CHAPTER - IV

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Introduction

The ancient Hindu law-books mark an important phase in the development of ethical thought in India. These law-books developed the rudimentary social and ethical precepts available in the Vedas and certain contemporary social customs to present a coherent legal system. Among these law-books, Manu Dharma Śastra is, if not the first, the most authoritative and comprehensive law-book. It is also called Manu Smṛti where Smṛti means the tradition remembered (smṛta) as distinct from Vedas (Sruti) which are supposed to be 'revealed'. The immense significance of Manu Smṛti lies in its comprehensive character. The fundamental objective of any law-book is to establish a legal system. But, unlike the other codes, Manu Smṛti considers, in addition to the legal maxims, certain religious, political, moral, economic and metaphysical principles to provide a consistent justification for its social theory. Manu Smṛti adopts certain philosophical views of different schools of thought, sometimes inconsistently, to project a systematic-ethical theory to back its legal system. It is here, the code is of serious philosophical interest.

As a comprehensive social code, Manu Smṛti served as an authoritative guide for Hindu jurisprudence for a long time in Indian social history. In terms of authority and reverence, it occupies important place next only to the Vedas from which it derives its authority.

Although the Sruti and Smṛti literature, we find references to Manu which furnish quite incommensurable accounts of Manu. Though these accounts are disconnected and inconsistent, the whole Vedic orthodoxy agrees on one point — the supreme authority of Manu on legal matters (of course, next to the Vedas). With great reverence Manu is
accepted as the authority on legal matters and his name appears first among the law-givers. *Taittariya Samhita* prescribes that 'whatever Manu says is medicine'.¹ *Yaska Nirukta* also endorses the unquestionable authority of Manu's legislation. The *Brhaspati Smṛti* ascribes absolute authority to *Manu Dharma Śāstra*:

“....the first rank (among legislators) belongs to Manu, because he has embodied the essence of the *Vēda* in his work; that *Smṛti* which is opposed to the tenor of laws of Manu is not approved” ²).

Samkaracharya, the great Vedantin, in his commentary on *Brahma Sutras* cites Manu in support of his arguments and to refute those of others. He considers *Manu Smṛti* as a *pramāṇa*. This shows Manu’s influence on philosophical issues a swell. Prof. D. P. Chattopadhyayaya wonders how a law-giver can have any say on matters philosophical.³ Precisely this is the reason for which *Manu Smṛti* deserves a thorough philosophical examination.

**Origin of the Law-book**

Prof. Buhler in his introduction to *Manu Dharma Śāstra* (Sacred Books of East, Vol. XXV) brings out the dominant hypothesis about the origin of the code. According to him, it belongs to the later-vedic period when "the systematic cultivation of the sacred sciences of Brahmanas began and for a long time had its centres in the ancient Śūtrakaraṇas, the schools which first collected the fragmentary doctrines scattered in the old vedic works, and arranged them for the convenience of oral instruction in *sutras* or strings of aphorisms” ⁴ These vedic schools collected religious, metaphysical, moral and legal ideas from the *Vedas* and tradition. Those ideas are preserved by them in the form of aphorisms which are known as *Dharma Sutras*. These Dharma Sutras along with

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¹ *Taittariya Samhita* II. 2. 10. 2.
² *Brhaspati Smṛti*, XXVII. 3
³ cf. *What is living and what is dead in Indian Philosophy*. P. 188.
⁴ *Manu Dharma Śāstra*, SBE. Vol.25, P. XVIII.
Grhya and Srauta Sūtras constitute the Kalpa Sūtras of each Sutrakarana. The different available law-books of these Vedic schools had their respective Kalpa Sutras as their basis. Similarly, Buhler argues, Manu Dharma Sastra is "a recast and versification of Dharma Sūtra of Māṇava Sutrakaraṇa, a subdivision of the Māitrāyanīya School, which adheres to the redaction of Kṛṣṇa Yajur-Veda".5

However, P. V. Kane in his History of Dharma Sastras differs from Buhler regarding the existence of Māṇava Dharma Sutras. He thinks that though all the other Dharma Śastras had their own Dharma Sūtras, it is extremely doubtful whether Māṇava Sutrakaraṇa had any Dharma Sutras of its own.6 In this regard, Jaimini, the author of Mimamsa Sutras gives us an interesting clue. In the Mimamsa Sutras, Jaimini clearly accepts the authority of Manu Dharma Śāstra, though interestingly, he rejects Kalpa Sutras as invalid because they had other sources than the Vedas.7 If there existed any Māṇava Dharma Sutras of which the present code is only a versified version, then Jaimini must be contradicting himself by accepting Manu Smṛti as authoritative and rejecting the authority of the Dharma Sutras in general and as forming part of the Kalpa Sutras. Jaimini, the exponent of the orthodox Mimamsa tradition, probably knew that Manu Smṛti is independent of Kalpa Sutras. This supports, the Kane's view about the non-existence of Māṇava Dharma Sutra.

Buhler and Kane differ on another important point. According to Buhler, Manu Smṛti had undergone several recastings before it acquired its present form. But Kane is of the opinion that the code might not have undergone such transformation for more than once.8 On this point, Buhler's argument appears to be more plausible as it is evident from the fact that Manu Smṛti was known to the Brahminical tradition long before it

5SBE, Vol. 25, P. XIX.
6SBE, Vol. 25, P. XIX.
was compiled in its present form.

Nārada Smṛti refers to four successive versions of the Manu's code. The original text had 1,00,000 slokas with 1,080 chapters when it was first given to Nārada. Nārada is said to have edited it before he passed it on to Markandēya with 12,000 slokas. Markandēya in turn taught it to Sumati, the son of sage Bhṛgu, as consisting of 8,000 slokas. Sumati reduced it to 4,000 slokas. But the present form of Manu Smṛti, as it comes to us, consists only of 2,635 slokas spread over 12 chapters. However, the authenticity of Nārada Smṛti is generally considered to be doubtful as it belongs to the early centuries of the Christian era. The above account of the Nārada Smṛti may be not reliable. Nevertheless, its suggestion that Manu Smṛti had different versions need not be ignored.

As to the exact date of the Smṛti, there are conflicting views held by different scholars. Indian chronology has been so problematic that it is difficult to ascertain the exact periods of most of the ancient Sanskrit texts and Manu Smṛti is no exception. However, we can admit that the code had an oral tradition for about three centuries before it acquired its present form around second century B.C.¹⁰

In the text of Manu Smṛti itself we find a mythical account about its origin: “The God (Brahman) having framed this system of laws himself, taught it fully to me in the beginning. I then taught it to Marīci and the nine other sages, my offspring. Of these (my sons) Bhṛgu is deputed by me to declare the code to you (Ṛṣis) from beginning to end, for he has learned from me to recite the whole of it.”¹¹

As William M.M. Rightly observes, “We need hardly, however, explain that these are merely ideal personages, introduced dramatically like Krishna in Bhagavad-gītā; or rather perhaps later additions, designed to give an air of antiquity and divine authority

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⁹ Nārada Smṛti, Preface 1-4.
¹⁰ For a detailed discussion of the topic, cf. Buhler's preface to Manu Dharma Sāstra, SBE, Vol. XXV.
¹¹ Manu Smṛti, I. 58,59.
to the teaching of the code" 12 We find such mythical elements at many places in the
code, particularly when it explains creation and origin of the four social classes.

As far evolution of legal ideas is concerned, there are different possible reasons which
might have influenced the origin and development of the low-book. The most important
factor seems to be the formation of state. At the time when the inter racial struggles
between Aryans and non-Aryans were intense and state organization was slowly being
established on the ruins of tribal communal systems, there was a need for assimilating
diverse cultural, moral and religious interests of the conflicting groups and tribes. In
both Sruti and Smrti literature these inter-racial clashes were depicted as fights between
Suras and Asuras.

Efforts were made by the ruling Aryans to evolve a social system which can accom-
modate all the groups of society with functional differences. Manu Dharma Sāstra might
have played a significant role in the process of bringing different races and groups into
one legal fold and meet the demand for stability. Manu Smṛti, as part of the efforts
to establish a social order based on distinct and organized economic relations between
individuals and groups, carried out a functional differentiation which might have helped
political, economic and moral stability.

Another important factor is religion. The efforts of the Aryan invaders to introduce
their culture and religion to non-Aryan tribes, who themselves had their own culture
and religious beliefs, resulted in a synthesis of cultures which gave rise to Hinduism.
Though Hinduism is a blend of Aryan and non-Aryan religions, it bears a strong mark of
Aryanism. The new religion and culture of Hinduism which is an admixture of different
customs and cultures could gain popular approval over a long period of time and Manu
Smṛti had its contribution in this process. Thus Manu Smṛti helped the process of
synthesizing different cultures and bringing them into the fold of Aryan tradition.

12 William M.M., Indian Wisdom, P. 207.
Besides these factors viz., formation of state, demand for stability, economic relations among individuals and groups, religion, there is another important factor. It is identified by law-book as the variation in moral values. With the advent of Buddhism and other non-Vedic religions, there was a change in the social situation which alarmed the adherents of Brahminical tradition. This might have resulted in executing the social code with more rigidity to counter the challenge. *Narada Smṛti* and *Bṛhaspati Smṛti* identify moral degeneration and negligence of duty by men as the main reason for origin of moral codes.

**Sources of the Code**

*Manu Smṛti* enumerates the scriptures, the tradition, the conduct of virtuous men and self-satisfaction as the four major sources of the sacred law and morality. However, the validity and the authority of the code are mainly derived from the *Veda* which is its primary source:

"The whole *Veda* is the first source of the sacred law, next the tradition and virtuous conduct of those who know the *Veda*, further, also the customs of holy men and finally self-satisfaction. By *Sruti* (revelation) is meant the *Veda*, and by *Smṛti* (tradition) the institutes of the sacred law; these two must not be called into question in any matter, since from these two the sacred law is shone forth" ¹³.

Here, one point is important. *Smṛti* or the code derives its authority from the *Veda* and in turn it tries to legally enforce the unquestionable authority of the *Veda*. Except this legal enforcement, the *Smṛti* does not offer any theoretical defence of the *Veda*. Rather, the *Smṛti* presupposes intrinsic validity, and thus absolute authority, of the *Veda*. The *Veda*, for *Manu* does not need any justification for its validity. So, no body can question its validity and the law takes care of those who do so with severe punishments. The task of theoretically defending the *Veda* is, however, taken up by the two orthodox *Vedic* Schools of Mimamsa viz., *Parva Mimamsa* and *Uttara Mimamsa* while the *Smṛti*

¹³ *Manu Smṛti* II. 6, 10
defends the *Vēda* in practice.

