is still recognized as an important law reference in many parts of

Bengal. The *Sabda-kalpa-druma* Sanskrit-Sanskrit dictionary, which quotes the *Smriti-ratnavali* in regard to the twenty types of *shandha*, was compiled in the early nineteenth century by a team of Bengali scholars under the commission of a local king named Raj Radhakantha Dev. The well-known Sanskrit dictionaries we use today, such as the St. Petersburg (Bohtlingk) and Monier-Williams, relied heavily upon this text and would not even have been possible without it. Typically, the European dictionaries edited, dismissed or perhaps misunderstood virtually all of the entries referring to homosexuality, due to the influence of their own Victorian culture.

Since the account in the *Kamatantra* ends by stating *klibani vimsatih* (these are the twenty *klibas*), the author takes *kliba* to be the same as *shandha*. The eleventh-century lexicographer, Hemacandra, similarly equates *shandha* with *napumsaka*. In other words, at least these writers believed that the words *kliba* and *napumsaka* could mean any of the things that the word *shandha* meant. In his important twelfth-century commentary on the *Kama Sutra* known as *Jayamangala*, the great scholar, Yashodhara, states that the homosexual men described in the *Kama Sutra* as *tritiya-prakriti* are also known as *napumsaka*. Similarly, the fourteen types of *panda* described in the *Narada-smriti* closely reflect those mentioned under *shandha* and are listed below.

The Fourteen Types of Panda

A fourth list of men who are impotent with women appears in the twelfth chapter of the *Narada-smriti* entitled “The Union of Woman and Man.” Within that chapter, men who are unfit for marriage due to impotence (*panda*) are listed and defined as follows:

- 1) *Nisarga*—he is born without proper genitals.
- 2) *Vadhri*—his testicles have been cut out.
- 3) *Paksha*—he is periodically impotent with women (every other fortnight, month, etc.).
- 4) *Abhisapad-guroh*—he is impotent due to the guru’s curse.
- 5) *Rogat*—he is diseased (which may pass).
- 6) *Deva-krodhat*—he is impotent due to a god’s anger.
- 7) *Irshyaka*—he is aroused only by the jealous feelings of seeing other men in the act of sexual union.
- 8) *Sevyaka*—he is sexually enjoyed by other men.
- 9) *Vataretas*—he has no discharge of semen.
- 10) *Mukhebhaga*—he performs oral sex on men.

- 11) *Aksipta*—his semen is deficient or does not discharge properly.
- 12) *Moghabija*—his attempts to unite with the woman are fruitless.
- 13) *Salina*—he is too shy or inhibited to even approach women.
- 14) *Anyapati*—he copulates with things or beings other than women.

The *Narada-smriti* is a Dharma Shastra text put into writing sometime before the first century B.C. Of the fourteen types of *panda* listed, the *Narada-smriti* (12.14-18) declares the following seven as incurable and unfit for marriage: *nisarga*, *vadhri*, *irshyaka*, *sevyaka*, *vataretas*, *mukhebhaga* and *anyapati*. It further declares the remaining seven as possibly curable: *paksha*, *abhisapad-guroh*, *rogat*, *deva-krodhat*, *aksipta*, *moghabija* and *salina*.

The Ten Types of *Nastriya*

Women who are impotent with men are mentioned less frequently in Vedic literature. Nevertheless, at least ten different types of *nastriya* or third-gender women can be found in various Sanskrit texts and are listed below.

- 1) *Svairini*—she engages in lovemaking with other women.
- 2) *Kamini*—she engages in lovemaking with both men and women.
- 3) *Stripumsa*—she is masculine in behavior and form.
- 4) *Shandhi*—she is averse to men and has no menstruation or breasts.
- 5) *Narishandha*—her womanhood is completely destroyed.
- 6) *Varta*—her female “seed” is afflicted in utero.
- 7) *Sucivaktra* or *Sucimukhi*—she has an extremely small, undeveloped vagina.
- 8) *Vandhya*—her menstruation is absent or suppressed.
- 9) *Moghapuspa*—her attempts to unite with the man are fruitless.
- 10) *Putraghni*—she has repeated miscarriages.

The *svairini* is described in the *Kama Sutra* (2.8); the *kamini* in the *Bhagavata Purana* (5.24.16); the *stripumsa* in the *Mahabharata* and various astrological texts; the *shandhi*, *sucivaktra*, *vandhya* and *putraghni* in the *Sushruta Samhita* (6.38); the *shandhi*, *narishandha*, *varta*, *sucimukhi* and *putraghni* in the *Caraka Samhita* (4.2; 4.4; 6.30), and the *moghapuspa* in various Sanskrit lexicons. The first three types are physically capable of bearing children whereas the remaining seven are infertile.

General Terms

Throughout the Vedic canon we can find at least eight general and forty specific third-gender terms, which are listed below. The first two entries refer to ordinary males and females and are cited for comparison.

(1) *Pums-prakriti*—*he is completely male by nature.*

The word *pums* or *purusha* refers to first-gender men with complete male organs, hormones, viable reproductive systems, masculine identities and heterosexual orientation. They further possess the male characteristics of strong muscles, bodily hairs, Adam's apple, deep voice, a male torso and so on. Their nature, behavior and mannerisms are predominantly masculine and they are sexually aroused by females. The *pums* or *purusha* type of man typically marries a woman, successfully impregnates her and produces progeny. According to the *Sushruta* and *Caraka Samhitas*, a *pums* or male child is produced when the male "seed" or *sukra* (reproductive fluids and hormones) predominates at the time of conception. This occurs when the father is sexually healthy, greater in passion and engages in *upasripta* or normal copulation (the "man on top" position).

(2) *Stri-prakriti*—*she is completely female by nature.*

The word *stri* or *prakriti* refers to second-gender women with complete female organs, hormones, viable reproductive systems, feminine identities and heterosexual orientation. They further possess the female characteristics of enlarged breasts and wide hips, slighter muscles, less bodily hairs, a higher voice and so on. Their nature, behavior and mannerisms are predominantly feminine and they are sexually aroused by males. The *stri* or *prakriti* type of woman typically marries a man, is impregnated by him and gives birth to children. According to the *Sushruta* and *Caraka Samhitas*, a *stri* or female child is produced when the female "seed" or *sonita* (reproductive fluids and hormones) predominates at the time of conception. This occurs when the mother is sexually healthy, greater in passion and engages in *upasripta* or normal copulation.

(3) *Tritiya-prakriti*—*he or she has both male and female qualities by nature.*

The word *tritiya-prakriti* refers to third-gender men and women with various combinations of the two natures described above. It is especially used in the *Kama Sutra* to describe men and women who are homosexual or transgender by nature. Such people appear as male or female and assume masculine or feminine identities but are impotent in terms of having no desire for the opposite sex. Vedic texts assert that a third-gender child is produced when the "seed" of both parents is equal

in quantity and quality at the time of conception. This can occur naturally or it may be due to various conditions of the parents. For instance, when the “seed” of both parents is equally dominant, a bisexual child is produced; when *citrarata* or exceptional types of copulation are employed, a homosexual or transgender child is likely, and if the “seed” is afflicted, the child will be sterile or intersexed.

(4) *Napumsa—he is deficient in manhood.*

The word *napumsa* or *napumsaka* refers to third-gender men with a critical deficiency in any of the male traits. It is used in Vedic literature to denote men who are “not fully male,” impotent with women, effeminate, sterile, without male organs or otherwise of questionable manhood. In his *Jayamangala* commentary, Yashodhara states that the homosexual men addressed in the *Kama Sutra* as *tritiya-prakriti* are also known as *napumsaka*. The *Caraka Samhita* (4.2.17-21) lists eight specific types of *napumsa* that include the intersexed, homosexuals and transgenders. A *napumsa* child is produced when the “seed” of both parents is equal in quantity and quality at the time of conception. Additional factors such as previous life impressions, parental conditions and various afflictions within the womb further differentiate such third-gender offspring.

(5) *Nastriya—she is deficient in womanhood.*

The word *nastriya* refers to third-gender women with a critical deficiency in any of the female traits. It is used in Vedic literature to denote women who are “not fully female,” impotent with men, masculine, barren, without female organs or otherwise of questionable womanhood. At least ten different types of *nastriya* are mentioned throughout Sanskrit texts and said to be produced when the “seed” of both parents is equal in quantity and quality at the time of conception. Additional factors such as previous life impressions, parental conditions and various afflictions within the womb further differentiate such third-gender offspring.

(6) *Kliba—he is impotent with women by nature.*

The word *kliba* or *klibaka* is the most common third-gender term found in Vedic literature. It can refer to any type of impotent man but often specifically describes those who are effeminate or homosexual by nature. *Kliba* is frequently used to disparage men considered weak, cowardly, unmanly, effete, of questionable manhood and so on. The *Sushruta Samhita* (3.2.38-45) lists five specific types whereas the *Kamatantra* equates the term to any of the twenty *shandha*. The five *kliba* cited by Sushruta are described in terms of homosexual, bisexual and transgender behavior. They are produced according to previous life impressions and an equal “seed” conception caused by various conditions of the parents.

(7) *Panda*—he is impotent with women for various reasons.

The term *panda* or *pandaka* refers to many types of men who are impotent with women for various reasons. The *Narada-smriti* (12.8-18) lists fourteen specific types and describes all of their different symptoms and means of testing. Of these, half are declared incurable and include homosexual and intersex types whereas the remaining seven are considered treatable. In the *Smriti-ratnavali's* list of the twenty types of *shandha*, the *panda* is specifically defined as a man whose penis does not respond to the touch of a woman. In any case, if the *panda* remains impotent with women he is not considered marriageable by the *Narada-smriti*.

(8) *Shandha*—he has the qualities and behavior of a woman.

The term *shandha* or *shandhaka* is also commonly found in Vedic literature. It can refer to any type of impotent man but often specifically describes male-to-female transgenders. Both the *Sushruta Samhita* (3.2.42) and *Smriti-ratnavali* state that the *shandha* talks, walks, laughs and otherwise behaves like a woman. The latter text lists twenty different types of *shandha* whereas the former mentions two basic characteristics: behaving like a woman and having no semen or male qualities. The *Caraka Samhita* (4.2.17) similarly mentions two types of *shandha*: the *narashandha* whose manhood is completely destroyed and the *vatika-shandha* who is born without testicles. The *shandha* is produced according to previous life impressions and an equal “seed” conception caused when the parents assume the *purushayita* or “woman on top” position during intercourse. Those born without semen or testicles are furthermore afflicted by the life-airs in utero.

(9) *Svairini*—she engages in lovemaking with other women.

The word *svairini* is the most common term used for homosexual women or lesbians in the *Kama Sutra* (2.8) but can refer to any type of “independent woman” whatsoever. The *Narada-smriti* (12.49-52) mentions four basic types: 1) the wife who leaves her husband; 2) the widow who leaves her family; 3) the foreigner or slave, and 4) a woman who has been raped. In regard to the *svairini* who is homosexual by nature, she is produced according to previous life impressions and an equal “seed” conception caused by various conditions of the parents.

(10) *Stripumsa*—she is masculine in behavior and form.

The word *stripumsa* refers to many different types of women who are masculine in behavior and form. Such women are strong-willed, averse to men and believed to have been males in their former lives. The *stripumsa* is mentioned in Vedic texts such as the *Mahabharata*, Sanskrit lexicons and numerous astrological works. She

is produced according to previous life impressions and an equal “seed” conception caused by various conditions of the parents.

Specific Terms

The forty terms listed below refer to specific third-gender types. The first twenty-five are considered unfit for procreative marriage and nearly all of them are homosexual, transgender or intersex by nature (*tritiya-prakriti*). The remaining fifteen types are viewed as possibly fit for marriage and involve bisexuality, acquired ailments or supernatural causes.

(1) *Samskaravahi*—*he is aroused according to previous life impressions.*

The *samskaravahi* type has sexual desires of a contrary nature and is consequently not aroused by the opposite sex. This category includes homosexuals, transgenders and the five types of *kliba* mentioned by Sushruta. According to the *Caraka Samhita* (4.2.19), the *samskaravahi* is produced according to previous life impressions (the man was a homosexual in his last life, or a woman, etc.) and when the channels of male arousal are permanently blocked by *vayu* in an embryo of equal “seed” conception. Some commentators believe that in certain cases, such as bisexuality, the *samskaravahi* is treatable through penile enemas, powerful aphrodisiacs or drinking semen. This is doubtful, however, since the *Caraka Samhita* declares all eight types of *napumsa* as inborn and incurable. In any case, if the *samskaravahi* remains aroused only by contrary behavior he cannot be married to any woman.

(2) *Mukhebhaga*—*he performs oral sex on men.*

The *mukhebhaga* type uses his mouth (*mukhe*) to receive another man’s penis, just as a woman would use her vulva (*bhaga*). This clearly refers to the homosexual and transgender men described in the *Kama Sutra* (2.9). The *mukhebhaga* is produced according to previous life impressions and an equal “seed” conception caused by various conditions of the parents; for instance, if the parents engage in oral sex prior to intercourse. Some commentators interpret words such as *mukhebhaga* and *saugandhika* to include heterosexual acts but such men would obviously not be impotent with women. Indeed, the *Narada-smriti* (12.15) declares the *mukhebhaga* incurable and unmarriageable under all circumstances.

(3) *Asekya*—*he is aroused only by swallowing a man’s semen.*

The *asekya* type is aroused only by swallowing the semen of other men. The *Smriti-ratnavali* specifically uses the word “devour” to stress the man’s strong desire for such activity and the term itself comes from the Sanskrit *aseka* (“to

water”) or *asecana* (“a vessel for holding fluids”). The *Sushruta Samhita* (3.2.38, 45) states that the *asekya* obtains an erection only by “sucking the genitals and drinking the semen of another man.” He is produced according to previous life impressions and an equal “seed” conception caused when the father’s semen is scanty. The *asekya* type is viewed exactly the same as the *mukhebhaga* in terms of curability and marriage.

(4) *Kumbhika*—he takes the passive role in anal sex.

The *kumbhika* type uses his buttocks (*kumbha*) to receive another man’s penis. This clearly refers to homosexuals and transgenders and is listed in the *Sushruta Samhita* (3.2.40) among the inborn types of *kliba*. Sushruta mentions that some *kumbhikas* perform the same act on women (indicating bisexuality) while others gain erections by drinking the semen of other men like an *asekya* (3.2.45). The *kumbhika* type is produced according to previous life impressions and an equal “seed” conception caused by various conditions of the parents; for instance, if they engage in anal sex prior to intercourse. He is viewed exactly the same as the *mukhebhaga* in terms of curability and marriage.

(5) *Saugandhika*—he is aroused only by smelling the genitals of other men.

The *saugandhika* type is aroused only by smelling the genitals of other men and coming in close contact with them. The *Sushruta Samhita* lists the *saugandhika* among the inborn types of *kliba* and mentions that he will also gain an erection by drinking the semen of other men like an *asekya* (3.2.39, 45). The *saugandhika* is produced according to previous life impressions and an equal “seed” conception caused when the mother’s womb is unclean at the time of conception. He is viewed exactly the same as the *mukhebhaga* in terms of curability and marriage.

(6) *Irshyaka*—he is aroused only by the jealous feelings of seeing other men in the act of sexual union.

(7) *Irshyabhirati*—same as above.

The *irshyaka* or *irshyabhirati* type becomes potent only when jealous feelings arise in him after seeing other men engaged in sexual intercourse; he is then able to perform. His sexual potency depends on jealous or even angry feelings. The *Sushruta Samhita* lists the *irshyaka* among the inborn types of *kliba* and mentions that he will also gain an erection by drinking the semen of other men like an *asekya* (3.2.41, 45). The *Caraka Samhita* (4.2.20) states that the *irshyabhirati* is produced according to previous life impressions and an equal “seed” conception caused when the parents harbor jealous feelings during intercourse. The *Narada-smriti* (12.15) declares the *irshyaka* type incurable and unmarriageable for any woman.

(8) *Sevyaka*—he is sexually enjoyed by other men.

The word *sevyaka* refers to a man who is sexually enjoyed by other men. Some commentators, such as eighth-century A.D. Bhavasvamin, interpret this word as “homosexual” whereas others define it as “a man whose potency is lost because of having too much sex with women.” Most scholars, however, equate the *sevyaka* to the *kumbhika* mentioned by Sushruta, who takes the passive role in anal sex. In any case, the *Narada-smriti* (12.15) strongly asserts that the *sevyaka* type is incurable and unmarriageable for any woman.

(9) *Anyapati*—he copulates with things or beings other than women.

The *anyapati* type has sexual intercourse in ways other than with women and includes all varieties of sexual orientations and psychological fetishes. Alternatively, some commentators interpret this word to mean that the man is deeply in love with another and consequently only potent with him or her. In any case, the *anyapati* type is not considered curable or marriageable by the *Narada-smriti* (12.18).

(10) *Narashandha*—his manhood is completely destroyed.

(11) *Narishandha*—her womanhood is completely destroyed.

These two types refer to people whose manhood or womanhood has been completely destroyed. The *narashandha* is either completely effeminate by nature or he may actually have no semen or sperm; similarly, the *narishandha* is either completely masculine by nature or she may actually have no menstruation or ovum. The former transgender types are produced according to previous life impressions along with an equal “seed” conception caused when the parents assume the “woman on top” position during intercourse (*Sushruta Samhita* 3.2.42-43). The latter intersex types are produced when the equal “seed” conception is caused by a lack of sexual drive and some deficiency in the reproductive fluids of both parents (*Caraka Samhita* 4.2.19). In each case, the *narashandha* and *narishandha* types are considered incurable and unfit for marriage.

(12) *Baddha*—he has no testicles.

(13) *Vadhri*—his testicles have been cut out.

(14) *Vatika*—he is born without testicles.

These three types of third-gender men are either born without testicles or their testicles have been cut out. They include intersex conditions as well as men who have had their testicles removed for various reasons (personal, medical, criminal, etc.). The *vatika* type is specifically described as inborn and produced when the testicles of an embryo of equal “seed” conception are destroyed by afflicted life-airs

(*vayu*) and life-fires (*agni*) in utero (*Caraka Samhita* 4.2.21). The *vadhri* type is considered incurable and unfit for marriage by the *Narada-smriti* (12.14) and the *baddha* and *vatika* types are viewed exactly the same way.

(15) *Vataretas*—he has no discharge of semen.

Literally, “wind or air semen.” The man achieves an erection and reaches orgasm but there is no emission of semen (only air). This can refer to various physical conditions such as intersex, retrograde ejaculation, dry orgasm, and so on. Some commentators interpret *vataretas* as a man having premature ejaculation (the semen is “lost to the wind”) but this is unlikely since the *vataretas* is declared incurable and premature ejaculation is typically temporary. Indeed, the *Narada-smriti* (12.15) strongly forbids the *vataretas* type from marrying any woman.

(16) *Pavanendriya*—he has no discharge of semen.

The *pavanendriya* type also has no discharge of semen. According to the *Caraka Samhita* (4.2.18), this type is inborn and produced when the seminal regions of an embryo of equal “seed” conception are afflicted by the life-air. Since *pava* means “wind or air” and *indriya* can be interpreted as “semen,” the *pavanendriya* type is usually considered identical to the *vataretas* and viewed the same in terms of curability and marriage.

(17) *Nisarga*—he is born without proper genitals.

The *nisarga* type refers to people recognized as impotent at birth, i.e., those born with absent or unusually formed genitals due to intersex or other causes. The term *nisarga* implies that the person is physically distorted by nature. Such third-gender types are not considered curable or fit for marriage according to the *Narada-smriti* (12.14).

(18) *Vakri*—his penis is severely curved or deformed.

The *vakri* type refers to men born with a severely curved or deformed penis. This usually involves chronic curvature of the penis or a drastically misplaced pee-hole. According to the *Caraka Samhita* (4.2.20), the *vakri* is produced by an equal “seed” conception caused when complicated postures are assumed during intercourse and the father’s semen is weak. The *vakri* type is considered incurable and unfit for marriage.

(19) *Dviretas*—he has both male and female “seed.”

The *dviretas* type describes people born with both male and female genitals, reproductive fluids and hormones. It is typically recognized at birth and was

formerly known as “hermaphroditism.” According to the *Caraka Samhita* (4.2.18), the *dviretas* is produced when an embryo of equal “seed” conception contains both the male and female reproductive material and becomes afflicted in utero. The *dviretas* type is viewed exactly the same as the *nisarga* in terms of curability and marriage.

(20) *Trnaputrika*—his male “seed” is afflicted in utero.

(21) *Varta*—her female “seed” is afflicted in utero.

The *trnaputrika* and *varta* types refer to men and women who are sterile or develop mixed physical traits (intersex). According to the *Caraka Samhita* (4.4.31), such conditions are caused when the “seed” of one or both parents (especially the mother) is afflicted and transferred to the child at the time of conception. When the essential components of the sperm or ovum (*bijabhaga* or chromosomes) are afflicted, the child becomes sterile and when minute fractions of the *bijabhaga* (*bijabhagavayava* or genes) are afflicted, the child becomes either sterile or intersex. The *trnaputrika* and *varta* types are viewed exactly the same as the *nisarga* in terms of curability and marriage.

(22) *Shandhi*—she is averse to men and has no menstruation or breasts.

The *shandhi* type of woman is mentioned in the *Sushruta Samhita* (6.38.8) as having no menstruation or breasts. Similarly, the *Caraka Samhita* (6.30.34) describes the *shandhi* as a woman who is “averse to males and with no breasts.” The *shandhi* is produced when a female embryo of equal “seed” conception is afflicted by the life-air in utero. Alternatively, this term can also refer to a female *shandha* with the qualities and behavior of a man. Such a female *shandha* is described in the *Sushruta Samhita* (3.2.43) and mentioned in the *Caraka Samhita* (4.2.18) as *narishandha*. In either case, the *shandhi* is considered incurable and unmarriageable.

(23) *Sucivaktra*—she has an extremely small, undeveloped vagina.

(24) *Sucimukhi*—same as above.

Both of these terms are literally translated as “needle-eyed opening or vulva.” The *sucivaktra* woman is described in the *Sushruta Samhita* (6.38.8) as having an extremely constricted and undeveloped vagina from birth. According to the *Caraka Samhita* (6.30.31), the *sucimukhi* type is caused when *vayu* afflicts a female embryo in the womb, causing her vaginal tract to remain undeveloped and minute. Both are identical and viewed exactly the same as the *nisarga* in terms of curability and marriage.

(25) *Nasta*—*he is without sperm due to disease.*

The *nasta* type refers to a man left permanently impotent or sterile after contracting venereal disease or some other illness. He was once virile but now his reproductive organs and sperm are completely destroyed. In general, the *nasta* indicates a diseased man (*rogat*) who has failed to regain his potency after one year of treatment. Such a man is deemed incurable and unfit for marriage.

(26) *Kami*—*he engages in lovemaking with both women and men.*

(27) *Kamini*—*she engages in lovemaking with both men and women.*

The words *kami* and *kamini* refer to men and women who are very sensuous and fond of lovemaking. Those with a third-gender nature are bisexual and simultaneously attracted to both sexes. Neither type is considered impotent (quite the contrary) but they are third-gender in the sense that they have both male and female sex attraction (*dvikama*). The *kami* and *kamini* are produced according to previous life impressions and an equal “seed” conception caused when the reproductive fluids and hormones of both parents are equally profuse. Most are heterosexually married with children and engage in homosexual relationships on the side. No injunctions prohibit these types from marriage as long as they are able to satisfy their spouses and produce offspring.

(28) *Paksha*—*he is periodically impotent with women (every other fortnight, month, etc.)*

The *paksha* type is difficult to detect and interpreted variously. The man is “half potent” (sometimes potent and sometimes not). This can refer to bisexuals who are sometimes potent with women and sometimes with men or to those whose sexual potency otherwise comes and goes. Some commentators interpret this word literally, meaning that the man is impotent “every other fortnight.” In any case, the *Narada-smṛiti* (12.14) states that a *paksha* should be retested after one month; if he remains impotent, he cannot be married to any woman.

(29) *Salina*—*he is too shy or inhibited to even approach women.*

In the case of the *salina* type, the man cannot attempt intercourse with the woman due to excessive shyness. This is clearly psychological unless he is secretly homosexual. The woman is encouraged to try arousing the *salina* by all possible means; if she cannot get him to unite with her after one year, he should be abandoned (*Narada-smṛiti* 12.17).

(30) *Rogat*—*he is diseased (which may pass).*

The term *rogat* refers to men who were previously virile but are now physically diseased and consequently impotent. The affliction may be temporary or

permanent in nature and requires further analysis. Several chapters within the *Sushruta* and *Caraka Samhitas* analyze and treat diseases of the male and female reproductive organs in great detail. The *rogat* type should be retested after one year; if he remains impotent, he is considered permanently diseased (*nasta*) and cannot be married to any woman (*Narada-smriti* 12.14).

(31) *Aksipta*—his semen is deficient or does not discharge properly.

The *aksipta* type does not discharge his semen properly or it is deficient in some way. The semen may be insufficient in quantity or appear watery, discolored, lumpy and odorous. There may also be premature ejaculation or the ejaculation is slow and difficult. Some commentators interpret *aksipta* to mean that the man is unable to ejaculate at all. This is unlikely, however, since the word itself means “to cast off” or “throw out.” In any case, the *aksipta* type should be retested after one year; if his semen remains deficient or does not discharge properly, he cannot be married to the woman (*Narada-smriti* 12.16).

(32) *Moghabija*—his attempts to unite with the woman are fruitless.

The *moghabija* type is impotent or “fruitless” when he attempts to unite with the woman. Such a man either cannot complete intercourse with the woman or, if he does, there is no resulting pregnancy. Most commentators interpret *moghabija* to mean that the man has semen but it is sterile and thus ineffective in the womb. In any case, the *moghabija* type is considered curable and may be retested after one year (*Narada-smriti* 12.16).

(33) *Kilaka*—he penetrates the woman using another man or some instrument.

The *kilaka* type can only penetrate the woman after first uniting her with another man or with the help of some instrument (a dildo or *apadravya*). According to most commentators, the *kilaka*’s penis is injured or broken and requires assistance or some kind of device for support. Alternatively, the man is aroused by seeing the woman with other men and is brought to sexual potency only by bringing them together. In any case, the *kilaka* should be retested after one month; if his potency remains dependent on another man or some device, he cannot be married.

(34) *Stabdha*—his penis is paralyzed, with no sperm.

The man’s penis is completely paralyzed and lifeless without any sign of arousal or seminal fluid. This generally indicates a serious condition of impotence associated with complete erectile dysfunction. If the *stabdha* type remains unable to achieve an erection after one year, he is not fit to marry any woman.

(35) *Moghapuspa*—her attempts to unite with the man are fruitless.

The *moghapuspa* type of woman is the female counterpart to the *moghabija*. Her attempts to unite with the man are “fruitless,” meaning she cannot bring herself to be penetrated by the man or, if she does, there is no resulting pregnancy. Most commentators interpret *moghapuspa* to mean that the woman has menstruation but is unable to conceive. In any case, the *moghapuspa* type may be treated for ten years from marriage; beyond that, the husband may dismiss her and take another wife (*Baudhayana Dharmasutra* 2.4.6).

(36) *Putraghni*—she has repeated miscarriages.

Literally, the woman’s womb “burns up her offspring.” The *putraghni* type is described in both the *Sushruta* (6.38.6) and *Caraka* (6.30.28) *Sambhitas* and produced when *vayu* afflicts the woman’s reproductive system, causing excessive bleeding along with repeated miscarriages during pregnancy. The *putraghni* type is considered curable in some cases by both texts; however, if she is unable to conceive a child after ten years the husband may dismiss her and take another wife.

(37) *Vandhya*—her menstruation is absent or suppressed.

The *vandhya* type of woman is described as infertile or completely barren. According to the *Sushruta Samhita* (6.38.4-5), the womb of such a woman has been afflicted by *vayu* and is marked by a suppression or complete absence of menstruation. The *vandhya* type may be either inborn or acquired. The acquired types are considered curable up to ten years but are otherwise declared inborn and incurable.

(38) *Sapadi*—he is unable to enjoy sex due to the power of a curse.

(39) *Abhisapad-guroh*—he is impotent due to the guru’s curse.

(40) *Deva-krodhat*—he is impotent due to a god’s anger.

These three types of third-gender men are impotent due to a curse, the guru’s imprecation or a god’s anger and clearly belong to the supernatural variety. They are found here and there throughout the Vedic canon—for instance, when the celestial courtesan, Urvashi, curses Arjuna to become a member of the third sex in the *Mahabharata*. According to the *Narada-smṛiti* (12.14), such men should be tested one year after the curse has taken effect; if they remain impotent, they cannot be married to any woman.

The Ten Causes of Gender

Both the *Sushruta* and *Caraka Samhitas* provide elaborate descriptions regarding how and why living entities take birth as male, female or third gender. Such descriptions can be summarized into the ten contributing factors listed below. In many cases, several or even most of these factors will be involved to some degree.

- 1) *Samskara*—previous life impressions.
- 2) *Kama*—desire.
- 3) *Sukarma*—good karma.
- 4) *Vikarma*—bad karma.
- 5) *Sukra-bala*—strength of “seed.”
- 6) *Mithuna-vidhi*—method of copulation.
- 7) *Paurusha*—the personal efforts of the parents.
- 8) *Dosha*—affliction.
- 9) *Prakriti*—nature.
- 10) *Daiva*—divine ordinance.

1) *Samskara*—previous life impressions.

According to Vedic teachings, the living entity is eternal and experiences innumerable lifetimes until achieving final emancipation. Thus, every newborn person comes with a complete package of previous life impressions, desires and activities known as *samskaras*. Based on these, the living entity takes birth as male, female or third gender.

2) *Kama*—desire.

Every living being has *kama* or innumerable desires as part of the previous life impressions or *samskaras* mentioned above. When the living entity desires to experience a lifetime as male, female or third gender, such a lifetime comes to pass.

3) *Sukarma*—good karma.

When the living entity takes birth as male, female or third gender according to desire, such a birth is said to be the result of previous good deeds or *sukarma*. A birth due to *sukarma* is evident when the person is happy with the awarded birth and resides in a setting where he or she is treated kindly. Such a person is furthermore endowed with auspicious qualities such as beauty, good health, strength, wealth, talent, intelligence, good parentage, righteousness, renunciation, religiosity, and so on.

4) *Vikarma—bad karma.*

When the living entity is forced to take birth as male, female or third gender against all desire, such a birth is said to be the result of previous misdeeds or *vikarma*. A birth due to *vikarma* is evident when the person is unhappy with the awarded birth and resides in a setting where he or she is treated harshly. Such a person is furthermore endowed with inauspicious qualities such as ugliness, ill health, weakness, poverty, lack of talent, foolishness, bad parentage, unrighteousness, excessive attachment, irreligiosity, and so on.

