CHAPTER – II

SOCIAL LIFE IN THE MANUSMRTI

1. ĀCĀRA, VYAVAHĀRA AND PRAYĀŚCITTA

In the very first chapter of this dissertation we have already mentioned in brief the contents of the M.S. Manu, towards the end of the 1st chapter of his Law-Book, enumerates in brief the subject matters which are discussed elaborately in twelve chapters.1 These subject matters or contents of the M.S. may be divided under the following six heads. Monier Williams conveniently divides these contents of the M.S. as follows2:

i) veda, ‘sacred knowledge’ and religion.

ii) vedānta or ātma-vidyā, as terms for philosophy in general

iii) ācāra.

iv) vyavahāra.

v) prāyascitta.

vi) karma-phala.

Out of these six heads, the first two and the last one, as Williams points out, are purely connected with religious and philosophical precepts.3 On the other hand, ācāra, vyavahāra and prāyascitta are connected purely with the rules of human behaviour or conduct.

1. M.S. I. 107-118.
3. Ibid. p. 217.
It is to be noted that though these three heads or topics find a prominent place in the M.S., yet Manu is not systematic enough while dealing with these topics in the great Law-Book.

Manu’s concept of dharma plays an important role in moulding the character and behaviour of individuals in the society. The foundation or superstructure of dharma again depends upon the functions or duties performed by the individuals of the society. Acāra, vyavahāra and prāyaścitta are some directives complementary to each other which regulate the behaviour of human conduct in a right way and, therefore, these three have been the principal objects of discussion in dharmaśāstra literature. Here, in this context, we intend to present a brief discussion regarding the aim and objectives of these heads.

(i) Acāra:

The term acāra simply means the rules of conduct or customary rites and rituals. It indicates those rules or practices or conduct of the virtuous persons which are inculcated by the vedas and the smṛtis, and Manu says that these are the highest dharma (virtue) of a man, specially the twice-born castes, should always act in conformity with these rules of conduct.4 According to Manu and some other authors of dharmaśāstra literature, acāra has been treated as one of the principal sources or proofs of dharma.5 It is also said that these conducts are some refined

4. ‘acāraḥ paramo dharmaḥ śrutyuktah smārta eva ca/ tasmād dasmin sadāyukto nityaṁ syādātmavān dvijaṁ //’ M.S. 1. 108.

5. M.S. II. 6, 12; Yaj. 1.7;

Also, Vana. 207. 82 1/2; Saṅti. 259.3; Anu. 104.9.
practices which have been praised, practised and followed traditionally generation to
generation among the twice-born and the mixed castes in *brahmāvarta* situated
between the rivers Sarasvatī and *Drāvatā*. As these practices are praised and
practised by the virtuous people, therefore, Manu applies the term *sadācāra* (approved
practices) in place of *ācāra* (established practices) in the above references The term
comprises both the derivative meanings of the word as ‘good conduct’ or practices laid
down by the *śāstras* in general, and the ‘practices of those who are versed in those
practices.’ The *Mbh.* also echoes the same concept of the term. Terming
*ācāra* or *sadācāra* as the principal sources of *dharma*, Manu says a lot in praise of
*sadācāra*. These are some directives or right conduct by proper observances of which
a *brahmapaṇa* reaps the desired result of vedic studies and the vice-versa. The *Vas. D.S.*
also maintain a similar view in this respect. This *ācāra* is the source of *dharma*


7. ‘*samsacāsaū ācāraḥ sadācāraḥ*, and ‘*satiṁ ācāraḥ sadācāraḥ’ quoted from
‘*Puruṣārtha-Catusūṭiya*, p. 54.

8. ‘*ye guṇīḥ kīrtite loke dharmakīmśārthasambhavīḥ / lokācāreṣu sambhūtār vedoktiḥ
śīṣṭasammatīḥ’// *Vana.* 1.31.;

Also, ‘*ācāralakṣaṇo dharmah santācāritralakṣaṇāḥ / saḍhunāṁ ca yathāvṛttaṃmeta-
dācāralakṣaṇaṁ’// *Anu.* 104. 9.


10. ‘*ācāraḥ paramo dharmaḥ sarveṣūmi niścayah / hīnācāra paridhīnai pretya caehe ca
naṣyati // *Vas. D.S.* VI. 1;

‘*ācārahāṁyas a brāhmaṇāṣyasya…andhasya dārā iva darśāṇīyāḥ //Ibid. VI. 4.*
as well as the tapas (austerities). Therefore, Manu suggests that these good rules of conduct enjoined by the vedas and smṛti should be followed by one incessantly. It is sadācāra (good conduct) which is the root of longevity and which also destroys all the inauspicious bodily traits. A man of misconduct is always condemned in this world. Vas. D.S. also maintains a corroborative view in this respect.

According to Manu, ācāra or sadācāra (custom or good conduct) comes next to the vedas and smṛtis as a source or proof of dharma. "But in practice", as is held by T.R. Venkatarama Sastri, "ācāra has prevailed over every other authority of dharma, and the courts of justice now uniformly maintain that custom supersedes all law. This is not without support in the smṛtis themselves." He also holds view that smṛti satisfies the needs of an earlier time while ācāra is a response to changed or changing circumstances and, therefore, ācāra should have prevailed over smṛti is not surprising one. P.B. Gajendragadkar also maintains a corroborative view while he comments — "The history of the development of Hindu law show that custom, which is

11. M.S. I. 110.
12. Ibid. IV. 155.
13. Ibid. IV. 156, 158;

‘ācārallabhate hyāyurācārallabhate śrīyatā / ācārāt kārtimāṅpnoti puruṣaḥ pretya ceha ca // Anu. 104.6.
14. ‘durācāro hi puruṣo loke bhavati ninditah ...etc.’ M.S. IV. 157.
15. ‘ḥimācāra parīśiśa pretya ceha ca nasyati /’ Vas. D.S. VI.1.
17. Ibid.
regarded as a source of law, has played a very important role in making Hindu law progressive and introducing into it from time to time provisions to bridge the difference between the letter of the law and the requirements of changing social needs.” Thus, it is observed that ācāra (custom or good conduct) has been the principal directive in moulding and regulating the human character and conduct as well as the great help in explaining the legal matters. The word ‘ācāra’ is a wide term which includes various rules of observances regarding human activities of the four stages of life of the four social orders. In short, the word includes some observances which should be followed by every member of the society to maintain purity of his conduct both mental and physical.

It has already been stated that the rules for regulating the human conduct in general as enjoined by Manu in his Law-Book are not presented in a systematic or arranged order. These rules thus scattered in the M.S. govern various aspects of human behaviour. We observe that these rules mainly govern the following aspects of human conduct and behaviour. These are—

(i) The rules relating to various sacraments (saṃskāras).
(ii) The rules relating to various conducts of the four social orders (varṇas) in their four stages of life (āśramas).
(iii) The rules relating to the conduct of women (strīdhharma).
(iv) The rules relating to the conduct of men towards gurus i.e. ācārya and parents.
(v) The rules relating to diet.
(vi) The rules relating to various impurity (asaśauca) and purity thereon.
(vii) Miscellaneous rules relating to moral and ethical practices of human behaviour.

18. Ibid. p. 426.
According to Manu, non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, purity and subjugation of the senses – these are the general duties which should be followed by all the four social orders.\[19]\ Sadācāra or good conduct is the very foundation or superstructure of these four general duties or dharmas as without the practice of good conduct one can not follow these noble ideals of eternal values. Manu expressly states that negligence or non-observance of good conduct is one of the four principal causes for which the god of Death destroys a brāhmaṇa (i.e. Death decays his longevity).\[20]\ We find references in upanisads also where it is stated that purity of nourishment (i.e. āhāraśuddhi) is the main door which shows the way of liberation.\[21]\ In fact, ācāra or good conduct is the basis of the ethical, moral and spiritual aspects of human behaviour which guides and inspires a man to act in a righteous way.

(ii) Vyavahāra:

The term vyavahāra simply means the rules of law and administration of justice. Dr. P.V. Kane presents a detail discussion regarding the uses of the term vyavahāra in his H.D.S. Here, in this context, Dr. Kane holds view that the term vyavahāra is used in the sūtras and smṛtis in four senses.\[22]\ In the very first sense,

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19. ‘ahīṁsā satyamasteyam śauacamindriyanigrahah / etam sāmāsikam dharmanī cēturvarṇye’bravhitmanuh //’ M.S. X. 63.
20. ‘anabhyāṣena vedāṅgāṃ kārasya ca varjanī / śāśvadānadoḍhācca mṛtyurviprīṇi-ghanāṇasati //’ M.S. V. 4.
21. ‘विष्णुर्मुद्धहृ विष्णुर्मुद्धहृ विष्णुर्मुद्धहृ विष्णुर्मुद्धहृ / स्मृतिह / स्मृतिलम्बे sarvagranthānī višramokṣah //’ Chāṇ. Up. VII. 26.2.
Dr. Kane refers to a passage of the *Mbh.* and holds view that the word *vyavahāra* here is used to mean transaction or dealing. In the second sense, the word means a dispute or a law-suit. In the third sense, the word means or indicates legal capacity to enter into transactions. It actually indicates or means the proper age or adulthood (i.e. sixteen years of old) attaining which one can enter into a legal transaction. In the fourth and a rare sense of the term, it indicates the means of deciding a matter. Here, according to the referred passage, the term *vyavahāra* indicates those means such as *vedas, dharmaśāstras, vedāṅgas, upavedas* and *purāṇas* etc. through which a king decides transactions.