*Manu* considers the *Vēda* to be eternal and therefore the social system it prescribes is also eternal. The *Vēda*, as the eternal source of morality and religion, is never erroneous in all the matters it considers and is equally binding on all creatures, even the gods:

"The *Vēda* is the eternal eye of the manes, gods and men; the *Vēda*-ordinance is both beyond the sphere of human power, and beyond the sphere of human comprehension; that is a certain fact • • • The four castes, the three worlds, the four orders, the past, the present and the future are all severally known by means of the *Vēda*"\(^{14}\).

All through the code, we find exterme veneration for the *Vēda*. Even a conspicuous contradiction between two texts of the *Vēda* would not affect he supermacy and authority of the *Vēda*. In such case both the texts, *Manu* says, have to be considered as valid (II. 14). Whenever a *Smṛti* text contradicts the *Vēda*, such *Smṛti* text should be ignored as invalid.

Though *Manu* accepts the *Vēda* as the primary source of his code, we do not find corresponding source for many of his legal maxims in the *Vēda*. This was explained in terms of lost texts of the *Vēda*. If we do not find any *Vedic* text for a *Smṛti* maxim, we have to assume a *Vedic* text, in support of the maxim, which is supposedly lost. Though all the Hindu-codes are believed to be authoritative as they are having sruti as their source, there are numerous differences, sometimes conflicting, among the codes.

In this connection, two questions areise. First, if the *Manu Smṛti* is considered to be of highest authority, then what is the need for compiling other *Smṛtis*? Secondly, how can there be differences if all the codes are believed to have the same source? These questions can be answered in the light of evolutionary character of Hindu law. Though *Manu's* authority is never questioned in Hindu tradition, there was, nevertheless, a need for modifying certain rules because of changes in environment and time. Hindu law was never

\(^{14}\text{XII.94, 97}\)
The changing social conditions over a period of time and the differences among local customs result in a need for modification of existing codes, and this can explain the existence of numerous minor codes which are followed by people of different regions at different times. It is evident from the Hindu codes that even the rules concerning ritualistic orthodoxy have undergone changes keeping in view the changing circumstances and yet they retain certain continuity. In all the codes, apart from the general structure of social organization, we find due importance given to local customs and contemporaneous beliefs. Even Manu acknowledges the possible changes in the social conditions and hence need for change in the rules and duties. He foresees laxity of rules depending on the ages:

"One set of duties (is prescribed) for men in the Kṛta age, different ones in the Treta and in the Dv̄apara, and (again) another (set) in the Kali in proportion as those ages decrease in length. In the Kṛta age the chief virtue is declared to be the performance of austerities, in the Treta age divine knowledge, in the Dv̄apara (the performance of) sacrifices, in the Kali liberality alone"15.

The second source of the sacred law is the tradition. By tradition Manu means the institutes of the sacred law which are practiced through generations. Tradition is the set of practices of the four social classes as the code depicts. The established customs of society form an important basis for social conduct:

"In this code (Manu Smṛti) appears the whole system of law, with definitions of good and bad actions, and the traditional practices of the four classes, which usages are held to be eternal (sāsvatah)"16.

The tradition Manu talks about is the Vedic tradition as it is represented by his Smṛti. Manu attaches very little importance to local customs and usages, and is rigid about the fourfold division of society and the respective duties of the four classes. So, for Manu

15 Manu Smṛti I. 85, 86.
16 Manu Smṛti I. 107, 108.
tradition is not only basis of his system, but also justification for rejecting all other non-
Vedic traditions as defective and futile. So, for Manu, Vedic tradition is not 'a tradition'
but 'the only tradition' which is valid and fruitful:

"All those traditions and all those despicable systems of philosophy, which are not
based on the Vēda, produce no reward after death; for they are declared to be founded
on darkness. All those doctrines, differing from the Vēda, which spring up and (soon)
perish, are worthless and false, because they are of modern date"\(^{17}\).

Here, it is obvious that Manu is referring to the practices of non- Vedic religions such as
Jainism and Buddhism, the materialist doctrines of Carvakas and the religious practices
of aboriginals which are outside the pale of the Vēda. His contempt for these traditions
can be easily understood from his position as a law-giver enforcing the Vedic tradition.

The third source of morality is the customs and lives of virtuous men. The exemplary
lives of great people and moral values they cherished have been a source of guidance to
the people. The great classical Indian epic-literature has an important role to play here.
The Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata, the two grand Hindu epics influenced the moral
vision of the masses in their daily life. These epics depict more or less the same ideal
society which the law-givers want to enforce, and highlight the moral values which are
conducive to such social organization. The epics describing the lives of the holy men,
who are known for their obedience to the Vedic tradition and the morality.

There is an interpretation that this source of the code is secular in character and that
'virtuous men' may belong to any tradition and caste. But this interpretation may not
be valid for Manu is very clear in defining the conduct of virtuous men as follows:

"The custom handed down in regular succession (since time immemorial) among the
four chief Varnas and the mixed (races) of that (Brahmavarta) country is called conduct

\(^{17}\) XII. 95, 96.
of virtuous men”\textsuperscript{18}.

So, the above three sources of morality and law have an invariable reference to the teaching of the \textit{Veda} or the tradition based on the \textit{Veda}. The fourth source, as the code enumerates, is the satisfaction of enlightened self. Whenever the other three sources fail to guide in a moral situation, then one has to follow the verdict of one's own self. Many, at many places, clearly emphasizes the purity of self as a preconditions for a morally commendable life:

"Neither the study of the \textit{Veda}, nor liberality, nor any (self-imposed) restraint, nor austerities, every procure the attainment (of rewards) to a man whose heart is contaminated (by sensuality). The soul itself is the witness of the soul, and the soul is the refuse of the soul; despise not thy own soul”\textsuperscript{19}.

This fourth source apparently has no reference to the \textit{Veda}. But on a close examination, we find that it is not totally independent. \textit{Manu}’s list of \textit{Sadhara\textata{a} Dharmas} and \textit{Nitya} and \textit{Naimittika Karmas} is primarily aimed at the purification of self. Purity of self is a precondition for attaining all the objects of human pursuit (\textit{Purus\textatrdhas}) within the frame work of \textit{Manu}’s moral system. These \textit{Sadhara\textata{a} Dharmas} are the values cherished by the \textit{Veda} as of paramount importance. Though they appear secular, they have a \textit{Vedic} import, however indirect it may be. Much about this would be discussed later when we deal with the chief features of \textit{Manu}’s morality.

What is rather strange about the enumeration of sources of morality is that \textit{Reason} has no place in morality and law. \textit{Manu} depends more on the \textit{Veda} for his moral system \textbf{than on} \textit{Reason}. Nevertheless, \textit{Manu} appears to be very rational in his systematic arrangement of legal maxims and in his attempt to justify them coherently with philosophical considerations. However, the question is how far does he accept \textit{Reason} as a

\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Manu Smrti} II. 18.
\textsuperscript{19}\textit{Manu Smrti} II. 97; VIII. 84
guide to moral behaviour and social conduct. As we have already seen, *Reason* is totally ignored while enumerating the sources of morality and is not given its due place in the field of moral cognition. *Manu* is well aware of the fact that once *Reason* is allowed to play a role in moral considerations, it certainly goes against the religious dogmas of the *Veda* on which he founds his moral and legal system. Precisely this is the reason why he elevates the *Veda* and his code beyond logical analysis and rational examination. Once the mythical elements in the *Veda* and his code are questioned, the whole social scheme he proposes would simply collapse. Hence, *Manu* is very careful not to allow unrestricted use of logic and free thinking. He thinks that logic is subservient to the *Veda* and thus to the religion and law. He is very stern against those who criticize the *Veda* on the basis of logical reasoning, even if they belong to a higher caste:

"Every twice-born man who relying on the institutes of dialectics, treats with contempt those two sources of law (viz., the *Veda* and the institutes of the sacred law), must be cast out by the virtuous, as an atheist and a scorners of the *Veda*".20

However, *Manu* appears to recommend *Reason* and the science of dialectics. There are three grounds for such an impression. First, *Manu* recommends perception, Inference and Authority as the three Pramanas in which one, who desires perfect knowledge of the sacred law, should be well-versed. Secondly, *Manu* prescribes logic to be taught to the king. Thirdly, he recommends the involvement of a logician (*Nydyajña*) among the committee of judges.

*Manu* recommends Inference as a valid source of knowledge in the followings verse:

"The three kinds of evidence, Perception, Inference, and the sacred institutes which comprise the tradition of many schools, must be fully understood by him who desires perfect correctness with respect to the sacred law" (XII. 105).

However, he is not at all vague about the scope of logic as a *Pramāṇa*. He does

\[\text{\textsuperscript{20}Manu Smrti II.11}\]
not recommend indiscriminate use of logic. For *Manu*, the ideal function of logic is to support the *Vedic* doctrines. He makes this clear in the very next verse to the above one:

"He alone, and no other man, knows the sacred law, who explores the utterances of the sages and the body of laws, by modes of reasoning, not repugnant to the *Veda-lore*" (XII. 106).

Even Samkaracharya quotes the verse of *Manu* (XII. 105) as recommending Reason. He quotes *Manu* exactly in the same context in which he talks about the ideal function of reasoning. It is to find out the real sense or meaning of the obscure and contradictory statements of the *Veda*:

Further, in the case of passages of scriptures (apparently) contradicting each other, the ascertainment of the real sense, which depends on a preliminary refutation of the apparent sense, can be affected only by an accurate definition of meaning of the sentences, and that involves reasoning. Thus *Manu* also expresses himself: "Perception, Influence, and the sacred ....etc., (Manu XII. 105).

This clearly shows that *Manu* is not prescribing Inference as an independent *Pramāṇa* or source of valid knowledge. *Manu*, while including logic in educating the king, appear to identify logic as an independent branch of study:

"From those versed in the three *Vedas* let him (the king) learn the three fold sacred science, the primeval science of government, the science of dialectics (logic) and the knowledge of the supreme soul; from the people (the theory of) the (various) trades and professions "(VII. 43).

On the basis of the above passage, we cannot jump to the conclusion that *Manu* recognizes logic as an independent branch of study. As we see in the above verse, *Manu* recommends reasoning along with knowledge of the self (*cha ātmavidyam*). The other three are *Trayi* (the *Veda*), *Danda nīti* (science of Government) and *Varta* (science of

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21 Samkaracharya, *Vedanta Sutra Bhasya* P. 315.
agriculture and trade). As he prescribes logic to be taught together with Ātma Vidya which is part of Trayi (the Veda), he is not allowing logic to be taught independently but as subservient to Ātma Vidya of the Veda. While state craft and science of trade are mentioned independently, logic is mentioned together with knowledge of the soul (the Upaniṣadic part of the Veda). This is an evidence for the fact that Manu does not mean logic to be an independent branch of study.