5) *Sukra-bala—strength of “seed.”*

According to the quantity and the quality of the parents’ “seed” at the time of conception, a child is conceived as male, female or third sex. When the father’s *sukra* or male sexual fluids predominate, a male is produced and when the mother’s *sonita* or female sexual fluids predominate, the child will be female. If both are equal, the offspring will be of the third sex. Such equal “seed” conceptions are further distinguished as follows: When the “seed” is exactly equal and afflicted, the child will be sterile or have both male and female physical characteristics; when the “seed” is mostly equal but slightly more in terms of the male or female, a third-gender boy or girl will be born respectively, and when the “seed” is mostly equal due to the profuse quantity and strength of both parents, a bisexual child is born. Thus, according to the *bala* or strength of the parents’ *sukra* and *sonita*, various types of male, female and third-gender offspring are produced.

6) *Mithuna-vidhi—method of copulation.*

According to Vedic science, the *mithuna-vidhi* or method of copulation can also determine a child’s gender by affecting the parents’ “seed” and attracting specific types of living entities to the womb. When *upasripta* or normal copulation is employed, the child will be either male or female but if *citrarata* or exceptional copulation is engaged in, a third-gender child will likely be the result. Such exceptional methods of copulation are further distinguished as follows: When the parents assume the *purushayita* or “woman on top” position, the offspring will be a male or female *shandha* who behaves like the opposite sex; when the wife assumes a complicated position during intercourse and the husband’s semen is weak, the child born will be a *vakri* with a deformed male organ; when the wife performs oral sex on her husband prior to intercourse and a son is conceived, that boy will be a *mukhebhaga* who performs oral sex on men, and if the husband performs oral sex on his wife prior to intercourse and a daughter is conceived, that girl will be a *svairini* who makes love to women. Thus, according to the

parents' *mithuna-vidhi* or method of copulation, various types of male, female and third-gender offspring are produced.

7) *Paurusha—the personal efforts of the parents.*

Parents generally desire heterosexual offspring—especially sons—and Vedic texts offer many helpful practices to assist them in this regard. The parents should keep good sexual health, take invigorating tonics, refrain from overindulgence, assume the *upasriptaka* or “man on top” position during intercourse, follow proper timing, observe prescribed rituals, consult astrologers, propitiate the gods and so on. At the time of conception, the consciousness of the parents should be peaceful and pure; they must have passion but not excessive lust, anger or detrimental feelings such as jealousy. In this way, the parents should apply personal effort or *paurusha* to conceive the offspring they desire.

8) *Dosha—affliction.*

Due to previous misdeeds and despite the best efforts of the parents, various afflictions or *doshas* can arise that result in the birth of sterile or malformed offspring. The word *dosha* refers to afflictions caused by some imbalance or aggravation of the three bodily substances known as *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* (also called *doshas*). When afflictions occur in the sex organs, reproductive fluids, hormones, chromosomes or genes of either the parents or embryo of any sex, offspring are consequently born sterile or sexually malformed to various degrees.

9) *Prakriti—nature.*

When all of the above considerations are taken together they result in the aggregate factor known as *prakriti* or nature. The workings of material nature are subtle and mysterious yet grossly powerful. According to the stringent laws of *prakriti*, all living entities are forcibly born among the three genders in a series of countless lifetimes.

10) *Daiva—divine ordinance.*

The ultimate factor in regard to cause of gender is *daiva* or divine ordinance. Indeed, the laws of nature work according to God's will and cannot be overruled. It is therefore *daiva* or divine ordinance that ultimately determines which of the three genders a living entity assumes. The various supernatural causes such as being cursed or blessed by a demigod or saintly person are also included within this category.

Spiritual Gender. According to Vaishnava teachings, the soul itself possesses an inherent spiritual form and gender that lies completely dormant during worldly existence. This innate spiritual gender has no bearing on a person's present physical or psychological sex and remains unmanifest even in the state of impersonal Brahman realization. Spiritual gender—in full variegatedness—awakens only at the highest levels of devotional attainment and reflects the living entity's pure desire to serve and interact with God in the spiritual world.

Vedic Testing For Impotence

Vedic testing for male impotence involves five basic steps: 1) a study of the man's astrological chart; 2) an overall physical examination; 3) an observation of his sexual interaction with women; 4) urination testing, and 5) an examination of his discarded semen. There are different versions of this test but a general description is as follows:

The prospective groom's astrological chart is first examined and if the parents of a girl about to be married have doubts regarding his potency, they hire a respected physician to thoroughly test him. The physician checks for masculine features such as a strong back, neck, shoulders, arms, torso, thighs, etc. along with the presence of good knees, bones, hair and skin. The penis, testicles, mouth and anus are also examined for unusual or defective signs and the man's gait, voice and mannerisms should all be distinctly masculine.

Once the physical examination has been passed, the groom is next handed over to a professional courtesan who is thoroughly familiar with all types of men, learned in the Kama Shastra and accompanied by her retinue. With the parents' permission, she tests the man's erection along with his ability to penetrate and climax with any of her girls. After successfully completing the task, his stream of urination is examined and must be seen as noisy and foamy. The man's discarded semen thereafter should also sink in water. The prospective groom is then declared fully virile to the parents and eligible to marry their daughter.

On the other hand, if the man exhibits any sign of weakness or failure with the girl, the courtesan employs various methods to ascertain his exact type of impotence. If she suspects he may be homosexual, she calls in a professional male prostitute to further test him. If she suspects some physical condition or disease, the physician is called back in. Based on her findings, the courtesan either declares the groom hopelessly impotent with women or suggests retesting him after a certain period of time.

Lady physicians and astrologers similarly conduct fertility tests on women, carefully examining them for favorable signs of feminine behavior and health.

Vedic astrological texts such as the *Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra* (80-82) provide detailed lists of female attributes, both physical and astrological, which help determine the status of any girl's fertility. Among all of the physical attributes listed, the feet, hips, sexual organ, abdomen, breasts, neck and mouth are especially examined for favorable signs. In Vedic culture, girls were generally married off at a very early age (typically between eight and twelve years old) and encouraged to bear children immediately upon reaching puberty. Dharma Shastra texts such as the *Narada-smriti* (12.25-27) attribute great sin to a father who does not get his daughter married prior to her coming of age. Other texts such as the *Baudhayana Dharmasutra* (4.1.12) extend the time limit to three years after puberty if the girl has no suitors; beyond this, she may select any husband of her own accord. Girls that are completely barren, excessively masculine or otherwise of the third gender, however, are exempt from all such marital considerations.



CHAPTER THREE

SUMMARY OF VEDIC REFERENCES

The following summary of Vedic references lists forty key points found in Vedic literature regarding the third sex. Each point is accompanied by one or more scriptural references to serve as examples.

1) Three categories of sex or gender are mentioned throughout the Vedic canon—virile males, fertile females, and an impotent third sex having both male and female qualities. (*Svetasvatara Upanisad* 5.10, *Srimad Bhagavatam* 8.3.24 and 10.1, notes by Srila Prabhupada)

The soul is neither male, female nor third sex [*napumsaka*] although it takes shelter of and assumes itself as such. (SU 5.10)

The Supreme Personality of Godhead is not woman, man, or third sex [*shandha*], nor is He an animal. He is not a material quality, a fruitive activity, a manifestation or a nonmanifestation. (SB 8.3.24)

The word *puman* refers to any person, whether man, woman or in-between. (SB 10.1, notes)

2) People of the third sex (*tritiya-prakriti*) have mixed male and female qualities by nature and birth. Vedic texts describe them as homosexual, transgender and intersexed. (*Caraka Samhita* 4.2.17-25, *Kama Sutra* 2.8, 9), *Sushruta Samhita* 3.2.36-43)

Activity mostly on the left side of the body; desire for men; feminine dreams, drinks, food, conduct and activities; fetus positioned on the left side of the womb; distended uterus (not round), and profuse lactation in the left breast—these indicate a female fetus. Symptoms opposite of this indicate a male fetus, and the third sex is indicated by mixed symptoms. (CS 4.2.24-25)

People of the third sex [*tritiya-prakriti*] are of two kinds, according to whether their appearance is masculine or feminine. Those with a feminine appearance show it by their dress, speech, laughter, behavior, gentleness, lack of courage, silliness, patience and modesty. They perform the act that takes place between the thighs and the mouth, which is called *auparishataka* (oral sex). They earn their living from those that seek this form of eroticism. Those who dress as women are taken for prostitutes. Those who like men but dissimulate the fact maintain a manly appearance and earn their living as hairdressers or masseurs. (KS 2.9.1-6)

(See also the “Eight Types of Napumsa” and “Five Types of Kliba” in Part One, Chapter Three)

3) Vedic texts contain lists that define third-gender men (*napumsa*, *kliba*, *shandha*, *panda*, etc.) and deem them impotent with women for a wide variety of reasons that include homosexuality, transgender identity, intersex conditions, and many others. Simplistic English translations such as eunuch, neuter, hermaphrodite, etc. are inaccurate and in most cases incorrect. (*Narada-smṛiti* 12.12-13, *Suśruta Saṃhita* 3.2.36-43, *Caraka Saṃhita* 4.2.17-21, *Kamatantra*, *Smṛiti-ratnavali*, *Sabda-kalpa-druma*, etc.)

(See lists of third-gender men in Part One, Chapter Three)

4) The primary definition of third-gender people is that they do not beget offspring, being either physically impotent or devoid of any desire for the opposite sex. (*Narada-smṛiti* 12.12-13, *Suśruta Saṃhita* 3.2.36-43, *Caraka Saṃhita* 4.2.17-21, *Kamatantra*, *Smṛiti-ratnavali*, *Sabda-kalpa-druma*, etc.)

Impotent men [*panda*] are known by the experts in the science to be of fourteen different kinds, some curable, some not. They are as follows... (NS 12.11)

(See definitions of third-gender men and women in Part One, Chapter Three)

5) All three sexes (male, female and third sex) are biologically determined at the time of conception. (*Manusmriti* 3.49, *Sushruta Samhita* 3.3.4, *Astanga Hridaya Samhita* 2.5)

A male child is produced by a greater quantity of male seed, a female child by the prevalence of the female; if both are equal, a third-sex child [*napumsa*] or boy and girl twins are produced; if either are weak or deficient in quantity, a failure of conception results. (MS 3.49)

The birth of a boy marks the preponderance of the male sexual fluids at its conception; the birth of a girl shows the preponderance of the female. A child of the third sex is the result when both elements are equal. (SS 3.3.4)

By the same doctrine, a boy will be produced when the male sexual fluids [*sukra*] are more, a female when the female sexual fluids [*rakta*] are more, and a third-sex child [*kliba*] when both are equal. (AHS 2.5)

6) Vedic medical texts (the Ayur Shastra) specifically mention how third-sex conditions (homosexuality, transgender identity and intersex) are caused at the time of conception. (*Sushruta Samhita* 3.2.38, 42-43, *Caraka Samhita* 4.4.30-31)

If the parents have exceedingly little generative fluids, their male offspring will be an *asekya* who will undoubtedly become aroused only by swallowing a man's semen. (SS 3.2.38)

If, due to illusion, a man engages with his wife during her fertile period as if he were a woman, then a *shandha* will be born who behaves like a woman. Conversely, if the woman engages in sex like a man during her fertile period, then, should a girl be born, that girl will behave like a man. (SS 3.2.42-43)

When, in the ovum, the genes (*bijabhagavayana*) concerned with the uterus are variant, the child becomes sterile or is miscarried. If the genes concerned with female characteristics are also variant, the child will appear as but not actually be female (*varta*). Likewise, within the

sperm, when the genes concerned with the testes are variant, the child becomes sterile or is miscarried. If the genes concerned with male characteristics are also variant, the child will appear as but not actually be male (*trnaputrika*). (CS 4.4.30-31)

7) The sex of the fetus—whether male, female or third sex—becomes manifest during the second month of pregnancy and cannot be changed after that. (*Sushruta Samhita* 3.3.14, *Caraka Samhita* 4.4.10, 4.8.19)

In the second month of pregnancy, a roundish appearance indicates the male sex of the embryo. An elongated shape denotes the female sex, and an erratic shape reveals an embryo of the third sex. (SS 3.3.14)

During the second month of pregnancy, the embryo manifests as a round, elongated or irregular-shaped mass indicating a male, female or third-gender child respectively. (CS 4.4.10)

Change of sex is effected before its manifestation by Vedic rites properly performed, because those actions performed with excellence of place and time certainly produce the desired results; otherwise not. Hence the pregnant woman (who desires male offspring) should perform the *pumsavana* rite before the sex of the embryo is manifested. (CS 4.8.19)

8) Vedic astrological texts (the Jyotir Shastra) analyze the sex of any child, whether male, female or third sex, through the *adhana* or conception chart. Various planetary configurations indicate the conception of third-gender offspring. (*Brihat Jataka* 4.13, *Jaimini Sutram* 4.3.12, *Saravali* 8.18-20)

When (in the conception chart) the Sun and Moon aspect each other; when Mercury and Saturn aspect each other; when Mars in a male sign aspects the Sun in a female sign; when the Moon and ascendant are in male signs and aspected by Mars in a female sign; when the Moon is in a male sign, Mercury in a female sign and both are aspected by Mars; and when Venus, the ascendant and the Moon are all posited in male *amsas*—in all six of these cases, offspring of the third sex (*kliba*) will be born. (BJ 4.13)

9) The Jyotir Shastra furthermore mentions hundreds of signs in the *janma* or birth chart indicating third-gender characteristics such as male and female

homosexuality, transgender identity, bisexuality, impotence, sterility and so on. (*Bhrigu Sutram* 3.60, 7.35; *Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra* 18.13, 80.50-51; *Jaimini Sutram* 4.3.84; *Brihat Jataka* 17.3; *Garga Hora* 465; *Jataka Parijata* 16.18, respectively)

When Mars is in the seventh house and aspected by Saturn, the native will touch with his mouth the secret organs of other men. (BhS 3.60)

If Saturn is associated with Mars the native will kiss another man's organ with his mouth. (BhS 7.35)

If Venus is in a *navamsa* or *rasi* of Saturn, or is in aspect to or conjunct with Saturn, the native will kiss the private parts of other men. (BPHS 18.13)

When a woman's ascendant is Taurus or Libra, her rising *navamsa* Capricorn or Aquarius, and the planets Venus and Saturn aspect each other or occupy one another's *navamsa*, the woman will be of great passion and satisfy herself through other females acting as men. (BPHS 80.50-51)

When Saturn is in the rising *navamsa*, the woman, although appearing female, will behave like a man. (JS 4.3.84)

With the Moon in Gemini, a man will be fond of women and sport with third-gender men. (BJ 17.3)

With the Sun, Mercury and Jupiter in the fifth house, a person will be impotent. (GH 465)

When a woman's ascendant is ruled by Saturn, is strong and in a *trimsamsa* of Venus, she will be barren and licentious. (JP 16.18)

10) Living entities take birth as male, female and third sex for many different reasons that include the state of the mother and father, the living entity's desire (*kama*), environment and nutrition, the psyche, past deeds (*karma*), previous life impressions (*samskaras*), astrological influences, divine ordinance (*daiva*) and so on. In any case, Krsna directs material nature and sanctions the birth of all living

entities. (*Caraka Samhita* 4.2-3, Bhagavad Gita 9.10, 18.61, *Srimad Bhagavatam* 3.31.1)

Atreya Rsi said: The embryo and its condition are produced from the aggregate of all these factors—the mother, the father, the self (*jiva*), suitability (of environment), nutrition and the psyche—just as a chariot or the roof of a house are comprised of several different parts. (CS 4.3.14)

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: Under the supervision of the Supreme Lord and according to the result of his work, the living entity, the soul, is made to enter into the womb of a woman through the particle of semen to assume a particular type of body. (SB 3.31.1)

This material nature is working under My direction, O son of Kunti, and it is producing all moving and unmoving beings. By its rule this manifestation is created and annihilated again and again. (BG 9.10)

11) Vedic texts state that men with inborn impotence such as homosexuals (*irshyaka*, *sevyaka* and *mukhebhaga*) and those without semen (*vataretas*) are incurable and unfit for marriage to the opposite sex. Furthermore, *ayurvedic* aphrodisiacs (*vajikarana*, which cure impotence in males) are useless on third-gender men who are impotent with women by nature. Bisexuals (*paksha*) are possibly fit for opposite-sex marriage if confirmed as potent after a period of one month. (*Sushruta Samhita* 4.26.3; *Caraka Samhita* 6.2.1-4, commentary by Gangadhara; *Narada-smriti* 12.11-19)

Sexual incapacity from the very birth constitutes a fifth type of impotence and is called congenital or inborn [*sahaja*]...Of the six foregoing types, the fifth (inborn) and well as the fourth (impotence caused by a long-standing disease) should be regarded as incurable. (SS 4.26.3)

These four—*irshyaka*, *sevyaka*, *vataretas*, and *mukhebhaga*—are to be completely rejected as unqualified for marriage, even by a wife who is no longer a virgin. (NS 12.15)

The word *purusa* signifies that the child and the old are not fit subjects for aphrodisiacs (*vajikarana*). Women and men of the third sex are

already eliminated and thus also not under its jurisdiction. (CS,CG 6.2.1-4)

For the one referred to by the term *paksha*, the waiting period is one month. (NS 12.14)

12) Vedic texts reiterate that women should not be married to third-gender men and that wives should leave such husbands. The same is true for males married to third-gender women. The Artha Shasta nullifies such marriages, returns the dowry and imposes fines whenever a spouse is thus deceived. (*Narada-smriti* 12.37, 97; Artha Shastra 3.15.14-15)

The five valid flaws in a suitor are: 1) being insane, 2) being an outcaste, 3) being impotent, 4) being unlucky, and 5) being abandoned by his family. (NS 12.37)

The five catastrophes in which women are required to take another husband are: 1) if the husband disappears, 2) if he dies, 3) if he renounces the world, 4) if he is found to be impotent, and 5) if he becomes an outcaste. (NS 12.97)

For giving a maiden in marriage without mentioning her defect in connection with sex, the fine is ninety-six *panas* and the return of the woman's dowry and property. For a suitor marrying without mentioning his impotence, the fine is double along with the return of dowry and property. (AS 3.15.14-15)

13) The Kama Shastra acknowledges third-gender marriages wherein same-sex couples with great attachment and complete faith in one another get married. (*Kama Sutra* 2.9.36)

There are also third-sex citizens, sometimes greatly attached to each other and with complete faith in one another, who get married (*parigraha*) together. (KS 2.9.36)

14) Vedic teachings recommend minimizing and moderating the four basic necessities of life (eating, sleeping, mating and defending). Forbidding these entirely, however, is deemed unrealistic and inhumane. Regarding mating, even people outside the *varnasrama* system are entitled to marry and establish

households. (Bhagavad Gita 6.16, *Jaiva Dharma*, Ch. 7, p. 172, *Kama Sutra* 7.2.59)

There is no possibility of one's becoming a *yogi*, O Arjuna, if one eats too much, or eats too little, sleeps too much or does not sleep enough. (BG 6.16)

Even outcastes can take up *vaishnava-dharma* and live as *grhasthas*, although they are not part of *varnasrama*. (JD, Ch. 7, p. 172)

A shrewd man, expert in one thing and another, considering both ethics and his own material interests, must not be a sensualist thirsty for sex, but establish a stable marriage. (KS 7.2.59)

15) Vaishnavas should not get married with the desire to beget children or worship their ancestors. Rather, a marriage is considered ideal when it is God-centered and one's spouse is viewed as a servant of Krsna. This is true despite whatever mundane priests or relatives may say. (*Jaiva Dharma*, Ch. 7, p. 164)

One should not enter marriage with a desire to beget children, or to worship the forefathers and Prajapatis. It is favorable to *bhakti* to think, "I am only accepting this maidservant of Krsna so that we can assist each other in Krsna's service and establish Krsna-centered family life together." Whatever one's materially attached relatives or family priest may say, ultimately one reaps the fruit of one's own determination. (JD, Ch. 7, p. 164)

16) Vedic law promotes virtue and sense control but also allows for various regulated expressions of vice such as intoxication, meat-eating, prostitution and gambling, especially among the lower classes and general public. Total prohibition of vice in society is not the Vedic system. (*Manusmriti* 5.56, *Srimad Bhagavatam* 1.11.19, purport; *Artha Shastra* 2.25, 26, 27; 3.20)

It is not unlawful to eat meat, drink spirituous liquor or engage in carnal intercourse, for that is the natural way of created beings, but abstention brings great rewards. (MS 5.56)

(See four chapters in the *Artha Shastra* entitled: The Controller of Spirituous Liquors 2.25, The Supervisor of Animal Slaughter 2.26,

The Superintendent of Courtesans 2.27 and Gambling and Betting 3.20)

17) No Vedic law specifically penalizes third-gender men or women (*napumsa*, *kliba*, *svairini*, etc.) for their characteristic behavior (homosexuality, crossdressing, etc.). They could be beaten for certain crimes or killed for grave offenses (like other citizens) but were never fined. (*Narada-smriti* 15.12-15, *Srimad Bhagavatam* 4.17.26)

The following ten may be beaten (for punishment) but never fined by the king since their property is considered impure: 1) a dog-eater, 2) an impotent man, 3) an outcaste, 4) a cripple, 5) a butcher, 6) an elephant driver, 7) the uninitiated (*sudras*), 8) the wives of the uninitiated, 9) the wife of an elder, and 10) the wife of a teacher. (NS 15.12-15)

Any cruel person—whether male [*pums*], female [*stri*] or third sex [*kliba*—who is only interested in his personal maintenance and has no compassion for other living entities may be killed by the king. (SB 4.17.26)

18) No Vedic law prescribes castration for third-gender men. Rather, it is mentioned only as a punishment for males committing sexual offenses against women. (*Manusmriti* 8.374, 11.105; *Narada-smriti* 12.72-74, *Gautama Dharmasutra* 12.2)

A *sudra* who has intercourse with a twice-born woman shall be punished in the following manner: if she was unguarded, his male organs are castrated and he loses all his property; if she was guarded, he loses his life. (MS 8.374)

A *brahmana* who violates his guru's wife should cut off his penis and testicles, hold them in his hands and walk straight toward the southwest until he falls down dead. (MS 11.105)

19) Vedic law considers male (*pums*) homosexuality a minor offense and only if the offender is brahminically initiated (twice-born). It is easily atoned for by taking a ritual bath or paying relatively small fines. If the offending party does not atone, his brahminical caste can be lost. (*Manusmriti* 11.175, 11.68; *Artha Shastra* 4.13.40)

A twice-born man who engages in intercourse with a male, or with a female in a cart drawn by oxen, in water, or in the daytime, shall bathe, dressed in his clothes. (MS 11.175)

For a (twice-born) male approaching a woman elsewhere than in the female organ, the lowest fine for violence shall be imposed [forty-eight to ninety-six *panas*]; the same applies for one misbehaving with a man. (AS 4.13.40)

Striking a brahmana, smelling obnoxious items such as liquor, cheating, and engaging in intercourse with a male are declared to cause the loss of caste. (MS 11.68)

20) Vedic law considers female homosexuality an offense only when it involves the violation of young, unmarried girls (traditionally aged 8 through 12). The offense is fined variously and can include corporal punishment. (*Manusmriti* 8.369-370, Artha Shastra 4.12.20-21)

A young maiden who defiles another must be fined two hundred *panas*, pay twice her nuptial fee and receive ten lashes. But (an adult) woman who defiles a young maiden shall instantly have her head shaved (if *brahmana*), be led through town riding a donkey (if *ksatriya*), or have the offending two fingers cut off (if *vaisya* or *sudra*). (MS 8.369-370)

A young, unmarried girl deflowered by a woman shall pay a fine of twelve *panas* if she was a willing party and of the same *varna*; the violating woman shall pay double that. If the maiden was unwilling, the woman shall pay a fine of one hundred *panas*—plus the girl's dowry—for the satisfaction of her passion. (AS 4.12.20-21)

21) Vedic law books regard heterosexual crimes such as rape, adultery and the propagation of unwanted progeny as the foremost threat to human society (not homosexuality). (*Manusmriti* 8.352-387; Bhagavad Gita 1.40-41)

Men who commit adultery with the wives of others shall be banished after they are marked by the king with punishments causing terror, for adultery causes a mixture of the *varnas*, followed by sins that cut the roots and destroy everything. (MS 8.352-353)

When irreligion is prominent in the family, O Krsna, the women of the family become corrupt, and from the degradation of womanhood, O descendant of Vrsni, comes unwanted progeny. When there is increase of unwanted population, a hellish situation is created both for family and for those who destroy the family tradition. In such corrupt families, there is no offering of oblations of food and water to the ancestors. (BG 1.40-41)

22) Parents must provide basic necessities (food, clothing, etc.) to their third-gender offspring, according to their means. The king should provide for third-gender citizens without family. (*Manusmriti* 9.202, *Artha Shastra* 3.5.32, *Vasistha Dharmasutra* 19.35-36)

It is just that a man who knows the law should give (their impotent offspring, etc.) food and clothing without any conditions, according to his ability. One who doesn't give this will become an outcaste. (MS 9.202)

The king should maintain people who are impotent or mad, because their estates go to him. (VD 19.35-36)

23) It is an offense to vilify or publicly mock people of the third sex. This is punishable by various small fines. (*Artha Shastra* 3.18.4-5, *Manusmriti* 28.274, *Narada-smriti* 15.19)

In case of vilification referring to people with leprosy, madness, impotence (*kliba*), and so on, when it is true the fine is twelve *panas*, if false twenty-four *panas* and if in mockery thirty-six *panas* (for equals). If toward superiors or the wives of others, the fine is doubled; if toward inferiors or due to a mistake, intoxication, delusion and so on, the fine is cut by half. (AS 3.18.4-5)

24) Male potency is verified through a study of the man's astrological chart, an overall physical examination, an observation of his sexual interaction with women, foam on the urine and the sinking of discarded semen. Nevertheless, men who are impotent with women are not always discernable. Female fertility is verified through the woman's astrological chart and a physical examination for favorable signs of feminine behavior and health. (*Artha Shastra* 3.18.6, *Narada-smriti* 12.8-10, *Caraka Samhita* 6.2.4.3-5, *Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra* 80-81)

Of male potency, testing with women, foam on the urine and sinking of the discarded semen shall constitute proof. (AS 3.18.6)

One should examine a man's virility by his congenital physical characteristics. If his virility is certain, then he is eligible to take a girl. His vertebrae, knees, bones, shoulders and neck should be well-built. The nape of his neck should be tough, as well as his torso, thighs and skin. He should have a smooth gait and voice. His discarded semen should sink in water and his urine should be noisy and foamy. If he has these characteristics he is virile; if not, he is impotent. (NS 12.8-10)

Not all men having strength beget progeny; some are weak with women even though their bodies are big and strong. On the other hand, men of small stature, who are constitutionally weak and debilitated by disease, may be very potent with women and beget numerous offspring. Such men mate frequently with women like sparrows whereas the strong type may not, even though he discharges semen profusely like an elephant. (CS 6.2.4.3-5)

A hidden clitoris, pink-colored, curved like the back of a tortoise, soft, hairy, shaped like the leaf of a pipal tree and smooth, is highly auspicious. If shaped like the feet of a deer or opening of an oven (furnace) with hard hair and a raised clitoris, inauspiciousness is indicated. If the left side of a woman's sexual organ is raised she will beget more female children, and if the right side is raised, more boys. If the organ is shaped like a conch, she will be barren. (BPHS 81.25-27)

25) Homosexual desire is not taught or acquired through practice. Rather, it arises naturally from deep within the imagination or psyche. (*Kama Sutra* 2.1.39, 41-42)

A person with no previous experience of a form of erotic action can manifest an attraction from his own imagination, which is termed imaginary. This includes erotic activities such as oral sex among third-gender men or women, as well as kissing, caressing, etc. (KS 2.1.41-42)

26) The *Kama Shastra* explicitly describes people of the third sex (gay men, lesbians and transgenders) and relates their various characteristics, types, practices

and traditional Vedic occupations as barbers, masseurs, house servants, florists, prostitutes, etc. The *Mahabharata* similarly describes Brihannala's role as a third-gender woman in Vedic society. (*Kama Sutra* 2.8, 2.9; *Mahabharata*, Virata Parva, Ch. 3, p. 260-261)

(See the *Kama Sutra* verses quoted in #2.)