According to Kātyāyana, the word *vyavahāra* is derived from the root ‘हर्’ (to remove, to use, to do, to behave etc.) with the prefixes ‘वि’ and ‘आ’.’ ‘वि’ means various, ‘आ’ means doubt and ‘हरः’ (i.e. ‘हर्’ + ‘घात’) means removal. This

23. ‘ग्रहति राजा पुनःकलि राजार्थ्याय पुत्रो भर्ती विधवान् बालपुत्रा / सेनाः दृढ़ता-भूतिर्वेद व्यवहारेशु वर्जनीयः श्रुयते ||' Udyog. 37.10. as quoted in the *H.D.S.* Vol. III. p. 245.

24. *Śānti.* 69.28; *M.S.* VIII. 1; *Vas. D.S.* XVI. 1 (‘atha vyavahārasya’); *Yāj.* II. 1;

25. *Viṣṇu D.S.* III.72; *Nār.* I. 1-2; *S.N.* IV. 5.5. as quoted in *Ibid.*


interpretation of *Kātyāyana* shows that the word *vyavahāra* means removal of all doubts behind a law-suit or dispute and finding out of the exact truth. The word thus indicates those topics on law which are regarded as secular law. In fact, that portion of *rājadhārma* (duties of a king) which deals with the topics of administration of justice by a king is called *vyavahāra*. According to Kullūka it deals with various disputes among the subjects in eighteen titles of law-suits and removal of doubts and dispense of justice thereon by a king. It indicates, in sooth, those duties of a king which should be followed by him to dispense justice in matters of various disputes among the subjects. A brief discussion in this respect will be presented ahead in chapter III of this dissertation.

(iii) *Prayāscita*

While explaining the term ‘*dharma*’, Vijnāneśvara holds view that the word ‘*dharma*’ deals with six type of *smārtadhārma*. Kullūka, on the other hand, while

27. ‘vi nānārthe’va sandhehe haraṇaḥ hāra ucyate / nānāsandeheha haraṇādvyavahāra iti smṛtaḥ // *Kāt. S.S.* 26;


28. ‘...vīvādajapāparihiḥraṛtham ṛpādānādyastātāsavāsayaḥ viruddhārthi- pratyarthi- vākyajanitasandehehairi vīcāra eva vyavahāraḥ /’ Kullūka on *M.S.*VIII.1.

29. ‘atra ca dharmaśabdāḥ sadvidhamsaṁtavāsayaḥ / tadyathā varṇadharmāḥ

 śrāmadharmāḥ varṇāśrāmadharmāḥ guṇadharmāḥ naimittikadharmāḥ sādhāraṇa-
dharmaśceti / *Mitākṣara* on *Yaj. I.1.*
explaining the term 'varṇadharma' occurs in the M.S., points out that here the term varṇadharma deals with five kinds of dharma. These are—

(i) varṇadharma  
(ii) āśramadharma  
(iii) varṇāśramadharma  
(iv) gunadharma  
(v) naimittikadharma  

Out of these five divisions, the last one viz. the naimittikadharma deals with the expiatory rites (prāyaścitavidhiḥ).  

According to Medhatithi, the word prāyaścitta, in a traditional sense, indicates a particular kind of casual act. Both Manu and Yājñavalkya hold view that a man stands under the obligation of doing an expiatory rite or penance as and when he omits prescribed rites and commits some condemnable acts under the influence of

30. 'varṇadharmasabdasa varṇadharmāśramadharma varṇāśramadharmagunadhar- 
manaimittikadharmānāmupalaksakah' Kullūka on M.S. II. 25.  
31. 'nimittamekāśritya yo dharmah saṁpravartate naimittikaḥ sa vijñeyah prāyaścitavidhīryathā 'ah /' Bh.P. as quoted by Kullūka on Ibid.  
Also, 'nimittadharma vihitākaranapratisiddhasevananimittaṁ prāyaścittāṁ /'  
Mitākṣarā on Yāj. I. 1.  
32. 'prāyaścittasabdo rūḍhirūpena visiṣṭe naimittike vartate' Medhātithi on M.S. XI.44.  
Also, prāyaścittasabdascayam pāpakṣayārthe naimittike karmaviśeṣe rūḍhah /'  
Mitākṣarā on Yāj. III. 220.
sensual pleasure. Manu holds view that a man doing some misdeeds becomes an object of detestation in the eyes of virtuous persons, and for such acts he will get some deformities in his next birth. Yājñavalkya also holds a similar view while he enjoins that a man of misdeeds without repentance on it certainly goes to the dreadful hells. Manu and Yājñavalkya, therefore, enjoin that a man doing such misdeeds should undergo expiatory penances for the purification of his self. The aim or purpose of performing expiatory rites or penances, therefore, is the purification of the self. It can, otherwise, be termed as redemption of sin through mental and physical sufferings which seem to reform his sinful minds. According to Hemādri it means a determination or resolution of the mind in severe austerities. Hence, a prescribed penance for a particular misdeed or sin should be performed in public so that the sinner can feel himself that the penances performed thus purify his self and satisfy the hearts

33. *M.S.* XI. 44; *Yāj.* III. 219-220.

34. *M.S.* XI. 48-53.

35. *Yāj.* III. 221-225.

36. ‘caritavayamato nityaman prāyaścittaṁ visūdhhaye / nindyairīhī lakaṣānairuyuktā jayante’niskṛtaṁ naisrūpah //’ *M.S.* XI. 54;

Also, ‘vihitasyānunuṣṭhānaṁ nibaddhaya ca sevanāt ... prāyaścittaṁ visūdhhaye //’ *Yāj.* III. 219-220.

37. ‘evam prāyaścitte kṛte asyāntarātmā sūdhataya prasiddati lokaśca saṁvyavahartaṁ prasiddati’ *Mitākṣarā* on *Yāj.* III. 220.

of others also. Manu says that no penance should be performed under the pretence of a vow or religious rites which shall certainly hide his sin from being public and such a performance does not serve the purpose of the act.\textsuperscript{39}

Penances or expiatory rites (prāyaścitta) has been the integral part of the dharmasāstra and dharmasūtra literature from time immemorial. Its importance in these two branches of literature may easily be understood from the following statement made by D.C. Bhattacharya while he comments -- "One of the three main pillars upon which the superstructure of dharma (duty) rests is designated as prāyaścitta (penance), a highly technical term coined by the Indian sages and universally adopted everywhere in India from the earliest times. The highest perfection of man can not be attained unless his religious and civil conduct (ācāra and vyavahāra) is refined by a proper regulation of his moral and spiritual relations."\textsuperscript{40} Bhattacharya also comments that the Indian sages started with this fundamental concept (i.e. prāyaścitta) which formulated an elaborate scheme of penances and vows aiming to eliminate all sins and evils from society.\textsuperscript{41}

According to Manu and other authors on dharmaśāstra literature, penances are of different kinds according to the nature of sins committed by one. It is to be noted that sins are of different kinds and the prescription of the grade of penances thereon are also different, and all the sins committed by one can not be brought under the jurisdiction of administration of justice (i.e. vyavahāra). For example, a vrātya (a twice-born who is not initiated in due age) can not be brought under the rule of law or

\textsuperscript{39} M.S. IV. 198.

\textsuperscript{40} C.H.I. Vol. II. p. 381

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
administration of justice (i.e. *vyavahāra*) but he is subject to the rules of penance.\textsuperscript{42} As all the rules for penances cannot be brought under the rules of law (i.e. *vyavahāra*), then the question naturally arises as to who will be the competent authority for administering the decree of penances for different kinds of sins. Manu says that an assembly of three *brāhmaṇas* versed in Vedas shall decide and proclaim such decree of penances.\textsuperscript{43} In case of some matters where penances have not been expressly enjoined, the decree of penances should be fixed after considering the nature of crime or sin and the capacity of the offender to bear it.\textsuperscript{44}

(a) Different kinds of sin:

The 11th chapter of the *M.S.* purely deals with the topic of penances and vows (i.e. *prāyaścitta*). Here, Manu mentions different kinds of sin under the following heads –

(i) *mahāpātakas* (the grave sins or mortal sins).\textsuperscript{45}

(ii) *anupātakas* (sins amounting similar offences to the mortal sins).\textsuperscript{46}

(iii) *upātakas* (minor sins).\textsuperscript{47}

(iv) *jātibhrasākārapātakas* (caste-degrading sins).\textsuperscript{48}

(v) *sahkārantaraṇapātakas* (hybridizing sins).\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{42. *M.S.* II. 39-40; XI. 192.}
\textsuperscript{43. *Ibid.* XI. 86.}
\textsuperscript{44. *Ibid.* XI. 210.}
\textsuperscript{45. *Ibid.* XI. 55.}
\textsuperscript{46. *Ibid.* XI. 56-59.}
\textsuperscript{47. *Ibid.* XI. 60-67.}
\textsuperscript{48. *Ibid.* XI. 68.}
\textsuperscript{49. *Ibid.* XI. 69.}
(vi) *apatrlkaranapataka* (sins making one unworthy of receiving gifts).\(^{50}\)

(vii) *malabahapatakas* (mind-polluting sins).\(^{51}\)

The above list of sins can again be classified under two broad heads. Thereby the first two divisions of the above list can be termed as *mahāpatakas* (the mortal or grave sins) and the other five divisions of the list can be termed as *upapatakas* (minor sins). The mortal or grave sins, according to Manu, are five in number.\(^ {52}\) These are killing of a *brāhmaṇa*, drinking wine (*surāpāṇa*), stealing of gold, defiling the bed of a preceptor (i.e. adultery with the wife of a preceptor), and keeping association with one of these four sins for a period of one year.\(^ {53}\) Moreover, Manu mentions some other sins which carry sins amounting to a grave sin in degree and, therefore, these are also placed in the line of mortal or grave sins.\(^ {54}\) *Yājñāvalkya* also presents almost a similar list of grave sins.\(^ {55}\) Among the grave sins, killing of a *brāhmaṇa* tops the list.

