Chapter V
Domesticating the Texts

The philosophical texts of the Asiatic countries have always fascinated the European minds. Their fascination has led to popular translations or rewritings of such texts embedded with the essence of Eastern wisdom. The attempts seem outwardly as humanistic enterprises of bridging the gap between peoples or cultures. But, actually they have prompted the surfacing of dichotomies between the modern and the primitive, the West and the non-West, the civilized and the barbaric, culture and nature. They have circulated the impression that such dichotomies are insignificant and should be left unnoticed. Their main objective has been to revitalize the Indian culture, art and systems of knowledge, and to protect them from oblivion. Thus, the notions of primitive innocence, simplicity, naturalness and spirituality have constituted the basic framework of all rewritings of the culture of India. The colonizers have understood that these are the discursive domains within which the East can be safely contained. The translation of these texts has, therefore, been seen as a disguised or oblique attempt to restrict the colonized subject within the discursive space that does not challenge the sophisticated, advanced and civilized cultural values of the West. Language has also become a political tool for creating such dominant and marginal groups in a text, providing epistemological structures with ideological gravity. On the whole, when rewritten, the rich Eastern values have lost their complexity and variety, the
Oriental texts have been presented as specimens of a culture “otherworldly or spiritual.”

Orientalists like Jones viewed the Indian religion and philosophy as disputing in the forms of logic, or discoursing on the vanity of human enjoyments, on the immortality of the soul, the emanation from the eternal mind, the debasement, wanderings, and final union with the source. Their rationalistic mind was eager to present the Asiatic philosophy as something exotic and curious. He comments satirically:

…, their Epick, magnificent and sublime in the highest degree; their Puranas comprise a series of mythological histories in blank verse from the Creation to the supposed incarnation of Buddha; and then Midas, as far as we can judge from that compendium of them, which is called Upanishat, abound with noble speculations in metaphysicks, and find discourses on the being and attributes of God. (1799:45)

Jones’s observation reflects his half-baked ideas on Indian epics, Puranas and Upanishads on the one hand and ancient history on the other. Jones expressed the imperialistic attitude in translating philosophical texts in his tenth Anniversary Discourse delivered on 28th Feb, 1793, “On Asiatic History, Civil and Natural”:

The practical use of history, in affording particular examples of civil and military wisdom, has been greatly exaggerated, but principles of action may certainly be collected from it; and even
the narrative of wars and revolutions may serve as a lesson to
nations and an admonition to sovereigns a desire, indeed, of
knowing past events, while the future cannot be known, and a
view of the present gives often more pain than delight, seems
natural to the human mind; and a happy propensity would it be, if
every reader of history would open his eyes to some very
important corollaries, which flow from the whole extent of it.
(1799: 149)

Jones meant that the knowledge of past/history provides examples or lessons to
the rulers and subjects alike. Even though they admitted these texts as general
substitutes in moments of crises, they considered it their duty to elevate the
Indians in a new perspective. In this context, Jones observed:

…, that the race of man, the advance of whose manly
happiness is our duty and will, of course, be our endeavour,
cannot long be happy without value, nor actively virtuous
without freedom, nor securely free without rational knowledge.
(1799: 142)

He regarded the Indians as a race without value, freedom or rational
knowledge. He thought that it was the colonizer’s duty to enhance the
happiness of the colonized by providing these qualities.

When Orientlists like Jones dubbed *The Bhagavat Gita*, as lacking
rational knowledge, many westerners have viewed it as a text aimed at
Brahmanising souls for the spiritual welfare of humanity. Europe got
acquainted with *The Bhagavat Gita*, through its translation made by Charles Wilkins. Under the auspices of the Asiatic society, *The Bhagavat Gita* was translated into the Europeans’ language, and was printed in London at the direction of the East India Company, at the special recommendation of Warren Hastings. Hastings forwarded a copy of *The Bhagavat Gita* by Wilkins to the chairman of the East India Company, in course of the introduction to the works. He stated:

…[it was] a performance of great originality, of a sublimity of conception, reasoning and diction almost unequalled, and single exception among all the known religions of mankind of a theology accurately corresponding with that of the Christian dispensation and most powerfully illustrating its fundamental doctrines. (Sengupta, 1996: 33)

Hastings’s imperfect understanding of *The Bhagavat Gita* made him equate it with Christian theology. This shows that Wilkins’s translation is conditioned by his exposure to theology of a monotheistic religion.

The translation of *The Bhagavat Gita* inspired many western thinkers and writers. The only book that Thomas Carlyle showed Emerson during their first visit together was an English translation of *The Bhagavat Gita* by Wilkins. He told Emerson:

This is a most inspiring book; it has brought comfort and consolation in my life …. I hope it will do the same to you. Read it. (Abhedananda, 1989: 118)
Carlyle emphasized *The Gita’s* power to drive away melancholy and bring in hope. Jacob Wilhelm Hauer, a modern German indologist called it a work of imperishable significance that offers

not only profound insights that are valid for all times and for all religious life, but it contains as well the classical presentation of one of the most significant phases of Indo-German religious history…. It shows us the way as regards the essential nature and basal characteristics of Indo-Germanic religion. Here spirit is at work that belongs to our spirit. (Radhakrishnan, 1993: ii)

He meant that *The Gita* is an excellent example of a religious matter rendered in a classical manner. Max Muller too pointed out the contribution of Vedanta towards Indian culture:

It cannot be denied that the early Indians possessed a knowledge of the true God; all their writings are replete with sentimental and expressions, noble, clear, and severely grand; as deeply conceived and reverentially expressed as in any human language in which men have spoken of their God… The divine origin of man, as taught in Vedanta, is continually inculcated, to stimulate his efforts to return, to animate him in the struggle, and incite him to consider a reunion and reincorporating with Divinity as the one primary object of every action and reaction. Even the highest form of European philosophy, the idealism of reason as it is set forth by the Greek philosophers, seems, when compared to the
bounteous light and force of oriental idealism, to be no more has than a feeble Promethean spark with the full celestial splendor of the noonday seen, a thin flickering spark always on the point of burning out. (quoted in Schlegel, 1849: 471)

Muller’s eloquence stands testimony to the multifaceted greatness of The Gita.

For ages, The Bhagavat Gita is ranked as one of the greatest repository of universal wisdom. It comprises of 18 chapters taken from the Bheeshmaparva of The Mahabharata, the largest epic in Indian history. Narrated in the form of dialogue between Lord Krishna and his favourite disciple and cousin Arjuna, it serves the whole mankind as a pathfinder forever. This philosophical treatise is rendered through Lord Krishna when he sees Arjuna’s inaction in the field of Dharmayudha. As the name suggests, the war is symbolic of the spiritual endeavor to conquer all vices and to make one pure. The Lord himself makes it clear that such a spiritual rejuvenation happens on a war footing at a time when the forces of evil and chaos are at their peak in the world:

Yada yada hi dharmaṃ glanirbhavati bharata
abhyyutthanam dharmaṃ tadatmanam sṛjamyaham. (4.7)

Paritranaya sadhunam vinasaya ca dushkrtam
dharmaṃ samsthapanarthayaṃ sambhavami yuge yuge. (4.8)

…; and as often as there is a decline of virtue, and an insurrection of vice and injustice, in the world, I make myself evident; and
thus I appear, from age to age, for the preservation of the just, the
destruction of the wicked, and the establishment of virtue. (IV: 40)

The Bhagavat Gita’s philosophy belongs to the school of Astika (theist), which
accepts the authority of the vedas. As Hindu religion owes its origin to the
Vedas, it is considered a monumental work by them. Such a work has three
prominent features: (1) the concept of God elaborated in two forms – the
Absolute (Nirguna Brahman) and the God in manifest forms (Saguna
Brahman); (2) the concept that the human life is subject to the laws of
retribution and rebirth; and (3) the concept of liberation (Moksha).

