

Bhaktivedanta Swami and the Manu-Samhita

This text is a rudimentary attempt to show how the *Manu-Samhita* is represented in the works of Bhaktivedanta Swami. To accomplish this, references to and quotes from the *Manu-Samhita*, as well as those mentioning the name Manu in relation to his laws, were extracted from Bhaktivedanta Swami's books, lectures, conversations, and letters in the latest Vedabase, and then categorized according to content and context. To this date the VedaBase is still not entirely complete, so more references may exist. However, the data used here comprises the bulk and I deem it fairly representative for the possible entirety.

A total number of 155 references have been categorized as statements made about the *Manu-Samhita* and quotations from the *Manu-Samhita* or references to such quotations. The former comprises 38% of the total and the latter 62%. The data shows that all statements made about the *Manu-Samhita* are solely meant to establish and highlight its importance as an authorized work of law and dharma that must be followed. Yet, despite this apparent importance a quarter of the material referencing the *Manu-Samhita* deals with the capital punishment of murderers and almost half with the dependence and control of women.

The question naturally arises why Bhaktivedanta Swami, after repeatedly establishing the *Manu-Samhita* as important, authoritative, and an almost absolute law for human kind, then chose to focus mostly on less than a handful of the 2,694 verses in this vast work.

Another question could be raised in this regard as to the significance of the letter to Madhusudana, in which we find the only instance where Bhaktivedanta Swami spoke against following the *Manu-Samhita* — about six months before his death.

Summary Statistics

Total references: 155

| Category | Type | References | % of total |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| About the <i>Manu-Samhita</i> | | 59 | 38 |
| | As law or dharma-sastra | 21 | 36 |
| | As a standard, guide, or authorized | 22 | 37 |
| | Following or failing to follow | 12 | 20 |
| | Miscellaneous definitions | 4 | 7 |
| From the <i>Manu-Samhita</i> | | 96 | 62 |
| | The capital punishment of murderers | 24 | 25 |
| | The dependence/protection of women | 44 | 46 |
| | Satisfaction of women | 6 | 6 |
| | Miscellaneous statements | 22 | 23 |

References

SB stands for *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (Bhagavata Purana), the compilation with translation and commentary by Bhaktivedanta Swami.

BG stands for *Bhagavad-Gita*, the compilation with translation and commentary by Bhaktivedanta Swami.

CC stands for *Caitanya-Caritamṛta*, the compilation with translation and commentary by Bhaktivedanta Swami.

TLK stands for *Teachings of Lord Kapila*, the compilation with translation and commentary by Bhaktivedanta Swami.

As law or dharma-sastra

BG 2.21: law book for mankind

BG 16.7: law of the human race

SB 2.1.36: standard law book for humanity

SB 4.27.5: laws meant for human beings

SB 4.27.5: contains laws regulating sex

SB 5.7.8: contains estate laws

SB 6.2.11: is a dharma-sastra

TLK 6.11: contains the laws of God

Lecture BG 4.10, Vrndavana, August 2, 1974: is a dharma-sastra

Lecture BG 7.3, Bombay, February 18, 1974: is Hindu law

Lecture BG 13.8-12, Bombay, September 30, 1973: is the law

Lecture SB 1.5.9-11, New Vrindaban, June 6, 1969: is a dharma-sastra

Lecture SB 3.25.11, Bombay, November 11, 1974: are the laws of God

Lecture SB 3.26.17, Bombay, December 26, 1974: are laws to control human society

Lecture SB 7.9.10, Mayapur, February 17, 1976: is the most important of the dharma-sastras

Room Conversation, July 9, 1975, Chicago: is Vedic law

Room Conversation, January 8, 1976, Nellore: is Hindu law

Garden Discussion on BG 16, June 26, 1976, New Vrindaban: is the law book of the human race

Discussion with Professor Kotovski, Moscow, June 22, 1971: is the Hindu law

Philosophy Discussions with Shyamasundara on Bertrand Russell: is the higher authority that we take the law from