On the other hand, the rest of the other five divisions of the above list fall under the main head termed as *upāpatakas* (minor sins). Manu presents a long list of sins under this head.\(^ {56}\) *Yājñāvalkya* also presents a list of minor sins which are akin to the

\(^{50}\) *Ibid.* XI. 70.


\(^{52}\) *Ibid.* XI. 55.

\(^{53}\) 'etaisca saha saṁsargaḥ saṁvatsarena patafi vākṣyamāṇţapra-kāreṇa /

\[\text{Kullūka on *Ibid.*}\]

\(^{54}\) *M.S.* XI. 56-59.

\(^{55}\) *Yāj.* III. 227-232.

\(^{56}\) *M.S.* XI. 60-71.
Manu's list, but his list is larger than that of Manu which includes some more sins outside the list of Manu. Among the minor sins, killing of a cow tops the list.

Manu, while deals with the various sins committed by one, also enjoins some means of expiation for different sins according to the gravity of sins. The hardest penance, according to Manu, is suicide. Here, it is enjoined that a brähmāṇa-killer should become the target of archers willingly confessing his sin, or should enter into a burning fire thrice with his head downward so that death may result. But, Manu, in one place, seems to be humane enough where he prescribes some other alternative means of expiation for all types of sins, and here Manu does not mention self-killing as a means for the purpose. He prescribes the following means for expiating sins.

(b) Means of Expiating Sins

(i) Confession (khyāpana) of the Sins

It means observance of vows and penance with confession of the sin in public, and it never means a mere pretentious observance of vows and penances by a sinner. If he pretends that he is only observing a religious vow as if he has not committed a sin, in that case he fails to expiate the sin. Manu says that whenever a sinner confesses his

58. '... prāsyedātmānamagnau vā samiddhe triravākṣirāh / M.S. XI. 74 ;
    'sāmigrāme vā hato lakṣyabhūtaḥ ... jīvannapi viśuddhyati.' Yāj. III. 248.

Also, 'lakṣyaṁ āstrabhṛṭāṁ vā syāt ... yajeta vāsvamedhenā kṣatriyo ye mahīpatiḥ
    // Bh. P., as quoted by Kullūka on M.S. XI. 74.
59. 'khyāpanenānutaḥpada tapasā'dbhayanena ca / pāpakṣaṁnucyte pāpattathā dānena
cāpadi // M.S. XI. 228.
60. 'na dharmasyāpadeśena pāpaṁ kṛtvā vrataṁ caret / vratena pāpaṁ pracchāda ya
    kurvanstrīśūradambhānāṁ // Ibid. IV. 198.
sin in public committed by himself, he becomes free from such sin as a serpent sloughs off its slough.\textsuperscript{61} This act of confession with certain prescribed rites certainly makes him to feel himself that from now he is free from all evils and this feeling of the mind will help him to begin a new chapter of life.

(ii) Repentance (\textit{anutāpa})

Repentance or \textit{anutāpa} means condemning of the self-doing sin or misdeed and thereby to create a sincere resolution in the mind not to repeat the same sin in future. 'I shall not repeat this sin again' – this type of self-feeling certainly purifies the mind of the sinner which shall engage his mind in good deeds in near future.\textsuperscript{62}

(iii) Austerity (\textit{tapas})

It means subjection to severe physical strain and pain. It is one of the means of cleaning the impurities of mind. It is, otherwise, a means through which one can engage his body and mind in good thought and action. One who can always engage his body, mind and spirit in good thinking and good deeds, he shall, in the long run, certainly be disinterested in evil thinking and evil deeds. Manu says that austerity is the root of all happiness.\textsuperscript{63} According to him, \textit{tapas} (austerity) has some miraculous power which can be used for redemption of sin.\textsuperscript{64} By means of severe austerity the sages of antiquity attained some miraculous power through which they had performed some impossibilities. But, in changing circumstances Manu seems to admit and prescribe

\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Ibid.} XI. 229.

\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Ibid.} XI. 230-233.

\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Ibid.} XI. 235.

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Ibid.} XI. 240.
some substitute means in place of these severe means followed by the sages of antiquity. For this purpose Manu says that austerity lies in the diligent pursuit of one’s own prescribed varṇa-dharma (caste-duty). Therefore, knowledge (jñāna), protection (rakṣaṇāṁ), trade (vārītā) and service (sevanāṁ) – these are the best austerities (tapas) for the brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiṣyās and śūdras respectively.65

(iv) Vedic Study (adhyayanaṁ)

Manu says that reciting of the vedic mantras, performing of the five daily sacrifices and forbearance – these are some virtuous and good deeds which tend to destroy the grave sins.66 Manu prescribes, vedic study as one of the means for expiation.67 The implication behind this idea of Manu seems to be that one, who always absorbs his mind in such good activities, will naturally reach a state of mental and spiritual development which again will disassociate his mind from all evils past and present. This type of mental satisfaction is also a helpful way of absolving sins.

(v) Gift (dāna)

Gift (dāna) has been one of the means of expiating sins in dharmaśāstra and dharmasūtra literature.68 In the P.P. there is a mention of four types of dāna (gift).

65. 'brāhmaṇasya tapo jñānaṁ tapaḥ kṣatrasya rakṣaṇāṁ / vaiṣyasya tu tapo vārītā tapaḥ śūdrasya sevanāṁ //’  
   Ibid. XI. 236.

66. Ibid. XI. 246.

67. Ibid. XI. 76, 78, 249-266.

68. M.S. XI. 128, 130-131, 134-140;

Āpa. D.S. I. 9.24.1;

Yāj. III. 266-267.
These are – *nitya* (gift as a daily duty without expecting its reward), *naimittika* (gift made for expiating sins), *kāmya* (gift made for desiring prosperity) and *prayika* (the pure gift which leads to liberation).\(^{69}\) Manu seems to indicate, by gift (*dāna*), the second sense of the term (i.e. *naimittika*) as mentioned in the *P.P.* It is a virtuous act consists of *tyāga* (sacrifice) which creates a human feeling in a sinful mind.

It is observed that Manu’s concept of *prayāscītta* is somehow connected with the law of *karma* (*karmaphala*) and rebirth. It is the auspicious or inauspicious effects of actions of body, mind and speech of a man which impart him a superior, middling or inferior status in the next life.\(^{70}\) Therefore, in Manu’s rules an offender has to suffer double punishment for an offence. An offender is held responsible both in the eyes of rule of law and rule of *karmaphala*. It is, thereby, a mixture of both crime and sin. Observing this fact K.V. Rangaswami Aiyangar comments – “It is to be noted that penance and civil penalties are not alternatives. As every crime is an offence against society as well as against God, both sentences run concurrently. A penance is not a substitute for punishment; it is a penalty. ... One may escape the civil power of the state after committing a crime; but he cannot escape the law of *karma*.\(^{71}\)” This idea of law of *karma* (i.e. *karmaphala*) is the root of Manu’s concept of *prayāscītta*. Moreover, from the standpoint of social welfare also sins are to be eliminated from the society and *prayāscītta* has been the traditional means for this purpose. C.S. Venkateswaran remarks rightly— “A sin is considered as such because it is anti-social. It implies

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\(^{69}\) ‘dānakālaṁ pravakṣyāmi nityanaimittikam nṛpa \(\kīm\)īcāpi mahārāja caturtham prāyikaṁ punah //’ *P.P., Bhūmikhaṇḍa.* 39.49.

\(^{70}\) *M.S.* XII. 3, 9, 11, 39, 40.