Outwardly, The Bhagavat Gita may appear as a series of dialogue
between the Lord and his disciple. But it is not so. It is a valuable treatise
containing religious and ethical teachings. The teachings are difficult to
comprehend as the ideas are wrapped allegorically. The battle between the
Pandavas and the Kauravas has been called Kurukshetra War. The word “kuru”
means do or to do. In the Mahabharata, both Pandavas and Kauravas are
presented as the descendents of Kuru since both perform actions. Pandavas do
pure and righteous actions while actions of Kauravas are impure, sinful and
irreligious. From this perspective, the whole world is a kurukshetra as all
creatures keep on performing actions; it may also be called Karma Kshetra.
In chapter thirteen of The Gita, human body is called kshetra; hence the body
which is the centre of all actions becomes the kurukshetra. Like the war
between Pandavas and Kauravas, the human mind is the arena of a fight
between the good and the evil. It is the real war to establish Dharma. The body
and the mind are, therefore, *kurukshetra* and *dharmakshetra* respectively. So the reference to the battle must be seen as an inward battle to defeat Maya or the body consciousness or world consciousness. But, Lord Krishna observes:

Sukhadukhae samekriitva labhalabhau jayajayau
tato yudhaya yujaysva nivam papamavpsyasi. (2: 38)

Make pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, the same, and then prepare for battle; or if thou dost not, thou wilt be criminal in a high degree. Let thy reason be thus applied in the field of battle. (II: 31)

The Lord calls this state of mind, free from ups and downs, rise and fall, a state of perfect mental balance. By attaining this, he says, one can free oneself from the bondage of actions and commission of sins:

Yeshatoabhihitha samkhye budhiryoge tvimam srinu

Bhudhya yuktho yaya partha karmabandham prahasyasi. (2:39)

This thy judgement is formed upon the speculative doctrines of the Sankhya Sastra: hear what its is in the practical, with which being endued thou shalt forsake the bonds of action. (II: 31)

Thus, it is clear that the war described in *The Gita* is not one waged against other persons; it is a fight within the self to win over and control the sense organs and the mind. That is why it is said that in this battle even the great warriors get defeated:

Yatato hyapi kaunteya purusasya vipascitah

indriyani pramathini haranti prasabham manah. (2:60)
The tumultuous senses hurry away, by force, the heart even of the wise man who striveth to restrain them. (II: 33)

The greatest enemy to one’s moksha or liberation is *kama* or desire which results from lack of control of senses.

Even though these words are spoken by Lord Krishna, he should not be misunderstood as a person. He is the voice of the Supreme soul, the Incorporeal Supreme. He is called “Keshava” by Arjuna; it is an attributive name, meaning the Creator of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The usages like “I am unmanifest Being” or “I have come from a Supreme abode,” or “I am unborn and invisible to the physical eyes” make it clear that to regard Krishna as a physical body is ignorance. Lord Krishna remarks:

Mayatatamidam sarvam jagadavyaktamurtina

matsthani sarvabhutani na caham tesvavasthitah. (9:4)

All things are dependent on me, and I am not dependent on them. (IX: 58)

Avyaktoksara ityuktaha tamahuh paramam gatim

yam prapya na nivartante taddhama paramam mama. (8:21)

He who is thus called invisible and incorruptible, is even he who is called the Supreme Abode; which men having once obtained, they never more return to earth; that is my mansion. (VIII: 57)

Na tu mam sakyase drastum anenaiva svacaksusa

divyam dadami te caksuh pasya me yogamaiswaram. (11:8)
But as thou art unable to see with these thy natural eyes, I will give thee a heavenly eye, with which behold my divine connection. (XI: 65)

The name Arjuna, his bow and arrows, the flag of his chariot are all highly symbolic. The word Arjuna literally means “white.” Arjuna stands for purity and stability in words, thoughts and actions. Therefore, a person who works hard to achieve something worthwhile can be called Arjuna. He has been defined by using quality names such as Anagh (sinless), Parantapa (one who does supreme penance), Gudakesh (one who overcomes sleep), Anasuya (pure), Dhananjay (one who acquires the imperishable wealth of Yoga). Arjuna is portrayed as a master in wielding the bow. “Bow”, in reality, is symbolic of hard struggle and battle. Arjuna’s Gandiva is thus symbolic of his hard fight against the evil tendencies of the mind. Similarly, there cannot be a material flag which keeps fluttering to the heights of one yojana, or, two miles above the earth, untouched or obstructed by trees, as mentioned in The Mahabharata. Hence, Arjuna’s flag stands for his single-mindedness in the path of spiritual endeavour which nothing can obstruct. The moon and the stars figuring on his flag stand for his aim to cool the fire of his passions. Again, it is said that Hanuman sits on Arjuna’s flag, thundering at times. Hanuman stands for the eradication of monkeyish propensities inherent in man. Thus, Arjuna’s flag stands for Dharma.

These allegorical facts were difficult for the Westerners to comprehend. Wilkins found the Hindu doctrines totally different from the doctrines which
the learned scholars of other nations were acquainted with. Hence he found it impossible to render it by any of the known terms of science in English language. For instance, Wilkins avoided figurative names as he had no plans to bring out the significance of their usages in the original text. Moreover, Wilkins used certain operational norms like relocation of passages and end notes to increase or highlight the ambiguity of the work. Hence, his translation can be called an ethnographic project, as it explains the difference between the cultural contexts of the source and the target language versions of the text.

In several contexts, the appropriation of the original text took place, where the translator reproduced the sense of the foreign work in his own terms. In doing so, Wilkins nullified the significance of the original. Reading of Wilkins’s Lecture ix, *Of the Chief of Secrets and Prince of Science*, makes one assume that Lord Krishna was arrogant:

> I am the fame to all mankind: there is not one who is worthy of my love or hatred. They who serve me with adoration, I am in them, and they in me… Be of my mind, my servant, my adorer, and bow down before me. Unite thy soul, as it were, unto me, make me thy asylum, and thou shalt go unto me. (IX: 60)

Here, Wilkins presented Krishna as a dictator to suit the temperament of the western. Phrases like “my servant”, “my adorer”, “bow down before me” suit not only the relation between the colonizer and the colonized but also the relation between the West and the East.
The Bhagavat Gita aims at furnishing a systematic and coherent system of ethics or a body of principles which are implicit in the ethical discipline. Its sole purpose is to expound these principles and laws of the practical life of man called sastra, a systematic discipline. This is called karma yoga sastra for the reason that it enunciates and formulates the laws and principles of ethical behaviour. In the first chapter, Arjuna, has given unmistakable evidence of his knowledge of ethics, though the Lord corrects him by saying that his opinions are mistaken because he does not know the principles underlying them. It is an attempt, therefore, on the part of the Lord to unfold and expound these principles of ethical conduct. This entitles The Bhagavat Gita to an honoured place in Indian or even World Literature.