Letter to Alfred Ford, Los Angeles, 16 July, 1974: is the Vedic law book

As a standard, guide, or authorized

BG 7.15: guide to religious principles

SB 1.7.37: contains civic codes and religious principles

SB 1.9.27: meant to give direction to kings for proper administration

SB 2.1.36: great book of social knowledge

SB 2.10: meant to give right direction in life

SB 2.7.9: authorized book of the great sages

SB 2.7.9: contains standard welfare codes

SB 6.1.7: is an authorized scripture

SB 7.8.48: contains directions based on varnasrama concerning how to live as a human being

SB 7.11.7: is an all-pervading authority

SB 8.1.10: contains instructions for all of human society

SB 8.1.16: is a guide to human society

CC Adi 2.91-92: guides the way to perfection in human life

Lecture BG 7.1, Bombay, January 13, 1973: directs people how to act and live

Lecture SB 1.3.20, Los Angeles, September 25, 1972: are rules and regulations for the human being

Lecture SB 3.26.17, Bombay, December 26, 1974: is Aryan literature

Lecture SB 3.26.17, Bombay, December 26, 1974: is Vedic literature

Lecture SB 6.2.11, Vrndavana, September 13, 1975: is authorized

Morning Walk, April 20, 1974, Hyderabad: contains moral principles for conducting society
Discussion with Professor Kotovski, Moscow, June 22, 1971: is an example of the standard of brahminical culture
Garden Conversation, June 28, 1976, New Vrindaban: decides who can vote
Philosophy Discussions with Hayagriva on Immanuel Kant: is a theocratic government

Following or failing to follow

SB 2.1.36: every human being is advised to follow it
SB 4.10.14: Hindus in India follow the laws given by Manu
SB 4.18.3: human society should follow the Manu-smṛti
SB 5.12.7: duty of a King is to follow dharma-sastra
SB 7.8.48: human society must follow its principles to attain peace
SB 8.1.7: states ruled otherwise will not endure
Lecture BG 7.3 , Bombay, February 18, 1974: is not to be amended
Lecture SB 6.1.6, Nellore, January 5, 1976: failing prescribed atonement will lead to hell
Lecture SB 6.1.7, Honolulu, May 8, 1976: failing prescribed atonement will lead to hell
Garden Discussion on BG 16, June 26, 1976, New Vrindaban: is followed by Hindus to this day
Letter to Madhsudana, Vrindavana, May 19, 1977: mlecchas and yavanas cannot touch the *Manu-Samhita*
Letter to Madhsudana, Vrindavana, May 19, 1977: if you try to follow the *Manu-Samhita* then you become a mlecccha and yavana and your career is finished

Miscellaneous definitions

BG 16.7: defines proper social behavior
Morning Walk, April 20, 1974, Hyderabad: is not religion
Discussion with Professor Kotovski, Moscow, June 22, 1971: is perfect
Discussion with Professor Kotovski, Moscow, June 22, 1971: is applicable for all time

The capital punishment of murderers

There is no specific reference in the *Manu-Samhita* stating that murderers should be killed or hanged and that this act is the mercy of the King. The closest reference would be: "*But men who have committed crimes and have been punished by the king, go to heaven, being pure like those who performed meritorious deeds.*" (*Manu-Samhita* 8.318) Killing in self-defense or for the protection of women and Brahmins incurs no sin (*Manu-Samhita* 8.349 and 8.350-351). Other than that, punishment differs for each caste and circumstance, and chapter 11 enumerates various forms of penance that can be performed instead of punishment — including capital punishment. Hanging is nowhere mentioned in the *Manu-Samhita* as a capital punishment.

BG 2.21: a murderer should be condemned to death
SB 4.25.8: it is necessary for a king to execute a murderer
SB 4.26.21: a King should be considered merciful when he condemns a murderer to death
SB 6.1.8: a man who has committed murder should be hanged
SB 7.1.12: a king bestows mercy upon a murderer by killing him
Lecture BG 2.1-11, Johannesburg, October 17, 1975: it is the government's mercy when a murderer is hanged
Lecture BG 2.20-25, Seattle, October 14, 1968: a murderer should be condemned to death
Lecture BG 2.32, London, September 2, 1973: a murderer should be killed
Lecture SB 1.16.36, Tokyo, January 30, 1974: a murderer is condemned to death to save him
Lecture SB 1.16.36, Tokyo, January 30, 1974: if a murderer is killed, then he will not commit further murders
Lecture SB 5.5.3, Stockholm, September 9, 1973: when a person is a murderer, he should be killed
Lecture SB 6.1.6, Bombay, November 6, 1970: hanging a murderer is mercy
Lecture SB 6.1.6, Sydney, February 17, 1973: if a man commits murder then he should be hanged
Lecture SB 6.1.6-15, San Francisco, September 12, 1968: it is a king's mercy to hang a murderer
Lecture SB 6.1.8, New York, July 22, 1971: it is of benefit if the king hangs a murderer
Lecture SB 6.1.8, New York, July 22, 1971: sanctions a life for a life

