

## Sanskrit Renaissance and the Re-construction of Socio-cultural Power in Nation: Colonial European Cultural Interactions

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### Abstract

This paper aims to study the new energy of Sanskrit renaissance in Europe due to European voyages to India, followed by trade and then the construction of British India. It created a new social impetus to Sanskrit in India too, and the Indian intelligentsia, empowered by western education also began to examine texts written in the language. Interpretations came out in a pouring manner of these ancient texts, some locating them as the manufacturers of caste system, and some appreciating their contribution to science, literature, and philosophy and especially law. We have to re-understand how German intelligentsia interpreted and viewed these texts. The concept of nation in the age of nationalism, and its ideology of an imagined community with similar culture and shared beliefs has brought forth the necessity to enquire into the foundation of India's modern identity, as perhaps, constructed by Oriental scholarship and the knowledge with new developments it brought forth.

**Keywords:** Sanskrit Renaissance, Colonial European Cultural Interactions, Re-construction of Socio-cultural Power, Indian subcontinent

Marx's writings brought forth the tradition of historical materialism that studies "how our everyday lives are structured by the connection between relations of power and economic processes." Accordingly, it studies questions of "how specific relations of power and specific economic formations have developed historically." These relations "form the context in which the institutions, practices, beliefs, and social rules (norms) of everyday life are situated." A society evolves its "shared practices, values, beliefs, and artifacts" based on the way its economic production operates. It argues that "human societies act upon their environment and its resources in order to use them to meet their needs. Hunter-gatherer, agrarian, feudal, and

capitalist modes of production have been the economic basis for very different types of society throughout world history” (Little, et al).

In this line of thought scholars in popular culture have begun to argue that the rise of the middle classes all over the world has brought about economic and political changes. As the Catholic Church did not support the business men “they split from the old Church (Catholic), and created their own new church (Protestantism), that did not look down on money lending, and moved from Europe to America to create a republic that supported free enterprise and did not care much for inherited entitlement. In the new world order created by Americans, professionalism matters more than loyalty.” To avoid this shift from feudalism to capitalism in India, “the feudal orders were legitimised by brahmins, who helped establish new villages especially in the south, and created systems for tax collection for God’s first servant, the king.” The business class was “patronised by the monastic Buddhist and Jain orders, who looked down on violence that was integral to war and agricultural activities.” There are exceptions to this as “many trading communities embraced Brahminism such as the Gujarati Vaishnavas and the Tamil Chettiars.” Mainstream economy in India “favoured the kshatriya feudalism to market-based economies of vaishyas.” Before this period India was “a country of sea-faring merchants” and “outsourced international trade to Arabs.” After social codes began insisting on “valuing submission to authority” the economic power of India came down (Pattanaik).

This Weberian approach also hints at historic materialism, as economy is perceived to be the superior deciding factor to decide cultural preferences. A historic materialist approach would interpret India’s past culture as a supporting system to its economic and political structure; hence the contemporary economic and political structure would quite naturally bring changes in culture and worldview. Economic forces would ultimately control and operate culture and codes.

India’s social codes in written format have been established by a particular religious community, that got widespread scholarly and legal approval of the monarchy in Indian sub-continent in the earlier days, and later by the academia of the western world, and thus, one can agree to a certain extent with the current idea that colonization has created a heavy social impact on the contemporary Indian sub-continent, and continues to influence the worldview of its people. The current principle of equity across the world is supporting knowledge economy and democracy. The past is slowly losing its grip; and a transition from the old to new would involve lots of emotional responses from the agents of the past and future. At this fluid state, it would become a necessity to re-understand how the past merged into the present. Myths and interpreted texts belonging to one of the many languages negotiating with European society changed the history of India, as it is understood today. A new discourse is born examining the history in the

myths. New voices in contemporary India demand explanations for the way British Indian administration appropriated bygone codes for their political strategies and revived them.