The argument of the moral philosophy of The Bhagavat Gita starts with an impressive, illuminating and graphic description of the intellectual confusion, moral deadlock and spiritual incest into which Arjuna has been thrown by his consciousness of duty:

Na ca saknomyavasthatum bhramatva ca me manah
nimittani ca pasyami vipravitani kesava. (1:30)

I am not able to stand; for my understanding, as it were, turneth round, and I behold inauspicious omens on all sides. (I: 26)

Arjuna’s supplication to the Lord for enlightenment shows his eagerness to emancipate himself from the deadlock and to find the ultimate goal of existence in peace, harmony and integration. The Gita promises to men, through its
teachings on the philosophy of ethics, the attainment of the highest stage of perfection. According to the Western perspective, this is spiritual autonomy whereas in the Eastern view it is complete autonomy or svarajya. The Gita slowly moves through different phases and stages of moral development which a man is obliged to undergo. Only through these movements the soul can attain moksha or emancipation from the operation of compulsive forces of the cycle of births and deaths or samsara:

Sarvadharman parityajya mamekam saranam vraja

aham tva sarvapapebhyo moksayisyami ma sucah. (18:66)

Forsake ever other religion, and fly to me alone. Grieve not then, for I will deliver thee from all thy transgressions. (XVIII: 95)

The Gita does not teach that we should altogether abandon the enjoyment of the pleasures of the senses. It tells us that we must discipline our senses and the mind so that they should not attune themselves to the sensuous pleasures or the carnal desires. This is what The Gita designates as sanga tyaga:

Yastvindriyani manasa niyamyarabhaterjuna

karmendriyaih karmayogam asaktah sa visisyate. (3:7)

So the man is praised, who having subdued all his passions, performeth with his active faculties all the functions of life, unconcerned about the event. (III: 35)

To the ordinary people, unreflecting consciousness appears to be impossible. This is because no one can perform any action or engage himself in any activity
unless there is an expectation of some reward or advantage out of it. So Lord urges Arjuna to do his duty without thinking about its reward:

\[
\text{Tasmadasaktah satatam karyam karma samacara asakto hyacaran karma paramapnoti purusah. (3:19)}
\]

Wherefore, perform thou that which thou hast to do, at all times, unmindful of the event; for the man that doeth that which he hath to do, without affection, obtaineth the Supreme. (III: 36)

Here, the Lord has to teach him the philosophy of detachment. He cannot do this unless He expounds to Arjuna the mystery of the nature of the body and the spirit and the relationship between the two. This indoctrination is incomplete without counseling on the nature of sensuous pleasures. The Lord observes:

\[
\text{Anaditva nirgunatvad paramatmaya avyaya sareerasthopi kaunteya na karoti na lipyate. (13.32)}
\]

This supreme spirit and incorruptible Being, even when its is in the body, neither acteth, nor is it affected, because its nature is without beginning and without quality. (XIII:76)

*The Gita* considers spirit as the highest form of being. When the spirit is not awake, matter and lower forms of being or levels of reality preponderate over it so that the dynamic power of the spirit is lost. So the Lord asks us to have spiritual discipline to overcome this pressure and weight of matter on the spirit. The more the spirit is enmeshed with these lower forms of reality, the more is it
impossible for it to shine in its pristine purity and unsullied brilliance. In this context, the Lord remarks:

Vedeshu yajneshu tapasee chaiva
daneshu yet punya bhalam pradeshtam
atyedi tatsarvamidam viditva
yogi param stanamupaidi chadyam. (8: 28)

The fruit of this surpasseth all the rewards of virtue pointed out in the *Veds*, in worshippings, in mortifications, and even in the gifts of charity. The devout *Yogee*, who knoweth all this, shall obtain a supreme and prior place. (VIII:57)

Detachment is an exercise in this direction. It proves effective in withdrawing our attention from *tamasik* influence. In this state, detachment becomes love. Then the dimensions of the spirit are widened and the pleasures and pains of the individual are identified with the pleasures and pains of others. In this regard, Arnold Toynbee rightly observes:

Absolute detachment looks as if it might be intrinsically unattainable, because it is hard to see how the intensely arduous spiritual effort to detach oneself from all other desires can be achieved without attaching oneself to the single master desire of extinguishing every desire save this. (1957:64)

Even the desire to have complete detachment itself is an obstacle to achieve this status.
Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that He has nothing to achieve and yet He engages himself in action. He remarks:

Na me parthasti kartavyam trisu lokesu kincana

nanavaptamavaptavyam varta eva ca karmani. (3:22)

I myself, Arjoon, have not, in the three regions of the universe, anything which is necessary for me to perform, nor anything to obtain which is not obtained; and yet I live in the exercise of the mortal duties. (III: 37)

This is an example for Arjuna to follow. The indication is that of the highest level of consciousness and the highest form of spiritual fulfilment. In this state, egoism and selfishness are the greatest impediments to social action. Thus *The Bhagavat Gita* teaches that detachment makes man more energetic and active. Lord Krishna observes:

Aphalakamksibhiryajno vidhidshto ya ijayate

yastavyameveta manah samadhaya sa satvikah. (17: 11)

That worship which is directed by divine precept, and is performed without the desire of reward, as necessary to be done, and with an attentive mind, is of the *Satwa-Goon*. (XVII: 87)

*The Gita* examines many standards of judging the moral quality of an action. It arrives at the conclusion that an action has to be evaluated in the light of the quality of the will from which it emerges. The Lord simply gives hints and
narrates the conditions and circumstances which have a compelling nature of their own under the constraint of which Arjuna must act even though he does not desire to act at all. The Lord urges him to consider the pros and cons of the course of action that he has to adopt. It is only when he has given patient and tranquil thought to the course of action that he has to adopt that he is free to do whatever he likes.

The Gita teaches the science of performance of action. Even selfish activities are to be preferred to a life of inactivity or abstention from all actions. The Lord observes:

Na buddhibhedam jayed ajnanam karmasanginam
josayeth sarvakarmani vidvan yuktah samacaran. (3: 26)

The learned man, by industriously performing all the duties of life, should induce the vulgar to attend the. (III: 37)

This advice of wisdom has been viewed by the westerns as a curious specimen of literature, mythology and morality of ancient Hindus. So the translation of a text of such values has been often difficult for them. They find that many passages are obscure, redundant and clothed with ornaments of fancy unsuited to their taste. Moreover, the modes of judgement in the text are difficult for them to pursue. Hence, they find The Bhagavat Gita as shocking to their religious and moral sentiments.

Charles Wilkins might have been confused by the rich wisdom emanating from The Bhagavat Gita. In the “Preface” to his work, he says:

The Brahmans esteem this work to contain all the grand mysteries of their religion; and so careful are they to conceal it
from the knowledge of those of a different persuasion, and even in the vulgar of this own, that the Translator might have fought in vain for assistance, had not the liberal treatment they have of late years experienced from the mildness of our government, the tolerating principles of our faith, and above all, the personal attention paid to the learned men of their order by him under whose auspicious administration they have so long enjoyed, in the midst of surrounding troubles, the blessings of internal peace, and his exemplary encouragement, at length happy created in their breaths a confidence in his countrymen sufficient to remove almost every jealous prejudice from their minds. (1867:19)

Wilkins points to the skepticism of Brahmins on the translation of *The Gita* and underlines the patronizing attitude of the colonizers. Actually, the reticence of the Indians against Europeans attitude to tamper with this text made them more and more curious about the text. In this regard, Wilkins observed: “..., the Translator may be encouraged to prosecute the study of the theology and mythology of the *Hindoos* for the future entertainment of the curious” (1867:21). He meant that the erotic and alien nature of the Hindu myths was fascinating to the foreign readers.