\(^{71}\) *Aspects of the Social and Political System of Manusmṛti,* p. 89.
lack of self-restraint, a tendency to trespass into other’s right. Hence, theft, murder, adultery, and envy and avarice are considered as sins. The sin of an individual adversely affects the whole society. By eschewing sin an individual is doing a duty both to himself and to the society.\textsuperscript{72}

2. THE FOUR ĀŚRAMAS AND DUTIES LAID DOWN FOR DIFFERENT ĀŚRAMAS

\textit{Varga}s and āśramas are two salient features of ancient Indian society. H.C. Chakladar remarks - “The framework of ancient society was founded upon \textit{varṇa} and āśrama – a fourfold classification of the entire people into \textit{varṇas} (castes) and a fourfold division of the life of each individual into āśramas (stages).”\textsuperscript{73} It is to be noted that according to the Hindu scheme of life, the \textit{varṇas} and the āśramas are invariably connected with some dharmas (duties) which are to be followed by every member of the human society. At the very beginning of the \textit{M.S.} and also of the \textit{Yaj.} the sages request Manu and Yajñavalkya to disclose them the duties of the \textit{varṇas} as well as the āśramas.\textsuperscript{74} Here, in this point, \textit{Yaj} is clear enough of mentioning the duties of \textit{varṇas} and āśramas, but the \textit{M.S.} only refers to the duties of \textit{varṇas}. But, the idea of the duties of āśramas (i.e. the stages of life) is not missing in the above reference of the \textit{M.S.} also as ‘\textit{varṇa} scheme comprehends āśramas’.\textsuperscript{75} Kullūka, while commenting on the above referred verse of the \textit{M.S.}, expressly states that the sages enquire after the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{72} C.H.I. Vol. II. p. 297.
\item \textsuperscript{73} Ibid. p. 558.
\item \textsuperscript{74} \textit{M.S.} I. 2 ; \textit{Yaj.} I.1.
\item \textsuperscript{75} Aspects of the Social and Political System of Manusmṛti, p. 136.
\end{itemize}
Vijnānesvara makes a six-fold division of dharma (duties) while Kullūka likes to mention a five-fold division omitting sādharanadharma. Kullūka also cites the views of the Bh. P. where a five-fold division of dharma is enumerated. The six-fold divisions of dharma (duty) as stated by Vijnānesvara are -

(i) varpadharma.
(ii) āśramadharma.
(iii) varpa/ramadharma.
(iv) guṇadharma.
(v) nimittadharma.
(vi) sādharanadharma.

Out of these six divisions, the second one i.e. the āśramadharma deals with those prescribed duties or obligations of an individual which he has to follow in different stages of life (āśramas) such as begging alms, vedic studies, taking of

76. ‘...yathāvat yo dharmo yasya varṇasya yena prakāreṇāḥḥaṁyametā-āśramadharmaśabdāmapi prāṣṇaḥ’ On M.S. I. 2;

‘varṇadharmaśabdaśca varṇadharmaśāśramadharma-varṇāśramadharma-guṇadharma-naimittikadharmaśāmupalākṣakah’ On M.S. II. 25.

77. ‘atra ca dharmaśabdaḥ śadvidhasmārtadharmavisaśayaḥ / tadyathā varṇadharmaḥ āśramadharmaḥ varṇāśramadharmaḥ guṇadharmaḥ nimittadharmaḥ sādharanadharma-āścet’ Miṭāksara on Yaj. I. 1.

78. On M.S. II. 25 as quoted F.N. 76 above.

79. On M.S. II. 1 & 25.
household life etc. The word 'āśramas' simply means a halting or dwelling place. Therefore, āśrama (i.e. stages of life) is a particular period or passage of time of the life of an individual which he has to cross observing and discharging prescribed duties, vows and rituals. In fact, these are the four steps of life of an individual towards the ultimate goal of life i.e. liberation (mokṣa). "These are like four halting stations on the path or like four rungs in the ladder leading to spiritual progress. ...The scheme of āśramadharma takes human nature into consideration and prescribes the final stage of renunciation only after giving room for enjoying the good things of the world and for discharging one's social duties in a spirit of detachment during the preceding stages. Man's life becomes one of discipline, study, service, sacrifice, penance and renunciation, all these leading to the perfection of human personality."  

The Hindu scheme of life as divided into four stages (āśramas) is not a new idea of the dharmaśāstra literature. In the Tait. Saṁ.. we have a passage where the three stages of life are clearly mentioned. According to this passage, an individual is born carrying with him three debts. These are the debts to Gods, to the ṛṣis and to the pitṛs (ancestors). These are the special obligations which should be repaid by an individual to the Gods, ṛṣis and pitṛs (ancestors) by means of sacrifice, constant vedic

80. ‘yastvāśramam samāśritya adhikāraḥ pravartate / sa khalvāśramadharmastu bhikṣādaṇḍādiko yathā /' Bh.P. as quoted by Kullūka on M.S. II. 25; ‘āśramadharma'gūndhanabhāiskacaryādīḥ /' Miśkaṇḍa on Yaj. I. 1.

This idea of three-fold stages of life (āśramas) is also depicted in the Chāṇ. Up. Here, in a passage, the word dharma is used in the sense of certain duties belonging to three different stages of life and these stages are stated as dharmaskandhas. This passage of the Upaniṣad compares dharma to a tree and the āśramas (stages of life) are compared to three branches of that tree.

In the Jāvālopaniṣad we have a clear mention of the four stages of life. Mentioning the four stages of life, the same Upaniṣad says that the very first stage of life i.e. brahmacarya is compulsory and one can follow one of the other three stages (i.e. grhī, vanī and vrajī) breaking the order of the stages. The Mbh. also mentions four stages of life.

82. “jāyamāno vai brāhmaṇaśtriḥkṛtairnāvān jāyate brahmacaryena ṛṣibhyo yajñena
devebhyah prajayaḥ pitṛbhyah eṣa vā anṛṇo yah putrī yajvā brahmacārīvāsī etc. /”

83. ‘trayo dharmaśakundhā yajñīdhyayanam dānamitī prathamastapa eveti ... sarve
ete puṣyaloṣā bhavanti brahmaśaṅkṣhonoṁṛtaṁ vaṁvametvi / Chāṇ. Up. II.23.1.
84. ‘brahmacaryṇāṁ samāpya grhī bhavet grhī bhūtva vanī bhavet vanī bhūtvā
pravrajet / yadi vetarathā brahmacaryādeva pravrajet grhūdvā vanādvā iti /’
Jāvālopaniṣad. IV.

85. ‘vānapratstham bhāikgacaryam gārhaśtyaṁ ca mahāśramaṁ / brahmacaryāśramaṁ pārauṣcaturtham brāhmanāirvṛttam //’ Sānti. 61.2.
Manu mentions a four-fold stages of life and the order of it. These are as follows according to their order —

(i) The stage of a celibate student (brāhmaṇa).

(ii) The stage of a householder (gṛhastha).

(iii) The stage of a forest-dweller or a hermit (vānaprastha).

(iv) The ascetic (yati or sanyāsa).

According to Manu these orders of life are to be followed by one of the twice-born varṇas in serial order or in a sequence. Manu expressly states that the stage of the householder is the root of all the four stages of human life, and specially a brāhmaṇa, who discharges the prescribed duties of these stages in a sequence, attains the supreme status. K.V. Rangaswami Aiyangar puts the following reasons in defence of imposing sequence in the stages of life. He comments — “Premature entry into ascetic life of one whose passions have not been conquered, and who is physically still subject to rājas or tāmasa impulses, can only spell disaster. From a social standpoint the moral is that one should not fly away from his responsibilities to society (and to the gods, manes and seers) and seek refuge in ascetism.” Therefore, here, we shall try to discuss in brief the four stages of human life and the respective duties of the stages as found in the M.S.

86. ‘brahmaṇa gṛhasthaḥ vānaprastho yatistathā / ete gṛhasthaprabhavācattvāraḥ
prthagāśramāḥ //’ M.S. VI. 87.

87. Ibid. IV. 1; VI.2, 33.

88. Ibid. VI. 87-88.

89. Aspects of the Social and Political System of Manusmṛti, p. 139.
(i) The stage of a student celibate (*brahmacarya*)

The very first stage of the four *āśramas* is called *brahmacarya*. This stage of life (i.e. the stage of a celibate student) is founded with some rigorous vows and discipline under the complete supervision of the preceptor which is started with the *upanayana* (initiation) ceremony and ended with the *samāvartana* (convocation) ceremony. The main aim and objective of this *āśrama* is to train up and to build up a strong mind within a strong body through a rigorous mental and physical drill. It is, otherwise, a scheme of life where a student is imparted with the basic trainings for the next stages of life.

The studentship (*brahmacarya*) begins with the rite of initiation with the holy thread (*upanayana*) which is held in the eight, eleventh and twelfth year from the date of conception in case of a boy belongs to *brāhma*, *kṣatriya* and a *vaisya* respectively. The age limit is extensible up to the sixteenth, twenty second and twenty fourth year of age according to the order of the three twice-born castes. The term *upanayanaṁ* or *upanāyanaṁ* is formed with the root ‘mr̥’ (to lead) with ‘anat’ adding a prefix ‘upa’ before it. The ceremony is called so because after the rite of initiation with the holy thread, a twice-born boy is brought near to the preceptor (*guru*) for imparting formal education. From this day, he is brought under the guidance and supervision of his *guru*.

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90. *M.S.* II. 36-37.