The *Manusmriti* is an ancient legal text among the many Dharmaśāstras of Hinduism. It was one of the first Sanskrit texts translated during the British rule of India in 1794, by Sir William Jones, and used to formulate the Hindu law by the colonial government. 'Over fifty manuscripts of the *Manusmriti* are now known, but the earliest discovered, most translated, and presumed authentic version since the 18th century has been the Calcutta manuscript with Kulluka Bhatta commentary.' Modern scholarship states this presumed authenticity is false, and the various manuscripts of *Manusmriti* discovered in India are inconsistent with each other, and within themselves, raising concerns about its authenticity, insertions and interpolations made into the text in later times. (Sarkar)

The text is “variously dated to be from the 2nd century BCE to the 3rd century CE” and it has “a discourse” between Manu and Bhṛigu, and scholars perceive that it had an impact even in the kingdoms in Cambodia and Indonesia. “Eighteenth-century philologists Sir William Jones and Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel assigned *Manusmriti* to the period of around 1250 BCE and 1000 BCE respectively,” though later scholarship has not validated the claim shifting the period to “200 BCE and 200 CE.” It is argued that *Manusmriti* “was not a new document,” and “it drew on other texts” reflecting “accumulated knowledge” of the past. It defines statecraft and duties basically. “The foundational texts of *Manusmriti*” are many and “most of these ancient texts are now lost, and only four of them have survived: the law codes of Apastamba, Gautama, Baudhayana, and Vasistha” (Sarkar).

Schlegel fell in love with these Sanskrit texts, and German Romanticism identified these thoughts as the core Indian ideology.

I have already referred to Schlegel's enthusiasm for India, and then his subsequent revulsion from it and of course from Islam. Many of the earliest Oriental amateurs began by welcoming the Orient as a salutary derangement of their European habits of mind and spirit. The Orient was overvalued for its pantheism, its spirituality, its stability, its longevity, its primitivity, and so forth. Schelling, for example, saw in Oriental polytheism a preparation of the way for Judeo-Christian monotheism: Abraham was prefigured in Brahma. (Said 150)

The eighteenth century was demarked by Orientalist projects beginning with “Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 and his foray into Syria.” Earlier, scholars like Abraham-Hyacinthe

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Anquetil-Duperron (1731-1805) had attempted to go “beyond the comparative shelter of the Biblical Orient.” He was “an eccentric theoretician of egalitarianism, a man who managed in his head to reconcile Jansenism with orthodox Catholicism and Brahmanism, and who traveled to Asia in order to prove the actual primitive existence of a Chosen People and of the Biblical genealogies” (Said 76).

Scholars like Jones had more interest in law “an occupation with symbolic significance for the history of Orientalism.” Before Jones came to India, “Warren Hastings had decided that Indians were to be ruled by their own laws,” by laws that already existed in Persian language – translations of Sanskrit into Persian. “No Englishman at the time knew Sanskrit well enough to consult the original texts. A company official, Charles Wilkins, first mastered Sanskrit, then began to translate the Institutes of Manu; in this labor he was soon to be assisted by Jones, (Wilkins, incidentally, was the first translator of the Bhagavad-Gita.)” Bengal became the centre for Oriental research and “in January 1784 Jones convened the inaugural meeting of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, which was to be for India what the Royal Society was for England.” Jones was its “first president of the society and as magistrate, Jones acquired the effective knowledge of the Orient and of Orientals that was later to make him the undisputed founder (The phrase is A. J. Arberry's) of Orientalism.” His goals were “to rule and to learn, then to compare Orient with Occident.” He wanted “to codify, to subdue the infinite variety of the Orient to "a complete digest" of laws, figures, customs, and works,” and “his most famous pronouncement indicates the extent to which modern Orientalism” was a “comparative discipline having for its principal goal the grounding of the European languages in a distant, and harmless, Oriental source” (Said 78).

The Sanscrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologist could examine them all three without believing them to have sprung from some common source. (Said 79 - quoting Jones)

Jones established the prestige of Sanskrit and put it on the world map and created a new theory of linguistics, followed by the research of a number of scholars on Indo-European languages. Similarities and agreements in languages and their words and inflectional system resulted in comparative linguistics. Branches of linguistics and this emerging science acquired a new impetus.

Edward Said studies the four elements of Orientalism: “expansion, historical confrontation, sympathy and classification.” Particularly, it was a narrow “religious scrutiny by which it had hitherto been examined (and judged) by the Christian West. In other words, modern Orientalism derives from secularizing elements in eighteenth-century European culture.” This had an impact on European worldview too: it expanded “the Orient further east geographically and further back temporally loosened, even dissolved, the Biblical framework considerably.” A kind of global picture emerged in the academia and the “reference-points were no longer Christianity and Judaism with their fairly modest calendars and maps, but India, China, Japan and Sumer, Buddhism, Sanskrit, Zoroastrianism, and Manu” (Said 120).