Wilkins’s translation of *The Bhagavat Gita* is, of course, a literal one. He cannot be blamed for that because the study and interpretation of the thought and culture of nations and races different from their own is not an easy
affair. This is especially true of the study of such a complex structure of thought as to be found in Hinduism. In this regard, Tomlin remarks:

Immersion is oriental philosophical writing over a period of years has led the author to believe that much of its attraction for Western readers resides first in its exotic terminology and secondly in its apparent and to some extent inevitable vagueness. Words such as Nirvan, Karma, Vedanta and Maya produce, it seems, an effect very much like hypnosis, above all perhaps upon those to whom their meaning is unknown. Admittedly few ideas of this order can be rendered into English with the precision demanded by Western philosophers for their own concepts. We have therefore refrained from introducing more than the minimum technical terms, even where the temptation proved strongest, as in the sections of Upanishads, the Yoga systems of Pathanjali, and the Hindu doctrines of darshanas. And secondly, we have throughout endeavoured to bring home to the reader that ideas which need to be rendered in vague or general terms are often the reverse of vague in the original. If, as Patanjali maintained, twenty-five ‘realities’ we are bound to miss endless subtleties of meaning by rendering their thought in the half dozen terms at most in English. (1959: 14)

Tomlin underlines the problems of equivalence; *The Gita* is virtually untranslatable, both culturally and linguistically. This difficulty is attributed
to the subtlety of Indian philosophical thoughts. For instance; consider Wilkins translation of the slokas:

Sparsyan krita bahir babyamsha chaksu chaivrandare bruvo
pranapanau samau kritva nasgabyantara charinau. (5:27)

Yatendriya manobudhi munier moksa parayana
bigadescha bayakrodo vya sada mukta yeva sa. (5:28)

Bhoktaram yajna tapasam sarvo loka maheshwaram
sukritam sarvabutananm njatva mama shanti mricyati. (5:29)

It seems to be more a verbal activity, without considering the basic knowledge of the importance of the Oneness of the Brahman, especially to attain peace and prosperity to the disturbed mind. Such a noble thought was translated as a simple activity by the translator. Wilkins was unaware of the basics of Vedanta in its subtlety and complexity. The ordinary words he chose for translation were too fragile to carry the gravity of Vedantic thought:

The man who keepeth the outward accidents from entering his mind, and his eyes fixed in contemplation between his brows; who maketh the breath to pass through both his nostrils alike in expiration and inspiration; who is of subdued faculties, mind, and understanding, and hath set his heart upon salvation; and who is free from lust, fear, and anger, is forever blessed in this life; and, being convinced that I am the cherisher of religious zeal, the lord
of all worlds, and the friend of all nature, he shall obtain me and be blessed. (V: 46)

Here, the outer frame is presented, but the enigma of the original remains unsolved. The process of exoticization is carried out by the destruction of underlying networks of signification. By such a rendition he was highlighting the European concept of Eastern inertia, the Orient as the Negative Other.

It may be unpalatable to the Christian thought to view the material world as a mirror image of the cosmic world. The fifteenth chapter of *The Bhagavat Gita* says:

Urdamoolamada sakamaswatam prahuravyam
candamsi yesya parnani yestam vetha sa vedavitu. (15:1)

The incorruptible being is likened unto the tree *Aswattha*, whose roots is above and whose branches are below, and whose leaves are the *Veds*. He who knoweth that, is acquainted with the *Veds*. (XV: 80)

Here the translator could bring about a clear cut distinction between their rational mind and the imaginative mind of the Indians. In Christian thought, the personal God is the centre of thought, and the world is his creation. Moreover, human beings are individual, substantial personal beings. But in Hinduism, the ground of the world is certainly not personal and the world itself is of dual nature and doubtful status. The world is seen as illusion or Maya, hence men are also impermanent, and their personality is only superficial and accidental.
While speaking of detachment in Karma, Lord Krishna exhorts Arjuna to believe that it is not you who has done the karma whether it is bad or good. It is done by Me, the God. This has made the westerners to call the God a man of no moral distinctions. They evaluate that in Hindu philosophy the world is a perversion of God, it is a false appearance of Brahman. As this Brahman has no purpose, no desire, it naturally follows that the universe is not an apt field for the moral and spiritual education of man. Thus, the eastern text itself has proved for them the notion that the East is an uncivilized land. The same conclusion is reinforced when we recall the doctrine of the world as the outcome of Divine sport or lila. In this context, Schweitzer observes:

The world, says Krishna, has no meaning. It is only a play that god acts with himself. By his magic power (Maya) he makes all living creatures spin round like Mario relics on their stage.

(1960:182)

Hence, the westerners assert that Indians are men devoid of ethics and need be educated by their polished hands. This inference is a justification of the colonial agenda of civilizing mission. Thus, the translation of the fundamental texts of Hinduism gave the Orientalists the space to launch unwarranted remarks on Hinduism and to establish in this way the supremacy of their own culture.

When the translator is not familiar with the language and culture of the text he is translating, he needs the strategy of intimacy, which results in the homogenization of the textual content. In The Gita, it is said that one
who has attained identity of one’s self with Brahman is no longer worldly-minded as before. The outcome of such enlightenment is identification with all beings:

\[ \text{Jnanavijnanatrptatma kutastho vijitendriyah} \]
\[ \text{yukta ityeyate yogi samalosaskancanah. (6:8)} \]

The man whose mind is replete with divine wisdom and learning, who standeth upon the pinnacle, and hath subdued his passions, is said to be devout. To the Yogee, gold, iron, and stones, are the same. (VI: 47)

It is the enlightenment of one’s narrow self to such extreme heights that enables one to identify one’s self so completely with others so that one’s sorrows and joys are felt to be the sorrows and joys of others. This is identified by the westerners with the concept of love. Only the terms are different, but the concept is the same. Thus, transliteration in European languages is a form of homogenization that depoliticizes the ideological or political aspects of national discourses.

Charles Wilkins’s *The Bhagavat-Geeta or Dialogues of Kreeshna and Arjoon*, clearly shows the translator’s inefficiency to grasp the rich Indian philosophy as expounded in the great work of *The Bhagavat Gita*. The translation also shows the translator’s over-enthusiasm to cover-up his inefficiency by putting forward the innocence and degradation of the Eastern mind that required a remedy not adequately supplied by their faith. So, in the
guise of a service rendered to them, the translator appropriated and institutionalized the text to strengthen the imperial power structures. The political motives are not clear at the surface level. But when it is related to the cultural contexts in which the translator functions, the motives become clear. The xenophobia of the Western mind has given a voice to the translator, making the text relevant to the receiving audience. While doing so, he has rendered the mysteries plain. Hence, the translation lacks visual sensation, but to a limited extent the special feeling of the original is conveyed through strangeness. This reminds one of Denham’s notion of translation that, if spirit be not added in the transfusion, it will remain nothing but a Caput mortuum.

The image of the East as a sort of timeless entity, stuck forever into an unchanging past, justified Charles Wilkins’s translation of *The Bhagavat Gita*. Through his politicized writing, he represented the East as a stagnant and magico-religious country in contrast to the rational West. He conveyed to the Western audience the geography of the East as a spiritual, degenerated, caste-centred, collectivist and holistically religious locus that has no coevalness with the West. Hence, he concluded that with such kind of weird philosophy the East could never raise to progress.

With a view to colonizing the Orient, Wilkins disguised himself as a missionary to civilize the highly imaginative East. The appropriations that took place at various levels show his inability to grasp the Vedantic philosophy. Many of the allegorical passages are rendered ineffectively emphasizing the
fact that the West can never become the East, not only in its physical geography, but also in its rich philosophy.

Western interest in *Manusmriti* derived its impulses mainly from the impelling necessity of ruling a country which differed significantly from the norms of Western social and religious behaviour and practices. It also partly stemmed from an antiquarian viewpoint with condescension that ancient India could achieve some standard in the development of its civilization. It was Warren Hastings who recognized that the sovereignty of England in India would be secure only if the rulers understood how to treat the social and religious prejudices of the natives with all possible considerations.