This fact can further be established with a reference to (Artha Śāstra) of Kautilya. Kautilya, who acknowledges the independent status of logic as a branch of knowledge, considers it as 'the lamp of all the branches of learning, the aid of all activities and the basis of all virtue'. For Kautilya, logic is a distinct branch of knowledge, different from scriptures for logic deals with objects of experience. Moreover, he is keen on distinguishing his theory from that of Manu. He, while doing so, informs us that Mānavas (followers of Manu) consider only three branches of learning and that they include logic under the scriptures:

"Anvikṣaki, the triple Veda (Trayi), Varta (agriculture, cattle breeding and trade) and Dandaniti (science of government) are what are called the four sciences. The school of Manu (Manava) hold that there are only three sciences: the triple Vedas, Varta and the science of government, in as much as the science of Anvikṣaki is nothing but a special branch of the Vedas. But Kautilya holds that four and only four are the sciences; wherefore it is from these sciences that all that concerns righteousness and wealth is learnt, therefore they are so called".

What is obvious from the above observation of Kautilya is that Manu does not accept the independent efficacy of Reason, either in the matters of morality or of law. On the contrary, Kautilya acknowledges logic as 'the basis of all virtue'. However, both Manu

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22Kautilya, Artha Śāstra i. 2. 12.
23Artha Śāstra II. 1. 1-3, 8,9
and Kautilya recommend logic only for the king but not to the ordinary people, being **well aware** of the fact that logic, if learnt by masses, would prove disastrous for their respective systems.

Again, the passage where *Manu* includes a logician in the committee of judges does not prove *Manu*’s sympathy for logic or for logicians. The *Reason* for which *Manu* does so, is not because of any consideration favouring *Reason* but because reational analysis is indispensable in understanding the merits and demerits of a case. *Manu* is very careful in including, along with a logitian, a specialist on the *Vēda*, the *Smrī* and Mimamsa in the committee:

"Three persons who each know one of the three *Vēdas*, a logician, a Mīmāṁsaka, one who knows the *Nirukta*, one who recites (the Institutes of) the sacred law, and three men belonging to the first three orders shall constitute a (legal) assembly consisting of at least ten members" (XII. 111).

From the above discussion, it is clear that *Manu* not only refuses *Reason* to be the basis for any moral deliberation but also ignores it as an independent branch of study. He accepts it only as an instrument in understanding the real sense of difficult scriptural passages and in so far as it does not contradict the *Vēdic* doctrines. However, *Manu* could not avoid logicians in legal assembly where a logician is important in distinguishing the rational merit of a case. Otherwise, *Manu* has little sympathy for logic or logicians. According to him a logician is not even to be entertained as a guest. This attitude of *Manu* has far-reaching consequences on the development of ethics in India.

There are two obvious reasons for which *Manu* appears to have rejected *Reason*. As we noted earlier, if *Reason* is applied to understand and analyse the *Vēdic* doctrines, it may prove unfavourable to his system. The other reason may be the assumption that *Reason* cannot be a proper guide for morality because it often leads to diversity of opinions. This view ignores agreement on majority of rational ethical judgements concerning social
conduct. Another supposition which goes against *Reason* is that the social laws are immutable and any change is a degeneration. But, society as a dynamic expression of human efforts (both physical and conceptional) has never been static, though change takes place at varying degrees.

So, *Manu*, enumerates the scriptures, the tradition, conduct of virtuous men and enlightened self-satisfaction as the four major sources of morality and law, and these sources have a direct or indirect reference to the *Veda* and its tradition. With the four sources of morality, *Manu* provides us with a comprehensive legal system touching all the aspects of social life. Before we go on to discuss *Manu’s* understanding of morality, we have to deal with his theory of creation which is the bedrock of his social theory. *Manu’s* theory of creation provides important clues as to what kind of society *Manu* envisages as ideal and how he tries to establish it legally. Hence, a thorough understanding of *Manu’s* ideas on creation and their social implications is necessary for any endeavour to deal with his ethical theory.

**Manu’s Theory of Creation**

*Manu’s* theory of creation, the most significant theory of the code, forms the foundation for his metaphysics, theology, law, economics and politics. In addition to the theory of creation of the physical world, *Manu* explains the origin of the four principal social classes, which is an important feature of his ideal society, in this theory. His social theory is based on his theory of creation. *Manu* gives his theory of creation in the very first chapter of the code, and no other *Smṛti* begins with it. This led to the view that this theory could be a later addition, but *Narada Smṛti* mentions that the original *Manu Smṛti*, which was supposed to contain one lakh of slokas, begins with the theory of creation and that the following verse is the very first verse of the code:

"The universe was wrapped up in the darkness, and nothing could be discerned. Then
the holy, self-existent spirit issued forth with four faces”\(^{24}\).

As the antiquity of *Nārada Smṛti* itself is questionable, it fails to provide a substantial evidence. However, it may be true that at least some version of *Manu Smṛti* which the author of *Nārada Dharma Sāstra* knew might have began with the above verse. So, we can presume that some other version of *Manu Smṛti*, if not the oldest, also starts with the theory of creation. On the other hand, no presently available other *Smṛtis* start with the theory of creation. Both points put together, it seems probable that the theory of creation is peculiar to *Manu Smṛti* with which it begins at least in some of its versions. As *Manu* is supposed to be father of the mankind, this theory is fit to be enunciated by *Manu* more authoritatively than other law-givers. *Manu*'s theory of creation and his ethical justifications which back his legal system distinguish *Manu*'s code from other *Smṛtis* and place it on top of them in importance and authority.

*Manu* presents his theory of creation in the first chapter from the fifth verse onwards as follows:

“The universe existed in the shape of Darkness, unperceived, destitute of distinctive marks, unattainable by reasoning, unknowable, wholly immersed, as it were, in deep sleep. Then the divine self-existent (*Svayambhu*, Himself) indiscernible (but) making (all) this, the great elements and the rest, discernible, appeared with irresistible creative power, dispelling the darkness. He who is subtle, indiscernible, and eternal, who contains all created beings and is inconceivable shone forth of his own (will). He desiring to produce beings of many kinds from his own body, first with a thought created the waters, and placed his seed in them. That seed became a golden egg, in brilliancy equal to the sun; in that egg, he himself was born as Brahman, the progenitor of the whole world. The waters are called narah, for the waters are, indeed, offspring of Nara; as they were his first residence (*ayana*), the thence is named Narayana. From that first cause, which

\(^{24}\) *Nārada Smṛti*, Preface, P. 5
is indiscernible, eternal, both real and unreal, was produced that male Purusa, who is famed in this world (under the appellation of) Brahman. The divine one resided in that egg during a whole year, then he himself by his thought (alone) devided it into two halves. And out of those two halves, he formed Heaven and Earth, between them the middle sphere, and eight points of the horizon, and the eternal abode of waters. From himself (atmandh) he also drew forth the mind which is both real and unreal, likewise from the mind agoism, which possesses the function of self-consciousness and is lordly. Moreover the great one, the soul and all the products affected by the three qualities, and in their order, the five organs which perceive the objects of sensation. But joining minute particles of those six, which possess measureless power, with particles of himself, he created all beings. Because those six kinds of minute particles which form the Creator’s frame, enter those creatures, therefore the wise call his frame Sativa (the body). But from fire, winds, and the sun he drew forth the threefold Veda called Rk, Yajus and Saman, for the due performance of the sacrifice. For the sake of the prosperity of the worlds, he caused the Brahmana, the Ksatriya, the Vaisya and the Sudra to proceed from his mouth, his arms, his thighs and his feet"25.

This evidently mythical theory of creation is combined version of Rg- Vedic mythical cosmogony, Sankhyan description of Pradhdna and the Upanisadic spiritualism. As far as the mythical element in the theory is concerned, it has its Sruti source in the theory of creation propounded by the famous Purusa Sukta of Rg-Veda. In the Purusa Sukta we find the first reference to the fourfold division of varna system. Manu effectively uses the mythical division of the cosmic person (Purusa) to explain and establish the functional differences among the four Varnas. The Purusa Sukta puts forth its pantheistic theory of creation with rudimentary social division as follows:

"The embodied spirit (purusa) has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand

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25 Manu Smrti 1. 5-17, 23. 31
feet, around on every side enveloping the earth yet filling space no longer than a span. He is himself this very universe. He is whatever is, has been, and shall be. He is the lord of immortality. All creatures are one-fourth of Him, three-fourths are that which is immortal in the sky. From Him, called Purusa, was born viraj, and from viraj was Purusa produced, whom gods and holy men made their oblation. With Purusa as victim they performed a sacrifice. When they divided him, how did they cut him up? What was his mouth? What were his arms? and what his thighs and feet? The Brahmana was his mouth, the kingly soldier was made his arms, the husband man his thighs, the servile sudra issued from his feet.\footnote{Rg-Veda X Mandala 90}

Manu takes this Rg-Vedic theory and enriches its rudimentary social division to include mixed castes and subcastes. He builds up his social and moral theory on this mythical sruti theory. Before we see how he does it, let us examine the philosophical aspect of Manu's idea of creation.

This theory is, though, substantially mythical in its form, it, nevertheless expresses a metaphysical position. If we strip off the mythical aspect of the theory, we find that for Manu, self-existing and ontologically independent spirit is the cause of all existence. The physical world is nothing but material manifestation of the ultimate universal self which underlies all such modifications. In the first verse of the theory Manu appears to assume the principle of avyakta as the material cause of the world. Some commentators (Medhatithi, Kullukabhatta) tried to interpret it, on Samkhyan lines and read Manu as assuming the Samkhyan principle of Mala Prakṛti or Primeval principle of Matter. On the other hand, another commentator Raghavananda tried to interpret it on the lines of Vēdānta and see it as avidya or ignorance. Whatever interpretation we take up, one thing is certain that Manu does not see it different from the self-existent spirit. He identifies all the modes of creation with the principle of ultimate universal soul. His idealistic outlook
is explicit all through the code:

“He who sacrifices to the self (alone), equally recognising the self in all created beings and all created being's in the self, becomes (independent like) an autocrat and self-luminous” (XII. 91).