Orientalism enhanced the understanding of Europe’s religious outlook from a different perspective. It helped the European academia notice the different types of religions and their longevity and sustainability from a different perspective. It reviewed established concepts and renewed itself with a new unleashed oriental energy. Oriental scholarship began locating the culture of the orient as well as the occident.

The most common sort of lie is that by which a man deceives himself...Now, this will not, to see what one sees, this will not, to see it as it is, is almost the first requisite for all who belong to a party of whatever sort: the party man becomes inevitably a liar. For example, the German historians are convinced that Rome was synonymous with despotism and that the Germanic peoples brought the spirit of liberty into the world: what is the difference between this conviction and a lie?... Kant...was on the same road: this was his practical reason. There are questions regarding the truth or untruth of which it is not for man to decide; all the capital questions, all the capital problems of valuation, are beyond human reason.... To know the limits of reason—that alone is genuine philosophy.... Pagans are all those who say yes to life, and to whom “God” is a word signifying acquiescence in all things.—The “law,” the “will of God,” the “holy book,” and “inspiration”—all these things are merely words for the conditions under which the priest comes to power and with which he maintains his power,—these concepts are to be found at the bottom of all priestly organizations, and of all priestly or priestly-philosophical schemes of governments. The “holy lie”—common alike to Confucius, to the Code of Manu, to Mohammed and to the Christian church—is not even wanting in Plato. (Nietzsche)

Unintentionally and quite spontaneously perhaps, Nietzsche places Sanskrit and its racial hegemonic codes on par with religions that operated with a prophet and his teachings. German philological ideology viewed Sanskrit texts as phenomenal development of human mind and its

supreme perfection – the symbolic superman – the highest form of human evolution – a natural leader with the complete power to dominate and to practice hegemony. The pyramid model of the organization of societies makes humanity perform better, it argued. It compared the ideology of egalitarianism proposed by its monotheistic, organized religion with the polytheistic, materialistic, hierarchic ideologies codified in Sanskrit. It could not study its advantages and the other’s disadvantages. It viewed itself narrow and viewed the other as broad in its bold celebration of inequality and oppression of fellow beings. As it did not actually ‘see’ the practices and did not ‘live’ the inequality order, it could not grasp the nuances of caste system and its implications and outcome. European colonialism intervened with the Indian written ideologies and reinforced them with a rigorous academic force and that gave a new energy to Sanskrit. Its academic system and its emotional attributes received an impetus from the western academia that institutionalized its classicism.

The nation called India began to be identified with this academic language that was pan Indian in a selected academic system and religious order which had Gurus or teachers of the highest order in their academic world who were revered, and the disciples were and still are trained not to question the ancient texts. The language was carefully preserved by a community and hence, its texts to a certain extent were preserved, just like the way the monasteries preserved Greek texts.

Stories have been constructed that Sanskrit is the language of the Gods, and hence any text associated with its usage acquires the status of godliness. Comparative language studies ultimately ended in comparing religions and societies in European academia, and placed Sanskrit as a language that produced intellectual texts of a high order. We have a proverb in Tamil – “Ikkaraikku akkarai pachai” – the other side land looks greener – and it is this principle which might help explaining the German interpretation of Sanskrit texts. The occidental philologist worked within this law.

The fact that, in Christianity, “holy” ends are not visible is my objection to the means it employs. Only bad ends appear: the poisoning, the calumny, the denial of life, the despising of the body, the degradation and self-contamination of man by the concept of sin—therefore, its means are also bad.—I have a contrary feeling when I read the Code of Manu, an incomparably more intellectual and superior work, which it would be a sin against the intelligence to so much as name in the same breath with the Bible. It is easy to see why: there is a genuine philosophy behind it, in it, not merely an evil-smelling mess of Jewish rabbinism and superstition,—it gives even the most fastidious psychologist something to sink his teeth into. And, not to forget what is most important, it differs



fundamentally from every kind of Bible: by means of it the nobles, the philosophers and the warriors keep the whip-hand over the majority; it is full of noble valuations, it shows a feeling of perfection, an acceptance of life, and triumphant feeling toward self and life—the sun shines upon the whole book.— All the things on which Christianity vents its fathomless vulgarity—for example, procreation, women and marriage—are here handled earnestly, with reverence and with love and confidence.... I know of no book in which so many delicate and kindly things are said of women as in the Code of Manu; these old grey-beards and saints have a way of being gallant to women that it would be impossible, perhaps, to surpass. “The mouth of a woman,” it says in one place, “the breasts of a maiden, the prayer of a child and the smoke of sacrifice are always pure.” In another place: “there is nothing purer than the light of the sun, the shadow cast by a cow, air, water, fire and the breath of a maiden.” Finally, in still another place—perhaps this is also a holy lie—: “all the orifices of the body above the navel are pure, and all below are impure. Only in the maiden is the whole body pure.” (Nietzsche)