In 1773 the British government appointed a committee to oversee the rule of the British East India Company. The first Governor General, Warren Hastings, took control of the administration and the first court in the style of European governance was established with Elzey Impey in charge as the first judge. These courts formulated *A Code of Gentoo Law*, which later evolved as the Hindu Law, to deal with the civil cases of locals. In the beginning, these codes were formulated taking into account the local customs of the populace. But the increasing complexity of issues that came for hearing in these courts, made British realize that these codes were not sufficient in themselves to deal with the local cases. In order to solve the impasse, it was decided to formulate a code of law from the sacred texts which the natives held in reverence from time immemorial. In the search for such texts, the British discovered that the *Manusmriti* was the principal text that dealt with laws of the land.
William Jones, who came to India as a Judge of the Supreme Court, also shared this view. He held the notion that even the best intended legislative provisions would have no beneficial effect unless they were congenial to the disposition and habits, the religious prejudices and approved ceremonial usages of the people for whom they were enacted. This made William Jones to translate *Manusmriti* as *Institutes of Hindu Law or, The Ordinances of Menu*. Prior to Jones, Charles Wilkins attempted to translate the *Manusmriti*, but after some initial endeavours, he abandoned the idea of translating it.

William Jones regarded the *Manusmriti* as one of the most important records of the Hindu antiquity. According to him, the style and the metre of *Manusmriti* are widely different from the metrical rules of later Sanskrit language. Thus, he came to the conclusion that the *Manusmriti* should be slightly older than the Five Books of Moses:

The style however, and metre of this work (which there is not the smallest reason to think affectedly obsolete) are widely different from the language and metrical rules of CALIDA’S, who unquestionably wrote before the beginning of our era; and the dialect of Menu is even observed, in many passages, to resemble that of *Veda*, particularly in a departure from the more modern grammatical forms; whence it must, at first view, seem very probable, that the laws, now brought to light, were considerably older than those of SOLOn or even of LYCURGUS,… (1796: v-vi)
Jones’s observation is a clear case of fixing the date of a literary work from its internal evidences like style, metre, spelling and references. In the “Preface” to his translation, Jones refers to the Indian tradition, that Brahma taught his laws to Manu in a hundred thousand verses, and it was subsequently handed down by Manu to Narada, who abridged it in twelve thousand verses and gave it to a son of Bhrgu named Sumati, who reduced the verses to four thousand. Jones believed that there was further abridgement since the present text consists only of two thousand six hundred and eighty five verses. He refers to the commentaries on Manu made by Methatithi, Govindaraja, Dharanidhara and Kulluka. Jones himself admitted that he had used Kulluka’s commentary which, according to him, was the shortest yet the most learned.

G.C Haughton called *Manusmriti* a beautiful monument of true philosophical research, combined with sound criticism that Hindu literature could boast of. He held that the *Institutes of Menu* were not only revered by this unvarying race of men as they had been by their primeval forefathers. But he observed that they contributed to preserve, in pristine force, the opinions, the usages and maxims, which as a rule, reversed in the moral what was observed in the material world, and grown stronger by the use of ages.

The greatest Indian *Dharmasastra, The Manusmriti* is attributed to Manu, the First Born, who was assigned to perform certain divinely ordained functions. He was also the progenitor of mankind, often a Creator-God equated with Prajapati, a sage chosen by the Supreme being to propagate laws for the human races, the mental born son of Brahma, the revealer of religion, the
institutor of Yajnas, the legal and moral representative in his various incarnations, the principal agent of the Second Creation, which took place after the flood, counsel of the gods in their troubles, the moral guardian, the symbolic upholder of the universe and so forth. Jones also equated Manu with other First Borns of different ancient mythologies:

There is certainly a strong resemblance, though obscured and faded by time, between our MENU with his divine Bull, who he names as DHERMA himself, or the genius of abstract justice, and the MNEUES of Egypt with his companion or symbol Apis;…” (1796: viii)

This observation only confirmed the position of Manu as the First Born entrusted with the duty to document the divinely given laws.

In Vedic, Epic and Puranic literature, we come across fragmented accounts pertaining to one or more characters having the appellation Manu. This name of the divine progenitor may have been derived from the root man which means “to think” or “rationalize”. The word manava, meaning “men” in particular and “mankind” in general, is its second derivative. This conceptualisation was endowed with numerous attributes and epithets and associated with a host of gods and goddesses, divine, semi-divine and mundane beings and with abstract principles like time, space, law, virtue and so on. Thus Manusmriti became a set of insititutes meant for the mankind in general. In the Taittiriya Samhita and theTandya-maha- Brahmana, it is said that whatever Manu said is medicine for the soul.
The *Manusmriti* is regarded as the earliest text of the *Dharmasastra* category. The term *Dharmasastra* is generally applicable to the metrical codes, otherwise known as *smriti*. The term *smriti* indicates that these codes were authorities on the basis of sruti, which were considered as revelations, from the rememberance of which *smiriti* arose. Most of the *smiritis* are compositions of ordinary mortals. But *Manusmriti* is considered an exception. It claims to have a divine origin and is called as the epitome of all the Vedic knowledge.

Regarding the relation between *Veda* and the *Dharmasastra*, Manu states:

Srutiṣtu vedo vijneyo dharmastraṃ tu vai smṛtih
te sāvartheśvamimamsye tabhyām dharma hi nirabhau. (II, 10)

By *Sruti*, or what was heard from above, is meant the *Veda*; and by *Smrīti*, or what was remembered from the beginning, the body of law: those two must not be oppugned by heterodox arguments; since from those two, proceeds the whole system of duties. (II, 10:18)

The verse explains the relation between *Sruthī* and *Veda* and that between *Smrīti* and *Dharmasastra*.

Vedah smṛtih sadacarah swasya ca priyamātmanah
etaccaturvidham prahuh saksad dharmaṃ lakṣanam. (II, 12)

The Scripture, the codes of law, approved usage, and, in all of indifferent cases, self-satisfaction, the wise have openly declared to be the quadruple description of the juridical system. (II, 12:18)
There is a four-fold division of the judicial system in resonance with the four-fold divisions of *varnas, ashramas or purusharthams*

> Arthakamesvasaktanam dhramajnanam vidhiyate
dharmam jijnasamananam pramanam paramam Srutih. (II, 13)

A knowledge of right is a sufficient incentive for men unattached to wealth or to sensuality; and to those who seek a knowledge of right, the supreme authority is divine revelation. (II, 13; 18-19)

Here the reference is to the revelatory knowledge which finds a parallel in the Western philosophy of Enlightenment:

> Sruthidhvidam tu yatra svatara dharmavubhau smrityau
ubavapi hi tau dharmau samya guktau manushibhi. (11, 14)

But, when there are two sacred texts, *apparently inconsistent*, both are held to be law; for both are pronounced by the wife to be valid and reconcilable. (II, 14:19)

Here the Smritikar underlines the validity of different streams of thought like *dvaita* and *advaita* or subjective introspection and objective mediation to realize the path to salvation. In this context, it is worthwhile to recall the comments of Kumarila on the validity and acceptance of Smritis:

> In much as these Smrtis have emanated from human authors and are not eternal, like the Veda, their authority cannot be self-sufficient. The Smritis of Manu and others are depended upon the memory of their authors, and memory depends for its authority on the trustfulness of the source; consequently, the
authority of not a single Smriti can be held to be self- sufficient, like that of the Veda; and yet in as much as we find them accepted as authoritative by an unbroken line of respectable persons learned in the Veda, we cannot reject them absolutely as untrustworthy. Hence it is that there arises a doubt as to their untrustworthy character. (quoted in Jha, 1930:105)

It can be safely argued that the authority, validity and acceptance of smritis are not beyond interrogation.