Arjuna [after being transformed into a woman of the third sex] entered the court of Virata. He was wearing his hair long. It was covering his shoulders. He was wearing necklaces made of corals and pearls. His form was draped in red silk. He was looking charming. His feminine attire hid his glory and at the same time it did not. He looked like the moon during the eclipse. Arjuna walked straight to the throne and said: "I am Brihannala, the dancer. I am well versed in all the fine arts that a woman should know. No one can make flower garlands for the hair as I can. As for my dancing and my music, I have learned it from a *gandharva*. There is no one equal to me in these arts. I want to stay in your court and train your daughter in the fine arts of dancing and music. I hope you will have me." (MB, Virata Parva, Ch. 3, p. 260-261)

27) In the Artha Shastra, third-gender men and women are described working for the king variously as bedroom servants, armed guards, harem supervisors, spies, assassins and so on. (Artha Shastra 1.21.1, 1.20.21, 1.12.21)

When risen from bed, (the king) should be surrounded at first by female guards bearing bows; in the second hall by third-gender manservants wearing robes and turbans; in the third by humpbacks, dwarfs and Kiratas, and in the fourth by ministers, kinsmen and door keepers with lances in hand. (AS 1.21.1)

28) The Jyotir Shastra associates third-gender men and women with the planets Mercury, Saturn and Ketu; with expertise in various arts and magical sciences; with asceticism, and with the worship of Lord Vishnu and Brahma. (*Brihat Sambhita* 16.19, *Brihat Jataka* 2.5-6, *Jaimini Sutram* 1.2.34, 76)

Mercury presides over spies, jugglers, children, poets, rogues, story tellers, black magicians, messengers, people of the third sex, comedians, sorcerers and conjurers. (Br.S 16.19)

Mercury has Kesava (Lord Vishnu) as its *adi-devata* (primary deity)... and Saturn has Kaha (Lord Brahma). Mercury and Saturn are third-gender planets, Venus and the Moon are female and the rest are masculine. (BJ 2.5-6)

Ketu in or second from the *karakamsa lagna* and aspected by Mercury and Saturn makes one impotent or unable to procreate. (JS 1.2.34)
Mercury and Saturn with Ketu in the twelfth house from the *karakamsa lagna* indicates worship of Lord Vishnu. (JS 1.2.76)

29) Vedic texts do not specifically associate the third sex with *Kali Yuga*. Rather, longstanding customs and scriptures on omen reading (the *Nimitta Shastra*) associate the third sex and other beings of unusual birth with prosperity, the special power to bless or curse, and variously as good or bad omens. (Sri Prabhupada tape #67-002, *Brihat Samhita* 46.95, *Susbruta Samhita* 1.29.21)

Such people (the third sex) have their own society, and their means of livelihood is that whenever there is some good occasion such as a marriage or childbirth, they go there and pray to God that this child may be very long-living. In this way they make some prayer, dance and chant Hare Krsna. (SP tape recording #67-002)

If women should give birth to children of unnatural form, or if cows, sheep, horses, deer or birds should do the same; or if leaves, sprouts or creepers should be of unnatural appearance, there will be prosperity in the land. (BrS 46.95)

The sight of...dried grass, straw, a third-gender person, a deformed person or one with a broken limb, a nude man or one with a clean-shaved head or clad in black garments, should be regarded as bad omens by a physician, whether noticed by him at the time of starting or after getting into the sick room. (SS 1.29.21)

30) In the *Mahabharata*, Arjuna's appearance as a male-to-female transgender (Brihannala) serves as an important example of the acceptance of third-gender people in Vedic society. Brihannala's traditional role as a skilled teacher of the fine arts and her acceptance by Maharaja Virata are exemplary. Similarly, at the time of Lord Caitanya's birth, Jagannatha Misra's charity and kindness toward

the third-gender dancers in his courtyard is highly commendable. (*Mahabharata*, Virata Parva, Ch. 3; Srila Prabhupada tape #67-002)

The king said (to Brihannala): “It will be as you wish. You can stay with me.” He sent for his beautiful daughter Uttara and told her that the newcomer would be her companion from then on and that she could learn dancing and singing from her. He added: “She seems to be a high-born person. She does not seem to be an ordinary dancer. Treat her with the respect due to a queen. Take her to your apartments.” (MB, Virata Parva, Ch. 3, p. 261)

Jagannatha Misra is (Lord Caitanya’s) father. Whatever money, cloth, gold and silver he had, he was also distributing it to the poor men and the third-gender (“eunuch”) dancers. (SP tape recording #67-002)

31) Everyone should work for Krsna or God according to their respective nature (*svakarma* or *svadharmā*), even if performed imperfectly. To follow another’s path or to artificially suppress one’s nature is considered dangerous and ill-advised. (Bhagavad Gita 3.33, 35; 18.45-48)

Even a man of knowledge acts according to his own nature, for everyone follows his nature. What can repression accomplish? (BG 3.33)

It is far better to discharge one’s prescribed duties, even though they may be faulty, than another’s duties. Destruction in the course of performing one’s own duty is better than engaging in another’s duties, for to follow another’s path is dangerous. (BG 3.35)

It is better to engage in one’s own occupation, even though one may perform it imperfectly, than to accept another’s occupation and perform it perfectly. Prescribed duties, according to one’s nature, are never affected by sinful reactions. (BG 18.47)

32) *Smarta-brahmanas* (ritualistic, non-Vaishnava priests) typically view a very wide range of people, including the third sex, as impure, untouchable or outcaste. (*Manusmṛiti* 4.205-223)

A (*snataka* or purist) *brahmana* must never eat a dinner given at a sacrifice that is offered by a *brahmana* who is not learned in the Veda,

a professional priest, a woman, or a third-gender man. Let him never eat any food given by the following: a prostitute, a thief, a musician, a carpenter, a loan agent, a person of the third sex, an unchaste woman, a *sudra* (laborer), a physician, a hunter, an actor, a tailor, a blacksmith, a dark-skinned person (*nisada*), a goldsmith, a basket weaver, a weapons dealer, a dog trainer, a tax collector, a washer man, a clothing dyer, an adulterer, a king, a leather cutter, an artisan, and so on. If the *snataka* unwittingly eats the food of one of these, he must fast for three days; if he eats it intentionally, he must perform a Krikkhra penance. (MS 4.205-223, abridged)

33) The *smarta* or ritualistic scriptures typically demean and place restrictions on third-gender persons as well as many other types including women, *sudras*, artisans, dark-skinned races, etc., according to birth, body-type and caste. Vaishnavas and other transcendentalists, however, easily reject such mundane judgments in favor of a person's quality of character and devotion to God. (*Jaiva Dharma*, Ch. 3, p. 54; Bhagavad Gita 9.32; *Srimad Bhagavatam* 7.11.35, *Caitanya-caritamrta* 2.8.128)

(A Vaishnava) never adheres blindly to the rules and prohibitions of the *sastras* [scriptures]. He accepts the instructions and prohibitions of the *sastras* graciously, but only when they are favorable to his practice of *hari-bhajana* [worship of God]. When they are unfavorable, he immediately rejects them. (JD, Ch. 3, p. 54)

O son of Prtha, those who take shelter in Me, though they be of sinful birth, women, *vaisyas* [merchants], as well as *sudras* [workers], can approach the supreme destination. (BG 9.32)

If one shows the symptoms of being a *brahmana*, *ksatriya*, *vaisya* or *sudra*, as described above, even if he has appeared in a different class, he should be accepted according to those symptoms of classification. (SB 7.11.35)

Whether one is a *brahmana*, a *sannyasi* or a *sudra*—regardless of what he is—he can become a spiritual master if he knows the science of Krsna. (CC 2.8.128)

34) Bodily designations such as gender (male, female or third sex), race, nationality, and so on play no role in determining whether a person is divine or demonic. That is determined by individual qualities and personal behavior alone. (Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 16)

(See Chapter 16 of Bhagavad Gita for a complete description of the divine and demonic qualities.)

35) Truthfulness, being open and straightforward, revealing one's mind in confidence, compassion, inclusiveness and so on are all important Vaishnava qualities that should be practically applied in cases of third-gender (LGBTI) people and issues. (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 8.20.4, Bhagavad Gita 10.4-5, *Sri Upadesamrta* 4, *Jaiva Dharma*, Ch. 20, p. 490, *Krsna* book, Ch. 24, p. 198)

There is nothing more sinful than untruthfulness. Because of this, Mother Earth once said, "I can bear any heavy thing except a person who is a liar." (SB 8.20.4)

Satyam, truthfulness, means that facts should be presented as they are, for the benefit of others. Facts should not be misrepresented. According to social conventions, it is said that one can speak the truth only when it is palatable to others. But that is not truthfulness. The truth should be spoken in a straightforward way, so that others will understand actually what the facts are. If a man is a thief and if people are warned that he is a thief, that is truth. Although sometimes the truth is unpalatable, one should not refrain from speaking it. Truthfulness demands that the facts be presented as they are for the benefit of others. That is the definition of truth. (BG 10.4-5, purport)

Offering gifts in charity, accepting charitable gifts, revealing one's mind in confidence, inquiring confidentially, accepting *prasada* [foodstuffs offered to Krsna] and offering *prasada* are the six symptoms of love shared by one devotee and another. (SU, verse 4)

Sri Krsna is very quickly satisfied with one who maintains a compassionate mood towards other *jivas*, and who does not give them any kind of anxiety through his body, mind and words. Compassion is the main *dharma* of the Vaishnavas. (JD, Ch. 20, p. 490)

In all communities in human society—including the *brahmanas*, *ksatriyas*, *vaisyas*, *sudras*, *candalas*, etc.—and in the animal kingdom—including the cows, dogs, goats, etc.—everyone has his part to play. Each is to work in cooperation for the total benefit of all society, which includes not only animate objects but inanimate objects like hills and land...Another hint we get from this statement is that the *candalas*, or the untouchables, are also not to be neglected by the higher classes and should be given necessary protection. Everyone is important, but some are directly responsible for the advancement of human society, and some are only indirectly responsible. However, when Kṛṣṇa consciousness is there, then everyone's total benefit is taken care of. (KB, Ch. 24, p. 198)

36) A spiritually advanced person views everyone equally as part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa. He never hates anyone. Rather, he is friendly and kind to all creatures. Conversely, mundane religionists discriminate against and exclude others on the basis of bodily differences. (*Sri Isopanisad* 6, *Srimad Bhagavatam* 3.29.26-27, *Sri Tattva-sutram* 35, *Bhagavad Gita* 5.18, 11.55, 12.13-14)

A person who sees everything in relation to the Supreme Lord, and sees all entities as His parts and parcels, and who sees the Supreme Lord within everything, never hates anything, nor any being. (SI, verse 6)

As the blazing fire of death, I cause great fear to whoever makes the least discrimination between himself and other living entities because of a differential outlook. Therefore, through charitable gifts and by viewing all to be alike, one should propitiate Me, who abide in all creatures as their very Self. (SB 3.29.26-27)

Those who think that devotion to God and kindness to living entities are different to each other and act accordingly in their life will not be able to follow devotional culture. Their attempt is only a resemblance of devotion. All types of beneficence to others like kindness, friendliness, forgiveness, charity and respect are included in devotion to God. Giving charity of medicine, clothes, food, and water are activities included in devotional culture. (STS, verse 35)

The humble sage, by virtue of true knowledge, sees with equal vision a learned and gentle *brahmana*, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater [outcaste]. (BG 5.18)

My dear Arjuna, one who is engaged in My pure devotional service, free from the contaminations of previous activities and from mental speculation, who is friendly to every living entity, certainly comes to Me. (BG 11.55)

37) Krsna Himself never hates nor envies anyone. He is equal to all but especially inclined to His devotees. (Bhagavad Gita 9.29, 12.20; *Srimad Bhagavatam* 1.9.21)

I envy no one, nor am I partial to anyone. I am equal to all. But whoever renders service unto Me in devotion is a friend, is in Me, and I am also a friend to him. (BG 9.29)

He who follows this imperishable path of devotional service and who completely engages himself with faith, making Me the supreme goal, is very, very dear to Me. (BG 12.20)

Being the Absolute Personality of Godhead, He is present in everyone's heart. He is equally kind to everyone, and He is free from the false ego of differentiation. Therefore whatever He does is free from material inebriety. He is equibalanced. (SB 1.9.21)

38) *Vaishnava-* or *sanatana-dharma* is very liberal and all living entities have a right to practice it. Anyone can serve Krsna in their natural capacity and chant the holy names whether fit or unfit, strictly following the regulations of *bhakti-yoga* or not strictly following. (Bhagavad Gita 12.9-12, *Caitanya-caritamrta* 1.9.29, *Jaiva Dharma*, Ch. 7, p. 172)

If you cannot practice the regulations of *bhakti-yoga*, then just try to work for Me, because by working for Me you will come to the perfect stage. (BG 12.10)

Not considering who asked for it and who did not, nor who was fit and who unfit to receive it, Caitanya Mahaprabhu distributed the fruit of devotional service. (CC 1.9.29)

Ah! *Vaishnava-dharma* is very liberal. All *jivas* have the right to *vaishnava-dharma*; that is why it is also known as *jaiva-dharma*. Even outcastes can take up *vaishnava-dharma* and live as *grhasthas*, although they are not part of *varnasrama*.” (JD, Ch. 7, p. 172)

39) The third sex exists throughout the natural and supernatural worlds. Third-gender animals, humans, demigods and deities with mixed male/female qualities are mentioned here and there throughout the Vedic canon. (*Sushruta Samhita* 5.4.18, 25; *Kama Sutra* 2.8-9; *Prasna Marga* 15.214; *Shatapatha Brahmana* 2.4.4.19, *Brihat Samhita* 58.43, 67.9-10)

[Animals] The eyes, tongue, mouth and head of a male serpent are large, whereas those of a female snake are small. Snakes with both features, along with milder venom and a less irritable disposition, are of the third sex (*napumsaka*). (SS 5.4.18)

[Humans] (See the *Kama Sutra* verses quoted in #2.)

[Demigods] When Jupiter occupies Gemini or Virgo, a third-gender *devata* formed by the wrath of the gods, *abhicara* or *brahmanas* is indicated. (PM 15.214)

During the new-moon night these two [Mitra and Varuna] meet and when they are thus together they are pleased with a cake offering. Verily, all are pleased and all is obtained by any person knowing this. On that same night, Mitra implants his seed in Varuna and when the moon later wanes, that waning is produced from his seed. (ShB 2.4.4.19)

[Deities] The deity of Siva shall be made with the figure of the moon in his head...The left half of the deity may be made of half the body of Parvati, Lord Siva's wife. (BrS 58.43)

40) The material world is a reflection of the spiritual world. Every material manifestation (including the third gender) has its pure, original counterpart in spiritual existence. These truths are not easily understood, even by learned transcendentalists, and therefore the third sex is sometimes known as *channa-* or *gupta-prakriti* (the hidden sex). (Bhagavad Gita 15.1, *Caitanya-caritamrta* 1.1.5; 1.4.29, 65; 1.14.42, *Jaiva Dharma*, Ch. 32, p. 695)

This tree [the material world], being the reflection of the real tree, is an exact replica. Everything is there in the spiritual world...The material world is the perverted reflection, so the spiritual world must have the same variegatedness, but in reality...A reflection is temporary, for it is

sometimes seen and sometimes not seen. But the origin from whence the reflection is reflected is eternal. (BG 15.1, purport)

One should know for certain that nothing can exist in this cosmic manifestation that has no real counterpart in the spiritual field. All material manifestations are emanations of the Transcendence. The erotic principles of amorous love reflected in mixed material values are perverted reflections of the reality of spirit, but one cannot understand the reality unless one is sufficiently educated in the spiritual science. (CC 1.4.29, purport)

The *priya-narma-sakhas* (Krsna's confidential boyfriends) are privy to extremely confidential secrets and have taken shelter of the spiritual emotions (*bhavas*) of Krsna's girlfriends (*sakhis*). Subala and Arjuna are prominent among Krsna's *priya-narma-sakhas*. Thus they are the best of all Krsna's friends. (JD, Ch. 32, p. 695)

Although Radha and Krsna are one in Their identity, They separated Themselves eternally. Now these two transcendental identities have again united, in the form of Sri Krsna Caitanya. I bow down to Him, who has manifested Himself with the sentiment and complexion of Srimati Radharani although He is Krsna Himself. (CC 1.1.5)

Creation of the Third Sex

The third sex has existed as an integral part of nature since time immemorial and its existence is rooted in spiritual reality. Bhagavan or God is the Supreme Male and His Sakti or Goddess is the Supreme Female. When combined into one form, They become the Supreme Hermaphrodite or Third-Gender Deity.

Since the material world is a reflection of the spiritual, conditioned souls also accept male, female and third-gender bodies. The original creation of the third sex in this material universe by Lord Brahma is narrated in the *Bhagavata Purana* as follows:

One day, Brahma, the creator of the living entities, beheld his own reflection in the water, and admiring himself, he evolved Kimpurusas as well as Kinnaras out of that reflection. The Kumpurusas and Kinnaras took possession of that shadowy form left by Brahma. That is

why they and their sexual partners [*mithuni-bhuya*] sing his praises by recounting his exploits at every daybreak. (3.20.45-46)

The Kimpurusas and Kinnaras refer to highly unusual beings that are part one thing and part something else. This typically refers to semi-divine beings that are half man, half animal but also includes the third-gender that is half man, half woman. Even today in India, transgenders, homosexuals and other people of the third sex are often addressed as *kinnara* due to their combined male and female natures. They are also believed to have supernatural powers because of this divine association.

One of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes evokes the verse cited above and can be found in Srīla Rupa Goswami's *Lalita-madhava* (8.34; see also *Srī Caitanya-caritamṛta* 2.8.148-149). In this pastime, Kṛṣṇa becomes so attracted by His own reflection in a jeweled pillar that He wants to embrace Himself just as Srimatī Radharānī does. It is said that at this moment, the Lord contemplated on becoming Srī Caitanya Mahāprabhu (Radhā and Kṛṣṇa combined) to experience a drop of Srī Radhā's unlimited love and appreciation for Him.

Three Types of Celibacy

The three types of celibacy mentioned in the Ayur Shastra can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Celibacy performed voluntarily, with a peaceful mind, for good health or spiritual purposes and at the proper stage of life is in the mode of goodness.
- 2) Celibacy performed artificially, with an agitated mind, for mundane purposes such as prestige and power or at an improper stage of life is in the mode of passion.
- 3) Celibacy performed involuntarily through force or lack of opportunity, while unqualified, through painful methods (such as castration), in distress and producing bad results is in the mode of ignorance.

Four Types of Sexual Intercourse

The four types of sexual intercourse described in the Kāma Shastra can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Sexual intercourse performed according to religious principles (in marriage, for procreation only, at the proper time and day, while clean, sober and purified, employing the *upasriptaka* or “man-on-top” method, etc.) is in the mode of goodness.
- 2) Sexual intercourse performed while neglecting religious principles (outside of marriage, for pleasure only, at an improper time, etc.), employing *citrarata* or exceptional methods (*purushayita* or “woman-on-top,” *auparishtaka* or oral sex, etc.) or with high-class courtesans is in the mode of passion.
- 3) Sexual intercourse performed while assuming very difficult positions; with biting and scratching; while mildly intoxicated; while jealous or unclean; employing methods such as *adhorata* (anal sex) or with lower-class prostitutes and persons of no account (*potarata*) is in the mode of passion mixed with ignorance.
- 4) Sexual intercourse performed without affection or attraction; with forbidden partners (such as the spouse of another, a relative, child, animal, etc.); causing great pain and distress; while grossly intoxicated or with hatred, anger, violence, rape and so on, is in the mode of ignorance.

Nine Components of Sex and Gender

Vedic science determines sex and gender not simply by a person’s genitals or appearance but by the nine components described in the Ayur Shastra and summarized below. Any variation, mixing, reversal, absence, weakness, etc. of these male/female components resulting in sterility, infertility or impotence with the opposite sex indicates the third gender.

- 1) *Bijabhagavayava* – male and female genetics.
- 2) *Bijabhaga* – male and female chromosomes.
- 3) *Bija* – male sperm and female ovum.
- 4) *Sukra* and *Sonita* – the male and female sexual fluids/hormones, respectively.
- 5) *Linga* and *Yoni* – the male and female sexual organs, respectively.
- 6) *Rupa* – bodily features such as facial hair, Adam’s apple, muscular build, etc. in males and enlarged breasts, wide hips, higher voice, etc. in females.
- 7) *Kama* – the desire of males for females, or of females for males.
- 8) *Abankara* – one’s bodily identification or self-conception as a man or as a woman.

- 9) *Vaja* – male potency (and female fertility) resulting in successful procreation.

Twelve Types of Exceptional Marriage

There are various types of exceptional marriage that are not allowed within the strict rules and regulations of *varnasrama* (*smarta-dharma*) but which Vaishnavas often recognize and allow as helpful in the cultivation of *bhakti*. Such exceptions to the general rule are not typically performed in front of temple Deities but nevertheless honored by an understanding and loving devotional community. They are as follows:

- 1) the marriage of women who are not virgins.
- 2) the marriage of women without dowries.
- 3) marriage outside of one's caste or to an improper caste.
- 4) interracial marriage.
- 5) the marriage of a Vaishnava to a person of another faith, an atheist or an agnostic.
- 6) the remarriage of divorced Vaishnavas.
- 7) the marriage of fallen *sannyasis*.
- 8) the marriage of middle-aged and elderly Vaishnavas (who are past childbearing age).
- 9) the marriage of sterile or infertile Vaishnavas.
- 10) the marriage of third-gender or LGBTI Vaishnavas (same-sex marriage).
- 11) the marriage of Vaishnavas who do not want and will not have children.
- 12) the marriage of people who are not strictly following Vaishnava principles (for instance, ethnic Hindus or the sons and daughters of Vaishnavas).

CHAPTER FOUR

HINDU DEITIES AND THE THIRD SEX

Throughout Hindu and Vedic texts there are many descriptions of saints, demigods, and even the Supreme Lord transcending gender norms and manifesting multiple combinations of sex and gender. These include male, female, hermaphrodite, and all other possibilities. In Hinduism, God is recognized as unlimited and untethered by any gender restrictions. For the purpose of enjoying transcendental pastimes (*lila*), the Supreme Lord manifests innumerable types of forms—just like an actor on a stage.

As parts and parcels of the Supreme Lord, the various living entities can also be seen to manifest within the full spectrum of sex and gender possibilities. From the impersonal perspective, the soul is not male, female, or hermaphrodite, but from the personal perspective the soul assumes such forms according to desire. In the mundane sphere, the soul manifests various gender roles in the pursuit of material enjoyment, but in the spiritual world these roles are adopted for the transcendental purpose of reciprocating with the Supreme Lord and rendering loving service.

The following list of Hindu deities provides interesting examples of saints, demigods, and incarnations of the Lord associated with gender transformation and diversity. These include:

- Deities that are hermaphrodite (half man, half woman)
- Deities that manifest in all three genders
- Male deities who become female, or female deities who become male
- Male deities with female moods, or female deities with male moods
- Deities born from two males, or from two females

- Deities born from a single male, or from a single female
- Deities who avoid the opposite sex, and
- Deities with principal companions of the same gender

All of these different examples demonstrate the remarkable amount of gender-variance found within Hinduism. In India, people of the third sex—homosexuals, transgenders, bisexuals, hermaphrodites, transsexuals, etc.—identify with these deities and worship them with great reverence and devotion. Along with other Hindus, they arrive en masse to celebrate the large holidays and festivals connected with them. In traditional Hinduism, such people were associated with these divine personalities due to their combined male and female natures. They were included in the various religious ceremonies and viewed as auspicious symbols of peace, good fortune and culture.

1. *Sri Ardhanarisvara* (Siva's Hermaphrodite Form). The form of Siva and Parvati combined is the most popular and widely known hermaphrodite deity in Hinduism. The deity's right side is male (Siva) and the left side is female (Parvati). Sri Ardhanarisvara is worshiped for blessings in fertility, marriage, progeny and longevity. People with both male and female qualities—the third sex—are associated with this deity and believed to possess similar powers.
2. *Sri Arjuna* (In Three Genders). Widely known as the hero of the *Mahabharata* and dear friend of Lord Krsna, Arjuna manifests all three genders in Vedic literature: his original male form, his transgender form as Brihannala and his female form as the *gopi* Arjuni. As Brihannala he lives as a transwoman in the palace of Maharaja Virata for one year, teaching music and dancing to young girls. As Arjuni he love-sports with Krsna after transforming into a young *gopi* girl.
3. *Sri Ayyappa* (Son of Siva and Vishnu). While chasing Lord Vishnu's beautiful female form of Mohini, Siva spilled his semen and from it arose an effulgent god known as Sri Ayyappa. As an eternal bachelor, Ayyappa is worshiped along with his companion Vavar for strength, purification, success in celibacy, freedom from marriage, and so on. Every winter, a pilgrimage is held atop Mt. Subarimalai (Kerala, India) in his honor.
4. *Sri Bahucara-Devi* (Goddess of Male Castration). When Sri Bahucara-devi's husband neglected her in marriage to enjoy with other men, the goddess (an expansion of Durga) castrated him as a lesson for all third-gender men who dishonestly marry women. Bahucara-devi has consequently become a patron goddess for transgenders, transsexuals, the

intersexed, *hijra*, eunuchs, etc. and she protects, guides and grants special powers to all who worship her.

5. *Sri Bhagavati-Devi* (Goddess of Crossdressing). When a group of cowherd boys worshiped a stone in the mood of shy young girls, the goddess Bhagavati (Durga) personally came before them to accept their worship and become the stone. Since that time, a temple was erected and the festival known as *Chamaya-vilakku* commenced. Celebrated in spring, this festival to Sri Bhagavati-devi features one of the largest crossdressing festivals in India.
6. *Sri Bhagiratha Maharaja* (Born of Two Women). When Maharaja Dilipa of Ayodhya died without any sons, Siva appeared before his two widowed queens and said, “You two make love together and by my blessings you will bear a beautiful son.” The loving queens complied and Maharaja Bhagiratha (“he who was born from two *bhagas* or vulvas”) was thus conceived. Bhagiratha went on to continue the dynasty and bring the Ganges River to earth.
7. *Sri Brahma* (Born of Vishnu Alone). At the beginning of creation, Lord Vishnu lies down on the universal ocean and sprouts a lotus from His navel. From that lotus He singlehandedly generates Sri Brahma, the first created being in charge of engineering and propagating the material universe. Examples of divine beings issued from a single parent, whether male or female, are common in Vedic literature and transcend all stereotypes regarding reproduction.
8. *Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu* (Radha and Krsna Combined). When Lord Krsna wants to taste the divine love Radha has for Him, He incarnates as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu—Radha and Krsna combined. While appearing in male form, His complexion, inner mood and emotions are that of a female (Sri Radha). Sri Caitanya was blessed by the third sex, inaugurated the chanting of Hare Krsna and engaged in many transcendental crossdressing pastimes.
9. *Sri Chandi-Chamunda* (Twin Warrior Goddesses). When two demons threatened the universe, Durga expanded herself as the twin warrior goddesses Sri Chandi-Chamunda. She then fought furiously against the demons and killed them. Sri Chandi-Chamunda represent a tradition of twin warrior goddesses in Hinduism that ride together on a single lion, exhibit extraordinary strength and defeat men in battle with great prowess.
10. *Sri Durga-Devi* (Universal Mother). Sri Durga-devi is the universal mother and goddess of the material cosmos. She rides a lion or tiger and

has eight arms. Durga can be both loving and fierce: she offers shelter to the conditioned souls but never hesitates to punish them when they misbehave. Sri Durga-devi has innumerable expansions and is worshiped throughout India. Many of the festivals connected with her involve both male and female crossdressing.

11. *Sri Gadadhara* (Radha in Male Form). When Sri Radha wants to associate with Krsna without any social restriction, She incarnates as Sri Gadadhara Pandita—Lord Caitanya’s inseparable and dearest companion. In that beautiful male form Radha freely associates with the Lord, assists in His pastimes and witnesses Her own ecstatic emotions in Him. Sri Gadadhara also participates in Mahaprabhu’s transcendental crossdressing pastimes.
12. *Sri Ganesha* (Born of Parvati Alone). Sri Ganesha is famous as the elephant-headed god and represents the many “queer” beings (*kinnara*) found in both Hinduism and nature. He is a friend to the fallen and removes all obstacles. When goddess Parvati wanted a powerful son that would obey her alone, she fashioned Ganesha from clay and brought him to life. When Ganesha later fought against Siva, his head was chopped off and replaced with that of an elephant’s.
13. *Sri Gangamma-Devi* (Goddess of Disguise). Sri Gangamma-devi is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu’s spiritual *shakti* (Yogamaya or Subhadra). When a demonic king wanted to enjoy the beautiful girl Ganga, she used eight different disguises to escape his advances. On the final day she assumed her fierce form of Durga and killed the demon. A South Indian festival (*Ganga-yatra*) celebrates this occasion and includes several days of crossdressing.
14. *Sri Harihara* (Vishnu and Siva Combined). Sri Harihara is a form in which the two male deities of Vishnu (Hari) and Siva (Hara) are fused together. This form appeared when Siva embraced Vishnu as Mohini—thus the right or male side of the deity is Siva and the left or female side is Vishnu. Sri Harihara is celebrated as the father of Lord Ayyappa and symbolizes the unity and deep relationship between the two *devas*.
15. *Sri Iravan* (Husband to Vishnu). Sri Iravan, known in South India as Aravan, is a son of Arjuna and the serpent princess, Ulupi. When Iravan offered himself as a sacrifice during the Kuruksetra War, Krsna fulfilled his final wish by assuming His Mohini form and marrying Iravan for the night. This divine marriage and Iravan’s sacrifice is honored each year by one of the largest crossdressing festivals in India (Tamil Nadu).
16. *Sri Jagannatha* (Lord of the *Gotipuas*). Sri Jagannatha is a popular Krsna Deity in Odisha whose temple has a long tradition of both *devadasis*

(female dancers) and *gotipuas* (crossdressing-male dancers). Each year, a selected virgin *devadasi* performs privately for Jagannatha and a selected *gotipua* similarly dances before Lord Baladeva (Jagannatha's brother). The *devadasi* tradition is currently extinct but the *gotipua* practice continues to this day.

17. *Sri Kali* (Goddess of Destruction). Sri Kali is yet another expansion of the goddess Durga, especially popular in Bengal. She manifests an amazing display of power and might, shattering all stereotypes of women as only feminine. As a divine warrior, she fights equally beside men and defeats them in battle. As a goddess, she rides a tiger and carries out mass destruction—war, catastrophe, cyclones, earthquakes, etc.—are all manifestations of her colossal force.
18. *Sri Kartikeya* (Son of Siva and Agni). Sri Kartikeya is the god of war and commander-in-chief of the demigods. When Siva once spilled his semen, Agni (the fire god) swallowed it up. The semen was then transferred in various ways but eventually emerged as the god Kartikeya. Cursed by Parvati to see all women as his mother, Kartikeya never married. He is worshiped alongside his fierce-looking male companion known as Visakha.
19. *Sri Krsna* (Enchanter of Cupid). Sri Krsna is known as Madana-mohana, the enchanter of Cupid. Although Madana or Cupid is the god of sex and bewilders the entire universe, Krsna's beauty is so incomparable that it mesmerizes even him. Indeed, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead and original male, all beings are considered female in relation to Krsna. He also crossdresses as *Syamali-gopi* and combines with Radha to become Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.
20. *Sri Minakshi-Devi* (Warrior Goddess). Sri Minakshi-devi is another warrior goddess, especially worshiped in South India. As an expansion of Durga appearing in Madurai, Minakshi rode horses, tamed elephants and wrestled bulls with her bare hands. She hunted tigers, led armies all over India and defeated many kings. Like the goddess Kali, Minakshi-devi shatters all stereotypes of women as weak or in need of protection.
21. *Sri Mitra-Varuna* (Intimate Brothers). The two gods of water, Sri Mitra-Varuna, are brothers of great intimacy. Riding together on a shark, crocodile or swan, Varuna rules the shorelines, rivers and lakes whereas Mitra guards the ocean depths and lower portals. Varuna is associated with the mouth and Mitra the anus. The *Brahmana* scriptures relate how Mitra plants his semen in Varuna on the new moon night, and Varuna in Mitra when the moon is full.

22. *Sri Mohini-Murti* (Vishnu as Female). When the demigods and demons were fighting over a pot of nectar, Lord Vishnu assumed His beautiful female form of Sri Mohini-murti. With her blackish form and enchanting ways, Mohini bewildered the demons and cheated them out of their share of the nectar. She also bewildered Siva (creating Ayyappa) and married Iravan for one night. Mohini-murti is worshiped during the large Kumbha-mela festivals of India.
23. *Sri Narada Muni* (Celestial Celibate). Sri Narada Muni is the transcendental sage of the demigods. He was born from the mind of Brahma and is a lifelong celibate. He travels freely throughout the universe plucking the *vina*, preaching the glories of God and accompanied by his dear companion, Parvata Muni. The *Padma Purana* describes how Narada was transformed into the *gopi* maiden, Naradi, to love-sport with Lord Krsna for an entire year.
24. *Sri Ramacandra* (Benefactor of the Third Sex). When Sri Ramacandra (a popular incarnation of Vishnu) was exiled, his devoted followers of the third sex remained waiting at the forest's edge for fourteen years. Thus they received the Lord's blessings. Similarly, when the sages of Dandakaranya developed conjugal affection for Sri Ramacandra, the Lord fulfilled their desire by blessing them to become cowherd maidens in Lord Krsna's pastimes.
25. *Sri Siva* (Lord of the Dance). Sri Siva is the lord of the material cosmos and husband of goddess Durga (his *shakti*). When the time comes for universal destruction, Siva performs his cosmic dance and ends the creation. He is the greatest *yogi* but also a friend to the ghosts, demons and other fallen beings. His third-gender form is Sri Ardhanarisvara and in Krsna's pastimes he is Gopisvara—the *gopi* maiden who guards the sacred *rasa-lila* dance arena.
26. *The Six Goswamis* (*Gopis* in Male Forms). The Six Goswamis were austere saints who lived in Vrndavana, India, during the sixteenth century. As pure devotees of the Lord they led strictly celibate lives, composed scores of essential Vaisnava texts, constructed large temples and established the pastime places of Sri Radha-Krsna. The Six Goswamis were all *gopi* maidens who, on the order of Radha, incarnated as males to assist in Sri Caitanya's mission.
27. *Sri Sukracarya* (Born of Siva Alone). Sri Sukracarya is the preceptor of the *asuras* (godless demons) and master of all mystic powers. He is blind in the right eye, relating to his lack of spiritual vision. When Sukracarya wanted the power for bringing the dead back to life, he quit his body and

entered the mouth of Siva. After acquiring the power, he exited through Siva's phallus and assumed a new body known as Sukra ("sprung from the semen of Siva").