Nietzsche saw Manu’s codes as a “book of laws” that epitomized “the experience, the sagacity and the ethical experimentation of long centuries.” The purpose of these codes was “to lay before a people the possibility of future mastery, of attainable perfection” as it would permit them “to aspire to the highest reaches of the art of life.” Accordingly, “the order of castes, the highest, the dominating law, is merely the ratification of an order of nature, of a natural law of the first rank, over which no arbitrary fiat, no “modern idea,” can exert any influence.” *Manusmriti* is a natural response to the structure of universe and the highest is the “intellectual,” and the next “are marked by muscular strength and temperament,” whereas the third are people of “mediocrity, and finally “the great majority” who are located as the last in social order. “The superior caste” has “the privileges of the few,” and “only the most intellectual of men have any right to beauty, to the beautiful; only in them can goodness escape being weakness.” Similarly, “indignation is the privilege of the Chandala; so is pessimism.” The intellectual views the world as perfect “who says yes to life.” Intellectuals are the most positive people and “the most intelligent men, like the strongest, find their happiness where others would find only disaster.” They take delight in “self-mastery; in them asceticism becomes second nature, a necessity, an instinct. They regard a difficult task as a privilege; it is to them a recreation to play with burdens that would crush all others.” To them knowledge becomes “a form of asceticism” and “they are the most honourable kind of men.” They are ruling “not because they want to, but because they are.” They are “the guardians of the law, the keepers of order and security” (Nietzsche).

The order of castes, the order of rank, simply formulates the supreme law of life itself; the separation of the three types is necessary to the maintenance of society,

and to the evolution of higher types, and the highest types—the inequality of rights is essential to the existence of any rights at all.—A right is a privilege. Everyone enjoys the privileges that accord with his state of existence. Let us not underestimate the privileges of the mediocre. Life is always harder as one mounts the heights—the cold increases, responsibility increases. A high civilization is a pyramid: it can stand only on a broad base; its primary prerequisite is a strong and soundly consolidated mediocrity. The handicrafts, commerce, agriculture, science, the greater part of art, in brief, the whole range of occupational activities, are compatible only with mediocre ability and aspiration; such callings would be out of place for exceptional men; the instincts which belong to them stand as much opposed to aristocracy as to anarchism. (Nietzsche)

The majority of people are made into “intelligent machines” and “to the mediocre mediocrity is a form of happiness; they have a natural instinct for mastering one thing, for specialization.” A profound intellect has to accept “mediocrity in itself.” The exceptional man will handle the mediocre man with “more delicate fingers than he applies to himself or to his equals, this is not merely kindness of heart—it is simply his duty.” The people who speak of equality, the “socialists, the apostles to the Chandala” actually “undermine the workingman’s instincts, his pleasure, his feeling of contentment with his petty existence.” Evil refers to “all that proceeds from weakness, from envy, from revenge” (Nietzsche).

Hegel viewed Sanskrit knowledge as theocratic. “The several powers of society” that “appear as dissevered and free in relation to each other” though “the different castes are indeed, fixed,” and from the perspective of “the religious doctrine that established them, they wear the aspect of natural distinctions.” India practiced “theocratic aristocracy” and “despotism.” The social structure distinguished “between the spiritual consciousness and secular conditions.” The religion conceived a “purely abstract unity of God” that was complemented with “the purely sensual powers of nature.” The two are connected, constantly changing, “hurrying from one extreme to the other” restlessly in “a wild chaos of fruitless variation, which must appear as madness to a duly regulated, intelligent consciousness” (Hegel).