92. ‘*upanayanamevopanāyanaṁ anyesāmapi śrīyata iti dirghah’

Kullūka on *M.S.* II. 36.
This āśrama is purely a period of life of character building of an individual. In this āśrama his activities and conducts are governed by some strict disciplines and trainings following which he becomes a person of good character. It is a stage of life where a student should learn under the guidance of his teacher discarding all the bodily comfort and any sort of luxuries. He should avoid the contact of a woman, as according to Manu, women are by nature quite competent to defile men by their passion. But, if a woman as well as a man of lower caste (i.e. a śūdra) advises him to do a good work which is likely to contribute to the causes of human welfare, then a brahmačārī should follow that advice. He is to earn his livelihood by taking alms from the suitable house-holders only. By this practice of taking or begging alms from others, a brahmačārī really acquaints with poverty which teaches him to avoid the path of luxury in the subsequent stages of his life. The very purpose or object of all these rules pertaining to brahmačarya (studentship) is to refrain him from every kind of luxury and sexual excitement so that he can maintain the vow of chastity of this āśrama. The student life, therefore, is a life of severe austerities and self-denial.

The brahmačarya āśrama played an important role in making education universal in ancient India. K. V. Rangaswami Aiyangar remarks – “From the standpoint of the interests of the community, the first āśrama (i.e. brahmačarya) is vital, as no one should remain uneducated, and the second (ghasthāśrama) is equally vital to society.” Manu makes upanayana (initiation) compulsory to the boys of the

97. *Aspects of the Social and Political System of Manusmṛti*, pp. 139-140.
twice-born classes which is the entrance of the *brahmacarya asrama* (studentship).\textsuperscript{98} In this *asrama* a student is to devote his mind in practicing study and certain vows for a stipulated period of time.\textsuperscript{99} Completing this stage of life duly, a bachelor (*snātaka*) should enter into the second *asrama* (i.e. *gṛhaśāstra*).\textsuperscript{100} Thus it is obvious that in Manu's scheme of social life every householder is an educated (i.e. a bachelor (*snātaka*)) and responsible person and thereby an educated and cultured human race could be expected from such progenitors.

One of the best ideals underlying in *brahmacarya* is the ideal relation between the disciples and the teacher. A teacher teaches not for money. It is not a mere profession on the part of the teacher, but it was a dedication for the sake of imparting knowledge and wisdom to his disciples and thereby a teacher played an important role in producing a healthy human generation. In return a student did not have to pay him any valuables as fee except his service such as collecting alms and fuel, water and other accessories needed for the daily ceremonies of his teacher.\textsuperscript{101} Though Manu enjoins paying of proper fee (*gurudaksina*) to a preceptor after the completion of studentship, yet it was desirable but not compulsory and the permission of the preceptor in offering such fee was also necessary and it was according to the ability of the student.\textsuperscript{102} The services rendered by a teacher in moulding the character of the students was reckoned with a high value. Both the *Chāṇ. Up.* and the *Laghuhārīṇa* maintain that even the

\textsuperscript{98} M.S. II. 37-40.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid. III. 1.
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid. IV. 1.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid. II. 182.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid. II. 245-246.
Earth is not sufficient as fee to pay off gurudaksināna.  

(ii) The Householder (grhastha)

The second stage of life is called as the life of a householder (grhastha). It is the household life which is the foundation of a social existence. Therefore, celibacy should come to an end for the maintenance of the social existence and married life is the only solution of it. After staying a stipulated period of time in guru’s house, a snātaka brahmācārī comes back home and he becomes eligible for a household life. Therefore, in āṣrama system, every householder is a respectable person as according to Manu a snātaka brahmācārī is respected by all wheresoever he moves. Being a respectable and responsible person, a householder has to perform a series of duties as his life is extensively related with dharma. In fact, in the very first āṣrama of his life, a snātaka has been trained up properly and perfectly so that he can enter directly into the next stage of his life and carry on the enjoined duties. We have a direct evidence in the Tait. Up. about the duties to be followed and performed by a householder. In the convocation ceremony of the outgoing snātakas, the preceptor actually delivers a lecture about the duties of a householder.

103. Chān. Up. III. 11.6;  
‘ekamapyaksaramaḥ yastu guruḥ śīye nivedayet / prthivyāṁ nāsti taddravyaṁ  
yaddatvā cānāṁ bhavet /’ Laghuhārīta as quoted by Kullūka on M.S. II. 246.

104. M.S. III. 1, 4.

105. Ibid. II. 138-139; III. 3;  
‘rajasnātakayoh samāgame rajña snātakāya deyaji /’ Vas. D.S. XIII. 59.

106. ‘vedamanūcyācāryo’ntevasinamanusāsti / satyaṁ vada / dharmaṁ cara ...  
The first and foremost duty of householder is to marry a wife of his own caste and to continue the human race. Therefore, he is to earn livelihood for himself and for his family. He is a bread earner not only for himself and his family but also for the other three āśramas as these are the homeless stages of life. For a brāhmaṇa householder Manu enjoins him to seek such means of livelihood which normally cause no harm or pain to others and except in the time of distress he should live with those occupations which are not reproachable and are with according to the rules of varṇas. But, on no account he should follow the occupation of service for earning his livelihood. It seems to mean by this prohibitory rule of Manu that a brāhmaṇa householder should not take the occupations of either one of the other three castes which are somehow connected with some faults or pains.

In Manus ideal real happiness of a householder and particularly of a brāhmaṇa householder is rooted in contentment and in a simple way of life. For a household life one shall have to earn and accumulate wealth. But, a householder should not pursue and accumulate more and more wealth out of greed. He should earn and accumulate as much as he needs and should content himself with that. Manu makes a fourfold

108. Ibid. IV. 6;

‘क्रष्णिनिजे स्वयंचाक्ये कुसिदान्तो / सेवां तु दिनार्थिसंदर्शना-स्वामित्ज्ञाना-
नित्यक्रियाय कार्मवीर्यात् सुना इव वर्तिरत्को स्ववर्तिनृताः / तस्मात् तानि प्रकर्तो ब्राह्मणप्रस्तयजेत’ / Gautama as quoted by Kullūka on Ibid.
109. ‘सांतोत्स्म परामार्थठिय सुखार्थि सहित्यतो बहवेत / सांतोत्स्मवील इह सुक्षमदुःखक्षमवील विपर्ययस् //’ M.S. IV. 12.
classification of brahmana householders on the basis of wealth accumulated by them\textsuperscript{110} and that one who accumulates wealth for the day only and even not for the morrow is the topper in merit.\textsuperscript{111} Moreover, Manu suggests that a brahmana householder with a large family members may earn his livelihood by maximum number of six ways and a householder with a small family members should earn his livelihood by teaching only.\textsuperscript{112} But, on no account he should follow a vile means for his livelihood which is usually adopted by an ordinary person. It indicates that any means for livelihood taken by a brahmana householder should be honest one and worthy of his caste.\textsuperscript{113}

Another important duty as Manu enjoins is that a householder should perform five great sacrifices everyday in his household life. The reason behind performing of these sacrifices, as Manu enjoins, is that in day to day life a householder is to perform some activities for his livelihood which are somehow connected with some direct or indirect sins due to killing of animated beings.\textsuperscript{114} By performing these five great sacrifices everyday, a householder expiates himself the sins connected with his day to day activities.\textsuperscript{115} These sacrifices are\textsuperscript{116} -

\begin{align*}
110. & \text{'kus\textasciitilde{\i}ladh\textasciitilde{n}yako v\textasciitilde{a} sy\textasciitilde{\i}tkumbh\textasciitilde{\i}d\textasciitilde{\i}h\textasciitilde{n}yaka eva v\textasciitilde{a} / tryahaihiko v\textasciitilde{a}pi bhavedasvastanika eva v\textasciitilde{a}' / I\textit{bid}. IV. 7.} \\
111. & \text{I\textit{bid}. IV. 8.} \\
112. & \text{I\textit{bid}. IV. 9.} \\
113. & \text{I\textit{bid}. IV. 11.} \\
114. & \text{I\textit{bid}. III. 68.} \\
115. & \text{I\textit{bid}. III. 69.} \\
116. & \text{I\textit{bid}. III. 70; T\textit{ait. Ar}. II. 10; S\textit{at. Br}. XI. 5.6.1.}
\end{align*}
(i) *brahmayajñā* which consists of study and teaching of the vedas.
(ii) *pitryajñā* which consists of offering oblations or libations to the manes.
(iii) *daivayajñā* which consists of offering burnt oblations to the gods.
(iv) *bhūtayajñā* which consists of offering food to all living creatures, and
(v) *nṛyajñā* which consists of hospitality to guests.

The five great sacrifices bear a great significance. The high value attached to these sacrifices is the expression of gratitude and obligation. Manu says that *ṛṣis*, manes, gods, living beings and guests expectantly looking for the householders for maintenance. By performing these sacrifices, a householder satisfies them\(^{117}\) which seems to be the best way of expressing his gratitude towards them. One who does not serve them properly is dead in living.\(^{118}\) *Nṛyajñā* which consists of hospitality to guests is totally based on the concept of service to men. Manu says a lot glorifying and encouraging the act of hospitality performed by a householder.\(^{119}\) A householder should not eat any delicious food without offering it to a guest, and hospitality duly offered by a householder brings wealth, fame, longevity and ensures heavenly peace to him.\(^{120}\) Manu defines the nature of a true guest from which it is evident that mere offering of food or service to a greedy person or to near relatives does not mean hospitality in the truest sense of the term.\(^{121}\) The *Ait. Ār.* says that one who is divine and attains

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117. *M.S.* III. 80-81.
superiority is known as guest. According to Manu, a brāhmaṇa who resides for a single night in the house of others and whose staying of the next day there in the same house is uncertain is termed as atithi (guest).