28. *Sri Surya* (Lover of Aruni). Sri Surya is the sun god who illuminates the universe. He is also known as Ravi or Vivasvan and is empowered by Lord Narayana. When Aruna—the god of dawn and charioteer of Surya—transformed himself into a beautiful goddess (Aruni), Surya became overwhelmed with desire and impregnated her. The monkey-king Sugriva was thus born and consequently the relationship between these two is very unique.
29. *Sri Vallabhavardhana* (Vishnu's Hermaphrodite Form). Sri Vallabhavardhana is the relatively little-known, combined form of Lord Vishnu and Laksmi-devi (His divine consort) mentioned in the *Bhavisya Purana*. The right half is represented by Vishnu and the left half by Laksmi. Sri Vishnu, maintainer of the cosmos, thus appears in all three genders as male (Himself), female (Mohini) and third gender (Sri Vallabhavardhana).
30. *Sri Yellamma-Devi* (Goddess of the *Devadasis*). When Renuka was in danger of being beheaded by her son (Parasurama), Sri Yellamma-devi (an expansion of Durga) rescued her from the matricide. Renuka thus dedicated herself to Yellamma and became her inseparable companion. Sri Renuka-Yellamma are worshiped together with great pomp in South India, especially by the temple *devadasis* and *jogappas* (crossdressing male dancers).

CHAPTER FIVE

HINDU FESTIVALS POPULAR WITH THE THIRD SEX

For thousands of years, people of the third sex have maintained prominent roles in many religious festivals all over India. At some of them, third-gender devotees actually preside over the festivities and constitute the majority; in others, they maintain a noticeable presence and carry out specific functions such as dancing, offering blessings, etc. Amidst the festive atmosphere of a Hindu holiday, the presence of crossdressing men and other members of the third sex never fails to complete the colorful pageantry. Under British rule, crossdressing was highly discouraged and even criminalized in most places. However, it persisted as an ancient Hindu tradition, especially within the context of religious festivals, and is now gradually being revived. Ideally, third-gender devotees should be welcome at all Hindu festivals and their presence considered an auspicious sign of peace and prosperity.

There are many different types of third-gender devotees. The most visible at festivals are the male-to-female crossdressers who are generally transgenders and effeminate gay men. Others are transvestites who live as men due to social pressure but who appreciate the chance to flaunt their feminine side on such occasions. A good number belong to the various third-gender sects of India—the *hijra*, *aravani*, *ali*, *jogappa*, *sakhi-bekhi*, etc.—and some are even eunuchs who have undergone ritual castration. Many masculine gay men can also be found in attendance, along with lesbians, bisexuals, the intersexed and other types of third-gender minorities. Some of the festivals cater to specific gender types; for instance, gay men are more prominent at the male-oriented Ayyappa festival (where crossdressing is virtually non-existent and females are prohibited), while male-to-female crossdressers are

most commonly visible at festivals honoring the various Hindu goddesses such as Bahucara-mata and Durga-devi.

As with any festival, motives for attendance can vary. Most third-gender devotees are sincere in their worship and consider themselves devotional practitioners (*sadhakas* or *sadhakis*) and humble servants of their venerated deity. A few others, however, may come merely for the festivities, social interaction, or to make a show of themselves. In any case, it is important to follow all local customs carefully—crossdressing may not be appropriate at certain times or places during the festival and homosexuality is still highly stigmatized in India. Respecting local customs and maintaining a humble, reverential attitude are imperative if one wants to achieve the true spiritual benefit of the holiday.

Below is a short summary of some of the more prominent festivals associated with the third sex. Most of these relate to the worship of gender-variant deities or important pastimes in which a deity has changed his or her gender. They fall on specific days of the year and are calculated according to the Hindu calendar. Be sure to check with festival organizers for the exact dates since local calculations may vary.

Aravan Festival

Deity worshiped: Sri Iravan (Aravan in Tamil) and Sri Krsna as Mohini-murti.

Description: This festival celebrates Sri Iravan's marriage to Lord Krsna's Mohini form and his subsequent sacrifice. In order to assure victory for the Pandavas in battle, Iravan, the son of Arjuna, agreed to sacrifice himself to goddess Kali. His last request before dying was to marry and lose his virginity but since no girl would marry a man about to be sacrificed, Krsna assumed His Mohini form and fulfilled Iravan's request. The festival lasts for six days and reenacts both the unusual marriage and Iravan's sacrifice. Thousands of crossdressers, transgenders and homosexual men assemble together for what is perhaps the largest of all third-gender festivals in India. At the climax, an effigy of the local Koothandavara deity (Iravan) is burned and thousands of crossdressers express their great distress by wailing, beating their chests, breaking their bangles, etc.

When: The main festival day is celebrated on the Tuesday prior to the full moon of Vaisakha (April-May; called Chaitra in Tamil Nadu). The entire festival begins four days before that.

Where: Koovagam, Tamil Nadu, India. Koovagam is a very small, rural village, so accommodations should be made in the nearby town of Villupuram (174 kilometers south of Chennai).

Ayyappa Festival

Deity worshiped: Sri Ayyappa, the son of Siva and Vishnu (as Mohini-murti).

Description: As the son of two male deities, Sri Ayyappa is very popular with the third sex. The main festival for Lord Ayyappa is held in winter atop Mt. Sabarimalai, a remote, forested mountain in Kerala. Tens of thousands of male pilgrims make the long trek up to the deity's main shrine in the belief that it will keep Lord Ayyappa free from marriage (women from ten to fifty years of age were formerly prohibited from making the pilgrimage). The festival celebrates Ayyappa's killing of the demon Mahisi and his retirement to the mountaintop for meditation.

When: The main festival day falls on the *Makara-sankranti*, when the sun enters Capricorn (mid-January).

Where: Sabarimalai, Kerala, India. Accommodations can be found in the nearby towns of Pamba and Sannidhanam.

Bahucara-Mata Festival

Deity worshiped: Sri Bahucara-devi.

Description: Sri Bahucara-devi is the goddess of male castration and is very popular with transgenders, transsexuals, *hijra*, eunuchs and so on. Each day of the week Bahucara-devi rides on a different animal carrier; on Sundays and full-moon days she rides a cock, and this is the special day for *hijras* and crossdressers to come worship the goddess. The temple is located in Gujarat on a holy site that is said to be the place where Lord Krsna performed His tonsure or hair-cutting ceremony.

When: Sundays and full-moon days. The two largest festivals are held on the full-moon days of Chaitra (March-April) and Asadha (June-July).

Where: Bahucharaji Taluka, Gujarat, India. The temple is located on the Mehsana Viramgam State Highway No. 7, about 110 kilometers northwest of Ahmedabad.

Chamaya-Vilakku Festival

Deity worshiped: Sri Bhagavati-devi.

Description: This festival is held at the Kottankulangara temple in Kerala. For two nights during the month of Chaitra, thousands of men of all types dress up as women and offer themselves to Sri Bhagavati-devi, an expansion of the goddess Durga. In a special ceremony called *Chamaya-vilakku*, the crossdressers grasp tall, lighted lamps and wait for the procession of the goddess in the form

of a *sila* or stone to pass by. The goddess Bhagavati then blesses the pilgrims and showers all good fortune upon them. The crossdressing festival is based on a story surrounding the temple's origin: Long ago, a group of cowherd boys worshiped a stone in the mood of shy, young girls. After some time, the goddess Bhagavati personally appeared before them to accept their worship and become the stone. The Kottankulangara temple was then constructed to house the stone deity and formal worship was commenced, along with the annual festival. The *Chamaya-vilakku* celebrations are very well organized; the crossdressing men are registered at the temple and makeup, dresses, wigs and jewelry are all available for rent on site.

When: The two festival nights are held on the tenth and eleventh days after the *Mina-sankranti*, when the sun enters Pisces (late March).

Where: Chavara, Kerala, India. The Kottankulangara temple is just a few miles outside the city of Kollam.

Ganesha-Caturthi Festival

Deity worshiped: Sri Ganesha.

Description: The half-elephant form of Sri Ganesha represents the “queerness” found in Hinduism and is very popular with the third sex. Ganesha is famous as the celestial guardian and gatekeeper who removes all obstacles and is merciful to all. The *Ganesha-caturthi* festival celebrates the god's appearance when his mother, Parvati, fashioned him from clay. It is celebrated all over India, but the festivities in Mumbai at Chowpatty Beach are the largest and most popular. Clay deities of Ganesha are worshiped for ten days and then taken in procession to the beach, amidst throngs of mostly male worshipers, where they are then immersed into the sea and dissolved. Most of the third-sex attendees of this festival are gay men but some crossdressers can also be found participating in the procession.

When: The worship begins on the fourth waxing-moon day of Bhadra (August-September).

Where: Mumbai, Maharashtra, India. The largest celebrations occur at Chowpatty Beach on the fourteenth day (Ganesha Visarjana).

Ganga-Yatra Festival

Deity worshiped: Sri Gangamma-devi.

Description: Sri Gangamma-devi is an expansion of the goddess Yogamaya or Subhadra and is worshiped as the younger sister of Lord Venkatesvara, a popular Deity of Lord Vishnu in Tirupati of Andhra Pradesh. The famous eight-day

festival, known as *Ganga-yatra*, is celebrated throughout South India during the month of Vaisakha (April-May) and is well known for its crossdressing festivities. These are based on a pastime in which Gangamma-devi assumed seven disguises in order to evade the advances of a local king. On the eighth day, the goddess became angry with the king and killed him. The final four days of the festival are the main time for crossdressing.

When: Festivities begin seven days prior to the *Vrsabha-sankranti*, when the sun enters Taurus (mid-May).

Where: Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, India.

Navaratri and Dasara Festivals

Deity worshiped: Sri Durga-devi (on *Navaratri*) and Sri Ramacandra (on *Dasara*).

Description: *Navaratri* is a nine-day festival celebrating the goddess Durga and held during the month of Ashvina (September-October). The seventh day of the festival is specifically known as *Durga-puja*, and the tenth day is *Dasara*, a celebration commemorating Lord Ramacandra's victory over the demon-king Ravana. This festival is also known as *Rama-vijayotsava* and is observed by burning an enormous effigy of Ravana, along with fireworks. *Navaratri* and *Dasara* are held side by side all over India and at some temples there is crossdressing in honor of the goddess. In Tamil Nadu, girl children are blessed with new dresses and sweets on these days and treated as representations of the goddess. In homes where there are no girls, small boys are crossdressed and honored in their place. At some temples such as the one in Udipi, the Krsna Deity is dressed up as a beautiful young girl with saris, jewelry and so on, and at the Tiruvanaikovil Siva temple on the banks of the Kaveri, a priest will wear a sari and headdress of the goddess while offering *puja* to Lord Siva on her behalf. In Kulasekarapattinam, also in Tamil Nadu, men traditionally dress up as women during *Navaratri* and go house-to-house asking for donations for the festival. On the tenth day of *Dasara*, they come to the Mutharamma Durga temple crossdressed for the purpose of offering prayers and receiving blessings from the goddess.

When: *Navaratri* falls on the first nine days of the waxing moon in Ashvina (September-October). *Dasara* falls on the tenth day.

Where: Traditions vary throughout India. The Mutharamma temple is in Kulasekarapattinam, Tamil Nadu. Kulasekarapattinam is a small, rural village, so accommodations should be made in the town of Tiruchendur (15 kilometers away).

Renuka-Yellamma Festival

Deity worshiped: Sri Yellamma-devi and Renuka.

Description: Sri Yellamma-devi is worshiped as an expansion of the goddess Durga. She saved the life of Renuka-devi who thereafter became her close companion and maidservant. There are many temples of Yellamma-devi throughout India; the ones at Saudatti and Badami in Karnataka are among the largest. They are associated with the *devadasi* cult as well as the *jogappas*—crossdressing men and homosexuals who, like the *devadasis*, serve the temple goddess as dancers and prostitutes. Festivals worshiping the goddess involve large celebrations and festive parades of nude or semi-clad *devadasis* along with the crossdressing *jogappas*.

When: The main festivals are held on the full-moon days of Chaitra (March-April) and Magha (January-February), with the Magha festival being the largest.

Where: Saudatti and Badami, Karnataka, India. Both of these villages are somewhat remote but can be reached from the town of Belgaum.

Other Festivals

There are other festivals that are important to the third sex but where their presence may or may not be visible. These include the *Kumbha-mela* festivals celebrated at Prayaga, Haridvara, Ujjain and Nasik during the month of Magha (January-February); *Siva-ratri*, *Gaura-purnima* and *Holi* celebrated in Phalgun (February-March); *Rama-navami* celebrated in Chaitra (March-April); the *Ratha-yatra* and *Hera-pancami* festivals of Lord Jagannatha at Puri celebrated in Asadha (June-July); *Sri Krsna-janmastami* celebrated in Bhadra (August-September), and *Kali-puja*, *Diwali*, *Govardhana-puja* and Sri Krsna's *Rasa-lila* celebrated in Kartika (October-November).

CHAPTER SIX

INDIA'S SLOW DESCENT INTO HOMOPHOBIA

Ancient India's acceptance and accommodation of many forms of eroticism within its culture, including homoeroticism, has been well documented in early Sanskrit writings, art and architecture. This makes modern-day India's sexual puritanism and homophobia, which reached its zenith in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, all the more astounding. In today's world, India has been relegated to the level of the most backward countries in the sphere of personal liberties, and one might wonder how such a drastic change could ever have come about. Through careful examination, India's long and troubled past reveals a gradual descent into puritanism and homophobia due to caste consciousness and foreign religious influence. The following is a brief timeline summarizing the history of India and its deteriorating attitude toward people of the third sex.

Vedic India

According to most Hindu astrologers, the *Kali Yuga* age began on February 20, 3102 B.C. and the period prior to this is generally referred to as the Vedic Age. At this time, many forms of sexuality are accommodated within India's native culture such as polygamy, prostitution, sexually explicit art, courtesans, etc. Homosexuality is recognized as a separate and third nature (*tritiya-prakriti*). Third-gender citizens are fully incorporated into society, most notably within the artisan and monastic communities. References to homosexuality and transgender identity in Vedic texts such as the *Kama Shastra* and *Mahabharata* are among

the oldest in the world, and scriptures such as the *Bhagavata Purana* date their compilation to approximately 3000 B.C.

Post-Vedic India

After the advent of *Kali Yuga*, Vedic culture slowly declines over several thousand years. A strict caste system develops based on birth and body type, causing the social structure to become very rigid. Priests are more ritualistic and less humanistic. They are known as *smarta-brahmanas* and become extremely arrogant and abusive of the lower classes, declaring them “untouchable.” Scriptures such as the *Manusmriti* and other ritualistic texts are corrupted during this time. The ancient Vedic rites are misused, and sacrifices are employed as an excuse for rampant animal slaughter.

The Buddhist Period

Beginning approximately 500 B.C., Buddhism gradually spreads throughout India. Vedic culture has degraded to such an extent that the population of India eagerly embraces Lord Buddha’s teachings of nonviolence and human equality. Buddhist teachings reject the Vedas, and Buddhism itself reaches a peak in India around the time of Christ.

The Gupta Period

This period begins about 300 A.D. The influence of Buddhism over India gradually wanes and is eventually driven out by Sankaracarya, who reinstates the authority of the Vedas. That authority is later reinforced by other great *acaryas* such as Ramanuja and Madhva. During this period, a renaissance of India’s Vedic philosophy and culture blossoms. Resurgence in the construction of Hindu temples begins around the sixth century, where one invariably finds a multitude of openly erotic images, including many depicting homosexuality. The temples of Khajuraho and Chapri serve as striking examples. The sage Vatsyayana also recompiles the *Kama Shastra* during this time.

Islamic Invasions Begin

In the closing years of the tenth century, armed Islamic migrants begin to move into northern India from regions west of the Hindukush Mountains such as Afghanistan and Persia. This starts an invasion that culminates in the establishment

of kingdoms in North India ruled by Muslim overlords. The meeting of Islamic and Hindu cultures is gradual, and each ethnic group flourishes. The construction of Hindu temples climaxes between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, particularly in southern India where Islamic influence remains virtually non-existent.

Hindu-Muslim Coexistence

Originally confined to military centers, Muslim migrants carrying Perso-Turko-Arabic traditions quickly disseminate into large urbanized areas within northern India. This is further accelerated by a mass migration of scholars, poets and elite administrators from other Islamic kingdoms to the west. These migrants are seeking refuge from the depredations of the Mongols who are ravaging much of western Asia in the thirteenth century. Hindus and Muslims coexist peacefully during this period, and there is a great cultural exchange between the two ethnic groups that lasts for centuries. Muslim clerics are free to interpret religious doctrine according to their own discretion and rarely punish homosexuality. On the contrary, it flourishes and is well documented within popular poetry from that time. Muslim migrants also introduce the Middle Eastern practice of castration among homosexual slaves and servants. Domestic slavery existed to a small extent in pre-Islamic India but now becomes an enormously profitable enterprise. Early sultans are heavily dependent on slaves as both soldiers and laborers. Alauddin Khalji (1296-1316) of the Sultanate of Delhi, for instance, is recorded as owning fifty thousand slaves, and Firuz Shah Tughlaq (1357-1388) owned 180,000. Of these, a good number are castrated eunuchs who command a high price. They are considered to be the most reliable and trustworthy of servants since they did not marry and raise families of their own. By the late 1400s, India is world renowned for its exotic treasures and European kingdoms clamor for a way to reach her lands. During the time of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the Genoan entrepreneur, Columbus, accidentally discovers the Americas while searching for a new shipping route to India.

The Mughal Empire

The Islamic Mughal Empire, established in North India in 1526, ends much of the peaceful coexistence between Hindus and Muslims with its new brand of Islamic extremism. Enforcing harsh anti-pagan codes, these invaders forcibly convert or kill Hindus, plunder their wealth and destroy villages, temples and religious deities. Not surprisingly, they also begin to mistreat women and persecute homosexuals during this period. Homosexual behavior is punished

under extreme Islamic or Shari'a law through either flagellation or death, which is accomplished by stoning, burning, collapsing a rock wall upon, or throwing off from a high point anyone found guilty. Fortunately the Mughal Empire, along with the rest of the Islamic world, soon declines in the 1600s when new advances in world commerce through ocean shipping rob them of their formerly prosperous monopoly on India's trade.

The Trading Companies

Bypassing Muslim traders, European shipping posts along India's coastlines flourish and establish powerful trading companies and ports. In 1757, the British East India Company becomes the dominant European trading company in India, a reign that will last for an entire century. After losing America to the colonists, the British are free to focus all of their attention on India. At this time in Christian England and Europe, the criminalization of homosexuality has reached its peak and "unnatural fornication" is routinely punished by hanging or garroting both men and women.

British Rule

In 1857, widespread rebellion breaks out in India against the British East India Trading Company. The rebellion is brutally crushed by the British Navy and in 1858 India is officially incorporated into the British Empire. Two years later, the anti-sodomy law of 1860 is enforced upon the entire empire that now includes India. The law, which remarkably is still in place in India today as Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, reads: "Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall be liable to fine." This law was taken to be an improvement for Great Britain, which had previously punished homosexuality by hanging, but for India it was a great step backward since Hindu culture had never previously criminalized homosexuality. The British also enact legislation outlawing castration and crossdressing in an attempt to eliminate the eunuch class that had thrived under Islamic rule. Despised by the British, eunuchs are forced into the darkest shadows of society where they must now live as outcasts. Also during this time, puritan scholars translate India's Sanskrit texts into English but omit or hide any reference to homosexuality because it is shocking to them. By British estimation, India was a backward country with a barbaric culture and primitive religion. The British Empire would impress upon

the Hindus their Christian values and educate them in proper, civilized behavior while simultaneously exploiting their country's resources for another full century.

India's Independence

In 1947, after considerable struggle through civil disobedience, India achieves political independence, and the British Empire is dismantled. However, as a country, India is culturally scarred in many ways. Most Indians believe that their ancient Hindu culture is inferior to modern Western civilization. They take their heritage to be something shameful and worth abandoning. Mahatma Gandhi, educated in England, sends squads of his disciples to smash the erotic representations on the ancient temples of Khajuraho and Chapri. Only the poet, Rabindranath Tagore, manages to stop them. Pandit Nehru attempts to halt the publishing of photographs that depict sculptures showing homosexual relations, claiming that such vices are due to Western influence. In fact, it is his own perception of vice that has been influenced by the West.

On to the Future

In 1967, the United Kingdom repeals its outdated anti-sodomy laws, effectively decriminalizing homosexuality for all of its citizens. India, on the other hand, continued to cling to such laws without considering its own native culture or traditions. Imposed labels upon homosexuality such as "deviant" or "unnatural" are of relatively very recent origin in India and not rooted in traditional Vedic or Hindu thought. Indeed, the very inventors of these labels, Euro-American psychologists, have already retracted them and come to the conclusion that homosexuality is natural and normal behavior for those born of that orientation. As modern culture and science gradually adopt a more open and realistic approach in dealing with its homosexual citizens, it is expected that India will eventually follow. Indeed, India's Supreme Court decriminalized homosexual relations in 2018.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NEGATIVE ATTITUDES IN MODERN HINDUISM

The various negative attitudes toward LGBTI or third-gender people found in Hinduism today is surprising when we take into account its traditionally tolerant approach. What follows is a short summary of these faulty attitudes and their origins. The first three involve natural prejudices that can occur in any society whereas the latter two are based on foreign (Islamic and Christian) religious teachings and theories. While many Hindu gurus and *acaryas* can be heard expressing these outdated attitudes even today, such approaches are unenlightened at best or completely untrue and opposed to Vedic teachings at worst.

Fear of Differences. Conditioned souls are inclined to harbor fear and prejudice against anything different, unusual, less common, unknown, etc. This is especially evident in children, who can often be seen bullying peers that are new, obese, racially or ethnically different, effeminate, etc. Ideally, culturally advanced societies have systems in place to safeguard against these natural prejudices. These include good parenting, attentive educational systems and exemplary civil/religious leadership. When the above-mentioned safeguards are absent or lacking, however, natural prejudices can run amok in society causing great harm and dissention.

Machismo. Another natural but potentially harmful attitude found in all societies is machismo or the excessive emphasis of masculinity, physical strength, power, etc. While the male ego and exploitive propensity are natural in this material world, they should not be allowed to go unchecked. Societies with

rampant machismo are prone to social oppression, violence and war. They tend to vilify or demean women, gay men and anyone else viewed as “weak” or “inferior.” Hindu scriptures specifically protect the third sex from vilification and ridicule (Artha Shastra 3.18.4-5), indicating that machismo and other natural prejudices existed in Vedic times but were ideally kept in check. There are several examples in Vedic texts wherein men are ridiculed for being third gender, even when they are not. (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 10.50.43-48 and 10.76.29, 31)

Religious Fundamentalism. When the rules of any religion are over-emphasized or misused to oppress others, such practices immediately become mundane and detrimental to society. In Hinduism, ritualistic priests (*smarta-brahmanas*), materialistic devotees, over-zealous neophytes and other similar types of religious people are susceptible to this kind of negative attitude. They place undue emphasis on the material body, birth or caste of others and look down upon a wide range of people including women, *sudras* (workers), dark-skinned races, the uninitiated, etc. *Smarta-brahmanas* impose innumerable strict rules that are impractical or even impossible for ordinary men to follow and consequently exclude many people from the Hindu faith. Regarding the third sex, Hindu fundamentalists typically dismiss such people as sinful, lusty or in the mode of passion. They fault them for not engaging in procreation and family life, which from their perspective is all-important and without exception. This negative attitude stands in direct contrast to the approach of enlightened spiritualists who view everyone equally as spirit-soul and engage whatever propensities they have in the service of God.

Islamic Influences. Muslims ruled over much of northern India for eight centuries and their influence over LGBTI attitudes in Hinduism was one of conflicted conservatism. India and the ancient world as a whole were quite liberal in regard to homosexuality and crossdressing but this came to a gradual end with the spread of Christianity and Islam, whose teachings condemned it. Under Muslim rule in India, homosexuality was publicly disavowed but nevertheless flourished behind closed doors. In regard to crossdressing, Islamic culture introduced and popularized the practice of castration among transgenders and house servants. Known as *hijras* in Arabic, they became the face of the third sex in medieval and early-modern India, holding a relatively dignified place in society. From the tenth century CE to the present, Islam grew increasingly conservative in India and around the world. This trend was also reflected in Hinduism as the two faiths competed against each other for moral superiority.

British Homophobia. British colonialists had the most negative impact on Hindu attitudes toward LGBTI people and this impact continues to stain the religion up to this day. Based on the Christian “two-genders-only” theory and biblical edicts, Great Britain criminalized both homosexuality and crossdressing for the first time in India’s history. Under the new laws and with its vast educational system, British colonialists instilled extremely vicious social attitudes and misinformation about LGBTI people upon India’s upper class and youth. These attitudes were consequently incorporated into the Hindu psyche and persist up to today, even though they directly contradict traditional Vedic teachings and scripture. Listed below are some of the negative attitudes and beliefs that were spread into Hindu culture under British rule:

1. *Homosexuality is unnatural.* Christian teachings assert that homosexuality and crossdressing are unnatural, manmade perversions that go against the order of nature. Traditional Vedic teachings, however, explain that everything is part of the natural world. Hindu scriptures explicitly mention a third nature or sex (*tritiya-prakriti*) that, while less common, involves natural same-sex attraction and transgender identity. Vedic medical texts such as the *Sushruta* and *Caraka Samhitas* describe how all three sexes are biologically determined at conception and established during the first two months of embryological development.
2. *Homosexuality does not exist in the animal kingdom.* British colonialists of the Victorian Era believed there was no homosexuality among animals. This fallacy is easily disproved by simple observation and science, but many old-fashioned Hindus still cling to the myth as an argument against LGBTI people. Vedic medical and astrological texts, however, cite several instances of third-gender animals (such as elephants and snakes) with mixed male and female qualities.
3. *Homosexuality is a curable disorder.* British colonialists taught that homosexuality and transgender identity were disorders that could be “cured” by forcibly adopting traditional male or female roles. For example, a gay or lesbian could be cured by marrying an opposite-sex partner, or a transgender could be cured by forced adherence to strict male or female roles, dress and identities. Later on they also asserted that homosexuality could be cured through various tactics such as hypnotherapy, chemical castration or electric shock. Hindus adopted these practices and also added a few quackeries of their own; for instance, the idea that homosexuality can be cured through breathing exercises, yoga or Ayurvedic potions. Vedic medical texts, however, assert that homosexuality and transgender

identity are inborn and cannot be changed after the second month of embryological development. The *Caraka Samhita* specifically condemns the idea of giving third-gender men aphrodisiacs (*vajikarana*) as a means of making them potent with women.

4. *Homosexuality is acquired or chosen.* British colonialists believed that since homosexuality and transgender identity were unnatural disorders, they must have been acquired in some way or chosen at some point. Thus they concocted all types of theories: the person was exposed to homosexuality at an early age, raised in a home with an absent father or overly-assertive mother, subjected to childhood trauma, sexually abused and so on. Another idea was that due to severe lust, irresponsibility or overindulgence with women, some men choose to become homosexual. These concocted theories are easily disproven through simple observation and science, and no Vedic texts support or suggest such claims. In the Ayur Shastra, homosexuality and transgender identity are discussed only in chapters on embryological development and never in sections concerned with psychological disorders or mental illnesses.
5. *Homosexuality and crossdressing are sinful.* Victorian Era Christians viewed homosexuality and crossdressing as horrific sins against nature and God, but Hinduism presents a more mild and rational view. Homosexuality and transgender identity are listed as a third sex or nature in Vedic texts and not as a third vice or sin. Thus we find homosexuality and crossdressing addressed much differently in traditional Vedic Hinduism.
6. *Homosexuality and crossdressing should be criminalized.* British colonialists criminalized homosexuality in India, first by hanging and then with imprisonment for life. Vedic law books, however, take a completely different approach. Homosexual behavior is prohibited only for brahminically-initiated males or when young, unmarried girls are involved. Non-*brahmanas*, men of the third sex and adult women are not included in the prohibitions. Furthermore, the atonement is relatively mild and involves taking a ritual bath or paying small fines. Crossdressing was similarly outlawed by the British but traditional Hinduism never had any problem with it.
7. *One should not associate with homosexuals and transgenders.* The British colonialists believed that homosexuals and transgenders were bad association. They feared that through such association, any person (especially small children and young adults) could become influenced and turn homosexual or transgender themselves. In Hinduism, *smarta-brahmanas* typically view the third sex as in the mode of passion

or low class and thus avoid their association. Enlightened spiritualists and Vaisnavas, however, are equally friendly to all and associate with others according to their spiritual advancement (not material body-type). In fact, it is a Vedic custom to invite people of the third sex into one's home for blessings during auspicious events such as marriages or birth ceremonies.

8. *Homosexuality should not be openly discussed.* One of the tactics employed by British colonialists to suppress homosexuality was to make the topic socially unacceptable for discussion. They believed that talking about homosexuality gave credence to it and made people more tolerant. They also feared that children or young adults would become homosexual simply by hearing about such topics. This contrasts greatly with traditional Hinduism, which considers homosexuality inborn and consequently non-contagious. Traditional Vedic teachings stress that knowledge and discussion are helpful whereas ignorance and lack of communication are harmful. In Vedic society, young adults of marriageable age were fully educated in the Kama Shastra before entering household life and these scriptures discussed all aspects of human sexuality, including homosexuality.
9. *Homosexuality is a modern-day occurrence.* British colonialists believed that homosexuality was a modern phenomenon dangerously on the rise. They feared it could ruin society. Traditional Hinduism, on the other hand, considered homosexuality a less common but relatively harmless aspect of nature. Nowadays, many Hindus believe that homosexuality is a symptom of *Kali Yuga* (the present age of quarrel) and was not present in Vedic times. They also believe that each and every member of society should marry the opposite sex and procreate, otherwise the world population will become dangerously depleted. None of these ideas are supported by the Vedic scriptures, however.
10. *Homosexual marriage is shocking.* In the Victorian Era, homosexual marriage was unheard of. Even the thought of it was completely absurd and shocking. In Vedic culture and many other ancient civilizations of the world, however, homosexual marriages of various types were known. The Kama Shastra mentions third-gender marriages between two men or two women based upon "great attachment and complete faith in one another." (*Kama Sutra* 2.9.36) This is not surprising for those who view LGBTI people as fellow human beings with all of the same needs and emotions.