India Proper is the country which the English divide into two large sections: the Deccan – the great peninsula which has the Bay of Bengal on the east, and the Indian Sea on the west – and Hindostan, formed by the valley of the Ganges, and extending in the direction of Persia... The peninsula of the Deccan presents a far greater variety than Hindostan, and its rivers possess almost as great a sanctity as the Indus and the Ganges ... We call the inhabitants of the great country which we have now to consider Indians, from the river Indus (the English call



them Hindoos). They themselves have never given a name to the whole, for it has never become one Empire, and yet we consider it as such. (Hegel)

Hegel paid attention to the diversity and perceived the limitations of European perception which viewed the Indian sub-continent as an empire. We can assume that European academia viewed Indian sub-continent as a similar continent - linked by one worldview – Jewish Greek.

“Hindoostan” was not one empire with one mainstream culture, and it was too vast, Hegel realised. This fine understanding is ambiguous in it and emerges as vague, as he also refers to the Sanskrit codes of law as superior to the Chinese model: “With regard to the political life of the Indians, we must first consider the advance it presents in contrast with China.” India has an essential advance over those “independent members ramify from the unity of despotic power.” India practiced “distinctions” that “imply” that it is “referred to Nature.” Hegel attacks the theocratic ideologies of ancient India and argues that sub-continent created servants on a large scale leading to “spiritual serfdom” (Hegel). There are many types of perceptions about India in his mind - one contradicting with the other.

Instead of stimulating the activity of a soul as their centre of union, and spontaneously realizing that soul – as is the case in organic life – they petrify and become rigid, and by their stereotyped character condemn the Indian people to the most degrading spiritual serfdom. The distinctions in question are the Castes. In every rational State there are distinctions which must manifest themselves. Individuals must arrive at subjective freedom, and in doing so, give an objective form to these diversities. But Indian culture has not attained to a recognition of freedom and inward morality; the distinctions which prevail are only those of occupations, and civil conditions. (Hegel)

The masses have been divided theoretically which “influences the whole political life and the religious consciousness.” While “examining the idea of a State and its various functions,” one recognizes the “first essential function as that whose scope is the absolutely Universal; of which man becomes conscious first in Religion, then in Science.” India permits the “highest class” as “the one by which the Divine is presented and brought to bear on the community – the class of Brahmins.” The written record prove that not only the second caste that represented “subjective power and valor” like “Warriors and Governors – the Cshatriyas” but “Brahmins often become governors” (Hegel)

But equality in civil life is something absolutely impossible; for individual distinctions of sex and age will always assert themselves; and even if an equal

share in the government is accorded to all citizens, women and children are immediately passed by, and remain excluded. The distinction between poverty and riches, the influence of skill and talent, can be as little ignored – utterly refuting those abstract assertions. But while this principle leads us to put up with variety of occupations, and distinction of the classes to which they are intrusted, we are met here in India by the peculiar circumstance that the individual belongs to such a class essentially by birth and is bound to it for life. All the concrete vitality that makes its appearance sinks back into death. A chain binds down the life that was just upon the point of breaking forth. The promise of freedom which these distinctions hold out is therewith completely nullified. What birth has separated mere arbitrary choice has no right to join together again: therefore, the castes preserving distinctness from their very origin, are presumed not to be mixed or united by marriage. (Hegel)

Hegel interprets caste system as “peculiar” and compares it to a “chain” that “binds” without offering freedom to human spirit. Similar Hegelian discourses have gathered force and power in contemporary India questioning the ancient laws of social stratification that has divided the people in their worldview.

Colonial education has empowered the masses, and this has broken the myth of genetically operated intellectual powers, believing in genealogy-based talents. Women’s schools and colleges have brought women to the centre of knowledge economy in a globalised economy, and women now study even the Vedas, which was denied to them traditionally. Arya Samaj broke away from the Establishment initially and now as a nation founded on democratic principles, India continues its social negotiation with the past and present. The ancient laws have been built on the principle of polygamy, patriarchy and selective social mobility, and have been written in a self-protective mode by the writers. These codes have to be re-understood as laws that were created thousands of years ago to suit the political and legal needs of those ages. Each age will have to adapt to the changes and requirements and create fresh laws for itself. Realism has taken over in Indian writing styles, and equity, access and sustainable development have become the national goals.