The supreme self is defined as eternal, indescernible, who contains all created beings. So, there is no eternal principle than the self and that is the cause of the whole creation. Thus, the self-existent supreme being is both the material and efficient cause of the creation. As the Creator or the Self-existent creates the material elements (out of his own substance) which constitute the material world, the material world is considered real, as real as the Creator. So, Manu admits a positive ontological status to the material world though ontological precedence is given to the spirit or soul of the universe. Here, he differs from the upanisadic Idealism which considers everything else as illusory except the unqualified spirit. Manu, on the contrary considers the external world as real though not eternal. It is real for it has its source of origin in the universal self. But the supreme Brahman is the only eternal principle from whom the world comes and goes to. So, the ontological status of the external world is positive but secondary as it owes its origin to the ontologically primary and independent spirit.

It is important to notice that this metaphysical position of Manu is supported by no outstanding ancient schools of philosophy. No school of ancient Indian thought subscribes to this ontological position. Let us see how Manu's metaphysical commitment is different from the ancient philosophical schools.

To start with, though Manu agrees with the upanisadic Idealism that supreme self is the ultimate reality, he differs from it as to its nature. For Manu, it is not simply pure consciousness. It is the creator of the whole universe and potentially contains within itself the whole creation. Again, the world is not illusory but real as created by the
supreme being from his own substance whereas, the Upanisads preach the ultimate illusory character of the world with the analogy of phantoms of dream. The material world, including birth and death, objects of sense experience is unreal, in the final analysis. The soul in its nature is pure and uneffected by the physical world. Manu thus contradicts the important philosophical speculation of the Veda. Quiet understandably, Manu cannot avoid it, for the conflict between the pre-Upanisadic mythical cosmogony and the speculative philosophy of Upanisads is inherent, in the Veda itself.

Secondly, Manu’s idea of creation appears to have a close resemblance to Sankhya theory of creation, as he upholds the reality of both the spirit and the matter. But Sāmkhya theory of evolution is different from that of Manu. For Sāmkhya, Puruṣa the spirit and the matter (Prakṛti) are two independent, though co-existing, ontological categories. Matter does not emanate from soul nor is identical with it. The primeval matter undergoes transformation in the proximity of the Puruṣa but that does not mean Puruṣa is the efficient cause of evolution. The spirit is not an active principle in the process of evolution but an indifferent spectator. Samkaracharya sees the Sāmkhya doctrine of Kapila as opposed to the teachings of the Veda and Manu. See how he puts it:

“Manu himself, where he glorifies the seeing of the one self in everything, implicitly blames the doctrine of Kapila. For Kapila, by acknowledging a plurality of selves, does not admit there being one universal self. . . . All which proves that the system of Kapila contradicts the Veda, and the doctrine of Manu who follows the Veda, by its hypothesis of a plurality of selves also, not only by the assumption of independent Pradhana”\(^{27}\).

Nyāya theory of Gotama goes against Manu’s ontological position. For Naiyayikas, the world is constituted by eternal atoms which are not produced. The world of objects is an effect of atomic conjunctitons. Consciousness is a product according to them and soul is inherently unconscious substance. Soul acquires consciousness only after its contact with

\(^{27}\)Samkaracharya, Vedanta Sutras P. 294,295
body, mind, external senses and objects of experience. Here consciousness, as a product of such contact, is a transitory phenomenon rather than an eternal quality of soul. Soul, as a substance like other substances, is devoid of consciousness and thus cannot deliberate any creation.

But, Kaṇāda, the founder of Vaiśeṣika philosophy, talks of creation and creator which needs a brief discussion. Kaṇāda, as the founder of Atomic theory views the world as a result of combination of atoms. Since he considers Action as external to substance, he is faced with the question as to what causes these combinations. He answers the question in terms of an unseen principle, Adrṣṭa, superintended by the supreme lord. This supreme lord is the efficient cause of the combination of atoms, of which the world is an effect. The world is a bundle of effects like a jar is an effect of atoms of earth. Here, the supreme lord is like the potter who makes the jar. At the beginning of every secondary creation, the great lord desires to create and under the principle of Adrṣṭa, merit and demerit. He produces action in the eternal atoms which constitute the world. Kanada makes use of the theological entity, the supreme Lord, to explain dissolution also. He is the efficient cause for the disjunction of atoms which results in the dissolution. At the beginning of every secondary creation, the Lord acts as the Evolver and at the secondary dissolution. He acts as the Withdrawer. But what makes Kanada to adopt the theological categories like a creator? He explains the existence of such supreme being for two reasons. He postulates the supreme Lord to account for ‘names’ and ‘effects’. How do names come to denot objects? Are they arbitrary utterances of a mad man? He answers that the Lord is the author of names. The application of names to objects is directed by the Lord. The second reason for the existence of the Lord is to explain ‘effect’. When the Earth is an effect like pot, who is the efficient cause? How do these effects come into existence? Kanada answers that the effect comes into existence through the efficiency

28Kaṇāda, Vaiśeṣika Sutras, II-i.18.
of the Creator. The Creator is the author of both names and effects. Kanada had to take recourse in the theological being, due to his theoretical inadequacy, contrary to the scientific spirit of his atomic theory. The inadequacy is due to the view that motion is external to atoms. Precisely, this inadequacy led to Samkaracharya’s criticism that neither creation nor pralaya could take place, if the atomic theory is adopted.\textsuperscript{29}

The important point to be observed is that Kanada is deliberately silent over primary creation. All the while he explains only the secondary creation but intentionally ignores the question of primary creation. If the supreme being is responsible for the origin of Atoms, the whole theory would be useless and inconsistent. For him, the atoms are eternal and ultimate units which make the world. They are not effects: “It is an error to suppose that ultimate atom is not eternal”\textsuperscript{30}, Kanada with his silence over the primary creation, avoids a fundamental contradiction in his atomic theory which is well advanced of his times.

So, Kanada’s Creator is not the creator of primary creation. Moreover, unlike Manu, Kanada does not consider Him as the ultimate material cause of creation. The only similarity between him and Manu is that while for Kanada, the Creator assigns meaning to the ‘names’ and for Manu, the Creator draws the Vedas from air, fire and the sun.

So, for both of them, the Creator makes the Veda intelligible. This position embarrasses the Mimamsakas, and Kumarila vehemently opposes this. The orthodox school of Mimamsa rests its doctrines on the assumption of eternity of the Veda. Kumarila. in his Slokavārttika, ridicules the theory of creation. Mimamsa does not admit that the world and the Veda have a beginning. So, the existence of a Creator flatly goes against the fundamental maxims of its philosophy.

The supreme Lord, in order to be the Creator of the world, has to be an omniscient

\textsuperscript{29}Samkara, Vedanta Sutras, P. 386-89.

\textsuperscript{30}Vaiśesika Sutras, IV. 1. 5
being. He must have complete knowledge of the material and instruments of such creation. The concept of creation presupposes an omniscient theological being either as the material cause or the efficient cause or as both. This position, Kumarila says, cannot be admitted into the Mimamsa system. Kumarila does not simply refuses to accept the theory but advances the most outstanding anti-theistic arguments in the history of Indian Philosophy.

Kumarila as a Mimamsaka faces a problem here. What about the explicit references to creation in the Vedas? Can Kumarila claim that the Vedas do not admit creation? If they do, how to account for them? Here Kumarila adopts the technique of evasion. He explains away the Vedic references to the creation as mere Arthavada, which are intended to praise some sacrificial injunctions. By doing so, is he not denying the very foundation of Manu's social theory and opposing the authority of Manu? Yes, he certainly does. But this does not mean Kumarila is also opposed to the system of social organisation Manu tries to establish. Kumarila knows well that this is the system which is extremely conducive to the observation of Vedic rituals, the sumnum bonum of his system. So, he silently accepts it. Then, why does he criticize Manu's theory of creation so vehemently? The obvious reason is that the theory of Manu contradicts some of the most crucial philosophical suppositions of his system i.e., eternity of sound and the Veda. Mimamsakas conceive the material world to be eternal or uncreated. This serves them to explain the eternity of the Veda and validy of rituals. Though, they accept the reality of soul, it is not held to be responsible for any creation.

Mimamsakas though oppose the theory of creation, they are not against the social implications of the theory. It is the ancient materialists, Carvakas, who are the extreme opponents of both, the theory of creation and the Varnasrama system founded on it. The materialists not only ridicule the Brahminical myths that support their social system,

\[31\text{cf. Slōkavārttika, Sambandhakṣepa Parihāra Vāda, 44-62, P. 356.}\]
but also hold a view which is exactly opposite of Manu’s view on creation.

For Cārvākas, matter does not come out of spirit. Rather, soul or self is a product of matter. They do not recognize separate existence of soul from body. The popular Cārvāka analogy for the origin of consciousness from matter is that of intoxicating quality of liquor arising out of ingredient materials which did not possess such quality before. They do not accept the existence of universal self. Viewing consciousness as a product of a particular combination of material elements, Cārvakas stand as the extreme opponents of Manu’s ontological position. Cārvākas vehemently question the Brahminical superstitions about after-death, sacrifices, heaven, transmigrations and the social system based on those superstitions which are expounded by the Vēda and the code.

Neither Buddhism nor Jainism contribute to the ontological position Manu holds. In Buddhism, the self is but five skandas and is not permanent. There is no universal self. Buddhism also preaches against the Varnāśrama system and the Vedic rituals. This explains Manu’s prejudice against Heretics. Jainism holds self to be just a category as other material categories, and that it is not responsible for any creation.

Though no ancient school of thought contributes to Manu’s theory of creation, the theory is honoured by other law-givers and the epics. The Mahābhārata advocates the same theory with some changes. In Sānti Parva the theory of creation is attributed to sage Bhṛgu. It has to be noticed that Brigu is appointed by Manu to enunciate the present Dharma Sāstra to other sages. In Sānti Parva, Bhṛgu is said to have taught the theory of creation to sage Bharadwajā.32

In this version of the theory we find that the Absolute Spirit is called Mānasa. Mānasa means the will. Next come Mahat (the great) and Brahman (this time, born from Lotus). Despite of these minute differences, both the theories are similar in their substance, in so far as both hold the absolute principle of thought or spirit as responsible for and

32 Sānti Parva, Section 182.
underlying all material manifestations.

Later, *Manu*’s theory of creation is revived, in its chief features, by *Viṣiṣṭa Advaita* of Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja holds a view of creation similar to that of *Manu*. Rāmānuja as an idealist, holds the supreme universal spirit as the only principle underlying all reality. But unlike an Advaitin, Rāmānuja considers the supreme soul or *Brahman* to be the real cause of all the diversity in the world. The world of plurality is the manifestation of the supreme soul. The world is a part of *Brahman’s* nature and is the body of the universal self. It is not an illusion. For Śaṅkara, the great Vedantin, *Brahman* is pure objectless mass of consciousness. But for both *Manu* and Ramanuja *Brahman* is the personal Creator who from his own substance creates the world of difference. For *Manu* and Ramanuja the world is real as part of the universal supreme soul.