11. *Homosexuals and crossdressers are demonic.* British colonial Christians viewed homosexuals and crossdressers as ungodly and demonic. They considered their behavior evil, Satanic and condemned by God. Traditional Hinduism, on the other hand, viewed homosexuality and crossdressing in a light-hearted fashion with little concern. LGBTI people, with their mixed male and female qualities, were associated with third-gender deities and believed to have special powers. At most they were considered by *smarta-brahmanas* to be lower class (as artisans and dancers) or in the mode of passion (as practitioners of oral sex) but never evil or demonic. The sixteenth chapter of Bhagavad Gita defines both the divine and the demonic natures, and nowhere therein is any particular gender, race or body type characterized as demonic. Rather, people are determined as divine or demonic by their individual qualities and personal behavior alone.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A TIMELINE OF GAY WORLD HISTORY

Ancient Times: Cultures such as the Indian, Chinese, Egyptian, Greek and Roman accommodate homosexuality and crossdressing among a minority of its citizens since the earliest recorded times. The castration of homosexual slaves and house servants becomes a custom of the Middle East, and Jewish tribes criminalize homosexual behavior.

- 8000 B.C. The world's earliest depictions of homosexuality are found in the ancient San rock paintings of Zimbabwe, Africa.
- 3100. The *Mahabharata* of India describes how Arjuna was well-received in the palace of Maharaja Virata while spending one year as a crossdressing transgender.
- 2697. Legendary Chinese Emperor, Huang Di, is described having male lovers and is by no means alone in the history of China's ancient ruling monarchs.
- 2460. One of the earliest Egyptian pharaohs associated with homosexuality is King Neferkare, who is described having an affair with his top military commander, Saset, during the Sixth Dynasty.
- 2450. An Egyptian tomb of two royal manicurists, Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep, depicts the couple embracing and nose kissing with the inscription "joined in life and joined in death."
- 2100. The custom of castrating homosexual slaves and house servants is established in Ancient Assyria.
- 2040. *The Contendings of Horus and Seth*, a text of Egypt's early Middle Kingdom, narrates a homosexual union between the two gods.

- 1200. The Jewish prophet Moses condemns crossdressing and homosexuality in the *Torah* (Book of Leviticus), punishing the latter by death for both men and women.
- 1075. The Code of Assura from Middle Assyria prescribes castration for soldiers caught engaging in passive homosexual behavior.
- 800. The *Shatapatha Brahmana*, a text from India's Vedic Period, mentions homosexual union between the brother-gods, Mitra and Varuna. Eighth-century Greek epics like the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* portray homosexual unions between gods and young men such as Zeus and Ganymede, Poseidon and Pelops, Apollo and Hyacinth, etc.
- 700. The custom of castrating homosexual slaves and house servants is introduced into Persia from conquered Assyria and Media.
- 600. On the island of Lesbos in Greece, Sappho becomes highly regarded as a female poet and writes many poems speaking of love and infatuation between women.
- 445. Plato and Xenophon, two prominent disciples of Socrates, describe their teacher as "helpless" among beautiful, adolescent boys. Plato further writes: "Same-sex love is regarded as shameful by barbarians and by those who live under despotic governments, just as philosophy is regarded as shameful by them."
- 400. India's renowned medical text, the *Sushruta Samhita*, describes homosexual, transgender and intersex conditions as inborn and incurable. Historian Herodotus describes Middle Eastern slave traders selling castrated boys in Sardis to satisfy the lust of wealthy Greeks. The practice of castration, he writes, is considered "undignified, with only a few exceptions."
- 338. The Sacred Band of Thebes, a homosexual army comprised of more than three hundred soldiers, is defeated by Phillip II of Macedon and his son, Alexander the Great.
- 334. In Troy, Alexander the Great and Hephaestion profess their love by garlanding the statues of Achilles and Patroclus.
- 330. Bagoas, the favorite male concubine of Persia's emperor Darius III, is presented to Alexander the Great as a gift after the emperor's death.
- 300. India's *Manusmriti* (*Manu Samhita*) lists homosexual behavior as a minor offense for twice-born males and for under aged, unmarried girls but does not condemn it otherwise.
- 200. The Cybele cult of Greece holds initiation rites wherein men voluntarily castrate themselves, wear women's clothing, and assume female names and identities.

- 100. India's *Narada-smriti* includes homosexuals in its list of men who are impotent with women and declares them incurable and unfit for marriage to the opposite sex. Roman historian Diodorus Siculus documents one of the earliest known references to homosexuality among the Celtic tribes of Britannia and northern Gaul.

The Dark Ages: With the advent of Christianity, homosexuality and crossdressing are criminalized in the Roman Empire but remain widely accepted throughout the rest of the world. Western Europe resists the Middle Eastern practice of male castration.

- 0 A.D. In the first century, castration is banned throughout the Roman Empire.
- 100. Greek moralist Plutarch describes the many male lovers of Heracles (Hercules) that include Apollo, Aberus, several of the Argonauts, Nestor, Iolaos and others said to be beyond counting.
- 300. The Kama Sutra is put into writing during India's prosperous Gupta Period. The renowned text describes homosexual practices and people in much detail and refers to them as a third nature or sex (*tritiya-prakriti*).
- 303. Two Roman officers, Sergius and Bacchus, are executed in Syria for preaching Christianity. They are later recognized as saints and become a model for the same-sex union or "wedded brotherhood" ceremonies performed in the Christian world from the eighth to the eighteenth century.
- 313. Rome enacts the Edict of Milan, which ends all religious persecution and returns confiscated property to the Church.
- 324. The Roman Empire effectively becomes a Christian state with the ascension of Emperor Constantine I.
- 389. Rome enacts its first law against homosexual citizens under Christian leadership, taking away their right to make or benefit from wills.
- 370. The Roman Empire criminalizes sex between men with a prescribed penalty of death by burning.

The Middle Ages: With the growth of Christianity and the advent of Islam, the criminalization of homosexuality and crossdressing spreads across Eurasia and into Africa. Although driven underground, the practice itself remains widespread and in most cases silently tolerated within the shadows of society. The Middle Eastern custom of castrating homosexual slaves and house servants becomes commonplace in the East Roman Empire (Byzantium) and is introduced into northern China and

India. Oblivious to the outside world, American and South Sea natives maintain their traditional acceptance of homosexual behavior and crossdressing.

- 632 A.D. Shari'a Law is formulated during the seventh century and gradually established throughout the Islamic world. It punishes homosexuality by flagellation or death by stoning, burning, collapsing a rock wall upon, or throwing off from a high point.
- 642. The Visigothic Code is crafted in Spain and gradually established throughout Christian Europe. It orders castration or death by burning for anyone convicted of "sodomy."
- 700. The custom of castrating homosexual slaves and house servants is introduced into northern China by Muslim merchants during the eighth century.
- 780. Korean Emperor Hyegong is executed fifteen years after his ascent to the throne when royal subordinates can no longer tolerate his effeminate behavior.
- 800. Traditional legends and practices of the Norse are put into writing, some of which include homosexual practices and crossdressing.
- 1000. The custom of castrating homosexual slaves and house servants is introduced into northern India by Muslims during the eleventh century. Temple construction flourishes on the Indian subcontinent and some are adorned with openly erotic images depicting homosexuality.
- 1100. Archbishop Theophylaktos argues in favor of eunuchs as an important and contributing social class of Byzantine society in his work, *Defense of Eunuchs*. Eunuchs are placed in charge of guarding the Prophet Mohammed's tomb in Medina during the twelfth century or earlier.
- 1184. Roman Catholic Inquisitions begin in France using torture to extract confessions and punishing homosexuality by death. The Inquisitions spread across the globe and remain in effect for more than seven centuries.
- 1327. England's King Edward II is grotesquely executed after refusing to end his "unnatural" relationship with Hugh Despenser, a son of the earl of Winchester.
- 1351. Slavery and male castration reach their peak in India under the Islamic rule of Firuz Shah Tughlaq of the Sultanate of Delhi.
- 1453. Ottoman Turks conquer the Byzantine Empire and attitudes toward homosexuality improve under the new Islamic emperor, Mehmet II.

- 1486. In Bengal, India, transgender dancers bless the newborn child Nimai (Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu), an important incarnation of Radha and Krishna.
- 1492. On his quest to find a shorter route to India, Christopher Columbus discovers the New World.

The Early Modern Age: Christian Europe wages its greatest assault upon homosexuality to date while the practice remains silently tolerated in the Muslim world. Expeditions into sub-Saharan Africa, the New World and the South Seas reveal an astonishing acceptance of homosexuality and crossdressing among the indigenous people there. France becomes the first Christian nation to repeal its sodomy laws.

- 1519 A.D. In a report to King Carlos V of Spain, conquistador Hernando Cortez reports widespread homosexuality among the Veracruz natives of Mexico.
- 1528. Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro gives detailed reports of Incan priests and chieftains engaged in crossdressing rituals and sodomy.
- 1533. King Henry VIII of England establishes the Buggery Act, which replaces the penalty for homosexuality from castration or burning at the stake to public hanging.
- 1536-1821. Thirty homosexuals are burned at the stake in Portugal during the Portuguese Inquisition.
- 1570-1630. More than one hundred homosexuals are burned at the stake in the city of Zaragoza, Spain, during the Spanish Inquisition (1478-1834).
- 1591-1593. In one of the earliest accounts of homosexuality in Africa, a series of court records from Portugal's Brazil colony describes sodomitic practices among the natives of Angola and Congo.
- 1599. Rome sanctions the castration of young boy singers known as *castrati*.
- 1625. Jesuit priest Joao dos Santos writes of a class of native Africans in Portuguese Angola, known as *chibados*, who dress like women, marry other men and "esteeme that unnaturale damnation an honor."
- 1629. A baffled colonial American court orders intersex woman, Thomasine Hall, to dress partly as a man and partly as a woman.
- 1633. Christina Alexandra, widely believed to be intersex or lesbian, is crowned Queen of Sweden.
- 1636. Dutch officers Caron and Schouten write of the unabashed acceptance of sodomy they find among Japanese Buddhist priests and gentry.

- 1646. Jan Creoli becomes one of the first-known persons executed for sodomy in colonial America (Dutch-ruled New Amsterdam, now New York City). He is garroted (strangled to death with a cord) and his body “burned to ashes.”
- 1656-1663. Several hundred homosexuals are publicly garroted in San Lazaro, Mexico, during a well-publicized effort by Spain to purge that country of sodomy.
- 1660. Jan Quisthout van der Linde is convicted of sodomy with a servant in New Amsterdam, tied into a sack, thrown in a river and drowned. London’s scandalous periodical, *The Wandering Whore*, describes English “hermaphrodites” who are “given to much luxury . . . and to that abominable sin of sodomy.”
- 1669. Spanish writer and traveler Francisco Coreal reports of a class of “hermaphrodite” boys in Florida who dress up like women and engage in sodomy with the native men.
- 1682. Robert de La Salle claims the Louisiana Territory for France. Early French explorers in Quebec, Louisiana and the Great Lakes observe crossdressing homosexual natives and coin the term “*berdache*” to describe them.
- 1691. Dutchman Engelbert Kaempfer observes the popularity of crossdressing Kabuki dancers that also work as boy prostitutes throughout Japan.
- 1702. One of the last public burnings of homosexuals occurs in France during a well-publicized male prostitution scandal in Paris.
- 1730-1732. Seventy-five homosexuals are sentenced to death and garroted in the city hall cellars of Holland during a harsh campaign to exterminate that country of sodomy “from top to bottom.”
- 1740. Frederick II the Great, one of the earliest known German homosexuals, is crowned King of Prussia. The Qing Dynasty enacts China’s first law against homosexuality but it is rarely enforced and the penalties are mild.
- 1770. Captain James Cook observes an acceptance of homosexuality among the Maori tribes of New Zealand. Similar observations are made by European explorers throughout the South Seas.
- 1771. Gustav III, widely believed to be homosexual, is crowned King of Sweden.
- 1778. Thomas Jefferson writes a law proposing castration instead of hanging for sodomy but the idea is rejected by the Virginia Legislature.

- 1791. A Cuban newspaper article criticizes the “effeminate sodomites” that apparently thrive in eighteenth-century Havana.
- 1791. France becomes the first Christian nation to decriminalize sodomy through a revision of its penal code during the French Revolution.
- 1796. New York state replaces hanging for sodomy with a maximum prison sentence of fourteen years.

The Nineteenth Century: France, Holland, Spain and Portugal repeal their sodomy laws along with those of their colonies while Great Britain, the United States, Canada and Australia manage only to reduce their penalties from death by hanging to long prison sentences. Britain’s harsh sodomy laws are implanted into all of its many important colonies around the world. The Islamic world maintains a mostly silent tolerance of homosexuality and the practice of male castration dissipates in unison with the global slave market. Germans usher in the world’s very first homosexual rights movement.

- 1801 A.D. New York state increases its prison sentence for sodomy to a mandatory life sentence.
- 1803. Austria decreases the punishment for sodomy to one year in prison.
- 1806. English traveler John Barrow describes the sodomy he finds among Hong Kong officials in his book, *Travels in China*.
- 1810. France’s Napoleonic Code is legally established, thus ratifying the country’s landmark repeal of all private sodomy laws. Several German states, including Bavaria and Hanover, adopt the code as well.
- 1811. The Kingdom of Holland repeals its sodomy laws while incorporated into France from 1810-1813. Spain and Portugal also repeal their sodomy laws during the early 1800s.
- 1820. Queen Mujaji I, a female monarch of Lesotho’s Lovedu tribe, keeps a large harem of wives and legitimizes the practice for other neighboring South African tribes.
- 1828. Australia records its first hanging for sodomy and the executions reach their peak in the 1830s. New York state reduces its sodomy penalty from a life sentence to a maximum of ten years in prison.
- 1830. Brazil repeals its sodomy laws, eight years after gaining independence from Portugal.
- 1834. The British Slavery Abolition Act ends slavery throughout most of the British Empire. The practice of male castration gradually disappears in tandem with the decline of world slavery during the nineteenth century.
- 1835. Russia establishes its first sodomy laws.

- 1836. In a well-publicized trial, Reverend William Yate, second in line to the bishop of Sydney, is prosecuted for engaging in sodomy with six Maori men in New Zealand.
- 1857. James Buchanan, widely believed to be homosexual, becomes the fifteenth president of the United States. Scottish explorer David Livingstone reports crossdressing shamans among the Ambo tribes of South-West Africa (Namibia).
- 1860. Great Britain revises its penal code, changing the penalty for sodomy from death by hanging to life imprisonment. The new code is established in British colonies all over world including India, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Canada, Australia, the Caribbean, etc. and has a long-lasting effect in those countries.
- 1861. German psychiatrists study homosexuality and begin to consider it innate. Karl Heinrich Ulrichs popularizes “Uranism” and the concept of a “third sex.”
- 1862. Mexico repeals its sodomy laws while under French rule from 1862-1867.
- 1864. Ludwig II, widely believed to be homosexual, becomes a popular albeit eccentric king of Bavaria. Australia replaces hangings for sodomy with long prison sentences and floggings. Sweden establishes sodomy laws prescribing up to two years in prison. British explorer Richard F. Burton locates the mysterious Amazon women of Dahomey (Benin, Africa) who identify as men, engage in warfare and “share passions between each other.”
- 1865. British-ruled Hong Kong enacts sodomy laws prescribing life sentences.
- 1869. The modern term “homosexuality” (*homosexualitat*) is first coined in a German pamphlet written by Karoly Maria Kertbeny.
- 1870. Anna Leonowens expresses shock at the crossdressing and “unnatural vice” among Siamese natives in her bestselling book, *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*. Italy outlaws the castration of young boy singers.
- 1871. King Wilhelm of Prussia creates a new German Empire and reestablishes sodomy as a crime (Paragraph 175).
- 1873. Japan briefly enforces sodomy laws from 1873 to 1881.
- 1883. The *Kama Sutra* is translated into English and published by Sri Richard Francis Burton. A German translation is published by Richard Schmidt in 1897.

- 1886. Native American two-spirit, We'wha, creates a sensation in Washington D.C. when introduced to President Grover Cleveland and dined at the White House. Two-spirit traditions are documented and occasionally photographed in nearly 150 North American tribes.
- 1889. Italy repeals its sodomy laws.
- 1890. South African Zulu chief, Nongoloza Mathebula, orders his bandit-warriors to abstain from women and take on boy-wives instead, a time-honored practice in the region.
- 1892. New York state eliminates its minimum requirement of five years in prison for sodomy.
- 1892-1921. Over two-hundred and fifty sodomy cases are tried in the British colony of Southern Rhodesia, with the most common defense being that sodomy has been a longstanding custom among the African natives.
- 1893. Famous Russian composer and known homosexual Pyotr Tchaikovsky dies unexpectedly at age 53.
- 1894. Canada replaces flogging as a penalty for homosexuality with prison terms of up to fifteen years.
- 1895. London's most popular playwright, Oscar Wilde, is convicted of "gross indecency" (homosexual acts not amounting to buggery) and sentenced to two years of hard labor in a highly-publicized trial.
- 1897. Magnus Hirschfeld founds the very first modern homosexual movement, the *Wissenschaftlich-Humanitare Komitee*, in Germany.
- 1899. Hirschfeld publishes the first annual journal for homosexuals, *Jahrbuch Fur Sexuelle Zwischenstufen*, in Germany.

The Twentieth Century: The English-speaking world begins repealing its sodomy laws en masse and the modern gay rights movement is born in the United States. Islamic countries begin to modernize but fall back into anti-gay religious fundamentalism. Asian countries maintain a mostly silent tolerance of homosexuality while Western Europe begins offering equitable marriage rights for gay couples.

- 1901 A.D. Reputed German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing concedes that homosexuality is inborn and not pathological, as he had earlier claimed.
- 1903. Celebrated British soldier, Sir Hector Archibald Macdonald, commits suicide when his homosexuality is uncovered while stationed in India.

- 1908. The Inquisitions are officially ended by the Roman Catholic Church.
- 1912. The last vestige of China's eunuch system ends with the collapse of the Qing Dynasty.
- 1917. Russia repeals its sodomy laws after the Bolshevik Revolution, citing their origin in Biblical teachings.
- 1918. The world's first demonstration for homosexual rights takes place one day before Germany surrenders in the Great War. Hirschfeld speaks before a Berlin crowd of five thousand, calling for the repeal of Paragraph 175.
- 1921. California lowers its sodomy penalties from a maximum life sentence to a maximum of fifteen years in prison.
- 1926. Portugal reinstates its sodomy laws under the Salazar dictatorship.
- 1930. The world's first modern sex change operation is performed on Danish painter Andreas Wegener, who travels to Germany for the procedure.
- 1932. Poland repeals its sodomy laws but homosexuals are soon persecuted under Nazi and later Soviet rule.
- 1933. Denmark repeals its sodomy laws. Joseph Stalin reinstates sodomy laws within the Soviet Union. In Germany and throughout much of Europe, homosexuals are viciously persecuted, imprisoned and killed by the Nazis up until the end of World War II.
- 1935. J. Edgar Hoover, founder of modern police investigation and widely believed to be homosexual, is appointed as the FBI's first director.
- 1944. Sweden repeals its sodomy laws.
- 1945. Nazi concentration camps are liberated at the close of World War II. Approximately 15,000 homosexuals, marked with inverted pink triangles, are believed to have died in the camps.
- 1948. Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (The Kinsey Report) is published, bringing the taboo subject of homosexuality up for debate in the United States.
- 1949. Strict sodomy laws are enacted in China after the communist takeover.
- 1950. New York becomes the first U.S. state to reduce sodomy from a felony to a misdemeanor. America's first homosexual organization, The Mattachine Society, is founded in New York City. Homosexual marriages among the Zulu of South Africa peak during the 1950s, with weddings held monthly.

- 1951. Greece repeals its sodomy laws. California's Supreme Court rules against the practice of suspending liquor licenses at bars serving homosexual clientele.
- 1952. Christine Jorgensen becomes America's first modern transsexual after returning home from a sex-change operation in Denmark.
- 1955. America's first lesbian organization, Daughters of Bilitis, is founded in San Francisco.
- 1956. Allen Ginsberg crosses censorship lines by publishing *Howl*, a book celebrating his homosexuality, and emerges victorious when challenged in court one year later. Thailand abolishes its British-inherited sodomy laws during an effort to purge Thai legal codes of obsolete edicts.
- 1959. Yugoslavia criminalizes male homosexuality.
- 1962. Illinois becomes the first U.S. state to repeal its sodomy laws.
- 1963. Israel repeals its sodomy laws.
- 1964. *Life* magazine dubs San Francisco the "Gay Capital of the U.S."
- 1966. The commencement of China's notorious Cultural Revolution includes a vicious and organized attack against homosexual people and art (1966-1976).
- 1967. England and Wales repeal their sodomy laws.
- 1969. In June, homosexual riots break out on Christopher Street at the Stonewall Inn in New York City as a response to routine police harassment, marking the beginning of the modern gay rights movement. Canada and West Germany repeal their sodomy laws.
- 1970. The world's first Gay Pride parades occur in Chicago, New York and San Francisco to mark the first anniversary of the Stonewall Riots.
- 1971. British anthropologist Edward Evans-Pritchard documents the widespread tradition of homosexual marriage among the Zande tribes of Sudan. Austria repeals its sodomy laws. Minnesota invalidates the first known same-sex marriage in the U.S. between Jack Baker and Michael McConnell. The U.S. Supreme Court upholds the ruling a year later.
- 1972. Sweden enacts the world's first law legalizing transsexual operations. A comprehensive study of female-female seagull pairing on Santa Barbara Island (California) creates a sensation as the first publicized observation of homosexuality in the animal kingdom. Norway repeals its sodomy laws.
- 1973. The American Psychiatric Association removes homosexuality from its list of mental and emotional disorders, followed two years later by the American Psychological Association.
- 1974. Chris Vogel and Rich North, a gay couple from Winnipeg, Canada, shock the world by becoming the first homosexual couple to

publicly marry in a church and file a legal challenge to the country's ban on same-sex marriage. A Manitoba judge declares their union invalid later that year.

- 1975. South Australia becomes the first Australian state to repeal its sodomy laws. California repeals its sodomy laws by a single vote.
- 1977. Harvey Milk becomes the United States' first openly gay elected official. Florida bans homosexuals from adopting children.
- 1979. Cuba repeals its sodomy laws. Pakistan adds Shari'a law to existing penal codes and consequently the death penalty for sodomy. Iran similarly reverts to Shari'a law and the death penalty for sodomy after its 1979 revolution. Spain removes anti-homosexual laws imposed under the dictatorship of General Franco. Homosexuals riot in San Francisco after Dan White receives the lightest possible sentence for his murder of Harvey Milk and mayor George Moscone.
- 1980. New York's sodomy laws are ruled unconstitutional by the state Supreme Court but not formally repealed until 2000. Scotland and Colombia repeal their sodomy laws.
- 1981. HIV/AIDS is diagnosed for the first time among American homosexual males.
- 1982. Wisconsin becomes the first U.S. state to outlaw discrimination against homosexuals. Portugal repeals the sodomy laws imposed under the Salazar dictatorship.
- 1984. The Unitarian Universalist Association becomes the first major Protestant church to approve religious blessings for gay unions. The U.S. Virgin Islands repeals its sodomy laws.
- 1985. France becomes the first country in the world to enact an anti-discrimination law protecting homosexuals.
- 1986. Equal rights and freedom from discrimination are guaranteed to homosexuals and transgenders under Canada's new Charter of Rights and Freedoms. New Zealand repeals its sodomy laws.
- 1987. Rep. Barney Frank (D) becomes the first member of the U.S. Congress to come out publicly as homosexual.
- 1989. Denmark becomes the first country in the world to establish civil unions for gay couples.
- 1990. The World Health Organization removes homosexuality from its list of mental disorders.
- 1991. Hong Kong abolishes its sodomy laws.
- 1993. Minnesota becomes the first U.S. state to ban discrimination against transgenders. The Intersex Society of North America becomes

the world's first organization in support of rights for intersex people. Hawaii's Supreme Court rules in favor of same-sex marriage and ignites America's gay marriage debate. Russia and Ireland repeal their sodomy laws. Norway establishes civil unions for gay couples.

- 1994. Alain Danielou publishes *The Complete Kama Sutra*. Bermuda repeals its sodomy laws.
- 1995. Sweden establishes civil unions for gay couples.
- 1996. The South African Constitution specifically guarantees equal rights and protections on the basis of sexual orientation. Iceland establishes civil unions for gay couple. The U.S. Congress enacts a law forbidding the federal recognition of same-sex marriage or any similar union (The Defense of Marriage Act).
- 1997. China repeals its sodomy laws. Tasmania becomes the last Australian state to repeal its sodomy laws.
- 1998. South Africa repeals its sodomy laws. Chile becomes the last major Latin American country to repeal its sodomy laws. Alaska and Hawaii become the first U.S. states to effectively ban same-sex marriage by constitutional referendum. The Netherlands establishes civil unions for gay couples.
- 1999. France establishes civil unions for gay couples. California becomes the first U.S. state to extend limited domestic partnership benefits to gay couples. India's very first Gay Pride march is held in Kolkata. Brazil becomes the first country to ban "conversion therapy" for gay minors.

The Twenty-first Century: GLBT people continue their fight for full equality under the law, culminating in the quest for equal marriage rights. Modern gay movements begin to effect change in Latin America and parts of Asia while most African, Middle Eastern and East European countries are held back by anti-gay religious fundamentalism.

- 2000 A.D. Germany establishes civil unions for gay couples. Vermont, after great resistance, becomes the first U.S. state to do the same.
- 2001. The Netherlands becomes the first country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage. Bertrand Delanoë becomes the first openly gay mayor of a major world city (Paris). Nova Scotia becomes the first Canadian province to extend limited domestic partnership benefits to gay couples. The Cayman and British Virgin Islands repeal their sodomy laws. GALVA-108, the Gay and Lesbian Association, is established.
- 2002. Quebec becomes the first Canadian province to establish civil unions for gay couples.

- 2003. The United States repeals all remaining state sodomy laws by virtue of the Supreme Court. Belgium becomes the second country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage. Puerto Rico repeals its sodomy laws. Tasmania becomes the first Australian state to extend limited domestic partnership benefits to gay couples.
- 2004. Massachusetts becomes the first U.S. state to legalize same-sex marriage. New Zealand establishes civil unions for gay couples. San Francisco begins issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples in California but is stopped one month later by court order.
- 2005. Spain becomes the third country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage. Canada becomes the fourth country in the world and the first in North America (and the New World) to legalize same-sex marriage. The United Kingdom establishes civil unions for gay couples. California extends full marriage benefits to registered domestic partners. Fiji's sodomy laws are invalidated by its High Court.
- 2006. South Africa becomes the fifth country in the world and the first in Africa to legalize same-sex marriage.
- 2007. Nepal repeals its sodomy laws.
- 2008. Uruguay becomes the first Latin American country to establish civil unions for gay couples. Connecticut becomes the second U.S. state to legalize same-sex marriage. In California, same-sex marriages resume in June by court order but are stopped after a constitutional referendum is passed five months later. A Florida court strikes down that state's ban on gay adoptions. India holds its first official Gay Pride marches in six major cities.
- 2009. The High Court of Delhi strikes down much of Section 377, effectively decriminalizing sodomy in India. Norway and Sweden become the sixth and seventh countries in the world to legalize same-sex marriage. Johanna Siguroardottir becomes the first openly gay head of government (Iceland). Iowa and Vermont become the third and fourth U.S. states to legalize same-sex marriage. Hungary establishes registered partnerships for gay couples.
- 2010. Argentina becomes the first Latin American country to legalize same-sex marriage. Portugal, Iceland, Washington D.C. and New Hampshire legalize same-sex marriage. Austria establishes registered partnership laws for gay couples.
- 2011. New York becomes the sixth U.S. state to legalize same-sex marriage. The United States lifts its ban on homosexuals serving in the military. Colombia bans discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

- 2012. Denmark and the U.S. states of Washington and Maine legalize same-sex marriage. Hawaii establishes civil unions for same-sex couples. The American Psychiatric Association removes transgender identity from its list of mental and emotional disorders. California becomes the first U.S. state to ban “conversion therapy” for gay minors. Tammy Baldwin becomes the first U.S. senator elected while openly gay (D-Wisconsin).
- 2013. Brazil, Uruguay, New Zealand, France and the U.S. states of Maryland and Hawaii legalize same-sex marriage. The U.S. Supreme Court strikes down the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) and legalizes same-sex marriage in California. Russia enacts “gay propaganda” laws criminalizing public support for gay rights or identity. India’s Supreme Court upholds its colonial-era sodomy laws.
- 2014. The United Kingdom, Scotland and Finland legalize same-sex marriage. More than 25 additional US states legalize same-sex marriage after DOMA is repealed. Eleven African nations tighten their sodomy laws. Mozambique, Northern Cyprus, Palau and Sao Tome & Principe decriminalize homosexuality.
- 2015. Same-sex marriage is legalized in the United States after its Supreme Court strikes down all same-sex marriage bans. Conservative U.S. states begin enacting “religious liberty” laws, allowing LGBTI discrimination based on religious views. Ireland legalizes same-sex marriage by referendum. Mexico’s Supreme Court of Justice allows state courts or legislatures to legalize same-sex marriage state-by-state.
- 2016. Nauru, Seychelles and Belize repeal their sodomy laws. Colombia and Greenland legalize same-sex marriage. The United States allows transgenders to serve in the military. Conservative U.S. states begin enacting “bathroom bills” to prevent transgenders from using public restrooms matching their gender identity. Italy establishes civil unions for gay couples. Chad criminalizes homosexuality.
- 2017. Germany, Bermuda, Malta and Australia legalize same-sex marriage.
- 2018. India’s Supreme Court reads down Section 377, effectively legalizing homosexuality. Jared Polis becomes the first U.S. governor elected while openly gay (D-Colorado). San Marino establishes civil unions for same-sex couples. Trinidad and Tobago’s High Court overturns its colonial-era sodomy laws.
- 2019. Angola legalizes homosexuality and bans discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in its new penal code. Taiwan becomes the first Asian country to legalize same-sex marriage. The World Health Organization removes transgender identity from its list of mental

disorders. Botswana's High Court overturns its colonial-era sodomy laws. Gabon criminalizes homosexuality but repeals the law one year later. Brunei tightens its sodomy laws to punish homosexuality with death by stoning. Northern Ireland legalizes same-sex marriage.