A Brahmin, e.g., is allowed three wives from the three other castes, provided he has first taken one from his own. The offspring of such mixtures originally belonged to no caste, but one of the kings invented a method of classifying these casteless persons, which involved also the commencement of arts and manufactures. The children in question were assigned to particular employments; one section became weavers, another wrought in iron, and thus different classes

arose from these different occupations. The highest of these mixed castes consists of those who are born from the marriage of a Brahmin with a wife of the Warrior caste; the lowest is that of the Chandâlas, who have to remove corpses, to execute criminals, and to perform impure offices generally. The members of this caste are excommunicated and detested; and are obliged to live separate and far from association with others. The Chandâlas are obliged to move out of the way for their superiors, and a Brahmin may knock down any that neglect to do so. If a Chandâla drinks out of a pond it is defiled, and requires to be consecrated afresh. (Hegel)

Next part of Hegel’s argument elevates caste system to the Greek ideologies presented by Plato. Though Hegel seems to disagree with the principles of caste hierarchy, he is indirectly acknowledging and accepting the intellectual contribution of these texts from India, it can be pointed out. It might be apt to refer to the renewed interest in Sanskrit as a rebirth or renaissance of the language in India.

“Plato, in his Republic, assigns the arrangement in different classes with a view to various occupations” in which “a moral, a spiritual power is the arbiter.” The caste system India operates in a manner, imitating nature – one thriving on the other. Hegel does not agree with this system that is not moralistic in nature as he puts morality on a higher pedestal that imitating nature. “But this natural destiny need not have led to that degree of degradation which we observe here, if the distinctions had been limited to occupation with what is earthly – to forms of objective Spirit.” He is disappointed at the servitude and servility created by caste system. “But by the fact that in India, as already observed, differences extend not only to the objectivity of Spirit, but also to its absolute subjectivity, and thus exhaust all its relations – neither morality, nor justice, nor religiosity is to be found” (Hegel).

To gain a more accurate idea of what the Brahmins are, and in what the Brahminical dignity consists, we must investigate the Hindoo religion and the conceptions it involves... for the respective rights of castes have their basis in a religious relation...If a Brahmin is asked what Brahm is, he answers: When I fall back within myself, and close all external senses, and say dm to myself, that is Brahm... But among the Hindoos it holds a negative position towards all that is concrete; and the highest state is supposed to be this exaltation, by which the Hindoo raises himself to deity. The Brahmins, in virtue of their birth, are already in possession of the Divine. (Hegel)

Hegel refers to Brahminical consciousness and its followers as Hindoos: “However pusillanimous and effeminate the Hindoos may be in other respects, it is evident how little they hesitate to sacrifice themselves to the Highest – to Annihilation.” He compares “another instance of the same” which refers to “the fact of wives burning themselves after the death of their husbands.” There is an account of a woman burning herself after she lost her child. (Hegel)

Sometimes twenty women are seen throwing themselves at once into the Ganges, and on the Himalaya range an English traveller found three women seeking the source of the Ganges, in order to put an end to their life in this holy river. At a religious festival in the celebrated temple of Juggernaut in Orissa, on the Bay of Bengal, where millions of Hindoos assemble, the image of the god Vishnu is drawn in procession on a car: about five hundred men set it in motion, and many fling themselves down before its wheels to be crushed to pieces. The whole seashore is already strewn with the bodies of persons who have thus immolated themselves. (Hegel)

Greeks and Catholic friars are remembered in the course of Hegel’s analysis of Hindoos.

“This elevation which others can only attain by toilsome labor is, as already stated, the birthright of the Brahmins. The Hindoo of another caste, must, therefore, reverence the Brahmin as a divinity; fall down before him, and say to him: “Thou art God”” (Hegel).

It can be noticed in India even now some senior Brahmins referring to each other as ‘Swami’ – God. This profound consciousness that was carefully created amidst the community was authorized and valorized by the constant discussion about it by European academia. This mental structure of considering itself superior and believing it sincerely is the empirical proof of the power of the ancient codes and their longevity. The codes located the writers above any political system and even above the legal system.

The Brahmin possesses such a power, that Heaven’s lightning would strike the King who ventured to lay hands on him or his property. For the meanest Brahmin is so far exalted above the King, that he would be polluted by conversing with him, and would be dishonored by his daughters choosing a prince in marriage. In Manu’s Code it is said: “If anyone presumes to teach a Brahmin his duty, the King must order that hot oil be poured into the ears and mouth of such an instructor. If one who is only once-born, loads one who is twice-born with reproaches, a red hot iron bar ten inches long shall be thrust into his mouth.” (Hegel)

Hindoos do not have a sense of history like the Chinese, argues Hegel. “Though the recent discoveries of the treasures of Indian Literature” have records of “Geometry, Astronomy, and Algebra” and “Philosophy” and have a fully developed grammatically structured language called Sanskrit, “the department of History” is “altogether neglected, or rather non-existent” (Hegel).