Manu tried to give a new orientation to the ritualistic patterns of the Vedas. He believed that rituals were performed with the deliberate purpose of securing some reward. He condemned this practice in the following verses:

Kamatmata na prasasta na caivehastyakamata
kamyo hi vedadhidgah karmayogasca vaidikah. (II, 2)

Self love is no laudable motive, yet an exception from self-love is not to be found in this world: on self-love is grounded the study of scripture, and the practice of action recommended in it. (II, 2, 17)

The study of veda, and the yajnas recommended by it emanated from self-love:

Sankalpamulah kamo vai yajnah sankalpasambhavah
vratanir yamadharmanasca sarve sankalpajah smrtah. (II, 3)

Eager desire to act has its root in expectation of some advantage; and with such expectation are sacrifices performed; the rules of
religious austerity and abstinence from sins are all known to arise from hope of remuneration. (II, 3:17)

He linked *karma* or action with *phala* or reward, normally; action is motivated by reward or advantage:

Akamasya kriya kacid drisyate neha karhicit
Yad yaddhi kurute kincit tat tat kamasya cestitam. (11,4)

Not a single act here below appears ever to be done by a man free from self-love; whatever he performed, it is wrought from his desire of a reward. (II, 4:17)

The desire for reward originated from self-love.

Manu’s inclination was towards the essence of the teachings of Vedas. He understood it in terms of *atmajnana* or knowledge of the self.

Vedabhyasastapo jyananamindriyanam ca samyamah;
ahimsa guruseva ca nih sreyaskaram param. (XII, 83)

Studying and comprehending the *Veda*, practicing pious austerities, acquiring divine knowledge of *law and philosophy*, command over the organs of sense and action, avoiding all injury to sentiment creatures, and showing reverence to a *natural and spiritual* father, are the chief branches of duty which ensure final happiness. (XII, 83:356)

He enumerated a few methods by which *atmajnana* could be achieved.

Though *Manusmriti* was recorded as the greatest repository of Indianness, the cosmological conceptualization, political conceptualization,
legal conceptualization, ritualistic conceptualization and socio-economic conceptualization were interpreted by the westerners like Jones as baseless, purely subjective and widely theoretical. In the “Preface,” Jones remarks:

We are lost in an inextricable labyrinth of imaginary astronomical cycles, Yugas, Mahayugas, Calpas and Menwantaras, in attempting to calculate the time, when the first MENU, according to the Brahmens governed this world, and became the progenitor of mankind, who from him are called. Manavah; nor can we, so clouded are the old history and chronology of India with fables and allegories, ascertain the precise age, when the work, now presented to the Publick, was actually composed; partly extrinsick and partly internal, that it is really one of the oldest compositions existing. (1796: iv-v)

He meant that Indian chronology and allegories were not only chaotic but also confusing. He also pointed out that it is difficult to ascertain the age of composition of The Manusmriti. Manu believed that the world came into existence through the agency of a Supreme Being. In the First chapter, he described his views on the Primordial Waters and the Cosmic Egg, in verses from 5 – 13. He said that the universe existed in the shape of darkness, unseen by others, without any distinctive marks. Then the divine Self-existent (svayambhu) dispelled the darkness, created the waters and placed his seed in them. That seed became a golden egg in which the Self-existent was born as Brahman. The Brahman is also identified with Narayana and the Purasa.
This Brahmān resided inside the egg for a whole year. Then he divided the egg into halves, which formed the Heaven and the Earth. This interpretation was enough for the westerners to label the Indians as highly imaginative, but lacking in rationality. They found that the approach of Manu was not towards a cosmogonic theory of the Biblical pattern in which Jahweh, the God of Israel, had measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and meted out heaven with the span and comprehended the dust of the earth, in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and hills in a balance. (1911:191)

Manu’s theory or story of the formation of the cosmos is different from the biblical theory of genesis.

Regarding the origin of a king, Manu invented the story of a king created by the supreme ruler of the universe:

\[\text{Arajake hi lokesmin sarvato vidrute bhayat} \]
\[\text{raksarthamasya sarvasya rajanamsrjat parabhuh. (VII, 3)}\]

Since, if the world had no king, it would quake on all sides through fear, the ruler of this universe, therefore, created king, for the maintainence of this system, both religious and civil. (VII, 3:159)

He thought that the king’s duty was to maintain the religious and ethical systems established by the ruler of the universe. Manu stepped further and he pointed out that the king was originated from the core of the eight important
gods: Indra, Vayu, Yama, Surya, Agrni, Varuna, Candra and Kubera. Hence, a
godly status was attributed to him:

Indranilayamarkaranamagneseca varunasya ca
candra vittesayoscaiva matra nirhrtya sasvatih. (VII, 4)

Forming him on eternal particles drawn from the substance of
INDRA, PAVANA, YAMA, SURVA of AGNI and VARUNA,
of CHANDRA and CUVERA. (VII, 4:159)

The divine origin of the king was easily comprehensible to the Westerners who
had a divine right theory of kings:

Sognirbhavati vayusca sorkah somah sadharmarat
Sa kuberah sa varunah sa mhendra prabhavatah. (VII, 7:160)

He is fire and air; he, both sun and moon; he, the god of criminal
justice; he, the genius of wealth; he, the regent of waters; he, the
lord of the firmament. (VII.7:160)

Manu pointed out that the distinctive qualifiers of the eight gods merged in the
person of the king. That is why Manu gave instruction to the people that a king
should not be disregarded even when he was younger in age as the king is the
manifestation of gods:

Balopi navamantavyo manusya iti bhumipah
mahati devata hyesa nararupena tistathi. (VII, 8)

A king, even though a child, must not be treated lightly, form an
idea that he is a mere mortal: no; he is a powerful divinity, who
appears in a human shape. (VII, 8:160)
For him the king was a divine personality. Manu cautioned that a king’s wrath is more dangerous than fire as it can destroy the whole race, including beasts and properties of man who neglects him:

Ekameva dahatyagnirnaram durupasarpinam
kulam dahati rajagnih sapasudravyasancayam. (VII, 9)

Fire burns only one person, who carelessly goes too near it; but the fire of a king in wrath burns a whole family, with all their cattle and goods. (VII, 9:160)

Manu just ventured to compare the quantum of destruction caused by fire and wrath of a king.

All these interpretations made the Westerners to criticize it as the theory of the divine origin of kingship. They pointed out that if the king was made of the parts of gods, he ought to have the capability of doing everything like god. Like god, he was not given full autonomy. He was not supported to do anything independently, because he is guided by the law of Dandaniti:

Adyat kakah purodasam sva ca lihyaddhavistatha
svamyam ca na syat kasmimscit pravartetadharottaram. (VII, 21)

The crown would peck the consecrated offering of rice; the dog would lick the clarified butter; ownership would remain with none; the lowest would overset the highest. (VII, 21:161)

There is no exclusive right or power; only the hierarchy of power structures remains. The divine origin of the king is the best example where the translator has construed the idea literally. He should have taken the concept of the king as
originated from the parts of different gods in a metaphorical sense. Manu himself remarked that a king is a great deity existing in the form of man. The Westerners also scorned, the supernatural, magical power of the king as they saw reflected in *Manusmriti*:

\[
yatra varjayati raja papakrdbhyo dhanagamam
tatra kalena jayante manava dirghajivinah.(IX, 246)
\]

Where the king abstains from receiving to his own use the wealth of such offenders, there children are born in due season and enjoy long lives. (IX, 246:277)

Manu believed that the ethics of the king would be reflected in the nature and human life of his country:

\[
Nispadyante ca sasyani yathoptani visam prthak.
balasca na pramiyante vikrtam na ca jayate.  (IX, 247)
\]

Where the grain of husbandmen rises abundantly as it was respectively sown; there no younglings die, nor is one deformed animal born. (IX, 247: 278)

He also believed that the morality or righteousness of the king would be reflected in the welfare of the country and the people.