Lecture SB 6.1.32, Honolulu, May 31, 1976: it is a king's mercy to hang a murderer
Lecture SB 6.2.16, Vrndavana, September 19, 1975: a murderer must be killed
Lecture CC Madhya 20.367-84, New York, December 31, 1966: punishment reduces sinful reactions
Room Conversation, July 9, 1973, London: a murderer should be hanged
Room Conversation, July 24, 1973, London: a murderer should be hanged
Morning Walk, December 16, 1973, Los Angeles: to hang a murderer is mercy
Interview with Newsweek, July 14, 1976, New York: a murderer should be killed
Letter to Alfred Ford, Los Angeles, 16 July, 1974: a murderer when hanged is released from sin

The dependence/protection of women

As to the issue of controlling women, I have placed references to the protection of women with those asserting their dependence, as they almost always appear together and share the same source (*Manu-Samhita* 9.3):

*pita raksati kaumare
bharta raksati yauvane
raksanti sthavire putra
na stri svatantryam arhati*

"The father protects her in childhood, the husband in youth, the sons in old age. A woman does not deserve independence."

The general concept is clarified by the verse preceding this one (*Manu-Samhita* 9.2):

*asvatantrah striyah karyah
purusaih svair divanisam
visayesu ca sajjantyah
samsthapyatmano vase*

"Day and night, men should never give any freedom to women. By engaging them in proper activities they should keep them under their control."

BG 16.7: a woman should not be given freedom
SB 3.22.25: a woman is never independent
SB 3.33.19: women should not have independence at any stage of life
SB 5.2.21: a woman needs a great deal of protection in order to remain pure and chaste
SB 6.18.30: a man should not associate with a woman in a solitary place
SB 8.9.9: every woman should be protected
SB 9.9.32: independence for a woman means miserable life
SB 9.14.38: a woman must always be protected
SB 9.14.38: women should not be given freedom
SB 10.4.5: women should never have chief executive posts
CC Antya 2.119: one should not sit closely to women
TLK 5.5: women should never be given freedom
Lecture BG, Ahmedabad, December 8, 1972: women should be given all protection
Lecture BG 2.44-45, 2.58, New York, March 25, 1966: a woman is always protected, never given independence
Lecture BG 4.11, New York, July 27, 1966: women should not be given independence is a Vedic truth
Lecture BG 4.12-13, New York, July 29, 1966: women should be given all protection
Lecture BG 7.4-5, Bombay, March 30, 1971: a woman has no independence
Lecture BG 7.4-5, Bombay, March 30, 1971: a woman's real happiness is to remain always dependent
Lecture BG 7.5, Vrndavana, August 11, 1974: women never deserve to be independent
Lecture BG 16.7, Hawaii, February 3, 1975: a woman should be given protection
Lecture BG 16.7, Hawaii, February 3, 1975: a woman is never given independence