The diversity of the sub-continent is sensed by Hegel, and he had tried to navigate through the nuances of various sects and religions in the land.

The wars of the sects of the Brahmins and Buddhists, of the devotees of Vishnu and of Siva, also contributed their quota to this confusion. – There is indeed, a common character pervading the whole of India; but its several states present at the same time the greatest variety; so that in one Indian State we meet with the greatest effeminacy – in another, on the contrary, we find prodigious vigor and savage barbarity. ... Among the Hindoos... Diversity is the fundamental characteristic. Religion, War, Handicraft, Trade, yes, even the most trivial occupations are parcelled out with rigid separation – constituting as they do the import of the one will which they involve, and whose various requirements they exhaust. (Hegel)

One can perceive that Occidentalism faced the knowledge it received via Orientalism, and it could not understand how in the sub-continent one of the classical languages that had records of fine spirituality and philosophy recommended rigorous and hegemonic materialism. It bound agreeable royalty and controlled populations using methodologies to create large numbers of workers and slaves. It began justifying Sanskrit texts-based worldview.

In India, on the contrary, distinctions made themselves prominent; but the principle of separation was unspiritual. We found incipient subjectivity, but hampered with the condition, that the separation in question is insurmountable; and that Spirit remains involved in the limitations of Nature, and is therefore a self-contradiction. Above this purity of Castes is that purity of Light which we observe in Persia; that Abstract Good, to which all are equally able to approach, and in which all equally may be hallowed. The Unity recognized therefore, now first becomes a principle, not an external bond of soulless order. The fact that everyone has a share in that principle, secures to him personal dignity. (Hegel)

Anyway, either by appreciating, or by critiquing, European intelligentsia located Sanskrit in the world linguistic map as a very important language of superior grammatical structure and

literary works, philosophy, and the sciences. Only its construction of the pyramid caste system that created slavery in a civil society and its lack of historicity and its lack of realism were the major weaknesses of this language and its religious framework, they argued. Nevertheless, for Sanskrit, it was a renaissance. Just as W.B. Yeats from England imagined that he would prefer to sail to Byzantium in search of art, denying the sensuousness of his generation, Heinrich Heine from Germany imagined that he would prefer to leave Berlin to India, celebrating Indian religion and its stories, as he understood from the new knowledge of the Orient that surrounded the German intelligentsia. The poem “Frederica” raises Sanskrit’s India to a supreme position aesthetically and culturally.

“Leave Berlin,” he says, which has “thick-lying sand.” Here people drink “weak tea” and there are “men who seem so much to know” that they understand “both God” and “themselves, and all below” with the help of “Hegel’s reason.” Whereas India is a “sunny land” in which “flowers ambrosial their sweet fragrance throw” and there “pilgrim troops on tow’rd the Ganges go / With reverence, in white robes, a festal band.” There are “palm-trees” that “wave, the billows smile, / And on the sacred bank the lotos-tree / Soars up to Indra’s castle blue” (Heine in “Frederica”).

The Ganges is roaring and “amid the foliage” one can “see / The sharp eyes of the antelope, who springs / Disdainfully along; their colour’d wings.” There are “peacocks” that move around showing their haughtiness. The Orient is lovely with sweet smelling flowers, and is a place for fantasy and romantic love: “Deep from the bosom of the sunny lea / Rises a newborn race of flowers, sweet things; / With yearning-madden’d voice Cocila sings” (Heine in “Frederica”).

The Cocila, the cuckoo is singing and the God of Love, Cama, has blessed the girl with sensuality:

Yes, thou art fair, no woman’s like to thee!  
God Cama lurks in all thy features fair,  
He dwells within thy bosom’s tents so white,  
And breathes to thee the sweetest songs he knows.  
Upon thy lips Vassant has made his lair,  
I find within thine eyes new worlds of light,  
In my own world no more I find repose.” (Heine in “Frederica”)

Vassant, the God of spring, dwells on the girl’s lips and Heine is attracted to the Orient for its sensuality and passion (Heine in “Frederica”).