Referring to the origin of the institution of kingship, Manu stated that if the world was without a king (a rajaka), it would be shaken with fear; that is why the Lord created the king for the protection of all. The same idea was appropriated by the Westerners to highlight the fact that the East is an uncontrolled land which needed a mighty ruler to make it civilized.
They strongly established the idea that the Indian philosophy had no conception of state and had no idea to make any provision for the state in their scheme because they had certain non-materialistic and unworldly tendencies inherent in their character. The sole city for the Indians is the city divine. Thus, they picture the East as a land without a true ruler.

Western interest in the *Manusmriti* was due to the compelling need of the British rulers to rule a country which differed significantly from the norms of western civilization. They treated the text as a sourcebook of Hindu law and studied it especially for legal purposes. Colebrook’s digests contained copious quotations from Manu which subsequently became the basis of modern legal literature intended for the European practitioners.

Like Demosthenes, Manu too claimed a divine origin for his laws. Men ought to obey laws because

> Laws are prescribed by God, because they were a tradition taught by the wise men who knew the good old customs, because they were deductions from an eternal and immutable moral code, and because they were agreements of men with other binding them because of a moral duty to keep their promises. (Pound, 1946: 22)

The idea was also in agreement with the Biblical “covenants” and “commandments.” The divine origin of the law would be always advantageous to the rulers.
The law that governed the physical universe, according to Manu, is a justice valid for all people and for all times. According to him, he who violates justice is always despicable:

Dharmo viddhastvadharmena sabham yatropatisthate
satyam casya na krntanti viddhastatra sabhasadah. (VIII, 12)

When justice, having been wounded by iniquity, approaches the court, and the judges extract the dart, they also shall be wounded by it. (VIII, 12; 190)

Manu underlined the sanctity of the system of justice and its effect on judges:

Yatra dharmo hyadharmena satyam yatranrtena ca
hanyate preksamananam hastatatra sabhasadah. (VIII, 14)

Where justice is destroyed by iniquity, and truth by false evidence, the judges, who barely look on, without giving redress shall also be destroyed. (VIII, 15)

Manu cautioned against the possibility of justice being thwarted by inequality and truth destroyed by false evidence:

Dharma eva hato hanti dharmo raksati raksitah
tasmaddharmo na hantavyo ma no dharmo hato vadhit. (VIII, 15)

Justice being destroyed, will destroy; being preserved, will preserve; it must never through be wouldn’t “Beware, O Judge, left justice being overturned, overturn both us and thy self. (VII, 15; 191)
Manu pointed out that a defective justice system would destroy the people as well as the judges.

For Manu, justice should be primarily dispensed by the king who combines in him both the original court and the appellate tribunal. Regarding evidence, Manu stated that if the defendant denies the charge, the complainant must call for witnesses or adduce other evidence. The personal qualities and trustworthiness of the witness as an individual should also be taken into account:

Bahutvam parigrhniyat saksidvaidhe naradhipah
samesu ca gunotkristan gunidvaidhe dvijottaman. (VIII, 73)

If there be contradictory evidence, let the king decide by the plurality of credible witnesses; if equality in number, by superiority in virtue; if partly up virtue, by the testimony such twice born men as have best performed publick duties. (VIII, 73: 198)

Credibility, virtuousness and integrity of the witnesses need be reckoned in judgement. He considered the testimony of a dvija or Brahman (twice born) more reliable than that of others. In case there are no witnesses, the judge can resort to the policy of investigation:

Saksyabhave pranidhi bhirvayorupa samanvaitaihi
apadesaisca samnyasya hiranyam tasya tattvatah. (VIII, 182)

On failure of witnesses, let the judge actually deposit gold, or precious things, with the defendant, by the artful contrivance of
spies, who have passed the age of childhood, and whose persons are engaging. (VIII, 182: 213)

Investigation, including spying, was advisable in the settlement of cases:

Sa yadi pratipadyeta yathanyastam yathakrtam
na tatra vidyate kincid yat parairabhiuyjyate. (VIII, 183)

Should the defendant restore that deposit in the manner and shape in which it was bailed by the spices, there is nothing in this hands for which others can justly accuse him. (VIII, 183: 213)

Manu even suggested how a defendant would normally behave:

Tesham na dadyadyadi tu taddhiranyam yathavidhi
ubhau nigrhya dapyah syaditi dharmasya dharana.( VIII, 184)

But if he restore not the gold, or precious things, as he ought to, those emissaries let him be apprehended and compelled to pay the value of both deposits; this is a settled rule. (VIII, 184: 213)

He pointed out that the defendant need be punished for any aberration in his behaviour. In case, there were no witnesses, the judge could ascertain the truth by means of oath and ordeal:

Satyena sapayed vipram ksatriyam vahanayudhaih
gobiya kancnairvaisyam sudram sarvaistu patakaih. (VIII, 113)

Let the judge cause a priest to swear by his veracity; a soldier by his horse or elephant, and his weapons; a merchant by his kine, grained and gold; a mechanic, or servile man, by imprecating on his own head if he speak falsely,. all possible crimes. (VIII, 113:204)
Strongly enough, swearing by one’s most important object or one’s own head was suggested to decide on a complaint. Manu laid down different punishments for identical offenses in accordance with the caste of the criminal and the victim. He prescribed capital punishment for the murder of Brahmans, women and children, tampering with the loyalty of ministers, treason and false proclamations. But as a general rule, Brahmans were exempted from capital punishment:

Na jatu brahmanam nayat sarvapapesvapi sthitam
rastradenam bahih kuryat samagradhanamaksatam. (VIII, 380)

Never, shall the king slay a Brahman though convicted of all possible crimes: let him banish the offender from his realm, but with all his property secure, and his body unhurt. (VIII, 380: 238)

This was in accordance with the faith that the slaying of a Brahmana (Brahmahatya) is sinful.

Manu’s injunctions on legal matters were considered by the West as highly complex, which could not be practised with complicity. Many of them were regarded as the revelation of the abberated mind. Manu’s views on punishment were highlighted as highly savage. Moreover, the West comprehended incorrectly that Manu strengthened caste hierarchy through his laws.

The ritualistic conceptualization of Manu was viewed by the Westerners as primitive and immature thoughts of an uncivilized mind. According to Manu, the rites, norms and rules, observance, conduct, behaviour, customs and
kindred characteristic pertaining to different stages of individual, family, communal, social and religious life fall within the purview of *acara*. He considered them as critical functions to obtain a fresh outpouring of life and power. Among the rituals to be performed by a householder Manu stresses on the following:

\[
\text{Adhyapanam brahmayajnah pitryajnastu tarpanam}
\]

\[
\text{homo daivo balirbhauto nryajnothithi pujanam. (III, 70)}
\]

Rituals were regarded as sacramental in nature and considered part of one’s dharma performed routinely.