Once *Manu* accepts the reality of the physical world, he is obliged to give a positive explanation of its constitution and transformation. In Indian thought, there are three distinct explanations regarding the nature and constitution of the world, offered by Lokayata, Samkhya and Nyaya. Lokayatikas offer Bhutavada, the theory that the world comes out of and is constituted by material elements or *Bhutas*. They are water, earth, fire and air. Sāmkhya offers *Pradhānavada*, according to which *Pradhāna*, the primeval matter is the root cause of all material transformations. Pradhana is constituted by three qualities or gunas called *Sātiva, Rajas* and *Tamas*. Nyaya- Vaiśeṣika offers the most advanced theory of *Paramanuvada*, which holds that the material world is constituted by ultimate atoms. *Manu*, in order to provide an explanation for the constitution and transformation of the material world, has to choose one among the above three theories.

*Manu* cannot adopt *Bhūtavāda* of Čārvākas, the plain speaking materialists, for the reasons obvious. The materialists are the most ardent opponents of the Vedic myths, brahminical superstitions and the social order founded on such grounds. Not only
that, they further see soul as a product of matter. They deny the existence of universal soul, whose existence cannot be proved by perception. Neither can Manu adopt Paramāṇuvāda, according to which the world is an effect of mechanical combination of eternal atoms devoid of production and distraction. Further, Naiyayikas also deny the existence of consciousness independent of material objects. So, Manu is left with no option but Pradhānavāda of Sāmkhya and he conveniently adopts it. Manu, for this purpose, comfortably ignores his basic differences with Sāmkhya and edits its theory of evolution to suit his purpose.

However, Manu cannot avoid a thorough theoretical inconsistency while adopting Sāmkhya theory of Pradhāna. Sāmkhya is famous for its Satkārayavāda, the causal theory that the effect must be pre-existing in the cause. The effect is not a new expression. Rather, it is realisation of the potency embedded in the cause itself. Sāmkhya theory of evolution is also an example of Svabhāvavada, according to which all material transformations depend on the nature of the matter. So, for Sāmkhya, the primeval matter (Pradhāna) undergoes transformation independently according to its nature (Svabhāva). All these transformations or modifications are latent, in the primeval matter itself and thus need no external agency for the purpose. Manu while conceiving matter as emerging from the universal self-existent spirit, undermines the essential aspects of Sāmkhya theory of evolution. Manu does not care to answer the question ‘how does the universal self give rise to matter out his own substance?’ Manu’s position ignores Satkārayavāda. But Manu, on the other hand, makes use of Svabhāvavada and Satkārayavāda while explaining further material modifications in terms of three constituent gunas.

This contradiction in Manu is brought to surface by Samkaracharya in his Vedanta Sūtra Bhāṣya. As we have earlier seen, Samkara quotes Manu to show that Kapila’s doctrine is opposed to the Veda and that Manu implicitly blames Kapila’s theory. Again, while refuting Paramāṇuvāda of Vaiśeṣika, Samkara concedes that Manu adopts 104
Pradhānavāda:

"While the theory of Pradhāna being accepted by some adherents of the Veda, for instance, Manu with a view to the doctrines of the effect existing in the cause already, and so on, the atomic theory has not been accepted by any person of authority in any of its parts, and therefore is to be disregarded entirely by all those who take their stand on the Vēdas".

Samkara quoting Manu as both blaming and adopting Sāmkhya theory involves a contradiction. This contradiction is inherent not in Samkara but in Manu’s theory of creation itself. Manu refuses independent Pradhāna as a principle different from the universal self and again assumes it to explain the process of material evolution. This theoretical inconsistency apart, we cannot but admire Manu when we see how intelligently he makes use of Sāmkhya ideas to substantiate his theory of social order, theory of action, its mechanism and particularly his theory of transmigrations.

Manu’s Theory of Society

Manu’s main aim, as a law-giver, is to prescribe a code of social conduct to enforce a particular social structure. But Manu is no less interested in justifying such code theoretically. As we have so far seen, he justifies it mainly on grounds of the authority of the Veda and tradition. Manu, although his code, attempts to evolve a consistent theory of society which is well-founded on his mythical theory of creation.

Society, for Manu, is the creation and manifestation of the self-existing supreme Brahmān. The Creator not only created the society, but also made certain rules for its conduct which Manu is presently offering through his code. So, for Manu the ideal society is one which totally corresponds to the model his code puts forth. Manu conceives the model society as an organic whole having the four Varnas or social classes as its limbs. The four Varnas are Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaisya and Sudra. Health of the society as an organic

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33 Vēdānta Sūtra Bhāṣya, P. 394

105
whole depends on the proper functioning of its different limbs, the four *Varnas*. The four *Varnas* are said to have originated from different limbs of the Creator. This division of society is not just functional for it supposes a specific social hierarchy. The position of each *Varṇa* in the social hierarchy depends on the limb from which the *Vānṇa* is said to have originated. So, the three important social implications of *Manu*’s theory of creation are (1) the conception of society as an organic whole; (2) the four fold division and (3) specific social hierarchy.

By viewing society as an organic whole, *Manu Smṛti* identifies personal good with social good. Social good depends on proper discharge of duties by all the members of society. Similarly, personal good depends on the functioning of society as a whole, just like the health of body and of its limbs are identical. The body organism cannot be fully functional without all its limbs discharging their respective duties, and limbs cannot function without the general health of the whole body. The interests of different classes, seen this way, are not conflicting. Rather they are necessarily compatible, viewed from the higher level of society as a whole. Social prosperity depends on unity and mutual cooperation among the four classes. Society is explained not in terms of conflicting interests of the groups but viewed as a unity of social forces. For *Manu*, like for Plato, the ideal society is a stable society. Both *Manu* and Plato aim at stability through stratification of society into different social classes with specific social functions. As Idealists, both of them view society as an organic whole comprising of the stratified classes as its limbs. There is a little difference however, between Plato and *Manu*. For Plato the best society is a replica of the ideal society. The ideal society is a changeless society and for Plato, all change is degeneration. *Manu*, on the other hand, foresees change and for him, a stable society is not a static society. However, as he highlights the age old tradition and traditional morality (*Sanatana Dharma*), he implicitly resists change.
Manu’s view of society as an expression of unified social forces functioning for mutual benefit has immense historical significance. To understand the importance of Manu’s view, we have to place it in the specific historical context and examine it in the light of the then existing social reality. At the time of disturbances caused by introduction of the state organization in ancient India, the immediate need of the hour was stability and peaceful co-existence of groups. Harmony or peaceful co-existence of conflicting social forces was a necessary step towards peace and stability. The importance of Manu’s attempt towards a stable society cannot be undermined in the given historical conditions. However, while doing so, Manu favours the interests of Aryan community by placing it in a privileged position. This is quite natural since the invaders always dominate the invaded. Nevertheless, Manu’s endeavour to accommodate different social classes in one systematic social spectrum has to be appreciated.

The fourfold division of society is one of the chief features of Manu’s morality, politics and economics. Manu Smṛti views this division as natural and hence permanent. It is important to notice that this division is not a product of the code. Rather, the code is a product of such system. Manu Smṛti does not give rise to this division, but presupposes it. In the beginning of the code, the divine sages request the great Svayambhuva to deliver ‘the code of conduct for the four Varṇas’ (1.2). So, the division was already existing before the code is delivered. Hence, the code presupposes the Varṇa system. Even the Rg-Vedic Puruṣa Sûkta, one of the most recent hymns of the Samhita, is a later attempt to account for the already existing division. This division can be traced back to Rg-Vedic Aryan tribal organization. The original Aryan community was divided into holy power (Brāhmaṇa), kingly or military power (Kṣatra) and the commonality (vis). At the time of Rg-Veda, Aryans were slowly establishing their power over non-Aryan tribes which were later included in their social scheme as Südras or Dasyus. Thus evolved the simple four-fold system through the adjustment of races, with specific functional differences.
The Rg-Vedic Purusa Sukta and Manu's theory of creation are mere speculations to account for the social division. Both are mythical in content. Manu, in his theory of creation, attempts to establish and perpetuate the social division, by describing that it is natural, universal and eternal. Manu extends the scope his social division to include even foreign origins like Yavanas (greeks), chinese etc.. Who neither belong to the Aryan community nor to the native Sudras. Manu explains these races as originally Kṣatriyas who later become Sudras by failing to adhere to the sacredorial duties.54

Among the later speculations about the origin of Varnas, Gīta attempts to furnish a rational theory about the origin of Varna. Gīta explains the social division in terms of temperament and moral character. Lord Kṛṣṇa assumes the responsibility for the creation of four Varnas, which are fixed in the light of or due to character and actions of individuals (Gīta IV,13). This explanation is more universal in its character and application. However, the Indian caste system is hereditary. Though social esteem depends on character, one's caste depends on one's parentage. One's parentage cannot be altered by one’s character. It is only exceptionally accepted to consider one's caste on one's character, especially when one's parentage cannot be ascertained. King Visvāmitra had to struggle and do severe penances in order to be called a Brahmaṇa (Brahmana sage). Such cases are very rare. As Sir Sivaswamy Iyer aptly puts it, “While we may deplore the evil effects of the institution (of caste), it is not possible to entertain the view that social classifications were determined merely by character”.35

However, Manu explains the differences among the four Varnas in terms of their origin from different limbs of the Creator:

“• • • for the sake of the worlds, He caused the Bṛahmaṇa, the Kṣatriya, the Vaisya and the Sudras to proceed from his mouth, his arms, his things and his things and his

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54 Manu Śmrī, X. 43-44.
35 Evolution of Hindu Moral Ideals, P. 81.
feet." (I.37)

After the creation, the Creator Himself assigned different duties, rights and privileges to the four classes. So, the differences are part of the Creator's design and thus, are natural. The specific functions of each class are fixed by Brahman as follows:

"In order to protect this universe, He assigned separate duties and occupations to those who sprang from his mouth, arms, things, and feet. To Brāhmanas He assigned teaching and studying Vēda, sacrificing for their own benefit and for others, giving and accepting alms; the Kṣatriya He commanded to protect people, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study Vēda and obaining from sensual pleasures; the Vaisya to tend cattle, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study Vēda, to trade, to lend money and to cultivate land; one occupation only the lord prescribed for Sudra, to serve meekly even these other three Varṇas." (I. 87-91).

