CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this dissertation is to find out the concept of human values behind the rules and regulations of the M.S. We have started our dissertation with an introduction regarding the meaning and scope of smṛti or dharmaśāstra, its origin and development. We have also presented a discussion on the date, authorship, contents and the influence of the M.S. in Indian society and abroad. Though the M.S. governed almost every aspect of human life in ancient India and it had a far reaching influence, yet the date of the M.S. has an open scope of debate. Though the codes of the M.S. are some teachings of the great sage Manu of remote past, it is held that the extant M.S. regained its final shape in the hands of Bhrigu. It is also held that the dicta of Manu were already there in the society in floating form. The literary composition of the M.S. (i.e. the use of the Pāṇinian form of language) further proves that it cannot be a composition of the great sage Manu of antiquity. It appears to be a post Pāṇinian creation. In spite of the difference of opinions regarding the date of composition of the M.S., its dicta have been the guidelines for Indian social life from time immemorial. It is also held that whatever Manu said or preached is wholesome like medicine and any smṛti which is not in accordance with the M.S. is not to be reckoned with.

Manu's aim was to regulate the human behaviour and to mould the character of the individuals of the society for a better social life. For the upliftment of human interest, every member of the society should cultivate a disciplined life and it may be possible only when every member of the society is a man of good character and conduct and dutiful.
Manu's rules govern almost every aspect of human behaviour such as religious, social, political, economic, moral and ethical aspects of life. In Manu's rules dharma plays an important role in governing the above aspects of human behaviour. It is observed that dharma, in Manu's rules, is not a particular sect or religious belief as is construed in general sense of the term but it indicates duties of the individuals in every sphere of their life. It may be varṇadharma (i.e. duties of the castes), or āśramadharma (i.e. duties of the four stages of life), or stūḍharma (i.e. duties of women) or rājadharma (i.e. duties of a king) and so forth. Dharmas is a guiding force which tends to encourage one to do his duties in a lawful way. It sustains the whole social system and upholds some noble ideals which are ancillary to protect the interests of mankind.

Rājadharma i.e. the duties of a king is an important topic of discussion of the M.S. Manu elaborately describes rājadharma particularly in the 7th chapter of the M.S. A rāja (king) is a leader and protector of his subjects. He is a part of the God. But, he is not above the law. He is to follow a series of duties for the pleasure of the subjects. He has to establish and enforce dharma in every aspect of social life. To establish dharma, he should hold and inflict the mighty rod of punishment selflessly contrary to which he shall meet destruction with his kin together.1 A king should follow what is right and just and should never swerve from the path of virtue. A king is held responsible for both the good and bad activities of his subjects.2 Therefore, one of the

1. ‘yato dandah prakṣṭatejahsvaṁputrabandhusahitaṁ nāśayati /’ Kullīka on M.S. VII. 28.
2. ‘sarvato dharma ṣadhāṁ rājīṁ bhavati rakṣataṁ / adharmādapi ṣadhāṁ bhavatyasya hyaraksataṁ /’ M.S. VIII. 304.
prime duties of a king is to see that the dharma of the varnas are being properly followed. Manu’s rajadharma, thereby seems to propound the idea of work culture which is a pressing need of our present society. In addition to this, Manu’s rajadharma seems to have a special significance in our modern politics. Today, it is often criticized and it has been an open secret that politics has become an open playground of the opportunists. Politics, devoid the sense or the spirit of rajadharma has nothing to do with the welfare of the needy subjects, rather it becomes an instrument of fulfilling the vested interest of the politicians. In this respect, proper knowledge of the concept of rajadharma as propounded by Manu may be some positive guidelines for the politicians of our age. The real value of politics remains in rajadharma.

The position and status of women as depicted in the M.S. is a controversial topic in the context of our modern age. In our modern age, equality of right of both the sexes is preferred. Now-a-days, women are not home-bound. They are given equal right with that of men in social system. Nevertheless, the division of labour, to some extent, in domestic matters according to the nature of physical labour involved in or the capacity of both the sexes to perform those could not be denied or ignored. This labour division shall create a happy family life and a sweet home. On the contrary, if a husband or a male member of a family tries to dominate his wife or female members stamping the rules of the ancient works like the M.S., it will surely hamper the progress and happiness of both the social and family life. Similarly, if a wife or a female member tries to revolt against her husband or male members merely in the name of freedom of women or women movement, it may derange a happy family as well as social life. It is natural that there should have some rules or directions for both the sexes to follow for a smooth maintenance of family life. Rules are made for the welfare of family life and not to create quarrel or dispute between husband and wife or
between males and females. The co-operation of both the sexes in family and social life is the root of success.

In Manu’s rules, we find the picture of a home-bound woman. Moreover, there are some comments found in the *M.S.* which appear to defame the position and status of women, but, these are not sufficient to establish that Manu’s rules wanted to chain women like slaves, as there are also a large number of verses in the *M.S.* which elevate women to a venerable position. The over all position of women in Manu’s rules is that they are treated as a social trust and they are to be guarded properly by their respective trustees. It seems that Manu wanted a dutiful and home-bound woman for the welfare of the family and therefore, he did not prefer the idea of equality of both the sexes. The ancient Indian works generally highlight both positive and negative aspects of women and consequently contradictory statements about women are found in different works. The *M.S.* is not an exception in this respect.

All the rules of Manu, which were codified to fulfill the demand of an age of remote antiquity, can not claim an everlasting or universal relevance. Manu himself declares this truth saying that those practices which do not carry good or incur enmity or bring trouble in future should be discarded.3 There are large number of supportive views found in ancient Indian texts in this respect.4 Medhātithi rightly comments that those bad practices followed by our forefathers should not be observed by us.5

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3. ‘parityajedarthakāmaṁ yau syāṁ dharmavarjītau ... etc. *M.S.* IV. 176.
4. ‘yānyanavadyāni karmāṇi ... no itarāni / *Tait. Up.* I. 11.2;
   Also, *Yaj.* I. 156;
5. ‘yadi pitṛpiśahādhibhī kaiscīt adharmaṁ ācaritapūrvavaḥ sa na ādaraṇīyaḥ iti satam mārgaṁ ityāha / Medhātithi on *M.S.* IV. 178.
Therefore, it will be wise not to follow or to implement all the rules of Manu in the present context of our society. At the same time we should not forget it that all the rules of Manu are some meaningless utterances and are irrelevant in the present context of our society. Most of the Manu's rules advocate some ethical, moral and spiritual values which are some pressing needs of our society. Individualism has been the growing tendency of our present society. Today, the inclination to excessive individualism results extreme consumerism. As a result, the present society seems to run after a philosophy of extreme materialism. Today, the idea of human welfare is given a secondary importance and personal interest or gain has been given the primary importance. This philosophy of the society is certainly detrimental to the human society. In this context, the universal ideals of the M.S. as well as other ancient Indian texts may be some positive guidelines to recover the good ideals of ancient past which uphold human values. Values or good ideals never become outdated. There are some ethical, moral and spiritual concepts behind some rules of Manu which tend to uphold human values. Truthfulness, non-violence, work culture, good conduct, human feeling to the disabled and distressed persons, honesty in every sphere of life, charity, observance of one's own dharma (duty) etc. are some universal ideals which have some everlasting relevancy in all ages of human history for upgrading human interest.