Manu's concept of bhūtāyajña which consists of offering food to the birds and animals by a householder also bears some important significance. It indicates that all the living creatures should get love and support from the human race which bears some relevancy still this day. Kullūka says that a householder, who daily worships all creatures with food, attains supreme Brahman (i.e. he attains the highest bliss).

From the viewpoint of existence of the human race, the grhasthārasma (household life) has a vital role. It is the grhasthārasma on which the continuity of human race depends. In fact, the other three (āśramas) are homeless and dependent on householders for their subsistence. A householder, therefore, has to perform manifold duties for the maintenance of the human race. He has to marry and set up an ideal family, to beget offspring and to hold up the good ideals in the society. Therefore, he has to perform a series of duties, and normally a man of weak and uncontrolled senses

122. ‘yo vai śvaro bhavati yah sreṣṭhātāmaśnute sa vā atithirbhavati /’ Ait. Ār. I. 1.1., quoted from the ‘Sanskṛtasūktisamuccayah’ Vol. IV. (Āranyakakhanda). p. 64.

123. M.S. III. 102 ;

‘eketi eka-rātram eva paragrhe nivasan brāhmaṇopātithirbhavati, anityāvasthānaḥ na vidyate dvitīyātithirasyeti atithirucyate /’ Kullūka on Ibid.

124. ‘abakreṇa vartmārā arcirādimārgeṇa prāpnoti brahmanī līyate ityarthāḥ /’

Kullūka on M.S. III. 93.
can not discharge these responsible duties properly. Manu, perhaps, therefore, gives
the household life a sublime position among the four āśramas. It is the mainstay of the
whole social orders. Dr. C.V. Venkateswaran remarks that a householder acts as a
steward of the other three āśramas. He comments—"Those belonging to the other
āśramas who had no fixed abode and who went about in quest of knowledge and truth
to centres of wisdom could find refuge only in the householder. He acted as their
steward. By feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless and
comforting the distressed he promoted social harmony and welfare." The exalted
position of the grhasthāsrama can be easily understood from the following statement of
V. Raghavan. He comments—"To this picture of goodness and strength, the lining of
beauty may also be added, for this picture of Manu’s grhastha is not of an emaciated,
sullen, untidy person;... one can not fail to be struck by the exalted and at the same
time radiant humanism of Manu’s conception of the householder."

125. M.S. III. 79.
126 Ibid. III. 77-78; VI. 87, 90;
‘āikāśramyaṁ tvācāryāḥ pratyakṣavidhānāt gārhasṭhyasya gārhasṭhyasya’
Gau. D.S. 1. 3.35.
‘yathā mātaramāśritya sarve jīvanti jantavaḥ / evam gārhasṭhyamāśritya vartanta
itarāsramā //’ Śānti. 269.6;
‘ahiṁsā satyavacanāṁ sarvabhūtānukampanānā / śamo dānanāṁ yathāsakti
gārhasṭhyo dharmo uttamaḥ //’ Anu. 141.25.
Also, Śānti. 269. 5-8.
128. Ibid. p. 348.

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The third stage of life is called the forest life or the life of a hermit (*vānaprastha*). It is a preparation or practice for the fourth stage of life by observing some severe discipline in life style. It means the retirement from the household life and hence the seclusion should be effected by shifting his abode to a forest. Manu says that when a householder distinctly finds the symptoms of old-age in his body such as grey-hair, skin furrowed with lines and wrinkles and is endowed with grandsons, then and there he should retire from the household life and should resort to the forest life. He should give up all the household comforts such as taking of household food-grains, bed, dresses, vehicles etc. and should go to the forest life placing his wife under the protection of his sons, and if his wife desires to go with him for a forest life he can take her with him. But, he should follow the life of a celibate there in the forest life. He should resides in the forest hut with his wife maintaining chastity of the *āśrama* at any cost. Kullūka holds view that on no account he should maintain sexual relation with her which will certainly impede the interest of the *āśrama* and, therefore, according to the view of Kullūka, one should take resort of the forest life after fifty years of his old.

129. *M.S.* VI. 2.
130. *Ibid.* VI. 3;
    ‘sādāro vāpyadāro vā ātmavān saṁhyatendriyaḥ / vānaprasthāśramanāṃ gacchet kṛtakṛtyo gṛhāśramāt //’ *Śānti.* 61.4.
131. *Yāj.* III. 45.
132. yatra tatraśreim vasanniti vānapratsthaśpekṣyāḥ / tasya hi bhāryāyaḥ saha gamanapakṣe ṛtugamanām prasaktam / na ca vanasthabhāryāyaḥ ṛturna bhavatī vācyāṁ, “vanaṁ paṁcāśāto brajediti” bārśārekaṅgūryaḥ bhāryāṁ mudvahet triguṇaḥ pumānityādīśāstraparyālocaṇayā tatsambhavat /’
    Kullūka on *M.S.* III. 50.
Manu mentions a list of duties to be performed by a hermit from which it is evident that he has to observe a severe discipline in his life-style giving up of all the bodily comforts. He should control his sense organs, live with the forest products only as far as possible; perform the five great sacrifices daily. He can hoard the forest products for livelihood up to a period of maximum one year only but should not eat anything that has been hoarded for more than a period of one year.\textsuperscript{133}

The rules laid down for this stage of life clearly indicate that in this stage of life one should control his passions for \textit{artha} (wealth) and \textit{kāma} (desires). He should earn \textit{artha} (i.e. the forest products) only for his livelihood, or he can earn it by begging from the nearest villages if only he is unable to get it from the forest, but on no account he should collect it for hoarding and should consume only eight morsels daily.\textsuperscript{134} Thus, controlling these two main passions of a householder he should concentrate himself in \textit{dharma} and \textit{mokṣa}, the other two aims of human life. It is, in short, a stage of life in which one tends his mind to the final goal of human life i.e. \textit{mokṣa} by observing a series of severe discipline. According to Manu it is a stage of life in which one performs some \textit{nivṛttaṁ} acts (i.e. acts done without any prospect of gain or reward) and gets control over the material elements.\textsuperscript{135}

(iv) The Ascetic (\textit{yati} or \textit{sanyāsa}):

The last stage of life i.e. \textit{sanyāsa} (ascetic) bears a special significance because according to Manu this stage is not allowed to all the four \textit{varṇas}. Manu enjoins

\textsuperscript{133} M.S. VI. 1-32.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid. VI. 28.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid. XII. 89-90.
Only to take resort of this āśrama.136 The Mun. Up. also maintains a corroborative view.137 The Mbh. states that sanyāsa is suitable only for brāhmaṇas.138 Of course, Yājñavalkya holds view that all the twice-born castes are eligible for holding sanyāsa for the purity of their mind.139

The main aim of this āśrama is to seek mokṣa or final liberation and hence it can be termed as mokṣāśrama also. This is the stage of life in which one is to follow some strict and severe discipline in his remaining last stage of worldly life.140 The vānaprastha stage of life is also a life of renunciation but it is not a complete renunciation. A dweller of the vānaprastha stage has a permanent abode for him in the forest; he can take his wife with him and can hoard forest products for the next day or up to a period of one year. But, the life of a sanyāsī is a life of complete renunciation. He has no companion with him, no permanent shelter, no hoarding for the next day. The roots of a tree is the abode and shelter for him and thus he is a complete wanderer.141 Thus, the highest ideal of complete renunciation and self-sacrifice is the motto of this āśrama which has been highly valued by the Indian tradition from time immemorial. M.A. Kamath remarks —śaṇyāsa is the highest stage a Hindu can

136. "atmanyagānīn samāropya brāhmaṇa prabrajey grhīt /" M.S. VI. 38.
137. Mun. Up. I. 2.12;
   brāhmaṇasyaiva viśeṣato'dhikāraḥ sarvatyāgena brahmavidyāyāmīti brāhma-
   nāgraḥaṇāṃ /' Saṅkara on Ibid.
138. "brahmacaryāāśramāṁ prāhuṣcaturthaṁ brāhmaṇairvṛtttaṁ" Śānti. 61.2.
139. "sanyāso vai dvijanmanāṁ /" Yāj. III. 32.
140. M.S. VI. 33-96.
141. Ibid. VI. 42-44.
conceive of. It is the highest ideal. ... He lives no longer specially for his family and home. He exists for the higher group of race and mankind. He is beyond caste, past all limitations. He begins to realize himself as part and parcel of Humanity. The world is his kin.\textsuperscript{142}

(v) The Value of āśrama system.