One's social function, as the law prescribes, is thus fixed by one's birth in a particular Varṇa. Manu Smṛti prescribes definite occupations for men of each Varṇa, caste and mixed caste in ordinary times and at times of distress. No Varṇa can follow, even at times of distress, the occupation of a higher Varṇa.

Apart from this, there is another important division — that of Dvija and Sudra. The first three Varṇas i.e., Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya and Vaisya are twice born or Dvija. Every Dvija has to undergo upanayana or the ritual of initiation, which is the most important purificatory rite and is remeniscent of Aryan tribal past. The ritual is supposed to give one a second spiritual birth. With this rite of initiation, one is introduced to the Aryan path of holy life and privileges thereof. A Sudra is not supposed to undergo this rite and thus remain ēka-jāti or once-born. As Sir Siva Sway Iyer observes, "while the relative estimation in which the three upper classes were held depended mainly upon the character of the occupations prescribed for or practised by them, the gulf which seperated them from the Sudras was due to racial considerations and the tendency to despise conquered
Among the twice-born, Brāhmaṇas are the first in importance and dignity. Brāhmaṇas are considered gods on earth (Bhusura). The code ascribes pre-eminence to the Brāhmaṇas and next come Kṣatriya and Vaisya. The superiority of Brāhmaṇas is due to their origin from the mouth of Brahman, their possession of Veda and the sacrificial thread (X.4). This supremacy is established throughout the code (IX.317, 319; XI.84 etc.).

The Brāhmaṇas with their dignity and supremacy earn their living by teaching Veda, assisting in sacrifices and by receiving gifts. These three functions are exclusively assigned to Brāhmaṇas for their livelihood:

"Of the six acts (functions of the Brāhmaṇa), three are the means of his subsistence viz., assisting at sacrifices, teaching the Veda and receiving presents by a pious giver. These three privileges are limited to Brāhmaṇas, and do not extend to Kṣatriyas and Vaisyas. Hence a Brāhmaṇa is called ‘Tri-Karman’, ‘One who engaged in three acts’.

(X.75-77)

Manu insists that a Brahman should be given liberal gifts and encourages giving heavy ‘Dakṣina’ to him to meet his material needs. No man should undertake a sacrifice unless he has plenty of money to make liberal gifts (X1.40). One who gives wealth to the Brāhmaṇas would obtain heaven when one dies (X1.6). No Brahmana should be left starving:

"A king even though dying (from want), must not receive taxes from a Brahman learned in Vēdas, nor must he allow such a Brahmana dwelling in his country to pine away with hunger. Of that king in whose kingdom a Brāhmaṇa learned in Vēdas wastes with hunger, the whole kingdom in a short time be wasted with famine” (VII.133, 134)

Hence, Manu takes care of livelyhood for the priestly class. A Brāhmaṇa who is not learned in Vēdas or one who is passing through distress can take up the occupations of

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36 Evolution of Hindu Moral Ideals, P. 92.
a Kṣatriya or Vaisya (X. 80-82).

The second in eminence is the military class which enjoys the political power. Its chief function is to protect people and maintain social order. The state with a king as its head, has to ensure peace and security to its people. The king is considered, like in many cultures all over the world, a divinity on earth:

"The Creator created a king for the protection of the whole world by drawing forth eternal particle from the essence of Indra, Anila (wind), Yama (god of justice), Sūrya (sun), Agni (fire), Varuṇa, Chandra (moon), and Kuber (god of wealth)". (VII. 3,4)

"A king even though a child, must not be treated with contempt, as if he were a mortal; he is a great divinity in human shape" (VII. 8)

The king has to rule over his subjects like a father with the help of a counsel of Brdhmanas as ministers. He must have a Brahmana as his Prime Minister and has to take him into confidence. The king should be brave and never retreat in battle; he must set an example of bravery. He has to take great care and should not indulge in sensuous pleasures. He has to divide his time properly to attend all the functions he has to discharge. (VII. 154).

Though a king is powerful, Manu takes, case the he would not become a tyrant. The king is supposed to be very obedient towards Brdhmanas. His activities are closely superintended and regulated by Brdhmanas around him. Manu formulates so many rules to restrict the power of the kind so that he does not take away the supremacy of the Brähmanas:

"Determination not to retreat in a battle, protection of the people, the obedience to Brdhmanas are the highest duties of a king, and secure their felicity in heaven" (VII. 88)

Manu recognizes the importance of proper relations between priestly class and military class in running the state. He insists on mutual cooperation between them:

"A Kṣatriya cannot thrive without a Brahmana, nor a Brahmana without a Kṣatriya."
Brāhmaṇa and the Kṣatriya when associated together prosper in this world and the next." (IX.322)

Vaisyas are the agricultural traders who constitute the third eminent Dvija class. They are usually wealthy with rights on land and property. The state takes care to protect their property and trade from internal disturbances and external invasions. They form the tax-paying lot who finance the political and religious operations. The prosperity and stability of the state mainly depends on agricultural production and trade. So, Vaisyas are very prominent class in the society. They enjoy all the privileges of being a Dvija.

Sudras form the fourth Varna whose function is service to Dvijas. They have no access to Veda and other purificatory rite which are exclusive for the Dvijas. As opposed to Dvijas, they are eka-jati or once-born:

"The service of Brdhmanas alone is declared to be an excellent, occupation for a Sudra: for whatever else besides this he may perform will bear no fruit for him. No collection of wealth must be made by a Sudra, even though he is able to do it: for Sudra who has acquired wealth, gives pain to Brdhmanas. A Sudra, whether bought or unbought, may be compelled to do servile work: for he was created by the self-existent to be a slave of a Brahmana. A Sudra, though emancipated by his master, is not released from servitude... A Brahmana may confidently seize the goods of his Sudra slave; for as that slave can have no property, the master may take his possessions" (X. 123, 129; VHI. 413, 414, 417)

In addition to the four Varnas, Manu refers to many mixed castes which are the result of unlawful marriages among the four principal Varnas:

"By unlawful intermarriage of classes (vyabhicharena Varna am), by their marrying women who ought not be married, and by neglect of their own duties, mixed castes are produced" (X. 24)

Manu refers to a number of these mixed castes such as Mahishya, Ambastha, Murdha Vasikta, Karana or Kayastha, Vaidya, Dhigvana, Ayogava, Pukkasa, Chandala, etc.
These castes are assigned particular occupations.

Besides these there were some aboriginal tribes who stayed outside the Manu's social system, living in the hills and forests. These tribes were warrior tribes on whom probably Aryans could not establish their hold by the time of Manu Smṛti Mlechchas is one of such tribes which had no social distinctions, the others being Pundarikas, Odras, Dravidians, Kambhojas, Kirathas etc., mentioned in the code. Aryans could, at a later stage win over most of them and include them into their cultural fold.

As far as the social adjustment among the four Varnas concerned, Brāhmaṇas are the most advantageously placed around whom the other classes are carefully placed to make a system.

**Manu and Morality**

Manu's idea of morality is comprehensive and philosophically interesting. *Manu Dharmasāstra* deals with all the aspects of human life and comes out with a comprehensive set of duties regulating one's conduct towards oneself, towards the society, towards other creatures, towards the universe as a whole. Hence, it is very difficult to define Manu's view of morality unless we see what it means to him in individual, social, practical and spiritual spheres of human life.

Manu highlights the concept of Rṇa which is the most dominant moral concept of Brāhmaṇa part of the Veda. Rṇa means indebtedness and every Aryan is born with three kinds of primary Rṇa. The first to gods which has to be fulfilled by sacrificial offering to gods. The second is towards the ancient sages which has to be discharged by studying the Vēdas, the repositories of ancient wisdom and cultural heritage. The third to one's ancestors which has to be observed by marrying and begetting children to continue the lineage. This idea of Rṇa finds clear expression in the code:

"By the study of Vēda, by vows, by burnt oblations, by the recitation of the sacred texts, by the acquisition of threefold sacred science, by offering to the gods, Rṣis and
manes, by the procreation of sons, by the great sacrifices, and by *Srauta* sacrifices this human body is made it for union with *Brahman*” (II. 28).

*Manu* divides the holy life of an Aryan into four successive orders or stages (Āśrama) and preaches definite rules to follow in each stage to make the whole life morally commendable. The first stage is of religious studentship (*Brahmacharyam*), the second is of a householder (*Grhastha*), the third is of a hermit (*Vanaprastha*) and the final stage is of a religious mendicant *Bhikṣu* or *Sanyāsin*. One who has undergone these four stages as the *Vēda* and law prescribe, will be exalted to the highest bliss.

The first Asrama of *Brahmacharin* begins with the child going to a learned preceptor or achārya for acquisition of knowledge in the *Vēda* and its angas. Achārya is considered as the spiritual father of the student. The young ward has to live with his preceptor satisfying him with service and obedience. The student has to observe rigorously the rules of conduct and live a puritan life (II 177-179). He has to go around the village for receiving alms and collect food for himself and his preceptor and also fuel for the sacred fire (II. 187). The student after completing his *Vēdic* education at his preceptor's place will be relieved after he offers valuable presents to his preceptor. Thus he discharges his duty toward ancient sages by studying the *Vēda* and repeating it.

The student after completion of education returns home. He, then, has to select a girl from his own class and enter *Grhasthāśrama* or the stage of a householder by marrying. *Manu* offers certain guidelines to chose a bride (III. 8-10). *Manu* offers eight forms of marriage and prescribes definite forms for each *Varṇa* (III. 21). *Grihasthārma* is the most important stage in life. *Manu* enjoins a number of daily domestic religious duties to householders which are dealt in detail by *Gṛhya Sūtras*. The most important are the morning and evening oblations, and the five *Mahādyajnas*. The five *Mahādyajnas* are —

1. *Brahma Yajña* or *Japayajña*: repetition of the *Vēda*;
2. Pitṛ Yajña: offering srāddha to departed ancestors;

3. Deva-Yajña: offering oblations to gods;

4. Bhūta-Yajña: offering rice for all creatures and spirits;


These five Yajñas remind one's duty towards Rsis, one's ancestors, gods, creatures and fellow men. Of these Brahma Yajña is the most efficacious. Pitṛ-Yajña is the key for Aryan patriarchal inheritance. The fifth Yajña—i.e., hospitality to men is cherished as a traditional virtue. Manu says that a Brahmana who is not received well would take away all the wealth and merit of the householder.