Manu prescribed a four-fold division of society in order to maintain social harmony:

\[
\text{Lokanam tu vivrdhyartham mukhabahurupadatalah}
\]

\[
\text{brahmanam ksatriyam vaisyam sudram ca niravartayat. (I, 31)}
\]

That the human race might be multiplied, He caused the *Brahmen, the Cshatriya, the Vaisya, and the Sudra* (so named from the *scripture, protection, wealth and labour*) to proceed from his mouth, his arm, his thigh and his foot. (I, 31:5)

Manu seemed to give a divine origin to the *Caturvarnya*, the four-fold division of the society. In Rigveda, the Brahman’s were stated to be originated from the mouth of Purusa, and, hence they were the men of wisdom; Ksatriyas from His hands, so they are the men of power; Vaisyas are the producers as they are born out of His thighs; Sudras were said to be born from His feet, and so they were the servants. Manu also assigned various duties assigned to each varna.
He also advocated marriage within the same caste to avoid the defect of *varna samkara*:

Sasvavarnesu tulasyua patnisvaksatayonisus
anulomyena sambhuta jatya jneyasta eva te. (X, 5)

In all classes they, and they only, who are born in a direct order of wives equal in class, and virgins at the time of marriage, are to be considered as the same in class with their fathers. (X, 5:290)

Even co-sanguinary marriages were permitted to avoid *varna samkara*, a state of cultural and social degradation. Manu said that while eating, a Brahman should talk about Brahman or Paramathman:

Yadyadroceta viprebhyastaticid dadyadamatsarah
brahmodyasca kathah kuryat pitnametadipsitam. (III, 231)

Whatever is agreeable to the *Brahmens*, let him give without envy; and let him discourse on the attributes of GOD; such discourses is expected by the manes. (III, 231: 81)

He meant that the speech of a Brahmana is a discourse of the mind. The Westerners looked down on Manu as one using moral codes that were non-efficacious in the social life. Moreover, they felt that Manu was taking sides with Brahmins. But Manu prescribed this practice only for Brahmins as he found them mentally and spiritually developed. According to him, a Brahmin means an individual who is *adhikari*, one having certain purer mental platform to do the job. Others are not eligible for such meditation, but they can resort to various routes to reach that goal. Hence, Indian philosophy was
over-simplified, when the Westerners found in Manu the prominence of caste discrimination.

Manu even prescribed rules for hospitality of the Indian households:

\[
\text{Nasrama patayejjatu na kupyennanrtam vadet} \\
\text{na padena sprsadannam na \ caitadavadhunayet. (III, 229)} \\
\text{Let him at no time drop a tear; let him on no account be angry; let him say nothing false; let him not touch the eatables with his foot; let him not even shake the dishes. (III, 229: 81)}
\]

The intention behind using this injunction was to highlight the social philosophy that to serve food to the guests is a sacred duty; a guest is treated as a god and food is considered Brahman. The same hospitality was shown by the East when they first met the West. But the West, having an inferior culture, utilized it to wield power.

Manu was criticized again for discrimination in the injunctions about the funeral procedures. He remarked:

\[
\text{Daksinena mrtam sudram puradvarena \ nirharet} \\
\text{pascimottara purvaistu yathayogam \ dvijanmanah. (V, 92)} \\
\text{Let men carry out a dead Sudra by the southern gate of the town, but the twice born in due order, by the western, northern and eastern gates. (V, 92: 135)}
\]

The discrimination of a Sudra continued even after his death. Discrimination in funeral was unimaginable to the Western world. This made the Westerners
show the world that the non-westeners are highly imaginative, irrational and inhuman. This enabled them to project the Indians as objects without history.

Manu had given some codes which apparently made the West to conclude that he was in favour of untouchability. He suggested that a Brahmin should not take food from a Sudra except when the Sudra was his own cowherd or tilled his field or was a hereditary friend of the family or his barber or his dasa. But Manu also suggested that he might take uncooked grain for one night form a Sudra, if he could not get food from anywhere else:

Nadyacchudrasya pakvannam vidvanasraddhino
adidita mame vasmada vrttavekaratrikam dvijah.( IV:223)

Let no learned priest eat the dressed grain of a servile man, who performs no parental obsequies; but having no other mean to live, he may take from his raw grain enough for single night. (IV, 223:117)

These two contradictory views might have perplexed the Western mind, and thus made them to conclude that the East was highly mysterious and therefore, their mysteries should be studied properly to render them ineffective.

The Western concept of cultural transformation had taken place with regard to the observations made by Manu about women. Manu observed that rituals performed in honor of gods yield no rewards, if women were not revered:

Yatra nasyastu pujyante ramante tatra devatah
yatraitastu na pujyante sarvastatra phatah kriyah. (111, 56)
Where female are honored, there the duties are pleased; but where they are dishonored, there all religious acts becomes fruitless. (III, 56, 58)

Manu suggested that women should be honored; otherwise gods would not be pleased. But, Manu presented contradictory views on women in some other contexts. Manu showed not only racial prejudices but also gender biases in his injunctions. He called women folk as fickle minded with regarded to the discussion or the worthiness of being a witness.

Ekolubdhastu sakshi syad bahvyah sucopi na striyah
Stribuddher sthiratvat tu dosaiscanyepiye vrtah. (VIII, 77)

One man, untainted with covetousness and other vices, may in same cases be the sole witness, and will have more weight than many women, because female understandings are apt to waver; or than many other men who have been tarnished with crimes. (VII, 77:199)

Manu stressed that women were untrustworthy as witnesses, they were frail and vacillating. He seemed to be against the freedom of women:

Pita raksati kaumare bharta raksati yauvane
Raksanti sthavire putra na stri svatantryamarhati. (IX, 3:245)

Their father protect them in childhood; their husbands protect them in youth; their sons protect them in age; a women is never fit for independence. (IX, 3:245)
Manu meant that it was the duty of the father, the husband and the son to protect and maintain a woman, as she could not lead an independent life, all by herself. The translation of this injunction fortified the universal notion of the inferiority of women. They have been ideologically positioned as inferior beings who need be protected. In short, the West found in women a position similar to the innocence of the East, which need be domesticated by a superior hand. The Westerners concluded that both the East and women need be tamed, civilized and protected by a strong hand; they should be penetrated to make them subordinate to the superior class. In other words, the colonization of the Orient and the subjugation of women were justified by the *Manusmriti*.

*Manusmriti* is perforce a test on social and moral codes, laid down in the form of a *Dharmasastra*. It emphasized each and every detail necessary for the smooth functioning of the society. Probably, this is one of the reasons which led the Europeans to translate this work. They understood that domestication could be achieved only through an understanding of the colonies. In the shade of a service rendered, they strongly believed that these rich thoughts in the form of laws should be taken away from them and translated before they could benefit from them. This intention resulted in the construction of the cultural Other, which made them incapable of grasping the origins of Eastern literary traditions. In this context, the observations of Burnell are noteworthy:

We meet with so much that it is inhuman, and such a hideous and cynical contempt for the human body that we are tempted to
believe that these books are the insane ideal of crazy fanatics or the foolish reveries of besotted ascetics. (1884: xxxvii)

Naturally, the Western minds could only condemn these laws. At various levels, the heterogeneity of Indian tradition, culture and society were glided over in the rush to appropriate themselves to the patterns of European culture. By marking the difference in the interests, the Westerners constructed an image of the source culture. Thus, through translations, the Orient got subordinated in the process of Europeanization.

William Jones’s intention to know India better than anyone in Europe and his ardent desire to rule, learn and compare the Orient with the Occident led to the translation of *Manusmriti*. Though he directly praised the ancient Eastern texts, he cultivated the impression that India promoted philosophical Brahmanical Hinduism as the “correct knowledge” and hence simple folk wisdom and Hinduism were not worthy of study. In every means, he equated India with “ancient tradition” and Europe with modernity. Through his translation, he scorned at the emotional attitude arising from Indian spirituality and even went to the extent of calling Hinduism a web of monstrous superstitions.