- 2020. Costa Rica and Switzerland legalize same-sex marriage. The U.S. Supreme Court bans gay and transgender employment discrimination on the basis of sex (Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act). Russia and Hungary ban same-sex marriage in their constitutions. Sudan abolishes flogging and the death penalty as punishments for homosexuality. Bhutan legalizes homosexuality. Conservative U.S. states enact laws banning transgender girls and women from school sports.
- 2021. Chile legalizes same-sex marriage. Hungary bans LGBT content in its media and schools.
- 2022. Andorra, Cuba, Slovenia and all 32 of Mexico's states legalize same-sex marriage. Antigua & Barbuda, Saint Kitts & Nevis, Barbados and Singapore decriminalize homosexuality. Conservative U.S. states enact laws banning LGBT books, public crossdressing, gender-affirming care and LGBT representation in schools.
- 2023. The Cook Islands and Mauritius decriminalize homosexuality. Uganda becomes the seventh country to punish homosexuality by death. Estonia becomes the first former Soviet Union country to legalize same-sex marriage. Nepal legalizes same-sex marriage by Supreme Court ruling. Russia bans health care, marriage and legal recognition for transgenders; it also bans all LGBT organizations and support groups.
- 2024. Greece becomes the first Christian Orthodox-majority nation to legalize same-sex marriage.

CHAPTER NINE

A THIRD SEX IN THE ANIMAL KINGDOM

Just as there are many incredible displays of sex and gender variety among Hindu deities, so also nature displays an amazing array of sex and gender diversity within the animal kingdom. The simplistic notion of a Noah's Ark, with one male and one female specimen sustaining all species, is a far cry from scientific reality. In truth, biological sustenance and reproduction are dependent upon an incredibly complex web of co-dependent factors, including a third sex. Not only is nature more complex than we imagine, it is more complex than we *can* imagine!

Microbes and simple life forms are, of course, either asexual or hermaphrodite, meaning they reproduce without separate dimorphic divisions of male and female. Many plants can reproduce themselves simply by the severance of a root, twig, or other appendage, and nearly all flowering plants are hermaphrodite with sexual organs (flowers) that have both male and female parts. Worms, slugs and many aquatic species are also hermaphrodite—they possess both eggs and sperm that are mutually exchanged. In the insect world, reproduction occurs mainly through dimorphic male and female methods, yet many of the more developed social species such as bees, ants and termites sustain their colonies through large numbers of asexual or sterile workers. In such insect colonies, the asexual workers and reproductive queens and drones are all co-dependent upon one another for survival.

Scientific studies of homosexual behavior among fruit flies are quite well known; scientists have observed this behavior in nature and can also induce it in individuals through the manipulation of their genes. Homosexual behavior has similarly been observed in insects such as moths, butterflies and beetles, and

intersexed examples of butterflies and spiders have been found that are sexually divided in half, with one side male and one side female (gynandromorphism). Among the millions of Monarch Butterflies found mating in central Mexico, 10 percent of the mating pairs are same-sex male couples—with an even higher ratio of 50 percent by the end of the season!

Creatures such as sow bugs, shrimp and oysters completely reverse their sex at some stage in their lives and such transsexuality is a routine occurrence for many species. Tropical coral fish, for instance, are especially well known for their ability to change sex—more than 50 species of parrotfish, groupers, angelfish and others are all transsexual. Their reproductive organs can undergo a complete reversal, enabling females with fully functioning ovaries to become males with fully functioning testes and vice versa. In some families of fish, transsexuality is so common that it's actually more unusual to find species that do *not* change sex!

Among amphibians and reptiles, certain species are known to reproduce both sexually and asexually. Female geckos, salamanders and Whiptail Lizards, for example, are parthenogenetic (able to clone themselves) and can reproduce without help from males. Biologists have identified over a thousand of such parthenogenetic species worldwide. Among snakes, both homosexual and bisexual behavior has been observed and studied. Most animals attract and find partners primarily through pheromone or scent signals and when snakes or other animals are homosexually attracted they are simply following these natural signals. In some species such as Garter Snakes, certain males will produce the female pheromone, thus adding to the complexity!

In birds and mammals, methods of reproduction are consistently dimorphic but social interaction and behaviors such as courting, mating and nesting become increasingly diverse. It is among these species, therefore, that the greatest amount of homosexual, bisexual and transgender behavior is found. Homosexuality among avian species is quite common and has been observed in nearly all bird families including waterfowl, sea birds, penguins, parrots, songbirds, finches, swallows, sparrows, crows, hummingbirds, woodpeckers, game birds, birds of prey, flightless birds and so on. Birds are similar to humans in the sense that they typically mate and nest in pairs. Thus, homosexual birds also court each other, pair off, mate and build nests together. Quite a few also become involved in raising chicks—penguins, swans, flamingos, parrots, songbirds, gulls and others have all been observed taking eggs or finding hatchlings to rear as their own. Some birds also engage in same-sex group behavior. In Mallard Ducks, for instance, where homosexuality and bisexuality are quite common, “gay” drakes socialize primarily among themselves and form what biologists refer to as “clubs.” Other birds are transgender—certain female Hooded Warblers can be found bearing the

markings and singing voices of males while in other species, such as Ochre-bellied Flycatchers, certain males will mimic the courting behavior of female birds to attract other males. Such types of transgender birds (with mixed gender markings and behavior) are commonly observed by ornithologists and referred to as “marginal” males or females. Intersex conditions are also found among avian species and over forty cases of gynandromorphism, wherein birds have split male and female plumage, have been reported in species such as pheasants, falcons, and finch. In some types of birds, significant portions of the population never mate or reproduce; for instance, twenty-five percent of Long-tailed Hermit Hummingbirds remain single and nonreproductive throughout their lives, and as much as one third of Common Murres (a seabird) and Kestrels (a type of falcon) do the same.

Among mammal species, homosexual, bisexual and transgender behavior is even more common and has been documented among small rodents and insectivores (mice, rats, bats, squirrels, chipmunks, marmots, hedgehogs, etc.); marsupials (wallabies, kangaroo, koalas, dunnarts, etc.); carnivores (lions, cheetahs, wolves, foxes, bears, hyenas, mongooses, martens, raccoons, etc.); hoofed mammals (deer, elk, caribou, moose, giraffes, antelopes, gazelles, pronghorns, wild sheep, goats, buffalo, bison, musk-oxen, zebra, horses, pigs, llamas, elephants, rhinoceros, etc.), marine mammals (river and salt-water dolphins, porpoises, Orcas, whales, seals, sea lions, walruses, manatees, dugongs, etc.) and primates (Bonobos, chimpanzees, gorillas, Orangutans, gibbons, langurs, Proboscis Monkeys, macaques, baboons, Squirrel Monkeys, capuchins, tamarins, langurs, bushbabies, etc.).

Homosexuality in mammals is quite complex and has been well studied both in captivity and in the wild. Bonobos (Pygmy Chimpanzees), for example, have been found to exhibit a wide variety of different homosexual behaviors and emotions, and in small mammals such as mice and rats, scientists can induce homosexual behavior through the manipulation of their hormones during gestation. Bisexuality is very common among mammals and has been observed in many species outside of their normal breeding season such as Walruses, Bottlenose Dolphins, Bison, Bighorn Sheep, Giraffes, etc. Transgender behavior can also be observed among mammals—in Bighorn Sheep, some rams identify as female and herd themselves with the ewes. While Bighorn rams typically engage in homosexual behavior all year long, the transgender rams will only allow themselves to be mounted during the mating season when the “other” ewes are in estrus!

Many varieties of intersex conditions are found in mammals such as primates, bears, whales, dolphins, marsupials, rodents, insectivores and others, and quite a few mammal species have large numbers of individuals that are nonreproductive and never breed. For instance, more than fifty percent of American Bison and

Right Whales, 75 percent of Blackbucks and Giraffes, and 80-95 percent of New Zealand Sea Lions and Northern Elephant Seals never mate or reproduce with the opposite sex throughout their entire lives.

Ratios of heterosexual, bisexual and homosexual animals vary from species to species and in many cases the homosexual populations of animals exceed those found in humans. Human populations are roughly estimated to be 80 percent heterosexual, 15 percent bisexual and 5 percent homosexual (80-15-5), but among animals these ratios can differ considerably. Female Silver Gulls, for example, have been found to have a ratio of 79-11-10, respectively, while male Black-headed Gulls have a ratio of 63-15-22 and Galahs (a type of cockatoo), 44-11-44.

There are so many examples of gender-variant creatures in the animal kingdom that it is impossible to do them justice here. Why such creatures exist or what purpose they serve may be debatable or even beyond our understanding, but clearly the natural world, when put under the microscope, is amazingly diverse. Biological life is so exuberant it seems to diversify at every possible opportunity and in every conceivable way, thus reflecting the very nature of Godhead itself.

Those who attempt to limit nature, limit God. In scientific journals from the nineteenth century, early zoologists typically imposed their own homophobia on the animal kingdom. While praising the mating of heterosexual creatures as “beautiful representations of God’s glory,” they simultaneously condemned the homosexual behavior they witnessed among animals as “unnatural” and “so monstrous as to be unworthy of record.” Initially, many zoologists tried to explain away homosexuality in the animal kingdom, hypothesizing that the creatures were simply deprived of opposite sex partners, mimicking heterosexual behavior, reacting to artificial environments, defective in some way, confused, or so on. All such rationalizations, however, have since been disproved and unbiased research into the animal kingdom has disclosed to modern biologists what indigenous cultures of the world have known all along—that nature is awe-inspiring and inconceivably variegated in terms of sex and gender.

CHAPTER TEN

MODERN THIRD-GENDER TYPES AND TERMS

Modern cultures no longer accommodate any notion of a third-gender category or nonreproductive class. Nevertheless, various conditions of male and female impotence as well as natural variations in sex, sexual orientation and gender identity have all been recognized and well studied within the bounds of contemporary science. Despite the gap in time, culture and terminology, the types listed below correspond well to their Vedic counterparts. The only types of impotence not recognized by modern science are those caused by curses or divine beings (the supernatural types).

Neurological Types

Variations in sex and gender are not only anatomical. In fact, a majority of cases are neurological in origin and affect people who are otherwise normal in terms of their male or female anatomy. Since hormones can drastically alter a person's physical sex in the womb there is no reason to doubt they can also alter one's neurological sex and brain wiring. Thus, homosexual attraction and transgender identity are not simply matters of psychological preference. A left-handed person does not simply "prefer" using his left hand over his right; rather, the brain has been neurologically wired that way since birth. Similarly, modern scientific studies suggest that a person's sexual orientation and gender identity are likely predetermined during early fetal development.

Bisexuality (1 in 5 persons): Significant bisexuality occurs in about fifteen to twenty percent of the population and is the most common type of gender

variation—nearly one out of every five adults experience some degree of bisexual attraction. A bisexual person responds to the sex signaling of both genders and is consequently attracted to men and women alike, whether simultaneously or at different times in life. Bisexuality is likely caused when the area of the fetal brain governing sexual orientation is both masculinized and feminized. It is also somewhat more common in women. Bisexuals who marry the opposite sex and bear children comprise the majority and typically identify as heterosexual, whereas those primarily attracted to the same sex and identifying as homosexual are less common.

Homosexuality (1 in 20 persons): Homosexuality occurs in about four to five percent of the population (nearly one out of every twenty adults) and is self-evident at puberty. A complete homosexual responds only to the sex signaling of his or her same anatomical sex throughout life. Homosexual orientation is likely caused when the area of the fetal brain governing sexual orientation is feminized in boys or masculinized in girls. It is somewhat more common in men and approximately three-quarters of homosexuals also exhibit some degree of transgender behavior. Thus there are two basic types of homosexual men and women—those that are more masculine and those that are more feminine. Homosexuals can and sometimes do have children although it is typically against their nature. It should also be noted that of all third-gender types, homosexuals and transgenders stand out in terms of how they socialize together and form distinct subcultures within society. None of the other types do this to such an extent.

Transgender Identity (1 in 3,000 persons): Transgender identity occurs in approximately one out of every three thousand persons and can usually be recognized during early childhood. A complete transgender identifies only as the opposite sex and typically lives and dresses accordingly. Many undergo hormone treatments and transsexual operations. Transgender identity is likely caused when the area of the fetal brain governing gender identity is feminized in boys or masculinized in girls. It is somewhat more common in anatomical males and approximately three-quarters of transgenders also have homosexual orientation. People with transgender identity can and sometimes do have children, but only by means of their birth anatomy. All transsexuals are sterile due to the sex-change operations they have undergone.

Psychological Types

Sexual impotence due to psychological factors has been well studied in recent years and is usually treatable. It accounts for approximately ten to twenty percent of all male impotence cases (the remaining eighty percent are physical or medical)

and is addressed with a combination of psychotherapy and medication. Some of the more common psychological types—found in both men and women—are caused by stress, self or interpersonal anxieties, shyness, inexperience, feelings of inadequacy, depression, drug abuse, social alienation, fears caused by trauma, guilt associated with religious orthodoxy or parental expectations, uncertainty about one's sexual orientation, unusual fetishes and so on. Psychological conditions can and often do overlap with pre-existing physical or neurological ones.

Physical Types

Physical types of impotence and infertility involve men or women whose sex organs are damaged, diseased, dysfunctional or anatomically defective in some way. Although many types are curable, others are not and approximately seven percent of all married couples are never able to have children. The most common physical types are caused by reproductive disorders, organ diseases, spinal injuries, blood vessel problems, afflictions of the nervous system, tumors, surgical complications, sexually transmitted diseases and so on. They are treated in terms of the specific disorder. Congenital or inborn types typically have intersex causes and are not always apparent at birth. In fact, many are not identified until puberty or after taking fertility tests as adults.

Minor Sex Anomalies (1 in 500 persons): Approximately one in every five hundred persons is born with sex anatomy that varies from the standard male or female type. This includes conditions such as Cryptorchidism (undescended testicles), minor cases of Hypospadias (misplaced pee-hole), Chordee (curvature of the penis) and Phimosis (constricted foreskin) in boys, and slightly enlarged clitorises and mild cases of Late-Onset Adrenal Hyperplasia (LAH) in girls. Roughly one in a thousand persons undergo minor surgery or medical treatment to normalize their genital appearance or functioning but otherwise go on to live ordinary lives. Many but not all of these minor anomalies have intersex causes.

Hypospadias (1 in 600 persons): Hypospadias is one of the most common types of genital anomalies in males. The pee-hole is located not at the tip of the penis but on the top or anywhere along the underside of the shaft, down to the very bottom. In more pronounced but rare conditions the hole forms a large opening extending halfway down the penis. Hypospadias occurs in approximately one out of every three hundred men but is extremely rare in women, where it occurs in only about one in 500,000. The exact cause in most cases is unclear but likely involves genetic, hormonal or even environmental factors.

Chromosomal Variations (1 in 1,000 persons): Many intersex conditions involve chromosomal variations. Klinefelter Syndrome is the most common and occurs in approximately one out of every one thousand men. Men with Klinefelter are sterile due to an extra X chromosome (XXY) in their body's cells. Their genitals are generally smaller and the ejaculate contains no sperm. Some men experience breast development. Another chromosomal variation, known as Turner Syndrome, occurs in approximately one out of every one thousand women. Females with Turner are smaller in size and sterile due to a missing X chromosome (XO). Other variations include XYY Syndrome in boys, XXX Syndrome in girls and various mosaic chromosomal patterns that occur when a person has one type of chromosomes in some cells and a different type in others. These rare variations all produce different kinds of intersex effects.

Vaginal Agenesis or Mullerian Syndrome (1 in 6,000 persons): In this condition, the female organs do not finish their development in the womb for reasons yet unknown but which likely involve hormonal irregularities. The woman's uterus and vagina are absent, misshapen or small but her ovaries and fallopian tubes are normal and there is hormone production, breast development and so on. The woman has no menstruation and cannot bear children; however, her eggs are viable and can often be fertilized in vitro and carried to term by another.

Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (AIS; 1 in 20,000 persons): AIS is typically an inherited genetic condition. The XY male embryo is unable to respond to his own androgen hormones and thus develops along the female path. Complete AIS infants appear externally as girls but have undescended testes and underdeveloped female organs inside. They do not menstruate and are infertile. Partial AIS cases also occur involving various mixed intersex conditions but these are more rare, occurring in approximately one out of every 130,000 persons.

Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (CAH; 1 in 36,000 persons): CAH is a genetic variation that causes XX female fetuses to manufacture androgen-related hormones and develop along the male path. XY male fetuses can also have CAH but it does not noticeably affect their development. Girls with classical CAH are masculinized to various degrees and may have larger than average clitorises or even partially developed penises and scrotums, extra body hair, deep voices, prominent muscles and so on. They often identify as male and desire women for partners. A similar yet milder condition known as Late-Onset Adrenal Hyperplasia (LAH) affects approximately one out of every one hundred girls after birth (usually around puberty and to various degrees) and is characterized by severe acne, facial hair, balding, menstrual disturbances and infertility.

Chronic Intersex Conditions (1 in 36,600 persons): There are various chronic intersex conditions that are rare, idiopathic and result in absent or severely-deformed sex organs. These include unusual cases of partial AIS or CAH, Aphallia (no penis), Clitoromegaly (severely enlarged clitoris), serious cases of Hypospadias, Micropenis (extremely small penis) and so on. Most if not all of these conditions are caused by hormonal irregularities in the womb.

Ovotestis (1 in 83,000 persons): People born with this intersex condition, formerly known as “true hermaphroditism,” have gonads (sex glands) with both ovarian and testicular tissue. This may be present in one or both of the gonads and the person may appear mostly normal or mixed in terms of gender and genital development. Little is known about this rare form of intersex.

Gonadal Dysgenesis (1 in 150,000 persons): In this condition, the gonads (as testes in males or ovaries in females) are completely undeveloped and dysfunctional, appearing as “streaks” in the abdominal cavity. In XY males, Gonadal Dysgenesis is known as Swyer Syndrome. All children born with this condition, whether XX or XY, appear as females and are sterile; they do not produce their own sex hormones or enter puberty. Gonadal Dysgenesis can be partially corrected with hormone treatment but not in terms of bestowing fertility.

5-Alpha Reductase Deficiency (5-ARD; variable): This genetic female-to-male intersex condition, formerly known as “pseudo-hermaphroditism,” is relatively common in certain isolated island and jungle regions of the world. Infants born with this syndrome appear female at birth but mature into males at puberty, sometimes only partially. Cultures familiar with this condition generally recognize it immediately upon birth.

Environmental and Pharmaceutical Causes (variable): Certain environmental and pharmaceutical causes of intersex conditions have been observed and studied, particularly in regard to environmental estrogens and exogenous androgens such as progestin. In these cases, fetal development is sufficiently altered so that XY infants appear female and XX infants appear male, to various degrees.

Modern Causes of Gender

According to modern science, the father’s chromosomes randomly determine the gender or sex of any offspring. At the time of conception, twenty-three chromosomes from the father’s sperm combine with twenty-three chromosomes

from the mother's ovum to produce a zygote or fertilized egg cell, which thus has forty-six chromosomes. Two of these forty-six chromosomes, one inherited from the father and one from the mother, are known to determine sex. One X chromosome is always inherited from the mother (XX female) but the father (XY male) may give either an X or a Y. If the father gives an X chromosome the child will be female and if he gives a Y chromosome, male.

This is the general dimorphic pattern for determining gender but modern science also recognizes variations from the standard male and female types. Such variations involve differences in the embryo's sex chromosomes, gonads or hormones and most are either proven or suspected to be genetic in origin. Differentiation of the sex chromosomes involves the conditions mentioned above (under "Chromosomal Variations") and differentiation of the sex gonads concerns testis or ovaries that are completely undeveloped (Gonadal Dysgenesis), partially developed or possessing both male and female tissue (Ovotestis). In regard to the male and female sex hormones, variations in these are especially complex and can substantially alter or even completely reverse an embryo's development in terms of sex anatomy and neurology. Differentiation of the embryonic sex hormones and how they are processed in utero involves numerous intersex conditions such as AIS, CAH, etc. and, most likely, the neurological variations found in people with transgender identity, homosexual orientation and bisexuality.

Modern Testing For Impotence

Modern tests for impotence or infertility in both men and women are not generally administered prior to marriage but only when a specific problem arises. In such cases, specialized physicians examine both the man and the woman and a cause is ascertained through various means of medical testing. Fertility treatment, surgery and/or drugs are then applied. Instances of male or female impotence due to psychological factors are examined and treated by professional psychiatrists.

Bisexuality and homosexuality are no longer misunderstood as psychological afflictions or considered types of impotence per se. Problems related to these—usually caused by social prejudice, parental expectations or religious orthodoxy—are treated through psychotherapy and counseling. Transgender identity and chronic intersex conditions are similarly treated through professional counseling, accompanied by hormone therapy and surgery when required.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

EXAMINING OUR TREATMENT OF SEX AND GENDER MINORITIES

In Bhagavan's creation there is great diversity, and much of humanity's struggle to advance has involved learning to include all types of people fairly within society. Among human beings there are differences in nature, sex, race, ability, size, weight, skin and hair color, handedness, intelligence, nationality, culture, faith and so on. Understanding these differences, the Lord has solemnly instructed mankind as follows: "As the blazing fire of death, I cause great fear to whoever makes the least discrimination between himself and other living entities because of a differential outlook. Therefore, through charitable gifts and attention, as well as through friendly behavior and by viewing all to be alike, one should propitiate Me, who abide in all creatures as their very Self." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 3.29.26-27)¹

Of all human differences, perhaps the most sensitive and difficult to address are those pertaining to sex and gender. The Vedic literatures mention three categories of sex: 1) virile males, 2) fertile females and 3) men and women of mixed gender qualities who are impotent with the opposite sex.² This third class of gender, known as *napumsa* or *tritiya-prakriti* in Sanskrit, is the focus of this chapter. It involves a minority of people³ traditionally addressed in archaic English as "eunuch" or "hermaphrodite" but more accurately known today as homosexuals, transgenders and the intersexed (LGBTI, "queer" or "gay," collectively). Bisexuals are also included in this category although typically they are not impotent with the opposite sex.⁴

Modern society's treatment of sex and gender minorities is one of the most prominent social issues of our day and for this reason, Hindus should not avoid

discussing or addressing it. Nations of the world vary greatly in their treatment of gay people with some advocating condemnation through a penalty of death, others granting full acceptance and legal equality, but most resting somewhere in-between. The global Hindu community also exhibits great variance in its attitude and approach toward LGBTI people in accordance with the many different gurus, sects, temples and congregations that guide and express its faith.

The following five profiles of LGBTI Vaishnavas and Hindus are typical of people I come across in my work with GALVA-108, the Gay And Lesbian Vaishnava Association. Names have been changed for privacy reasons but otherwise the experiences described herein, both good and bad, are accurate and real. Hopefully these examples will cause the reader to reflect upon his or her own treatment of sex and gender minorities, especially in regard to the verse cited above.

*Intersex Man.*⁵ Kumar is an intersex man of Indian descent living in Western Europe. His family members are Shaivite and he was born with ambiguous genitalia. Diagnosed with Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (CAH), an intersex condition causing XX-chromosome female fetuses to develop both physically and neurologically along the male path, Kumar was surgically altered to appear female and raised as a girl (Kumari). However, he displayed masculine behavior in childhood and, as a teen, experienced attraction only to women. Kumar eventually switched his identity from female to male, much to the embarrassment of his traditional Hindu family who initially cut off all contact with him. Kumar had a female partner for many years but could not marry her due to being legally female. His gender assignment surgery as an infant, which he had no voice in and now regrets, caused many physical and emotional complications throughout his life. Kumar maintains his faith in Lord Siva and identifies with Sri Ardhanarisvara (Siva's half man, half woman form) and Sikhandi, a character from the *Mahabharata* who was raised as a girl but later became male. He follows celibacy and occasionally attends temple ceremonies but mostly practices his faith at home.

*Transgender Woman.*⁶ Anjali is a transgender woman living in India. Her family is poor and not especially religious but observes many traditional Hindu customs. Born as a boy (Arjuna), Anjali played and behaved like a girl from a very early age. When her parents chastised her for this, Anjali would cry and dream about becoming a woman one day. Despite the many efforts of her parents, Anjali was never able to become the masculine son they so desired. Tensions eventually estranged her from the family, with the exception of one loving aunt, who

recognized Anjali's *hijra* qualities and taught her about the goddess Bahucara.⁷ In her late teens, Anjali was sexually abused by men, introduced into prostitution and ended up on the streets of a large Indian city. She eventually connected with the *hijra* community, which she happily joined. While her life remains difficult and filled with social abuse, Anjali values the friendship and support she receives from her fellow *hijras*. Free to dress as a woman full-time, Anjali faithfully worships goddess Bahucara and is considering castration or, preferably, a modern-day transsexual operation if she can ever afford it. Interestingly, Anjali feels welcome at all the traditional Indian temples she visits but not at the more western-associated ISKCON centers,⁸ perhaps due to cultural differences and misunderstandings about the third sex.

*Lesbian Woman.*⁹ Satyabhama (Satya) is a lesbian woman living in North America. Her family is Christian but Satya converted to Gaudiya Vaishnavism through the Hare Krishna movement in her late teens, not long after realizing she was attracted to women. Satya's treatment as a lesbian in the Hare Krishna movement has been a rocky road to say the least. Initially she kept her same-sex attraction a secret but when social pressures to marry became unavoidable, Satya confided her lesbianism to a friend and the word eventually got around. Temple authorities insisted she marry a man and in one particularly ugly incident, Satya was raped by a so-called Vaishnava under the plea of "curing" her homosexuality. Her arranged marriage soon ended in failure and Satya left the Hare Krishna mission, at least externally although never within her heart. After much time and difficulty, Satya eventually got her life together and established a long-term relationship with a fellow Vaishnavi. She and her partner, now legally married, faithfully worship Radha-Krishna at home and regularly attend their local temple as a celibate same-sex couple, where they are quietly accepted.

*Gay Man.*¹⁰ Kartik is a young gay man of Indian descent living in a South East Asian country with a large Hindu population. His family members are moderately conservative Sri Vaishnavas. Kartik has always been attracted to men ever since he can remember and has never felt any attraction for women. As a closeted teenager, Kartik was very interested in spiritual life and considered joining the ashram at a temple attended by his family. Temple authorities were very friendly to Kartik and heartily encouraged him to join. However, one day Kartik naively confided to a temple elder that he was gay and the friendly treatment immediately stopped. The temple devotees no longer spoke to Kartik or answered any of his e-mails. Both he and his family were received coldly at the temple and Kartik was crushed, his faith shaken. Now in his early thirties, Kartik still visits the temple on occasion

but feels alienated there. He has few friends and no fellow gay association other than through the Internet. Kartik's parents accept him but not his homosexuality and still harbor delusions of him someday "growing out of it" or "finding the right girl." For his part, Kartik has given up trying to explain homosexual orientation to his parents. He is still a virgin and maintains his faith in Vishnu but wonders if he will ever be able to find a suitable male partner and lead a happy life of his own. "Straight guys are given full social support as soon as they need to marry," Kartik says, "but gay men are treated like pariahs and forced to fend for themselves."

*Bisexual Man.*¹¹ Amit lives in a small city in central India. His family worships Durga, Ganesha and various other *devas* although Amit himself converted to Gaudiya Vaishnavism while attending college. Amit is a deeply closeted bisexual man. He is mostly same-sex attracted but has some feelings for women also. Because of this, Amit bowed to family and religious pressures to marry and has two daughters with his wife. Nevertheless, he is having doubts about his decision to marry. Amit's attraction to men has gotten the best of him lately and secret rendezvous' with anonymous male partners has become a fairly regular occurrence. Despite his better judgment and religious training, Amit's need for male companionship overwhelms him, even with all the risks involved. While his life appears ideal on the outside and his secret is as yet unexposed, a tempest is brewing inside Amit. He wishes he could be a better devotee of Lord Krishna but cannot seek counsel because he fears complete rejection. Amit wonders if he would be happier living single or with a male partner. Either way, Amit has little luxury to ponder such choices in modern-day India, and thus the façade goes on.

Several examples regarding the treatment of sex and gender minorities can also be found in the Vedic scriptures. For instance, in the *Mahabharata*, Maharaja Virata kindly accepts the crossdressing Brihannala into his kingdom and engages her in teaching the fine arts to his daughter, Uttara.¹² Significantly, Maharaja Virata does not neglect Brihannala, drive her from his kingdom or force her to dress as a man. Rather, he accepts Brihannala's nature as it is, addresses her as female and offers her a residence within his palace. A similar positive example can be found in the pastimes of Lord Caitanya, wherein transgender dancers are offered gifts by Jagannatha Misra and invited into his courtyard to entertain and bless the newborn child, Nimai.¹³ There are furthermore several positive examples of homosexual men and women in the Kama Shastra, wherein such people are demonstrably accommodated within the fabric of Vedic society and culture.¹⁴

One lone example of ill treatment toward the third gender can be found in the *Vishnu Purana*, wherein the Yadavas notoriously ridicule Garga Muni as being an

impotent man of the third sex. The ridicule and (likely) false accusation, however, results in Garga Muni's anger and the creation of Kalayavana, a demonic king who later terrorizes the Yadu clan.¹⁵ Interestingly, the Artha Shastra specifically forbids the vilification of third-gender men or women (*kliba*) and imposes a small fine for the offense, whether the targets are actually third-gender or not.¹⁶ Other verses from the Artha Shastra, *Manusmriti* and *Vasistha Dharmasutra* enjoin parents to provide at least some minimal maintenance for their third-gender offspring and instruct a king to do so when there are no relatives.¹⁷

Overall, the consensus of Hinduism supports the idea of caring for and befriending every member of human society, including sex and gender minorities. My spiritual master, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, elaborates on this as follows: "In all communities in human society—including the *brahmanas*, *ksatriyas*, *vaisyas*, *sudras*, *candalas*, etc.—and in the animal kingdom—including the cows, dogs, goats, etc.—everyone has his part to play. Each is to work in cooperation for the total benefit of all society, which includes not only animate objects but also inanimate objects like hills and land.... Another hint we get from this statement is that the *candalas*, or the untouchables, are also not to be neglected by the higher classes and should be given necessary protection. Everyone is important, but some are directly responsible for the advancement of human society, and some are only indirectly responsible. However, when Kṛṣṇa consciousness is there, then everyone's total benefit is taken care of."¹⁸

In conclusion, my hope is that readers will contemplate the examples presented in this chapter and consequently improve their treatment of not only of sex and gender minorities but all living entities everywhere. Hare Krishna!