Grhaṣṭhaśrama gives ample scope for the pursuit of Purusartha or ends of life which we shall discuss a little after. A householder has to pursue a holy life with the help of his partner. Manu emphasizes mutual trust and love between a man and his wife (IX. 45, 101; V. 157). Social prosperity depends on healthy family relations, for family is the primary unit of the social nexus.

The next stage in life is that of an anchorite (Vanaprastin) in which one has to retire to a forest after duly fulfilling the three Rñas and discharging all other duties towards family. Manu says that one has to take up Vdnaprastha when one sees one's hair turning gray or as soon as one begets a grand child. In this Āśrama too, one has to fulfill the prescribed religious duties (VI. 4,5,22,20,24,25). This is a preparatory stage for the final Āśrama. In this stage one has to practice restraint over one's sense organs and keep one's mind in control.

The fourth and final stage of an Aryan's life involves renouncing the world, suppression of passions and wandering about as a Bhikṣu or Parivrajaka. Renouncing the world does not mean that one has no obligation towards society. Indeed, this is the stage in
which one can devote oneself towards the welfare of society. After suppressing passions
towards worldly objects and thoroughly overcoming desire for physical pleasures, on can
do disinterested (Niṣkāma) service to humanity and society. This stage is not free from
social duties. A Bhikṣu or mendicant still depends on the society for his bare maintanence
and in turn serves the society by going around enlightening people, showing the path of
welfare and liberation. This is the reason why sanyasins are revered by people even
today. This is the stage in which a man is supposed to attain the spirit of freedom
through control of passions and service to society.

This is the holy life of an Aryan spread over four stages or orders closely regulated
by law and tradition. One cannot but appreciate the scheme of life envisaged by Manu
which gives due importance to all aspects of human life. It is not probable that all Aryans
observed the third and fourth stages i.e., Vdnaprastha and Sanyasa. But as Manu says,
one who undergoes these four stages, according to the prescribed Dharma, is said to have
lived a meaningful life and would attain emancipation.

Now, let us see what morality or Dharma means to Manu in this context. For Manu.
Dharma is not free floating. It is rather relative to one's situation in life. Dharma is
what is demanded by one's Varna and Aśrama in accordance with Veda, the tradition.
the lives of holymen and self-satisfaction:

"So act in thy brief passage through this world that thy apparel, speech and the inner
store of knowledge be adapted to thy age, thy occupation, means and parentage." (IV.
18)

Manu classifies Dharma or one's ethical obligations into twofold: Sadharana Dhar-
ma and Viṣista Dharma. While the former refers to the common duties of three higher
castes, the latter refers to the duties relative to one's caste and particular stage in life.
Manu enumerates steadfastness (Dhairya), forgiveness (Kṣama), application (Dama),

116
non-appropriation (*Chowryābhāva*), cleanliness (*Soucha*), repression of senses (*Indriyānigraha*), wisdom (*Dhī*), learning (*Vidya*), veracity (*Satya*) and restraint from anger (*Akrōḍha*) as the tenfold virtues for the twice-born (VI. 92). These are the virtues intended for individual perfection.

These common duties or virtues are often mistaken to be 'universal duties' meant for all men irrespective of caste and social position. S.K. Maitra says that “the universal duties are the duties irrespective of one's age, caste or creed i.e., duties obligatory on man as man and not as a member of a particular community or social class or as being at a particular stage or period of life.” However, *Manu* is not ambiguous about it. He clearly mentions that the tenfold law is meant for twice-born:

By twice-born men belonging to (any of) these four orders (*Āśramas*), the tenfold law must be obeyed (VI. 91). We can easily see that this tenfold *Sādharana Dharma* is not meant for *Sūdras* for it consists sacred wisdom (*Dhī*) and Learning (*Vidya*) which are refused to *Sūdras*. *Manu* says that the purpose of the tenfold law is self-purification for the attainment of final liberation i.e., *mōkṣa* (VI. 93). As Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya observes, “these general duties are meant exclusively for the members of the privileged class, the law-giver's *Dvīja*-s. The toiling majority—known to the law-giver as the *Sūdras*—being debarred from it are not entitled to salvation.”

However, *Manu’s* list of *Sādharana Dharma* is important for it gives us the essential virtues of the Vēdic tradition. *Viśīṣṭa Dharma* refers to the particular duties which depend on one's specific caste and stage of life. *Sādharana Dharma* and *Viśīṣṭa Dharma* together form the *Manu’s* moral prescription.

*Viśīṣṭa Dharma* depends on one's *Varna* and stage in life. General duties and specific duties with reference to one's *Varna* and *Āśrama* together make a comprehensive set of

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37 The Ethics of Hindus, P. 7. For a similar view Cf. SC. Crawford, The Evolution of Hindu Ethical Ideals, P. 52.

38 What is Living and What is Dead in Indian Philosophy, P. 627.
ethical principles. All the virtues cherished in the Vedic tradition are incorporated in this set of duties.

Again, Dharma is regarded as the first and most important thing to be pursued or end of human life (Puruṣārtha). The other three pursuits or ends are Artha (wealth), Kāma (desire) and Mokṣa (liberation). Dharma is the underlying principle of the other three pursuits. Artha and Kāma pursued in accordance with Dharma would lead to Mokṣa, the *summum bonum* of human life. There is no shortcut to Mokṣa without, observing Dharma.

Wealth should be acquired in a way that does not contradict one’s Dharma. Wealth is necessary to take care of material comforts. A Grhastha should acquire wealth in a morally acceptable way to pursue Kāma and Dharma. Among the four Puruṣārthas, Dharma and Artha are means whereas Kāma and Mokṣa are ends in themselves. Artha is needed for Kama and Dharma is essential for Mokṣa.

Now, we shall try to understand Manu’s conception of Dharma. Dharma, for Manu, is the set of moral principles, to be followed by every member of society in accordance with one’s Varna, Āśrama and sex, which has the sanction of Veda, tradition, holy men and one’s conscience. Dharma is the guiding light for other pursuits of life and is higher than all human beings.

**Law and Justice**

Manu uses the word Dharma to mean not only individual and social duties, but also to mean law and justice. Dharma as justice is higher than king and the state. The King has to be impartial in administration of law and justice and he himself is bound by them. The king has to punish every offender whether the offender whether the offender is his father, mother, wife, son, teacher, priest or a friend (VIII. 335).

The interesting feature of Manu's justice is that the social heirarchy of classes has its influence on the administration of justice. The inequality among social classes is reflected
in the matters of rights, duties, witnesses and punishments. The law and justice vary
depending on one's *Varṇa* and social status. While the principle of equality is observed
only within the confines of each *Varṇa*, the law discriminates between *Varṇas*. Both civil
and criminial law reflect these distinctions.

The law prescribes different rates of interest to different *Varṇas*. A *Brāhmaṇa* can
barrow at the rate of three or four per cent. While the other three *Varṇas* can barrow
at five per cent, for a month (VIII. 142).

Though a crime committed by a *Sūdra* attracts the most severe punishment, in the
case of theft, it is the higher castes that deserve more punishment. A *Vaisya* and a
*Kṣatriya* are liable to pay two or four times the fine payable by a *Sūdra* thief. If a
*Brāhmaṇa* does it, he has to pay eight, or sixteen times the fine payable by a *Sūdra* thief.
If the king himself is the offender, he has to pay one thousand times the fine (VIII. 337,
338). The idea behind this is that the gravity of offence increases in the case of higher
castes for they are supposed to be more responsible.

*Manu* mentions four offences as *Mahāpātaka* or mortal sins which are considered
serious. One who slays a *Brāhmaṇa*, who drinks intoxicating liquor being a *Brāhmaṇa*.
who steals gold belonging to a *Brāhmaṇa* and one who violates a Guru's bed are said to
have committed *Mahāpātaka* (IX. 235). One who is guilty of these *Mahāpātakas* would be
branded on forehead unless one undergoes prescribed penances. However, the penances
save him only from branding while he is liable for other punishments.

In administration of law and justice, *Brāhmaṇas* are again the most previliged class.
*Brāhmaṇas* are exempt from punishment of death. The most severe punishment for
them is deportation. A *Brāhmaṇa* who finds a treasure can take all of it. *Brāhmaṇas*
are exempt from paying taxes (VII. 133-136).

However, *Manu* is really humanitarian when he says that whenever declaration of
truth causes death of a *Sūdra*, *Vaisya*, *Kṣatriya* or *Brāhmaṇa*, it is better to speak false.
Such falsehood is preferable to truth (VIII. 103). Despite of the discrimination between the social classes in administration of justice, Manu's endeavours have to be appreciated for his consistent and comprehensive view of justice. Manu's view of justice makes the different Varna to adhere to their respective duties and contribute to the smooth running of the state and the society.

Theory of Action and Transmigrations

In view of their philosophical content, the eleventh and twelfth chapters of Manu Smrti are the most important. In these chapters, Manu establishes his theory of action, theory of final liberation and transmigration. His views on human action are very important for his theory of action plays a key role in understanding his views on Moksa and transmigration. In his theory of action, Manu adopts the Sāmkhyān views to explain mechanism of action and its fruition. He extends his theory of action to explain his ideas on transmigration in a commendable way. So, it is very important to analyse his views on Moksa and transmigrations.

Contrary to the idea of renunciation as the means to liberation, Manu understands the importance of desire in the mechanism of action. He sees every empirically significant action as having founded on desire. Desire for rewards is what prompts man to action:

"To act solely from a desire for rewards is not laudable, yet an exemption from that desire is not found to be in this world; for on that desire is grounded the study of Veda and performance of actions prescribed by the Veda. The desire for rewards, indeed, has its roots in the conception that an act can yield them, and in consequence of that conception sacrifices are performed; Vows and the laws prescribing restraints are all stated to be kept through the idea that they will bear fruit. Not a single act below here appears to be done by a man free from desire; for whatever man does, it is the result of impulse of desire." (II. 2,3,4)

Action, for Manu, is of three types viz., mental (mānas), bodily (sarira) and speech
Mind is the instigator for all the three types of action. These actions, Manu says, invariably bring out good or evil consequences:

"Action which springs from the mind, from speech and from body, produces good or evil results; by action are caused the various conditions of men, the highest, the middling and the lowest. Know that the mind is the instigator here below, even to that action which is connected with the body, (and) which is of three kinds, has three locations and falls under ten heads. In consequence of many sinful acts committed with his body, a man becomes (in the next birth) something inanimate, in consequence of sins committed by speech, a bird or a beast, and in the consequence of mental sins he is reborn in a low caste." (XII. 3,4,9).