The ongoing discussion shows that the āśrama system teaches some model codes of conduct and duties which mould the character of the individuals of the society and instigate them to perform their duties in respective āśramas in a positive way. It is a system through which an individual gradually achieves the four aims of human existence (i.e. dharmārthakāmamokṣa). M.A. Kamath remarks—"The āśrama life of the Hindus is the very root of their spiritual culture. Whatever of idealism the Hindu has developed in the country has been very largely due to this age-long system, in which from the very early days of his civilization he has realized all the possibilities of building up an ideal for the individual. It is by this system of individual character-training that the Hindu has been able to root deep in his land the ideal of spiritual culture."\textsuperscript{143}

The āśrama system was also helpful from the point of view of averting of conflict that may arise in the family as well as in the social life due to generation gap. Observing this fact, T.R. Venkatarama Sastri comments—"Conflict between different generations of people is also put a stop to, by the retirement of each generation in due time when the next generation is ready to take the place of the outgoing one."\textsuperscript{144}

Manu's concept of āśrama system does not allow one to escape from specific duties

\begin{flushright}
142. Hinduism and Modern Science, pp. 56-57. \\
143. Ibid. p. 54. \\
\end{flushright}
and responsibilities of one’s respective āśramas, but enjoins to do one’s respective duties. Hence, Manu does not allow one to take sanyāsa directly without performing the respective duties of the previous āśramas. One should march towards renunciation gradually halting in different āśramas in a proper order. None should strive to attain self-emancipation through renunciation without discharging the three debts; otherwise he will go to the hell.145

3. VĀRNA (CASTE) SYSTEM, DUTIES OF DIFFERENT CASTES TOWARDS THE SOCIETY, ITS VALUE AND SIGNIFICANCE

One of the notable social organizations in ancient India is the four social orders or the four varṇas. According to the SBG. the Lord created the four varṇas on the basis of inherent qualities or merits and performance of the individuals.146 Thus, the aim of the varṇa system was to engage one in suitable work according to his merit. The English equivalent for the word varṇa in Sanskrit is caste. According to N.K. Dutta “The word caste (from Latin ‘castus’, pure) was loosely used by Portuguese to denote the Indian social classification as they thought that the system was intended to preserve purity of blood.”147 But, the above mentioned passage of the SBG. regarding the origin of varṇa nullifies the idea of the Portuguese about their concept of Indian social orders or varṇa system. “Caste is quite a modern word, and is supposed to be a corruption of the Portuguese casta, ‘a race’. Manu’s word for the four classes is ‘varṇa’, ‘colour’, which suggests some original distinction of colour as marking the dominant

146. ‘cāturvarṇyāṁ mayā śṛṣṭaṁ gunakarmavibhāgaṁ’ SBG. IV. 13.
races."\(^{148}\) In fact, the prime object of Indian \textit{varṇa} system was not preserving of the purity of blood but was allotment of duties according to the merits of the individuals in the society. In this respect we would like to refer to the following passage. "The keynote of the Hindu system however, was national service. It afforded to every member of the social body, opportunities and means to develop fully his powers and capacities, and to use them for the advancement of the common weal. Everyone was to serve the Nation in the sphere in which he was best fitted to act, which, being congenient to his individual genius, was conducive to the highest development of his faculties and powers."\(^{149}\) This was the basic principle on which India’s \textit{varṇa} system was founded. Sir P.S. Sivaswami Aiyer holds view that both European and Indian scholars alike have described it (i.e. the caste system or the \textit{varṇa} system) as a unique institution peculiar to the soil of India.\(^{150}\) Sir Aiyer also observes – "There is, however, considerable difficulty in formulating a scientifically precise definition of caste which will apply to all the groups which now consider themselves as separate groups with caste characteristics."\(^{151}\) Citing the definition of caste given in the Indian census Report of 1911 which was adopted by Prof. Rapson, Sir Aiyer holds view that the same definition of caste is obviously loose and faulty. The above mentioned Census Report presents the definition of caste as – "An endogamous group or collection of such groups bearing a common name and having the same traditional occupation, who are so linked together by these and other ties, such as the tradition of a

\(^{148}\) As quoted by Monier Williams in \textit{Indian Wisdom}, p. 218.

\(^{149}\) \textit{Hindu Superiority}, pp. 26-27.

\(^{150}\) \textit{Evolution of Hindu Moral Ideals}, p. 68.

\(^{151}\) \textit{Ibid.}
common origin and the possession of the same tutelary deity, and the same social status, ceremonial observances and family priests, that they regard themselves, and are regarded by others, as forming a single homogeneous community."\textsuperscript{152}

That the \textit{varṇa} system (i.e. four social orders) was founded according to the inherent qualities and merits of an individual is also evident from some passages of the \textit{M.S.} where it is stated that a person of a high birth also may fall into a low \textit{varṇa} and the vice versa according to the good or bad deeds he performs.\textsuperscript{153} The \textit{Āpi. D.S.} also maintains a similar view in this respect.\textsuperscript{154} The \textit{Mbh.} says that there are no distinctions of \textit{varṇas}. Originally there was only one \textit{varṇa} i.e. \textit{brāhmaṇa} and subsequently it was divided into four \textit{varṇas} due to different qualities and actions they performed.\textsuperscript{155} Mentioning four \textit{varṇas}, the Epic says that the colour (\textit{varṇa}) of the original race became white (\textit{sita}), red (\textit{lohitā}), yellow (\textit{pūnaka}) and black (\textit{asita}) in consequence according to the nature of actions they discharged.\textsuperscript{156} On the other hand,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{153.} \textit{M.S.} X. 41-44;
\begin{quote}
\textit{"Sudro brahmaṇatāmeti brahmaṇasvācetī śudratāṁ / kṣatriyajñātamevantu vidyādvaisyāttathaiva ca //"} \textit{Ibid.} X. 65.
\end{quote}
\item \textbf{154.} \textit{"Dharmacaryaya jaghanyo varṇāḥ pūrvāṁ ... adharmacaryaya pūrvo varṇo... jātiparivṛttau //"} \textit{Āpi. D.S.} II. 5.11.10-11.
\item \textbf{155.} \textit{"Na visesōsti varṇāṁ sarvaṁ brahmamidaṁ jagat / brahmaṇā pūrvasṛṣṭāṁ hi karmabhīrvarṇatāṁ gataṁ //"} \textit{Śānti.} 188. 10.
\item \textbf{156.} \textit{"Brāhmaṇaṁ kṣatriyaṁ vaiśāyaṁ śudrāśadvijasattama / ... Brāhmaṇaṁ sito varṇāḥ kṣatriyaṁ tu lohitāḥ / ...Śudrāṁmasitastatha //"} \textit{Ibid.} 188. 4-5.
\end{itemize}

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Sāṅkara Digvijaya says in a reverse way that by birth all are śūdra and they promote themselves to higher varṇas (i.e. dvijas) by dint of their good conducts and actions. Accordingly by reading the vedas one becomes vipra and becomes brāhmaṇa by acquiring the knowledge of the Brahman.157

The origin of varṇa system goes back to the R.V. The word varṇa occurs in the R.V. in its several places.158 In one of the mantras of the R.V. the prayer says that he himself lives with practicing sacrifice, his father is a physician and his mother lives with grinding and thereby they want to live with different trades.159 From this mantra of the R.V. it is evident that the members of the same family in those days lived with different kinds of profession of different varṇas. It was, perhaps, due to their own ability and merit that they followed different trades for their livelihood in the same family.

In the Puruṣa Sūkta of the R.V., we have an allegorical account regarding the origin of varṇas which delineates the picture of a divine origin of varṇas. According to it brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya and śūdra were born from the mouth, arms, thigh and feet respectively of the Supreme Being (Brahman).160 This context of the

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157. ‘janmānā jāyate śūdraḥ saṁskāṛāddvijah ucyate / vedapāthī bhavedvipraḥ brahma jānāti brāhmaṇāḥ ///’ Sāṅkara Digvijaya as quoted in Hindu Superiority, p. 28.

158. R.V. I. 73.7; II. 3.5; II. 12.4; IX. 97.15; ‘dāsaṁ varṇaṁ śudrādikaṁ //’ Saṅyāsa on R.V. II. 12.4.

159. ‘kārurahāṁ tato bhīṣagupapraśṇiṁ nanaṁ / nānādhiyo vasūyavo’nugāva tasthimendrāyendo pari srava ///’ R.V. IX. 112.13.

160. ‘brāhmaṇo’sya mukhamāṁśī vāhūrijayyamāṁ kṛtaḥ / uru tadasya yadvaśayāḥ padbhyaṁ śūdro’jāyata ///’ R.V. X. 90. 12.
Parma Sukta is quite an allegorical one and can not supply us a satisfactory account regarding the origin of varna. J. Muir comments - “But it is doubtful whether, in the form in which it is there presented, this presentation is anything more than an allegory.”

Muir also presents a detail account on the origin of Indian castes in the very first chapter of his book in the light of some vedic hymns, the Rāmāyana, the Mahābhārata and the purāṇas and remarks - “The sacred books of the Hindus contain no uniform or consistent account of origin of castes; but on the contrary, present the greatest varieties of speculation on this subject.”

In a passage of the Ait. Br., it has been said that the three twice-born varnas were created by the Supreme Being (Brahman) from the three vedic metres gāyatrī, triśṭubh and jagatī. The Vas. D.S. also maintains a similar view.

In the Chān. Up., we have a passage from which it is evident that the birth of an individual either in lower or higher caste depends upon the good or bad actions of his previous birth. The Śānti of the Mbh. also says that a man falls from the high varga due to his misdeeds and attains a superior varga by dint of his right actions. A man ruins himself by performing misdeeds.