"One who is not envious but who is a kind friend to all living entities...he is very dear to Me." (Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, 12.13-14)

Endnotes

- ¹ *Srimad Bhagavatam*. Tr. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami (Prabhupada). Singapore: Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1987.
- ² To cite just one example: "A male child is produced by a greater quantity of male seed, a female child by the prevalence of the female; if both are equal, a third-sex child (*napumsa*) or boy and girl twins are produced; if either are weak or deficient in quantity, a failure of conception results." (*Manusmriti* 3.49) Definitions and examples of the third sex can be found in the *Susbruta Samhita* (3.2), *Caraka Samhita* (4.2), *Kama Sutra* (2.8 and 2.9) and *Narada-smriti* (12.11-13).

- ³ There is some diversity of opinion as to the exact percentage of homosexual, transgenders and intersex people within any given society, but most studies place homosexuals at around 3-6 percent, complete transgenders at 1 in 3,000, and the chronically intersexed at 1 in 36,000.
- ⁴ Bisexuality can vary greatly but general consensus places the number of people with significant bisexual attraction at approximately 10 to 15 percent of any given population. A bisexual may be predominantly attracted to the opposite sex, predominantly attracted to the same sex, or equally attracted to both.
- ⁵ Intersex, often called “hermaphrodite,” “asexual” or “neuter” in archaic English, refers to people born with ambiguous genitalia or having both male and female anatomy in various ways. The *Sushruta* and *Caraka Samhitas* mention more than twelve different types, which correspond to known modern conditions and are known as *napumsa*, *nisarga*, *vataretas*, etc.
- ⁶ Transgender, often called “eunuch” or “hermaphrodite” in archaic English, refers to people who by nature identify and behave as the opposite sex. Such people may castrate themselves or undergo transsexual operations. The *Sushruta Samhita* (3.2.42) refers to transgenders as “*shandha*.”
- ⁷ Sri Bahucara-devi is an expansion of the goddess Durga and a patron deity of transgenders, the *hijra* and transsexual operations. The term “*hijra*” is Arabic in origin and refers mostly to members of a transgender cult found in northern India.
- ⁸ ISKCON, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, is also known as the Hare Krishna Movement and was founded in the United States in 1966 by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.
- ⁹ Lesbians are known as “*svairini*” (literally, “independent women”) in Sanskrit and are described in detail in the Kama Shastra, where they are also addressed as “*tritiya-prakriti*” or a third sex (See *Kama Sutra* 2.8).
- ¹⁰ Gay or homosexual men are referred to as “*kliba*” (literally, “impotent with women”) in the *Sushruta Samhita* (3.2) and described as men who by nature are only aroused by engaging in various sexual acts with other men. They are described in much detail in the Kama Shastra and addressed as “*tritiya-prakriti*” or a third sex (See *Kama Sutra* 2.9). Gay men are often called “eunuchs,” “catamites,” or “hermaphrodites” in archaic English. I mention this since many Sanskrit-to-English texts are nineteenth-century translations and commonly use the older, outdated terms.
- ¹¹ Sanskrit texts refer to bisexuals as “*kami*” (or “*kamini*” for women) and “*paksha*.” The former term refers to those who are attracted to both sexes simultaneously whereas the latter indicates people whose attraction switches back and forth periodically. The *Narada-smriti* strictly forbids homosexual men from marrying women but permits it for bisexuals if they can demonstrate arousal for females (See *Narada-smriti* 12.14).
- ¹² *Mahabharata*. Kamala Subramaniam. Bombay: Siddhi Printers, 1995. (Virata Parva, Chapter Three, pp. 260-261.)

- ¹³ Tape-recorded conversation between Srila Prabhupada and Hayagriva dasa dated April 5, 1967. (Tape No. 67-002, The Bhaktivedanta Tape Ministry, BBT-1994.)
- ¹⁴ *Complete Kama Sutra, The*. Tr. Alain Danielou. Rochester, VT: Park Street Press, 1994. (Part Two, Chapter Nine, pp. 183-196.)
- ¹⁵ For a short narration of this pastime, see *Srimad Bhagavatam* 10.50.44, purport.
- ¹⁶ *Kautilya Arthashastra, The*. Tr. R.P. Kangle. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2003. (3.18.4-5, Part Two, p. 246.)
- ¹⁷ Artha Shastra 3.5.30-32, *Manusmriti* 8.274, *Vasistha Dharmasutra* 19.35-36.
- ¹⁸ *Krsna: The Supreme Personality of Godhead*. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami (Prabhupada). Herts, England: Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1996. (Vol. I, pp. 245-246.)



CHAPTER TWELVE

COMING OUT TO THE DEVOTEES

A Lecture on the Importance of Honesty and Compassion among Vaishnavas

By Bhakti Tirtha Swami

“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.”

There has been much discussion lately within ISKCON and other Gaudiya Vaishnava groups concerning how to deal with those who are in third-gender or gay and lesbian bodies. Should they be dealt with openly and honestly in a compassionate manner, or should they be viewed with suspicion and kept in secrecy and silence? Which attitude will be healthier, both to the individual and to our society at large, and which will be more pleasing to Krsna?

At least one ISKCON temple, the Gita-nagari farm community in Pennsylvania, has decided to approach this issue with compassion and openness. Under the spiritual guidance of Srila Bhakti Tirtha Swami, this temple has decided that honesty is the best policy among Vaishnavas and that open discussion and compassion will do far more to encourage third-gender devotees in their spiritual lives than ignoring them or treating them with condescension and contempt.

Bhakti Tirtha Swami gave the following lecture on May 15, 2003, at Gita-nagari. Maharaja is seated on a saffron-colored chair in the temple room and is surrounded by greenery and flowers. The beautiful Deities 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 his lecture, which is transcribed below:

Bhakti Tirtha Swami: Sri Sri Radha-Damodaraji *ki jaya!* So, I think you know we talk about marriage, we talk sometimes about relationships and we also talk and discuss things about community. As a matter of fact we are looking closer and closer at the model that we have within 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, and try to see the many ways that we can become better devotees. One of the ways we can become better devotees is to look at how we can offer ourselves better in Krsna's service by trying 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 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 *sastra*, and also reflecting on ways of how we look at this in 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 been 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 and 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, giving it in connection with some of the things that 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 who 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 (Srla Ravindra Svarupa Swami) especially, for helping me through this whole process of becoming more vulnerable and truthful to the Vaishnavas 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 set the best example as possible, as a third-gender devotee in this community, and in that way become more Krsna conscious and help others also. Not to be stuck in a pigeonhole and be invisible, but be visible. Many of us have been stuck in a pigeonhole and died silently because of fear of scrutinization, bigotry and homophobia, or different sources of mental or physical abuse, or because of fear of being thrown out by someone who 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. 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 Swami: *Jaya!* Vaishnava Thakura *ki jaya!* So, I want to use this as a topic today, just briefly, and then open up for discussion. In previous classes I shared how we often lump everyone who is in the

gay community into a certain sector. We discussed how, when Lord Caitanya was born, 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, says how in India there were special villages, special places, where such people lived and that they were also 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, about Arjuna. We may remember that when the Pandavas were exiled, Arjuna, as well as all of them, were surreptitious—they were in disguise—and Arjuna's particular disguise, the word then used was "eunuch," but it was understood that he was a man dressed as a woman, wearing woman's clothing and adopting a woman's mannerisms. When Maharaja Virata examined his character to see if he was going to invite Arjuna into the kingdom, he 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 Brihannala. So if this idea of third gender was something in itself demonic, or something in itself evil or whatever, then obviously Jagannatha Misra would never have invited such people to Lord Caitanya's appearance, and the Pandavas would have never considered having Arjuna 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, I gave our initial discussion when we had a suicide in the community. One devotee in Potomac had committed suicide, and this person committed suicide mainly based on the anxiety and bewilderment of being in a body that was third gender and having difficulty trying to understand his role and position in devotional service. As a matter of fact, 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 can 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 trying to find themselves—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.

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 deny what that person's life space, field of activities, or "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. Many third-gender Vaishnavas have been hurting inside from being in an environment where people assume to know how they think or what their present package really is in this lifetime. They feel the community would disown them, not appreciate them, or categorize them. Many Vaishnavas are hurting inside from being unable to feel more love in the community, from being unable to feel more Krsna conscious, and from having this secret that they feel they have to cover up constantly in such a way. Or from 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 intrical part of them is living sort of a lie, or living in secrecy. 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 Krsna says in the Govardhana Hill story that Vaishnavas do not keep secrets, and Rupa Goswami explains in the process of *pṛiti*—loving exchanges—that we should reveal our mind. Bhaktivinoda Thakura also 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. When we make a *vrata* or vow in public, it helps us to be more accountable.

There is a rising concern, outside of spiritual circles as well as inside of spiritual circles, for people who are in third-gender bodies and how to

communicate their situation, to understand them, to offer value and to help them rise above whatever their particular concerns are as well as anybody else's concerns. There's also the tendency for people to exploit their identity whether straight, gay or whatever. Someone who has a manipulative, exploitative mentality will exploit that whether they are in a communistic, autocratic, or monarchical environment—whether they're in commerce, education, politics or even religion—they have an exploitive mentality. So some people will exploit this in the sense of considering, "Well, yes, it's in the Vedic *sastra*, it's something that's always been there, and therefore let me enjoy." But Manu has given us ways, as well as our *acaryas*, how to refrain from illicit activities whatever our gender or environment is, and how to control the senses and not be slaves of the senses. Brhaspati has given us the Artha Shastra and Lord Siva and Nandi have given us the *Kama-sutra* where these kinds of things are all discussed in detail. Manu has given us the Dharma Shastra, and this is all a part of *varnasrama-dharma*—basic knowledge on how to be healthy humans both ethically and morally. And then of course we have the *Bhagavata Purana*, or we have *Bhagavata-dharma*, which is helping us to become transcendental. We want to be hungry, eager and determined to embrace *Bhagavata-dharma* while we try to understand the nature of this body and the material world.

There are different reasons why people are in different kinds of bodies, both in this life and in previous lifetimes, and why somebody finds themselves in a package that's third gender. Some of it is hormone and chromosomal arrangement, and 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 this in a way 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. 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 this is not 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 Manu lets 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 Bhagavad Gita 7.11, that He is sex life according to religious principles.

Since time immemorial there have been these kinds of classifications and there have been various ways how people can honor it in the right way, or also how people can exploit it, just as people exploit anything based on their consciousness and the modes of material nature that they're in. There's a good side to this in that individuals should not have to feel that they're hiding something they've brought into this world, and that it's also a part of their experience in Krsna consciousness in this lifetime. At the same time, people should understand what the higher goals are and try to acquire and attain such higher goals. So now, let's see if anyone has any questions.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SRILA PRABHUPADA AND THE GAYS

Over the past few years it has become commonplace for devotees to depict Srila Prabhupada as very hateful and condemning of gays. What a great disservice this has been to His Divine Grace! I suspect this is more a reflection of the mentality of such devotees themselves, and not that of Srila Prabhupada. As far as I have seen, Srila Prabhupada's exchanges with homosexual friends and disciples were always exceptionally loving and kind. Indeed, he was quite caring toward them and displayed a great deal of concern that they feel welcome and included in his Krsna consciousness movement.

It is very sad that this loving attitude has become mostly absent today among many of Srila Prabhupada's disciples and followers. Devotees seem obsessed only with the sexual aspect of homosexuality, while failing to address the more important human and personal considerations emphasized by Srila Prabhupada himself. A pure devotee always looks for the good qualities in others, while foolish neophytes take delight in pointing out faults and weaknesses. In regard to gays and lesbians, Srila Prabhupada personally taught us how to receive and treat them, so why not simply listen and follow his example?

Srila Prabhupada met many times with Allen Ginsberg, who was sometimes accompanied by his lover, Peter Orlovsky. Do you know how nicely and politely Srila Prabhupada received them? Do you think he called them demons and accused them of having illicit sex together? No. Srila Prabhupada's mind was never in the gutter like that. His concern was for their Krsna consciousness, how to make them feel welcome in his temple, and how best to engage them in Krsna's service. The same interaction was evident in Srila Prabhupada's dealings with disciples like Sudama Maharaja and Upendra Prabhu. He was always very concerned and

caring for them. They felt his love so strongly that it changed their hearts and lives forever!

It is these loving dealings between Srila Prabhupada and gays that convince me he would eventually have allowed for some type of concession regarding gay marriage. When the issue becomes personal and involves loved ones, it becomes much more clear and easy to understand. Even thirty years ago, when one of Srila Prabhupada's earliest disciples discussed his homosexual orientation with him, Srila Prabhupada said, "Then just find a nice boy, stay with him and practice Krsna consciousness." It is plain commonsense that monogamy is superior to promiscuity for anyone unable to follow complete celibacy. It may not be perfect or ideal, but it's definitely a step forward. And while Srila Prabhupada initially experimented in marrying gay men to women, often without the wife's knowledge, I think it's fair to say we have all seen the unrealistic nature and failure of such experiments, however well intended.

One time at the Hawaii temple, Siddhasvarupa Swami came to visit Srila Prabhupada in his private garden. After some initial conversation, Siddhasvarupa began complaining to Prabhupada about the gay devotees in ISKCON, apparently trying to prod him into making some negative statement he could later use against them. Srila Prabhupada remained silent and unimpressed, refusing to take the bait, and Siddhasvarupa left feeling disappointed. Shyamasundar, a gay disciple who had been present for the conversation, remained seated next to Srila Prabhupada, feeling angry about what he had just heard, but also somewhat self-conscious about his sexuality. After remaining silent for some time, Srila Prabhupada, perhaps sensing Shyamasundar's discomfort, said, "What is the difference if a person is held in this material world by a gold chain or by a silver chain?" Shyamasundar replied, "I don't know, Prabhupada." Prabhupada continued, "I am glad that Siddhasvarupa is chanting and reading my books, but he is always focusing on everyone else and not on the Supreme Person. That is the important thing."

If we study the transcendental examples of Srila Prabhupada's dealings with gay people very carefully, keep note of them, and imbibe them into our own lives and character, then we can truly become bona fide followers and representatives of His Divine Grace. Otherwise we cannot. If we are able to display the same loving and caring attitude that Prabhupada himself embodied, only then will our preaching be inspiring and effective. Without this sincerity of heart, our preaching will be useless and filled with false ego. No one will listen, and it will drive intelligent and fair-minded people far away. It will be a great embarrassment for our movement. In short, only one who genuinely cares for others has any business preaching to them.

If any devotees are harboring deep hatred or dislike for any of God's creatures, I beg them to please abandon it immediately. Do not act upon this lower nature because it will only grow and increase. Displays of hatred and contempt for others only anger the guru and stain the entire Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition. Instead, like Srila Prabhupada, we must become emblems of love and compassion for all. I beg everyone to please chant Hare Krsna carefully and offer all respect to others. Consider only yourself as the most fallen. This is how Srila Prabhupada was, and this is how he expected us to be. I offer my humble obeisances to all of you and thank you for listening.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

POSITIVE PERSPECTIVES

Bhagavad Gita: “I envy no one, nor am I partial to anyone. I am equal to all. But whoever renders service unto me in devotion is a friend, is in Me, and I am also a friend to him.” (9.29)

Srimad Bhagavatam: “As the blazing fire of death, I cause great fear to whoever makes the least discrimination between himself and other living entities because of a differential outlook. Therefore, through charitable gifts and attention, as well as through friendly behavior and by viewing all to be alike, one should propitiate Me, who abide in all creatures as their very Self.” (3.29.26-27)

Sri Isopanisad: “He who sees everything in relation to the Supreme Lord, who sees all living entities as His parts and parcels, and who sees the Supreme Lord within everything never hates anything nor any being.” (6)

Sri Caitanya-Caritamṛta: “One should know for certain that nothing can exist in this cosmic manifestation that has no real counterpart in the spiritual field. All material manifestations are emanations of the Transcendence. The erotic principles of amorous love reflected in mixed material values are perverted reflections of the reality of spirit, but one cannot understand the reality unless one is sufficiently educated in the spiritual science.” (1.4.29, purport)

Mahabharata: “Lord Kṛṣṇa said: ‘My dear Arjuna, you know that marriages are of many kinds. But the most wonderful of all these is the marriage of two people in love.’” (Adi Parva, Ch. 41, p. 114)

Baudhayana Dharmasutra: “Some commend the *gandharva* form of marriage for all, because it flows from love.” (1.20.16)

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura: “One should not enter marriage with a desire to beget children, or to worship the forefathers and Prajapatis. It is favorable to *bhakti* to think, ‘I am only accepting this maidservant of Kṛṣṇa so that we can assist each other in Kṛṣṇa’s service and establish Kṛṣṇa-centered family life together.’ Whatever one’s materially attached relatives or family priest may say, ultimately one reaps the fruit of one’s own determination.” (*Jaiva Dharma*, p. 164)

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura: “Ah! *Vaiṣṇava-dharma* is very liberal. All *jivas* have the right to *vaiṣṇava-dharma*; that is why it is also known as *jaiva-dharma*. Even outcastes can take up *vaiṣṇava-dharma* and live as *grhasthas*, although they are not part of *varnasrama*.” (*Jaiva Dharma*, p. 172)

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura: [A Vaishnava] never adheres blindly to the rules and prohibitions of the *sastras* [scriptures]. He accepts the instructions of the *sastras* graciously, but only when they are favorable to his practice of *hari-bhajana* [worship of God]. When they are unfavorable, he immediately rejects them. (*Jaiva Dharma*, p. 54)

Srila Prabhupada: (After asking a disciple what “eunuchs” were called in the West and not getting a satisfactory answer.) “I do not know exactly, but such people, they have their own society, and their means of livelihood is that whenever there is some good occasion... marriage or childbirth, like that, so, they go there and pray to God that this child may be very long-living. In this way they make some prayer... They are dancing. Yes. They are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.” (Tape No. 67—002, April 5, 1967)

Srila Prabhupada: “In all communities in human society—including the *brahmanas*, *ksatriyas*, *vaishyas*, *sudras*, *candalas*, etc.—and in the animal kingdom—including the cows, dogs, goats, etc.—everyone has his part to play. Each is to work in cooperation for the total benefit of all society, which includes not only animate objects but also inanimate objects like hills and land... Another hint we get from this statement is that the *candalas*, or the untouchables, are also not to be neglected by the higher classes and should be given necessary protection. Everyone is important, but some are directly responsible for the advancement of human society, and some are only indirectly responsible. However, when Kṛṣṇa

consciousness is there, then everyone's total benefit is taken care of." (*Kṛṣṇa* book, pp. 245-246)

Srila Prabhupada: "It is said that by modern medical treatment, a male can be transformed into a female, and a female into a male. The body, however, has no connection with the soul. The body can be changed, either in this life or the next. Therefore, one who has knowledge of the soul and how the soul transmigrates from one body to another does not pay attention to the body, which is nothing but a covering dress. *Panditah sama-darsinah*. Such a person sees the soul, which is part and parcel of the Supreme Lord. Therefore he is a *sama-darsi*, a learned person." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 9.1.33, purport)

Srila Prabhupada: (To an aspiring disciple considering a transsexual operation) "First of all, you decide whether you are male or female, then be one or the other. Then, you may enter our temple anytime you like. But sometimes man, sometimes woman, that is not proper. Such awkward things cannot be allowed. It will be disturbing to others. Anyway, continue to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa as much as possible." (Letter, June 10, 1975)

Srila Prabhupada: "This is the sum and substance of Lord Caitanya's *sankirtana* movement. There is no distinction made between those who are fit and those who are not fit to hear or take part in the *sankirtana* movement. It should therefore be preached without discrimination. The only purpose of the preachers of the *sankirtana* movement must be to go on preaching without restriction. That is the way in which Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu introduced this *sankirtana* movement to the world." (*Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta* 1.9.29, purport)

Srila Prabhupada: "Conservative we are not. Caitanya Mahaprabhu was so strict that He would not even look on a woman, but we are accepting everyone into this movement, regardless of sex, caste, position, or whatever. Everyone is invited to come chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. This is Caitanya Mahaprabhu's munificence, His liberality. No we are not conservative." (*Srila Prabhupada-Lilamṛta*, 3.1)

Srila Narayana Maharaja: "I received your letter and became very happy to read that you are inspiring so many devotees by Internet. My hearty blessings are for you and for all of the members of your preaching program [GALVA-108]. This is a very important service, please continue with this and help all to make progress on the path of pure *bhakti*. (Letter to Amara dasa, December 20, 2005)

Amara dasa: “Srila Narayana Maharaja was once asked by one of his temple presidents whether or not gay devotees should be allowed to live in his centers. He replied that everyone was welcome to join his temples as long as they followed the rules and regulations. He added that Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada wanted all types of people to join Lord Caitanya’s movement, and this was also his desire.” (December 5, 2005)

ISKCON Governing Body Commission: “While Srila Prabhupada’s definition of illicit sex is clear [sex outside of marriage and/or for purposes other than procreation], it is also clear that some devotees have difficulty maintaining this initiation vow. The GBC recognizes this, and suggests that rather than trying to adjust Srila Prabhupada’s definition we should go on with devotional service and humbly and sincerely keep endeavoring to reach the proper standard. In this regard, Srila Prabhupada writes, ‘In the beginning of Krishna consciousness, one may not fully discharge the injunctions of the Lord, but because one is not resentful of this principle and works sincerely without consideration of defeat and hopelessness, he will surely be promoted to the stage of pure Krishna consciousness. (BG 3.31, purport)’” (GBC Resolution 303, February, 2001)

Hridayananda das Goswami: “A truly spiritual society must constantly seek a balance between the strict codes of *varnasrama*, and the practical needs of sincere devotees. There can be no doubt that a significant number of souls, whose external sexual orientation is homosexual, sincerely strive to be Krishna conscious. It is entirely natural and predictable that a majority of these devotees, as with most heterosexual devotees, will not be suited for lifelong celibacy. My view of this issue is as follows:

- 1) As a general rule, we should appreciate devotees in terms of the sincerity and diligence of their spiritual attempts, given the psychophysical circumstances of their life. In other words, in any condition of life, if a devotee sincerely strives to please Krishna, that devotee is to be admired.
- 2) It is the duty of any society to recognize, and thus encourage, the admirable behavior of its members. Monogamy, among devotees of any orientation, is an admirable achievement in the context of today’s promiscuous society, and should be thus appreciated and encouraged.
- 3) Given the need to balance strict *varnasrama* with liberal spirituality, I believe that ISKCON should recognize and encourage monogamy among all its members of whatever orientation, and that such recognition and

encouragement should take appropriate forms that achieve both purposes: the maintenance of *varnasrama* and the encouraging of spiritual sincerity.

- 4) I am not convinced that marriage is the best means in all cases, but some serious, formal and public recognition and appreciation of gay monogamy is, in my view, in the best interest of ISKCON and its members.” (Open letter, December 11, 2004)

Swami BV Tripurari: “My opinion regarding gay and lesbian devotees is that they should be honored in terms of their devotion and spiritual progress. They should cultivate spiritual life from either a celibate status, or in something analogous to a heterosexual monogamous situation. Gay and lesbian people have always been a part of society from Vedic times to our postmodern times. They should be accepted for what they are in terms of their sexual orientation and encouraged like everyone else to pursue spiritual life.” (Letter to Bhakta Alberto, July 2001)

Swami BV Tripurari: “Although my Guru Maharaja [Srila Prabhupada] frowned on homosexuality in general, he was also very practical, flexible, and compassionate. One of his earliest disciples was a gay man who once related how he had ultimately discussed his sexual orientation with Srila Prabhupada. He said that at that point Srila Prabhupada said, ‘Then just find a nice boy, stay with him and practice Krsna consciousness.’ I also had the experience of meeting a transsexual who explained her sexual orientation and confusion to Srila Prabhupada before committing to an operation. She told me that Prabhupada told her, ‘Just pick one or the other [sex] and stick with it.’ Those who knew him well would have expected him to say something like this in both of these incidences. Again, he was very flexible and compassionate.” (*Sanga*: Vol. V, no. 13, June 2003)

Swami BV Tripurari: “Hindu scripture is largely silent on homosexuality, although it may be acknowledged in books such as the *Kama Sutra*, but not with regard to spiritual progress. Modern Hinduism for the most part condemns homosexuality but misunderstands it to be an improper choice rather than psychophysical reality that some people are born with, rendering them as attracted to the same sex, as heterosexuals are attracted to the opposite sex. As modern society has come to better understand this phenomenon, it is also imperative that Hindu traditions do the same if they are to remain vital. A dynamic approach in doing so might involve encouraging homosexuals to also establish committed

relationships in an effort to help them transcend sexuality altogether, as is done in the case of heterosexuals.” (*Sanga*: Vol. V, no. 13, June 2003)

Swami B.A. Asrama: “Once, when Srila Prabhupada was leaving after a visit to Honolulu in July of ‘74, a few of us stayed in the airport terminal with him while most of the other devotees stayed out on the sidewalk and kept a *kirtana* going. Satsvarupa Maharaja was reading ISKCON-related newspaper clippings to Srila Prabhupada when Prabhupada interrupted him: ‘I hear Aniruddha [a gay disciple who had fallen away] is here in Hawaii, but he has not come to see me. Do you know?’ One devotee volunteered that Aniruddha was outside with the *kirtana* party and Prabhupada told him, ‘He may come inside; there is no difficulty.’ The devotee scampered out to retrieve Aniruddha but returned empty-handed. Prabhupada told him, ‘No, you don’t understand. He may come inside; there is NO difficulty!’ The devotee ran out again and Aniruddha, who apparently wasn’t spiritually strong at the time, came in wearing cut-off jeans, a T-shirt and a stud in his left ear. He folded his hands and offered *pranamas* to Srila Prabhupada. ‘So, Aniruddha, how are you?’ Srila Prabhupada said. Aniruddha blushed and replied, ‘Actually, Srila Prabhupada, not so good.’ Srila Prabhupada insisted, despite Aniruddha’s protests, that Aniruddha sit on the seat next to him (the rest of us were sitting on the floor at Srila Prabhupada’s feet), and they exchanged small talk for a minute or two. Then Srila Prabhupada turned to us and said, ‘In Los Angeles temple, he is the beginning.’ It was clear that Srila Prabhupada’s vision was different from ours. The feeling I heard expressed among devotees around that time was something like, ‘Poor Aniruddha; Prabhupada loves him so much but he just can’t surrender!’ Srila Prabhupada’s perspective, however, was obviously different. Although he was not unaware of Aniruddha’s difficulties, he simply saw, like Raghunath Bhatta Goswami, that the problems were ephemeral, but the service is eternal, the essence of any devotee’s identity.” (GALVA-108 e-group post)

Bhakti Tirtha Swami: “‘Srila Prabhupada, there are prejudices in this movement.’ Prabhupada looked at him and said, ‘Ah. Someone is thinking you’re the body? That is their nonsense. And if you’re disturbed because they see you in that way, then you are also nonsense.’” (*Black Lotus*, p. 118, by Steven J. Rosen)

Bhakti Tirtha Swami: “It is quite amazing how most of us can be so prejudiced about so many things and not even know it. As we read Srila Prabhupada’s books, our own prejudice can easily cause us to see and not to see (*pasyann api na pasyati*). I thank you and several others for your compassion and for your tolerance in

making efforts to educate your godfamily, so that we can be more authentic servants of the servant. (Letter to Amara dasa, July 7, 2002)

Bhakti Marga Swami: “Regardless of whatever sexual orientation we may belong to—hetero, bi or homo—we are all endeavoring through the process of Krishna Consciousness by chanting, etc., to reduce the sex appetite and increase the urge to serve Krishna. In the Ninth Chapter of the Gita, the Lord explains that everyone has the opportunity to accomplish love of Krsna. So for starters it is recommended that we take direction from a *siksa* guru and then, to enhance our devotion more, to take *diksa* [initiation]—oftentimes from the same person who counsels us. (Letter to Manohara, May 18, 2003)

Bhakti Ananda Goswami: “Humans are masculine and feminine, not just genitally male and female or XY and XX. For physical, mental, affective/emotional health and ultimately self-realization, people need to understand themselves and be understood by others on their own terms, not indiscriminately lumped-in-together in pastoral care, diagnosis and treatment. There are so many combinations and variations of the basic types and relationships that ideally there should be no categories and every precious soul should be understood individually. However, since this is not possible, then at least we can make some effort to understand people a little better, and to stop impersonally merging them all-in-together under too general and simplistic labels like ‘homosexual.’ By daring to leave our comfortable denial to ask the right questions, we can accept the right answers and finally begin to render sex and gender justice to all of our sisters, brothers and others. This means honoring the basic beingness of every person, and recognizing the primacy of persons over their parts.” (From the article, *Modern Biology and the Concept of a “Third Sex”*)

BV Vaishnava Maharaja: “Every congregation and indeed many temples and ashramas around the world have gay and lesbian members. This is only natural. The sad fact remains, however, that many of these good devotees—rare souls that they are—often find they need to secret their inborn natures for fear of being ostracized. I found this the case in many places personally. Although I was “out” with many devotees I had to be discreet in order to remain in the ashrama. This only put undo emphasis on what I needed to transcend above many other misconceptions, especially as a *brahmacari* and even more now as a *sannyasi*—when honesty is essential. I am of course no angel but being excluded from the open and friendly atmosphere enjoyed by my dear heterosexual brothers and sisters, and then being ridiculed for not fitting in, was a most cruel experience

which was difficult to reconcile. Many devotees were banned and/or even in some places beaten and/or sexually abused. Still, by Sri Sri Nitai-Gauranga's grace, I managed to use the situation to my advantage as an impetus to take shelter of the Holy Names." (Open letter to GALVA-108)

Narahari dasa: "Whatever impermanent karmic identity we have assumed in this lifetime, we can certainly use nicely in Krishna's service. There is no need to artificially change who we are for now. In fact, we can have fun with our temporary identity in this lifetime by learning to use it in Krishna's service. This can be an enjoyable experience as our true eternal identity gradually awakens. For example, if someone is an actor in a movie, they can have a lot of fun playing their role. However, at the end of the day, the actor leaves his character behind and returns to his family. In this present age of *Kali Yuga*, by the unlimited mercy of Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityananda, anyone, in any condition of life, can take up the process of chanting Krishna's Holy Names. By this simple process we can transcend the amnesia of illusion and begin to awaken our original Krishna consciousness. In this way, we will begin to taste the nectar of our eternal, loving relationship with Krishna. For many years I've had the honor of performing same-sex marriages and assisting many wonderful souls in the LGBTQ community on their journey back to the Lotus feet of Krishna. If anyone is interested in speaking with me, please feel free to get in contact. I would consider it a great honor. I may or may not be able to help, but it certainly may be worth a try." (Open letter to GALVA-108)

Adi-karta dasa: "In his early *brahmacari* days [Upendra dasa] had the honor of being Srila Prabhupada's personal servant for a couple of years. And I had the honor of being his close friend from 1975 until his death. Upendraji was always one to speak from the heart. He related to me once something that he said Srila Prabhupada told him in a private conversation. Upendra was bemoaning his fate as a homosexual in the Hare Krsna movement, and (according to him) Srila Prabhupada—perhaps tired of his endless moaning—advised him to 'just find a nice boy then, and settle down!' This was in a private conversation (not recorded), and what actually transpired was that Upendraji got married to a woman instead, some time later. But he did tell me this anecdote, I can vouch for that. And Upendra was, in my experience, an honest and honorable man. Srila Prabhupada was an absolutely sacred memory for him, the most meaningful thing in his entire life, and it's hard for me to imagine he would ever make up something and pass it off as 'Prabhupada said...'" (Letter to Amara dasa, June 28, 2001)

Shyamasundar: “[May, 1976] One morning in Hawaii, I was standing by Srila Prabhupada’s window overlooking his private garden when a senior disciple named Siddhasvarupa Swami came in. He began complaining about all of the ‘pretty boys’ and homosexuals in ISKCON and Srila Prabhupada just let him vent, not saying much of anything. After some time Siddhasvarupa left, not getting the reaction he had wanted. Prabhupada sat at his desk for a while. I was feeling really angry toward Siddhasvarupa but also self-conscious about my own sexuality. Prabhupada sat there quietly and in deep thought. He then looked over at me briefly and said, ‘What is the difference if a person is held in this material world by a gold chain, or by a silver chain?’ I replied, ‘I don’t know, Srila Prabhupada.’ He continued, “I am glad that Siddhasvarupa is chanting and reading my books, but he is always focusing on everyone else and not on the Supreme Person. That is the important thing.” (*Ashe Journal*, Vol. II, no. 4)



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

ON RENUNCIATION

In the course of time, after experiencing worldliness and confronting one's own mortality, the living entity naturally comes to a point wherein he or she contemplates material renunciation for the sake of spiritual reawakening. At such a time, positive religious practices are adopted along with various prohibitions. While such prohibitions may vary according to the different traditions of Hinduism, for the most part, and especially within Vaishnavism, spiritual aspirants are encouraged to abstain from or at least minimize as far as possible meat-eating, gambling, intoxication and sex.