So, Manu's theory of action is central to his theory of transmigrations also. As far as the mechanism of action is concerned, Manu gives the four-fold division of the subject. The body consisting of material elements (Bhūtātman), the mind which knows the field of action (Kṣetrajña), the individual soul through which the mind experiences the world (Jīva) and the supreme soul which prevades the individual souls and resides in its own multiform manifestations — constitute the moral subject. In addition to these four, Manu considers another subtle body which undergoes the after-death experience:

"Him who impels this corporeal self to action, they call the Kṣetrajña (the knower of the field); but him who does the acts, the wise name the Bhūtātman (the self consisting of elements). Another internal self that is generated with all embodied (Kṣetrajñas) is called Jīva, through which the Kṣetrajña becomes sensible of all pleasure and pain in successive births. These two, the great one and Kṣetrajña, who are closely united with elements, pervade Him who resides in the multiform created beings. Another strong body, formed of particles of the five elements and destined to suffer the torments in hell, is produced after death in the case of wicked men." (XII. 12,13,14,16).

Mind, the instigator of actions, is characterized by the three qualities (Triguna) of
Sativa (goodness), Rajas (Activity) and Tamas (Darkness). This triple characterization of mind corresponds to Sāmkhya description of Pradhāna which is conveniently adopted by Manu. All actions are expressions of these three qualities. It is the efficacy of the actions that determines the present and future states of the agent. With this conception of action, Manu tries to explain his theory of transmigrations:

"Know Sattva, Rajas and Tamas to be the three qualities of the self, with which the great one always completely pervades all existences. When one of these qualities wholly predominates in a body, then it makes the embodied soul eminently distinguished for that quality. Goodness is declared to have the form of knowledge, Darkness of ignorance. Activity of love and hatred; such is the nature of these three which is all pervading and clings to everything created. When a man, having done, doing or about to do any act, feels ashamed • • • all such acts bear the mark of the quality of Darkness • • • when a man desires to gain by an act much fame in this world and feels no sorrow on failing, know that it bears the mark of the quality of Activity. But that bears the mark of the quality of Goodness which with his whole heart he desires to know, which he is not ashamed to perform and at which his soul rejoices. The craving after sensual pleasures is declared to be the mark of Darkness, the pursuit of wealth the mark of Activity, the desire to gain spiritual merit the mark of Goodness; each later named quality is better than the preceeding one. Those endowed with goodness reach the state of gods, those endowed with Activity the state of men, and those endowed with Darkness ever sink into the condition of beasts; that is the three fold course of transmigrations. But know this three fold course of transmigrations that depends on the three qualities to be again three fold, low, middling and high according to the particular nature of the acts and of the knowledge of each man. Women, also, who in like manner having committed theft, shall incur guilt; they will become the females of those same creatures which have been enumerated above." (XII. 24,25,26, 35-38,40,41,49)
But Manu does not attempt to explain how precisely do these actions mature into effect, especially in the case of transmigrations and efficacy of sacrifices. Look at how Manu tries to explain the way a burnt oblation brings out the intended effects:

"An oblation duly thrown into fire, reaches the sun; from the sun comes rain, from rain food, therefrom the living creatures derive their subsistence." (III. 76).

This naturalistic explanation of the sacrificial efficacy is interesting. On the one hand, it refers to the archaic belief in the pragmatic value of sacrifice for sustenance and on the other hand, it is admirable for it does not bring in any supernatural potency into picture in terms of gods. However, in the absence of explicit explanation by Manu as to how actions result in consequences, we can presume that he adopts Samkhya way of explaining in terms of the changes in gunäs brought out by an action.

Manu says that Vedas prescribe two paths of action:

"The acts prescribed by the Veda are of two kinds such as procure and increase in happiness and cause a continuation of mundane existence (pravṛttī) and such as ensure supreme bliss and cause cessation of mundane existence (nivṛttā). Acts which secure (the fulfilment of wishes in this world or in the next are called pravṛttī; but acts performed without any desire for a reward, preceded by the acquisition of true kñōledge, are declared to be nivṛttā. He who seriously performs acts leading to future births (pravṛttī) becomes equal to gods; but who is intent on the performance of those causing the cessation of existence (nivṛttā) indeed, passes beyond the reach of five elements." (XII. 88, 89, 90)

Manu prescribes pravṛttī-mdṛga for the attainment of intended goals (kāma) but always identifies nivṛttā-mārga as a better means towards the liberation, the fourth object of pursuit (Puruṣārtha):

"If one man should obtain all those sensual enjoyments and another should renounce them all, the renunciation of all pleasure is far better than the attainment of them." (II.
But one should aim at final liberation only after duly fulfilling his empirical duties:

"A twice-born man who seeks final liberation, without having studied Vēdas, without having begotten sons and without having offered sacrifices, sinks downwards." (VI-37)

So, one is not supposed to aim at the final Purusārtha without discharging the three debts (Ṛṇa). Mōkṣa or final liberation, Manu says, is attainable in the empirical world:

"By not injuring any creatures, by detaching the sense from objects of enjoyment, by performance of rites prescribed in the Vēda, and by rigorously practicing austerities, men gain that state (Mōkṣa) even in this world." (VI. 75).

Manu understands knowledge of the ultimate reality as sure guide to final liberation. Knowledge of reality leads one beyond one's actions and the attainment of this knowledge is emphasized as the most virtuous action:

"He who possesses the true insight into the nature of the world, is not fettered by his deeds; but he who is destitute of that insight, is drawn into the circle of births and rebirths. The knowledge of soul stated to be the most excellent among all of the virtuous action; for that is the first of all sciences, because immortality is gained through that. When by the disposition of his heart he becomes indifferent to all objects, he obtains eternal happiness both in this world and after death. He who has in this manner gradually given up all attachments and is freed from all the pairs of opposites reposes in Brahman alone. He who is not proficient in the knowledge of that which refers to the soul reaps not the full reward of the performance of rites" (VI. 74; XII. 85; VI. 80, 81, 82).

Finally Manu Summarises the whole moral teaching of his law-book as follows:

Abstention from injuring creatures, veracity, abstention from unlawfully appropriating the goods of others, purity, and control of the organs, Manu has declared to be the summary of the law for four castes (X. 63).

Manu and Other Philosophical Theories
Before we undertake a philosophical reflection on Manu's attitude towards other theories and his adoption of various philosophical views, we must keep one thing in mind that Manu is not a philosopher but a law-giver. His business is not to entertain philosophical debates but to establish a social system. Before we appreciate the philosophical commitments of Manu, let us see what philosophical systems he is repellent to. This gives a clue as to what kind of philosophy is acceptable to Manu and why.

As could be easily understood, Manu's attitude towards those philosophical views which do not accept Vēda as a Pramāṇa is not favourable:

"All those traditions and all those despicable systems of philosophy, which are not based on Vēda, produce no reward after death; for they are declared to be founded on darkness; All those doctrines, differing from the Vēda, which spring up and perish soon, are worthless and false because they are of modern date. Every twice-born man, who relying on the institutes of dialectics, treats with contempt those two sources of the law, must be cast out by the virtuous as an atheist and scioner of Vēda. Let him not honour, even by a greeting, those heretics, men who follow forbidden occupations, men who live like cats, rogues, logicians (arguing against Vēda) and those who live like harons. Let him not dwell in a country where the rulers are Sudras, nor in one which is surrounded by unrighteous men, nor in one which has become subject to heretics, nor in one swarming with men of low-castes. That kingdom where Sudras are very numerous, which is infested by atheists and destitutes of twice-born, soon entirely perishes by famine and disease." (II. 11; IV. 30, 60; VIII. 22).

So, Manu's attitude towards Buddhists, heretics and materialists is generally unfavourable. Heretics who vehemently question the superstitions of after-death, sacrifices, heaven and transmigrations, which is ardently propounded by Brāhmaṇa part of the Vēda, are banished from the state (IX. 225).

Now let us examine the philosophical views of different schools adopted by Manu.
Manu acknowledges Certain views of Advaita Vedânta especially those on final liberation. Manu describes supreme soul in an anologous way to Advaitins as beyond all the valid sources of knowledge:

"He who can be perceived by the internal organ alone, who is subtile, indescrivable, and eternal, who contains all created beings and is inconceivable, shone forth of his own will."

So, Manu submits all Pramâna to mysticism which alone, according to Manu, is capable of knowing the supreme soul. Advaitins rest the Reality outside the field of comprehension which can be realized only through mystical experience. Thus all valid sources of knowledge are taken to be useless. So, logic which operates within the field of Pramâna or valid sources of knowledge is considered to be of no use in comprehending the Reality. Advaitins as thorough-going idealists understand the world to be an illusion. This concept of world as an illusion preaches passive acceptance of the social reality and thus serves the purpose of the law-giver in a sense. The common platform for the Advaitins and Manu is their faith in the scriptures, rejection of logic as capable of reaching to reality and common understanding of final libneration. Manu like an Advaitin feels that final liberation can be attained only through the knowledge of the soul.

But Manu faces one important problem from an Advaitin. He cannot totally adopt the Advaitin view of the world. If the world, as Advaitins sees, is an illusion, the efficacy of sacrifices is effected. If the world is an illusion, who would like to take pains to do sacrifices for desired ends? But, for Manu, Vedic sacrídices have efficacy to bring out the intended results and these sacrificial acts are the fundamental duties of Brâhmaṇas on which they live.

So, Manu, in order to establish the importance of sacrificial acts, has to establish the reality of the phenomenal world. This purpose of the law-giver is best served by the Purva-Mimâansa view which strongly argues for the reality of the world. Reality of
the world should be accepted not only for justifying the Vēdic sacrifices but also for the moral operation in society. Society has to be real for the observation of social law. here, Manu unconditionally accepts the reality of the world.

Manu, to a great extent, adopts the Samkhya concept of Matter as constituted of three qualities, he does not share Samkhya's dualistic metaphysics. The Matter is a manifestation of the supreme soul for Manu whereas for Samkhya it is a separate ontological category. Further, for Samkhya actions are empirical modifications of Prakṛti and thus do not entail any transcendental significance. Actions, good or bad, necessarily bind the soul. So, all actions even the sacrificial acts, have to be renounced. Liberation for Samkhya is liberation from all experience because experience necessarily involves guṇas or qualities. As actions appertain to the empirical mode of mind, morality is just a function of mind. Samkhya denies scriptural sacrifices as constituting Dharma for all actions lead to impermanent consequences for they have a beginning in time and the ultimate liberation comes from cessation of all actions, actions of every kind. Manu agrees with the materialists as far as reality of the world is concerned. But materialists differ from Manu in the matters of after-death. It is materialists, Purva-Mimamsakas and Manu, however, that realize the importance and efficacy of human action.