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162. Ibid.
164. ‘gāyatrī brāhmaṇamāsṛjata, triśṭubhā rājanyāṁ jagatyā vaiśyaṁ, na kenacit chandaśa śūdrāmityaśarṇāṁśkāryo vijñāyate //’ Vas. D.S. IV. 3.
165. ‘tadya iha ramanvacyacaranāḥ abhyāsō... brahmaṇayoninī vai kṣatriyayoninī vai... śukrāyoniṁ vai caṇḍālayoniṁ vai //’ Chān. Up. V. 10. 7
166. Śānti. 291.4;
‘vargotkarṣamavāṁpnoti naraḥ puṣyunena karmāḥ / durlabhāṁ tamalabhāḥ hi hanyāt pāpena karnaḥ //’ Ibid. 291.5.
The M.S. as well as the Puruṣasukta holds the view of divine origin of the four castes. Manu says that the Supreme Self (i.e. manifested as Brahmā) created brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaśya and śūdra from his mouth, arms, thighs and feet respectively for the furtherance of the creation or for the progress of the world.167 The progress and prosperity of the creation surely depends upon the functions or activities of the individuals of the society. The standard of functions or activities of the individuals again depends on the qualities and merits of the individuals they inherit with them. Manu’s concept of varṇa is symbolic. He mentions four limbs of Brahmā as the origin of the four varṇas. Accordingly, brāhmaṇas were created from the highest limb (i.e. mouth) of Brahmā. It seems that one, who possesses the best qualities and merits is said to be a brāhmaṇa. Similar is the case in respect of other three varṇas. The separate duties for all the varṇas were laid down for the progress of the creation and it was according to the inherent merits and qualities of the individuals.168 Brāhmaṇas were created from the mouth of Brahmā seems to mean that they were versed in learning and vedic teachings. It should not be taken into granted that a brāhmaṇa by birth is superior to the other varṇas. He is equal to a śūdra in merit until and unless he is versed in his duties (i.e. versed in learning).169

167. 'lokāśeṣam tu vivṛddhyarthāṁ mukhāṁhūṛupādatāh / brāhmaṇāṁ kṣatriyaṁ vaiśyaṁ śūdraṁ ca niravartayat //’ M.S. I. 31.
168. ‘sarvasyaśeṣaṁ tu sargasya guptarthāṁ sa mahādyutih / mukhabāḥhūṛupājñānāṁ prathak karmāṇyašaśāryavat//’ Ibid. I. 87.
169. ‘yo’nadhīya dvijō vedamanyatra kurute śramaṁ/ sa jīvanneva śūdratvamāśāyu gacchati sāṃvayaṁ //’ Ibid. II. 168;
‘śūrdreṣa hi samastāvav yāvadvede na jāyate //’ Ibid. II. 172;
X. 65; XII. 114-115.
Manu's division of varṇa into four is duty oriented. Kewal Motwani holds -

"When any people live together to ensure their continuity and security, they must resolve themselves into these four divisions to fulfill their different functions." Each of the four varṇas has some duties of its own to be performed for the smooth progress of the society. Each should perform his duties according to his merits and qualities and none should perform the dharmas (duties) of other varṇas except of its own. Manu's division of varṇa and distribution of duties according to the varṇas seem to mean that intrusion into the duties of other varṇas by any one of the varṇas might impede the progress and discipline of the society by creating a confused situation. The SBG. highly asserts that the duties of one's own varṇa are superior for himself. Death while performing of one's own duty is preferable to the well performance of other's duties. Manu enjoins prescribed duties as well as the professions of the four varṇas of the society. In the very first chapter of the M.S., the duties of the four varṇas are enumerated. After creation of the four varṇas, Brahmā laid down separate duties and occupation for them. Accordingly, study of the vedas and teaching, performance of sacrifices for himself and for others, giving and accepting of gifts – these are the main duties and occupations for a brahmana. Protection of the subjects, gift-making, offering of sacrifices, study of the vedas and abstention from sensual pleasure – these are the duties of a kṣatriya. Rearing of cattle, gift making, offering of sacrifices,
study of the Vedas, trading, money-lending and cultivation — these are the duties and occupations for a vaiśya.175 The only duty for a śūdra is to earn his livelihood by means of serving the other three varṇas ungrudgingly.176

It is to be noted that Manu’s varṇa system is significant from both the points of view of this worldly life and the life hereafter. Every varṇa has its own prescribed duties to be discharged for the smooth running of the society. Thereby, performing of its own dharma (duties), every varṇa contributes to a social harmony. On the other hand, by discharging one’s own duty of his varṇa faithfully and ungrudgingly, an individual can acquire an exalted status and a high birth in his next life.177 Observing this fact K.V. Rangaswami Aiyangar comments — "Its (of varṇadharma) purposes have been both worldly and unworldly, concerned with this life and with after life. It has proceeded on the hypothesis that life in the universe is an endless chain revolving round the wheel of action (karma). It has stressed individual responsibility as well as collective."178

The varṇa system is the main factor of the stability and contentment of the Indian society. Sidney Low remarks — "There is no doubt that it (caste) is the main cause of the fundamental stability and contentment by which Indian society has been braced up for centuries against the shocks of politics and the cataclysms of Nature. It provides every man with his place, his career, his occupation, his circle of friends; it


protects him through life from the canker of social jealousy and unfulfilled aspirations; ... The caste organization is to the Hindu his club, his trade union, his benefit society, his philanthropic society... An Indian without caste, as things stand at present, it is not quite easy to imagine."\(^{179}\)

The *varṇa* system as we find in the *M.S.* as well as in other sacred texts of ancient India was not discrimination between man and man in the society, but it was a system of division of labour amongst them according to their inherent merit, skill and ability. The intellectual section of the society (i.e. the *brāhmaṇa*) was bestowed upon the Education Department, the vigorous section (i.e., the *kṣatriya*) was engaged in defence, section of people versed in productive works and trade and commerce (i.e. the *vaiśya*) was engaged in trade, commerce, agriculture and cattle breeding, and the remaining section which was good for nothing in the above Departments was engaged in service of the above three classes. Society was a body and the four *varṇas* were its parts who discharged their own duties for a common weal. In this regard we would like to refer to the following passage — "These distinctions of castes have nothing of the hatred and the sense of inequality, which prompted many a civilized society of modern times to lay down an arbitrary barrier between man and man, to create an artificial gulf between the classes and the masses, only on the basis of money-qualification. The framers of the ancient *saṁhitās* recognized the inevitable necessity of organizing a division of labour among the several orders of the society. The caste system had its origin in the principle of co-operation and reciprocal help, and not in contempt and spitefulness as it is now erroneously believed in certain quarters."\(^{180}\)

\(^{179}\) *A Vision of India* as quoted in *Hindu Superiority*, p.31.

\(^{180}\) *Manusmṛti*, ed. by Dr. R.N. Sharma, p.12.
In Manu's varna system, it is evident that the higher varnas have some special privileges than those of the lower varnas in order. For example, Manu says that whatever property (wealth) is in this world belongs to the brāhmaṇas and this is on account of superiority of their origin or birth.\textsuperscript{181} But, it is to be noted that the high varnas, especially the brāhmaṇas have some special obligations and responsibilities towards the society. The duties, responsibilities and disciplines to be discharged and maintained by the higher varnas in order of merit were very strict and rigorous than those of the lower varnas. Their superiority was reckoned not by birth but by the qualities and merits according to the varṇas.\textsuperscript{182} K. V. Rangaswami Aiyangar comments — “The brāhmaṇa is relegated, not by his own choice but by birth, to a hard and comfortless life of poverty and constant occupation. His is a lifelong and almost tragic dedication to the cause of spiritual uplift and education of society.”\textsuperscript{183}

Varṇa (caste) system, as is held by M. A. Kamath, is an extension of the Hindu family ideal in the society. He remarks — “The true ideal of caste is an extension of the Hindu family ideal, where each has his right place and privileges, and where the ideal of all is ‘service for all.’ As in the family the elders have the chief obligations and responsibilities, while the children have lesser reverence but greater freedom. So the higher castes have the chief responsibility for the welfare of the whole, and have to go through many disciplines from which the lower castes (like children) are exempt.”\textsuperscript{184}

\textsuperscript{181} M. S. I. 99-100.
\textsuperscript{182} ‘viprānāṁ jīvāt tu jāśthan kṣatriyānāṁ vīryataḥ / vaiśyānāṁ dhānya-dhānataḥ / śudrānāṁ eva janmataḥ’ \textit{Ibid.} II. 155.
\textsuperscript{183} \textit{Aspects of the Social and Political System of Manusmṛti}, p. 125.
\textsuperscript{184} \textit{Hinduism and Modern Science}, p. 60.
In fine, we would like to quote the following remark of K.V. Rangaswami Aiyangar which will glorify the utility of the varṇa system of the M.S. as well as other ancient Indian texts. Aiyangar remarks – “The scheme of varṇa lived, served and survived because it was based on reasoned philosophy of existence, of rational perception of the strength of instinct, and of the possibility of conserving them by heredity”.\textsuperscript{185}