Lecture BG, Ahmedabad, December 8, 1972: women should not be free
Lecture BG, Ahmedabad, December 8, 1972: woman should not be given freedom
Lecture SB 1.3.21, Los Angeles, September 26, 1972: women should not be given independence
Lecture SB 1.3.21, Los Angeles, September 26, 1972: women should remain under the intelligent men, not declare freedom
Lecture SB 1.7.43, Vrndavana, October 3, 1976: women should be given protection, no freedom
Lecture SB 1.7.43, Vrndavana, October 3, 1976: women should not be given freedom, they must be protected
Lecture SB 2.1.2-5, Montreal, October 23, 1968: women should be given all protection
Lecture SB 2.1.2-5, Montreal, October 23, 1968: women should not be allowed independence
Lecture SB 2.3.1, Los Angeles, May 19, 1972: woman cannot be given independence, they must be protected
Lecture SB 3.25.5-6, Bombay, November 5, 1974: woman should not be given freedom
Lecture SB 3.26.8, Bombay, December 20, 1974: a woman neither requires nor deserves independence
Lecture SB 3.28.18, Nairobi, October 27, 1975: women should be always protected
Lecture SB 5.6.4, Vrndavana, November 26, 1976: a woman should not be given independence
Lecture SB 7.6.6-9, Montreal, June 23, 1968: women should be always protected
Lecture SB 7.6.6-9, Montreal, June 23, 1968: a woman should never be given independence
Evening Darsana, May 9, 1977, Hrishikesh: for women there is no independence
Room Conversation, May 14, 1969, Columbus: a woman does not deserve independence
Room Conversation, July 9, 1975, Chicago: describes a woman's dependence
Room Conversation, July 9, 1975, Chicago: a woman is not to be given freedom
Room Conversation, January 7, 1977, Bombay: a woman should not be given independence
Garden Discussion on BG 16, June 26, 1976, New Vrindaban: a woman should not be given freedom
Garden Discussion on BG 16, June 26, 1976, New Vrindaban: proper social behavior is to protect women in every stage of life
Morning Walk, December 14, 1975, New Delhi: women should not be given independence

Satisfaction of women

SB 4.25.41: keep a wife satisfied with ornaments [MS 3.55, 59]
Lecture BG 4.39-5.3, New York, August 24, 1966: women dress according to their position
Lecture BG 6.47, Ahmedabad, December 12, 1972: must be married to produce nice children
Lecture SB 1.9.2, Los Angeles, May 16, 1973: women are kept satisfied with gifts [MS 3.55, 59]
Lecture SB 2.9.11, Tokyo, April 27, 1972: women are kept satisfied by giving them ornaments [MS 3.55, 59]
Morning walk, April 30, 1973, Los Angeles: one cannot touch a woman's property

Miscellaneous statements

BG 3.39: lust cannot be satisfied
SB 3.22.16: mentions eight forms of marriage [MS 3.20-35]
SB 4.11.7: attacking innocent citizens is sinful
SB 6.4.9: teaches curbing of material tendencies
SB 6.13.8-9: enumerates names of inter-varnic offspring
SB 7.11.14: enumerates the duties of brahmins
CC Adi 1.46: explains the duties of an acarya
CC Madhya 10.145: enjoins the dress code for sannyasis
CC Antya 20.147: names the teacher of supplementary scripture
Lecture BG 4.18, Bombay, April 7, 1974: the tendency of humans is to enjoy
Lecture BG 7.3, Bombay, February 18, 1974: states that there is no divorce
Lecture SB 1.3.17, Los Angeles, September 22, 1972: the son inherits the father's debt [generalized interpretation of MS 8.162]
Lecture SB 1.7.32-33, Vrndavana, September 27, 1976: the son inherits the father's debt [generalized interpretation of MS 8.162]
Lecture SB 5.5.1-2, London (Tittenhurst), September 13, 1969: states that widow marriage is prohibited [MS 9.65]

Room Conversation, June 5, 1974, Geneva: sudras are not to be instructed

Room Conversation, June 5, 1974, Geneva: Europeans and Americans are mleccchas and yavanas [likely inferred from MS 10.41-45]

Letter to Madhsudana, Vrmdavana, May 19, 1977: states that we are all mleccchas and yavanas [likely inferred from MS 10.41-45]

Morning Walk, April 20, 1974, Hyderabad: forbids killing completely

Morning Walk, January 22-23, 1976, Mayapura: the son inherits the father's debt [generalized interpretation of MS 8.162]

Arrival Address, London, September 11, 1969: has no divorce law

SB 1.7.37: the killer of an animal is to be considered a murderer [Not if an animal is killed for sacrifice]

Lecture SB 5.5.1-2, Stockholm, September 7, 1973: enumerates the persons involved in animal killing [MS 5.51]

some roads are endless; keep walking for everything else there are particle accelerators