In terms of renouncing sex, a person may do this all at once by taking a vow of celibacy and moving into an ashrama, or gradually by committing oneself to a single partner in marriage. Indeed, the very last verse of the *Kama Shastra* concludes:

A shrewd man, expert in one thing or another, considering both ethics and his own material interests, must not be a sensualist thirsty for sex, but establish a stable marriage.

(Kama Sutra 7.2.59)

Married life and sexual restraint in general are thus recommended even for material stability, what to speak of for success in spiritual endeavors.

Since many Hindus today do not have a practical understanding of homosexuality, transgender identity and intersex conditions, third-gender people often have to make their own arrangements in this regard. Ideally, however—whether celibate, married or fallen—third-gender devotees should seek out and

associate with those pure-hearted souls who are able to extend their love, kindness and understanding to everyone. The following guidelines have been compiled by GALVA to help our members in their cultivation of spiritual life and renunciation.

Selecting a Temple and Guru

It is important that third-gender devotees and guests find a temple where they are genuinely welcomed and treated equally. The following guidelines should be present when considering membership at any Vaishnava or Hindu temple:

- Third-gender members or guests are equally welcomed and befriended. This includes those who may stand out as different such as transsexuals, gay and lesbian couples, etc.
- Third-gender persons inspired to follow the path of *bhakti* and live a monastic lifestyle are equally invited to join and move into the temple ashrama.
- People are viewed according to their devotional qualities and spiritual advancement, not by body type. Ridicule, disparagement, alienation or any unfair treatment of third-gender people is never tolerated and promptly addressed when it occurs.
- Temple authorities exhibit genuine kindness and flexibility to help accommodate third-gender members and guests. They are completely straightforward and never force anyone into silence or self-denial.
- Third-gender devotees who can't follow monastic vows are not rejected by the temple or pressured into artificial renunciation. Rather, they are offered realistic counseling and advice. They are encouraged to keep their ties with the temple as congregational members, continue their devotional practices, become responsible citizens and establish committed, monogamous relationships.

Finding a highly qualified guru or spiritual master who is sympathetic toward third-gender devotees and issues is also very important. Here are some of the most important qualifications to look for when selecting a guru:

- The guru must be a *madhyama* or *uttama* devotee. *Madhyama* means that he (or she) has impeccable faith in Krsna or God, spotless *sadhana* (regulative practice) and great expertise in the Vedic scriptures. An *uttama* guru is furthermore situated in *raganuga-bhakti* or the topmost mellows of loving devotional service to God.

- The guru must be firmly dedicated to his own spiritual master and imbibe the essence of his teachings. He should be reasonably accessible for association and inquiry.
- The guru must be a *sama-darsi*—he sees all living entities equally as spirit-soul and is expert at engaging all types of people (including the third sex) in devotional service to God.
- The guru is dear to everyone (*dbhiradhira jana-priyau*). He is kind and merciful to all living entities whether they are renounced, fallen, or anywhere in-between.
- The guru should be open-minded, flexible and innovative in his preaching. He should imbibe the liberality of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and previous *acaryas*.
- The guru should firmly practice all-inclusiveness and immediately check anyone exhibiting bigotry or hatred toward others.
- Ideally, the guru should have some practical understanding of third-gender issues such as same-sex marriage, transsexuality and so on, which are otherwise not relevant to ordinary heterosexual devotees.

Find Your Place

Everyone has a place in Vaishnavism and finding the most conducive environment for spiritual life is very important. For some, this may involve living in the temple as a celibate and doing full-time devotional service; for others, it may be within a marital situation outside the temple, owning a home, raising a family, going to work, etc. In any case, the cultivation of spiritual life and renunciation is best executed from a position where one is most peaceful, happily engaged, and surrounded by supportive friends and well-wishers.

Stress the Positive

In spiritual life there are both positive instructions (chanting, studying scripture, associating with devotees, etc.) and negative ones (refraining from meat-eating, gambling, intoxication, sex, and so on). While both are important, the positive instructions should always be given precedence over the negative. For instance, people should begin hearing and chanting about Kṛṣṇa even if they cannot follow all of the prohibitions. It is not that one must first give up all bad habits, and then after that he or she may begin Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Rather, by immediately adopting the positive practices of spiritual life, a person will gradually become inspired to follow the various prohibitions.

Keep Balanced

Srila Rupa Goswami advises us to neither over-emphasize nor neglect the various rules and regulations of spiritual life. Religious fundamentalists (*smarta-brahmanas*) overstress scriptural regulations and indiscriminately impose them in a harsh manner that is dispiriting to others. Religious sentimentalists, on the other hand (known as *sahajiyas*), casually neglect or omit the various rules and regulations to their own spiritual detriment. In reality, there must be a fine balance between these two extremes. Regulations should be adopted when they are helpful and realistic, but rejected when they are counterproductive or unrealistic.

Seek Proper Guidance

GALVA cautions its members to avoid the fundamentalist and *sahajiya* types of devotees mentioned above. In particular, fundamentalists are often hateful toward gays and their bad association can be very discouraging in spiritual life. Members should instead seek out the thoughtful, pure-hearted souls who view everyone equally and are expert at engaging all types of people. Such good and inspiring association (*sadhu-sanga*) is the most important secret for achieving spiritual success.

Be Honest

Honesty and straightforwardness are important Vaishnava principles that everyone should adhere to. Devotees should be truthful about who they are and where they stand spiritually. GALVA advises its members to be straightforward about their psychophysical selves as gay, bisexual, or whatever. They should not lie about this or pretend to be something they are not. If a person is dishonest and pretentious in spiritual life, all sorts of problems and obstacles will ensue: “O what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive!”

Know Where You Stand

Spiritual aspirants should truthfully assess their own capabilities in terms of renunciation and move forward from there. Srila Prabhupada often stated that it is better to be an honest sweeper in the street than a highly-positioned charlatan or hypocrite. It is not possible to make progress in spiritual life if we do not confront our actual position and deal with it realistically. In this regard, Swami B.V. Tripurari has stated: “*Daiva-varnasrama* refers to the importance of situating devotees in consideration of their psychological and physiological makeup so

that they can gradually tread the topmost path of pure *bhakti* by eliminating the danger of artificial renunciation. False renunciation (*phalgu-vairagya*) involves not only artificially leaving one's family, but more so, being out of touch with the reality of one's material identity. One thereby ignores or denies much that one has to work through to attain freedom from the karmic realm and develop love of God. False renunciation does not mean to merely artificially accept a renounced formal posture. It involves misunderstanding one's actual standing in *bhakti* and avoiding the difficult task of dealing with one's material responsibilities and shortcomings through appropriate means, even when those means appear to be outside of the realm of *bhakti* proper."

Never Offend Others

In our practice of spiritual life and renunciation it is important never to offend other living entities. In particular, offending fellow devotees is the foremost of all prohibitions and is even more detrimental to one's spiritual life than engaging in sex or other restrictions. Sometimes it is seen that devotees become agitated due to false renunciation and, obsessed with the behavior of others, continuously criticize and offend them. Such a demeanor is highly detrimental in spiritual life and needs to be checked immediately. Devotees should peacefully focus on their own spiritual practices and learn to see only the good qualities in others.

Remain Humble and Hopeful

Devotees should always remain humble and hopeful that they will one day attain the mercy of their venerated Deity despite any shortcomings. In this regard, Srila Prabhupada writes:

In the beginning of Krishna consciousness, one may not fully discharge the injunctions of the Lord, but because one is not resentful of this principle and works sincerely without consideration of defeat and hopelessness, he will surely be promoted to the stage of pure Krishna consciousness.

(*Bhagavad Gita As It Is* 3.32, purport)

Similarly, Lord Krsna explains how His devotee should remain happy and faithful, even if he cannot be completely renounced:

Having awakened faith in the narrations of My glory, being disgusted with all material activities, knowing that all sense gratification leads to misery, but being unable to renounce all sense enjoyment, My devotee should remain happy and worship Me with great faith and conviction. Even though he is sometimes engaged in sense enjoyment, My devotee knows that all sense gratification leads to a miserable result, and he sincerely repents such activities.

(*Srimad Bhagavatam* 11.20.27-28)

In the verse below, Srila Rupa Goswami expresses his own humility and hope in a prayer to Sri Krsna:

I have no love for Krsna, nor for the causes of developing love of Krsna—namely, hearing and chanting. And the process of *bhakti-yoga*, by which one is always thinking of Krsna and fixing His lotus feet in the heart, is also lacking in me. As far as philosophical knowledge or pious works are concerned, I don't see any opportunity for me to execute such activities. But above all, I am not even born of a nice family. Therefore I must pray to You, Gopijana-vallabha [Krsna]. I simply wish and hope that some way or other I may be able to approach Your lotus feet, and this hope is giving me pain, because I think myself quite incompetent to approach that transcendental goal of life.

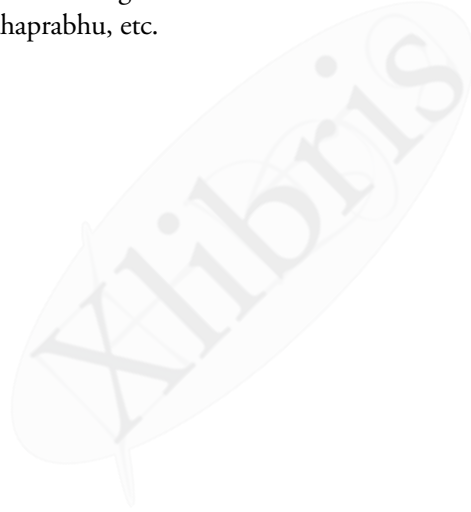
(*The Nectar of Devotion*, p. 137)

Real Renunciation

According to Srila Rupa Goswami, real renunciation (*yukta-vairagya*) involves not simply giving things up but rather utilizing them in the service of Krsna or God. A devotee should therefore accept the minimal requirements for peaceful living, without attachment, and dovetail one's natural propensities in the Lord's service. All three genders—male, female and third sex—can serve Krsna peacefully by employing their own specific qualities in this way. Below is a list of some of the special advantages commonly associated with the third sex:

- 1) Purifies one of previous karma or allows one to work out material desires.
- 2) Gives one the special insight that comes from belonging to a minority group.
- 3) Affords detachment from the encumbrances of family life, children, etc.
- 4) Affords a better opportunity for living a celibate lifestyle.
- 5) Affords more time for spiritual life and perfecting special talents.

- 6) Often characterized by unique skills, such as in the fine arts and sciences (for men) or leadership and business roles (for women).
- 7) Often psychically attuned and able to serve as shamans, fortune-tellers, healers, bestowers of blessings, temple priests, etc.
- 8) Able to judge the spiritual advancement of others according to how they are treated or mistreated by them.
- 9) When open and visible, able to set a good example, inspire others, preach to the gay community and improve relations in one's social or religious sphere.
- 10) Having unique relationships with men and women.
- 11) Able to mediate between the sexes and serve as go-betweens.
- 12) Having a deeper attraction for male Deities (as men) or female Deities (as women).
- 13) Associated with third-gender Deities such as Sri Ardhanarisvara, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, etc.



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

WE ARE NOT THESE BODIES

In the highest sense, it should be a complete nonissue that anyone is in a gay or third-gender body. All branches of Hinduism teach that the soul is transcendental to the material body and that it transmigrates from one body to the next until achieving liberation in the perfected, spiritual state. Lord Krsna says in the Bhagavad Gita:

As the embodied soul continually passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. The self-realized soul is not bewildered by such a change. (2.13)

For the soul there is never birth nor death. Nor, having once been, does he ever cease to be. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, undying and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain. (2.20)

As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, similarly, the soul accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones. (2.22)

There are so many types of material bodies, but the soul is transcendental to all of them. Everyone takes their birth according to previous deeds (*karma*) and desires (*kama*), and everyone passes through various forms, genders, and species of life. A person who is spiritually advanced, therefore, does not attach importance to the material body or see others in terms of it. Rather, he views everyone equally as spirit-soul:

The humble sage, by virtue of true knowledge, sees with equal vision a learned and gentle brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater [outcaste]. (5.18)

So-called religious people who discriminate against or mistreat others because they are gay or straight, black or white, male or female, etc.—based on the material body—are known to be among the lowest class of spiritualists. They are not advanced even when they pretend to be, and in general, such people should be avoided. A person who is truly spiritually elevated will be full of love, compassion, and kindness in his dealings with all other living entities, seeing them purely on the spiritual level.

In this age of *Kali*, many people are on the bodily platform, and therefore they judge others externally according to the body, rather than internally based on spiritual qualities. Such people are always arguing and quarreling over who is higher and who is lower, who is better and who is worse, or who is more fallen, more sinful, etc. My spiritual master carefully instructed me to always be like the honeybee and not like the fly when dealing with other people. Honeybee-like people are always looking for the good qualities of others, whereas fly-like people are always searching after faults and shortcomings. To apply this toward people of the third sex, we should learn to see their good qualities and encourage them to develop and engage these in the service of God. This is the type of positive interaction with other people that we should practice ourselves and expect of our religious leaders.

When a devotee has perfected his spiritual practices, he no longer takes birth in this material world. Instead, he enters into spiritual existence, either in an impersonal way by merging into the Brahman effulgence, or in a personal way by entering into the Lord's transcendental pastimes. Those who desire to enter into the Lord's pastimes achieve a spiritual body that is eternally youthful and beautiful, and they engage in loving service and affectionate exchanges with their worshipable Lord in an unlimited variety of ways.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

GOD LOVES EVERYONE

The Supreme Lord Sri Krsna loves everyone within His creation. This is true regardless of any distinctions such as gender, race, nationality, class, etc. Both the eternal spiritual world and its reflection (this temporary material world) are full of unlimited beauty and variety, and each individual creation of the Lord has its own unique role to play. This can be compared to the many different spokes on a wheel that all serve to support its operation. In the spiritual world, everyone lives in full, loving consciousness of God and His creation at every moment. Unfortunately, in this world, most people have lost that loving connection or “yoga” with the Supreme and are thus entrapped in an endless cycle of repeated births and deaths, similar to dreaming. Having mercy upon such fallen souls, Sri Krsna has descended to awaken our dormant spiritual lives. He has especially come in this age as Lord Caitanya to distribute the all-purifying holy names of God:

Not considering who asked for it and who did not, nor who was fit and who unfit to receive it, Caitanya Mahaprabhu distributed the fruit of devotional service.

(Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta 1.9.29)

This is the sum and substance of God’s love and compassion for all. The holy names of “Hare Krsna” are priceless and must be lovingly distributed to everyone without any discrimination or restriction. It does not matter whether one is male or female, black or white, gay or straight, high class or low class. None of these things matter because simply by chanting these holy names of God, everyone can

be awakened from their dreamlike material existence. It is therefore recommended that everyone immediately take up this chanting of the Hare Krsna *maha-mantra* and awaken their dormant love of God. This mantra can be chanted by anyone, anywhere and at any time.

Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna,
Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare;
Hare Rama, Hare Rama,
Rama Rama, Hare Hare.



APPENDIX 1

SUMMARY

The following is a summary of ten important facts presented in this book according to the Vedic understanding, accompanied by their corresponding myths or common misconceptions that have arisen in recent years.

1. *Fact*—There are three categories of sex according to the Vedas: male, female and mixed (the third sex).
Myth—There are only two categories of sex: male and female.
2. *Fact*—Third-sex citizens had a role to play in Vedic society.
Myth—Third-sex citizens were not allowed to participate in Vedic society.
3. *Fact*—The term “Vedic eunuch” most commonly refers to the gay or homosexual male.
Myth—The Vedic eunuch was an asexual, castrated male no longer relevant to modern society.
4. *Fact*—The third sex is a natural order that has always and will always be with us, generally at a ratio of 5 percent of the population.
Myth—Homosexuality is a modern-day occurrence that is dangerously on the rise and could overtake us if not checked.
5. *Fact*—The third sex or nature is an inherent quality that its members are born with.

Myth—Everyone is born heterosexual, but some of us are corrupted and decide or choose to become gay.

6. *Fact*—Gender, in and of itself, plays no role in determining whether a person is good or bad.
Myth—People of the third sex are by nature sinful, immoral, and corrupted persons.
7. *Fact*—Promiscuity in general is a major symptom of the age of Kali.
Myth—Kali Yuga is marked by an increase in the number of homosexuals.
8. *Fact*—Vedic society accommodated a wide variety of sexual conduct that was regulated by the government.
Myth—All members of Vedic society were forced by law to follow strict brahminical standards of sexual conduct.
9. *Fact*—Third-gender people were considered to be aloof from and unimportant to matters concerning procreation and family life.
Myth—Homosexuals pose a serious threat to the order and tradition of family life.
10. *Fact*—People of the third sex were given all of the basic rights and privileges afforded to other citizens.
Myth—Homosexuals should be denied certain rights in order to keep them in check and protect society from corruption.

APPENDIX 2

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Hinduism?

Hinduism is the world's oldest religion and is indigenous to India. With approximately 900 million followers worldwide, Hinduism is the third largest religion after Christianity and Islam. Hindu teachings originate from ancient Sanskrit texts known as the *Vedas* and encompass a wide spectrum of tradition and philosophy. Hindus believe that everything is sacred as a part and parcel of God or Brahman; that God manifests in unlimited forms; that the soul is eternal and reincarnates until liberation, and that nonviolence and compassion are the foremost religious principles. Vaishnavism is the largest branch of Hinduism and Vaishnavas worship a supreme God realized as Kṛṣṇa, Rama, Viṣṇu, Narayana, etc.

What is Gaudiya Vaishnavism?

Gaudiya Vaishnavism is a branch of Vaishnava Hinduism originating from *Gaudadesa* (Bengal). Its members accept Lord Caitanya (1486-1534 A.D.) as the spiritual preceptor for this age—an incarnation of Radha and Krishna combined. Gaudiya Vaishnavas worship Radha-Krishna as the original and most intimate manifestation of Godhead. Lord Caitanya's mission was to spread love of God throughout the world and to all people, especially the fallen and downtrodden. His specific method was to engage everyone in chanting the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*. Gaudiya Vaishnavas always chant this *maha-mantra* while meditating on the Divine Couple in a loving mood and are commonly known in the West as the "Hare Krishnas."

What does Hinduism teach about homosexuality?

Ancient Hindu teachings describe homosexuality as a “third sex” (*tritiya-prakriti*), an inborn nature combining both male and female properties. Homosexuals and transgenders were recognized for their unique nature and incorporated into Vedic society accordingly. They were not punished or persecuted under ancient Hindu law and elaborate descriptions of homosexuality can be found in the *Kama Shastra* (Hindu scriptures describing the art of lovemaking).

What exactly is the Hindu third sex?

The Hindu third sex refers to people we know today as gender minorities—homosexuals, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgenders, the intersexed—people who do not fit neatly into society’s “normal” male and female roles. Such people are sometimes described as “neither man nor woman” or “both man and woman.” In Hinduism, the universal creation is honored as unlimitedly diverse and the recognition of a third sex is one more aspect of this understanding. Gender-ambiguous persons were traditionally awarded a semi-divine status and their participation in religious ceremonies, especially as crossdressing dancers and devotees of the temple deity, was considered auspicious—a symbol of good luck, peace and cultural prosperity. This tradition can still be observed in India today. Many Hindus believe that people of the third sex have special powers that allow them to bless or curse others.

What are the different types of third-sex people?

The basic types of third-sex people are as follows:

- Gay or homosexual men (who are only attracted to other men)
- Lesbian or homosexual women (who are only attracted to other women)
- Bisexuals (who are attracted to both sexes, either simultaneously or at different times in life)
- Transgenders (who identify and behave as the opposite sex)
- Intersexed persons (who share physical traits of both sexes, to various degrees)

What is the Sanskrit word for “homosexual”?

Homosexual men are referred to in Sanskrit by several different names including *kliba*, *napumsaka* and *shandha*. These words are often inaccurately

translated into English as “eunuch” but actually refer to a wide range of men who are impotent with women for a variety of different reasons. Such men formed a distinct social class in ancient India and were considered to be sexually neutral by nature. Lesbians are called *svairini* or *nastriya* in Sanskrit and were similarly impotent with men.

What are the “eunuchs” of India?

The “eunuchs” of India are perhaps more accurately described as religious crossdressers. They are typically transgender or homosexual and only certain groups, such as the *hijra*, actually undergo ritualized castration (a primitive form of sex-change that involves removing both the penis and testicles). It is estimated that less than ten percent of people commonly referred to as eunuchs in India are actually castrated. Other so-called eunuch groups include the *aravani*, *jogappa* and *sakhi-bekhi*, none of which practice castration. Modern transsexual operations are illegal in India and unaffordable for most citizens, so castration is still very appealing to many transgender Hindus. Male castration is not recommended in Vedic scriptures nor considered to be a traditional Hindu practice. Rather, it was introduced and popularized in medieval North India during Muslim rule. Vaishnava teachings discourage bodily mutilation and for this reason most crossdressing Hindus simply bind their genitals up tightly against the groin. This traditional Hindu practice is still common among many crossdressing communities in South India.

What are some common misconceptions about the third sex?

One of the most common misconceptions about the third sex or gender is that it only refers to intersexed people (hermaphrodites), or that it only refers to transgenders and “eunuchs,” or to homosexuals, and so on. Another misconception is that the third gender only refers to sexually submissive partners (“bottoms”) in men or sexually dominant partners (“tops”) in women. None of these limited definitions, however, are correct by themselves. The third gender category is first and foremost defined by an inability or lack of desire to unite with the opposite sex and beget children, and this includes a very broad range of many different types of people.

What are the primary considerations in determining the third gender?

There are two primary considerations in determining the third gender—the first being social and the second, biological. The social consideration refers to

whether or not a person is sexually procreative (bearing offspring in society) and the biological consideration refers to whether or not a person, by nature and birth, has both male and female characteristics. A completely third-gender person will have both of these aspects but in some instances only one may be present. For instance, a bisexual person is third gender by nature (having both male and female attractions) but if he or she unites with the opposite sex and begets children, such a person is not socially viewed as belonging to the third gender. Similarly, heterosexually potent males and fertile females who never produce offspring throughout their lives are socially viewed as third gender, even though biologically they are not.

How should Hindus and Vaishnavas treat people of the third sex?

Hindus and Vaishnavas should not discriminate against, mistreat, or exclude anyone based on their material body. All beings should be viewed equally as spiritual entities and as parts and parcels of God. Higher qualities such as love, kindness, mercy and compassion should always be cultivated and emphasized above lower qualities like hate, cruelty, fear and suspicion. Hindus should revive their ancient tradition of accommodating the third sex in society and treat everyone with respect.

Why do some Hindus discriminate against the third sex?

Discrimination against the third sex is mostly due to ignorance and a lack of genuine spiritual advancement and insight. A person must truly care about others in order to understand them properly. In recent centuries, foreign religions such as Christianity and Islam introduced many harmful misunderstandings about homosexuality into India, and these ideas have since been incorporated into both Indian law and the modern Hindu psyche. Such misconceptions should be abandoned.

Is homosexuality inborn?

Yes. Vedic literatures are very clear about this and repeatedly state that a person's sex as male, female or third gender is determined at the time of conception due to various biological and psychic factors. Vedic medical texts (the Ayur Shastra) especially describe how third-gender traits such as homosexual attraction, transgender identity and intersex conditions are developed in the embryo during the first two months of pregnancy and cannot be changed after that. There is no

question in Hinduism that heterosexuality, bisexuality, homosexuality, transgender identity and intersex are all fixed, biologically inborn natures.

Is homosexuality a symptom of Kali Yuga?

No. This is a common myth, but Vedic texts do not refer to homosexuality as a symptom of *Kali Yuga*. If anything, the persecution and mistreatment of third-gender people is more likely a sign of this age of quarrel and hypocrisy. Intolerant persons filled with hate and contempt for gay and lesbian people are the true representatives of *Kali Yuga*.

Why recognize oneself as a gay Hindu or Vaishnava?

Ultimately, we must identify only as spiritual entities and servants of God, but this does not mean ignoring or failing to recognize our present psychophysical state. Coming to terms with one's nature is an important step in establishing good mental health, self-esteem, and moving forward in all aspects of life. Honesty, straightforwardness, and revealing one's mind in confidence are essential religious qualities, and people are much more likely to have a positive impression of gays if they have open and favorable dialog with them. Educating and familiarizing others through personal exchange is the best way to eliminate anti-gay prejudice in society.

Is homosexuality defined by behavior?

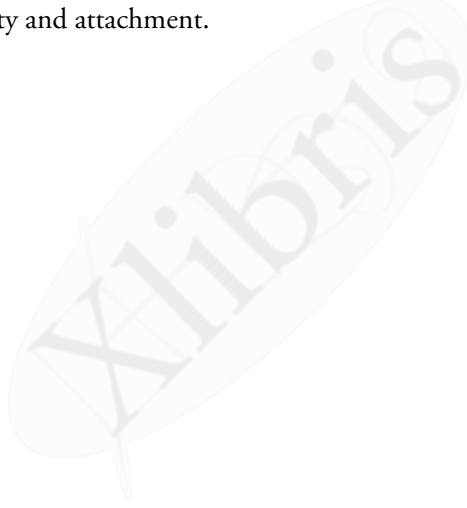
No. Homosexuality is defined by same-sex love and attraction. Whether or not a person is sexually active has nothing to do with his or her sexual orientation. A homosexual person may be celibate, monogamous, or promiscuous, just as any heterosexual person may be.

Should homosexuals be allowed to live in the ashrama?

Yes. Anyone should be allowed to live in the ashrama as long as they are sincere and promise to follow the rules and regulations. There are many wonderful examples of homosexual people who have been successful in celibate ashrama life, and no one should be denied this opportunity because of bodily prejudice or hate. Of course, not everyone is suited for lifelong celibacy, but even a year or two spent in the ashrama can be highly beneficial. Those unable to continue in celibate life can marry and live outside as responsible congregational members.

What about sex and marriage?

Sexuality is problematic in ascetic Hinduism since achieving liberation requires the abandonment of all material attachments and desires. Most Hindu religious texts extol abstinence and celibacy, with monogamy in marriage being a type of “second-best” concession. Gays and lesbians should similarly be encouraged to cultivate spiritual life from either a celibate status or in something analogous to a heterosexual monogamous situation, according to their ability and nature. Homosexual couples can be viewed in much the same way as infertile or sterile couples are—their need for companionship should be recognized and they can adopt children, etc. In religious married life, the foremost principle is to view one’s partner as a servant of God and encourage each other in spiritual life. As the couple matures both physically and spiritually, they can gradually transcend all mundane sexuality and attachment.



APPENDIX 3

TAPE TRANSCRIPT (NO. 67-002)

The following conversation between Srila Prabhupada and Hayagriva dasa was tape-recorded in San Francisco on April 5, 1967:

SP: (Srila Prabhupada) Jagannatha Misra is father. He was . . . whatever money and cloth and gold and silver . . . they were coming . . . he was also distributing to poor man, some dancers. In India there is a system . . . what do you call the eunuchs? Those who are neither male or female? What do you call them? What is their name?

HD: (Hayagriva dasa) A combination of both?

SP: Yes.

HD: Male and female? Hermaphrodite.

SP: Eunuchs? What is the eunuch?

HD: Eunuch. A eunuch is a . . .

SP: Tell me that.

HD: Impotent . . . someone who's been castrated.

SP: Oh. That is called a eunuch.

HD: Eunuch.

SP: Rather, by nature, neither man nor woman.

HD: Oh. This is also called asexual. That is to say, no sex.

SP: No sex?

HD: Hermaphrodite means they have the physical characteristics of both man and woman.

SP: Oh? At the same time?

HD: At the same time.

SP: I do not know exactly, but such people, they have their own society, and their means of livelihood is that whenever there is some good occasion . . . marriage or childbirth, like that, so, they go there and pray to God that this child may be very long-living. In this way they make some prayer and get some . . .

HD: These people. Now, I don't understand . . .

SP: Yes. Saci-devi is the mother of Lord Caitanya. She is sitting with the child. And everyone is greeting and visiting, and everyone is saying, "Oh! Look how nice a child He is!"

HD: And these "asexual" people?

SP: They are dancing.

HD: They are dancing.

SP: Yes. They are chanting Hare Krsna. Like that. So. Hare Krsna dancing is going there and visitors are coming and presenting very nice things. Yes.

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, founder of the Hare Krsna movement of the Western world, rarely discussed gay or third-gender issues but mentions it here in a conversation with one of his disciples. He is referring to the transvestite dancers and their societies that still exist in India even today. He is obviously trying to find a more appropriate word for the outdated term "eunuch," which he had used in his writings when referring to people of the third sex. He also acknowledges herein that he does not exactly know the nature of these people.

As was proper for a *sannyasi*, His Divine Grace avoided discussing sexual topics except in regard to their renunciation. He did, however, recognize the Kama Shastra as "the science of sex" but gave it little regard in comparison to other more important scriptures. He rarely discussed homosexuality, and the few times he did were always in context as to how it applied to heterosexual men and women.

Despite this, and more importantly, was Srila Prabhupada's shining example of conduct in dealing with his third-sex disciples and friends. He always gave them full support, encouragement, and love. He never rejected anyone as a candidate for Krsna consciousness. His warm friendships with openly gay people such as Allen Ginsberg set an example that we would all do well to follow.

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