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Dr. S. Sridevi

Sanskrit Renaissance and the Re-construction of Socio-cultural Power in Nation: Colonial European Cultural Interactions



Heine fantasizes and dreams of a land that is filled with natural beauty, peaceful life undisturbed by rational thinking, and innocence that pervaded the atmosphere. It is a visual treat to the reader to relish the way the European imagination perceived India. Indian Sanskrit speaking Gandharvas, celestial beings, play the western guitar in his mind. Sanskrit ruled the fantasy world of European top brass, and as suggested earlier, it gave an impetus to study this language in India just as in Europe and America. It created a new caste-based energy too, as this language was the academic, spiritual, philosophic, scientific and theological language of the learned people from one caste and a few members of royalty of certain kingdoms.

The Ganges roars; the mighty Ganges swells,  
The Himalaya glows in evening's light,  
And from the banyan-forest's gloomy night  
The elephantine herd breaks forth and yells.  
O for a type to show how she excels!  
A typo of thee, so lovely to the sight,  
Thee the incomparable, good and bright,  
So that sweet rapture in my bosom dwells.  
In vain thou see'st me seek for types, and prate,—  
See'st me with feelings struggle, and with rhyme,  
And, ah, thou smilest at my pangs of love!  
But smile! For when thou smil'st, Gandarvas straight  
Seize on the sweet guitar, and all the time  
Sing in the golden sunny halls above. (Heine in "Frederica")

Heine redefines the devil now, after the advent of Oriental knowledge into Europe. "He is not ugly, and is not lame, / But really a handsome and charming man." The devil is a "man in the prime of life" and "obliging." He is "a man of the world, and civil" and a "diplomatist" who is "well skill'd in debate" who "talks right glibly of church and state." The devil is an intellectual, in perhaps Judaic fashion, who did not accept the Establishment and asked questions, delving into the unknown. "He's rather pale, but it's really not strange, / For his studies through Sanskrit and Hegel range" (Heine in "Pictures of Travel: The Return Home. 1823-4").

Unlike in Christianity, a devil is "charming" and "handsome," and human – a new perspective to Europe.

Gottfried Herder, the Schlegel brothers, Herman Hesse, Schopenhauer and many others were either influenced or impacted by Sanskrit texts. India came to be viewed by Europe as a country whose language was Sanskrit.

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Sanskrit is considered to be the richest language in the world, due to its literary contents. Some Western scholars may be put on the first rank, to bring it into the light of the world, who translated Sanskrit texts in various foreign languages. Contributions to Vedic Literature: Fredric Rozane, was a German Scholar, who edited and translated some parts of the *Rigveda* into German in 1830. S.A. Longlois, of France, translated the whole text of the *Rigveda* into French, which was published in Paris, during 1848-51. Friedrich Max Muller (1823-1900) lived in England, sacrificed his own life in the study of the Vedas, and edited the whole *Rigveda* with its Sayanabhashya that was published by East-India Company. He published his "Vedic Hymns" on famous Suktas of the *Rigveda*, under the *Sacred Books of the East*. Theodar Benfey (1909-81), translated 130 Suktas of 1st Mandala of the *Rigveda* into German. He also translated the whole text of the *Kauthuma Shakha* in German that was published with illustrations and lexicons in the year 1848. Hermann Grassman (1809-77), was a German Scholar, who made a poetic translation of the *Rigveda* and a Lexicon of the *Rigveda* in German titled, *Wortbruchzum Rgveda*. Alfred Ludwig (1832-1911), belonged to Germany, was a Professor of Sanskrit in the University of Prague. He prepared the German translation of the *Rigveda*, titled *Der Rigveda* with 230 important Suktas of the *Atharvaveda* translated into Germany. Harace Hymen Wilson of 19th Century A.D. belonged to England and lived in India for a long time. He edited and translated the text of the *Rigveda* with the Sayana Bhashya into English. R.T.H. Griffith 1828-1906, was the first and the last after H. H. Wilson, who translated the whole text of the *Rigveda* into English. He has also published his poetic translation of the *Yajurveda*, the *Samaveda* and the *Atharvaveda*. A. Weber (1805-1901), was very famous among those who contributed to Vedic literature. He was a French Missionary. He translated the *Shukla Yajurveda Samhita's* Ninth and Tenth Chapters into Latin and its 16th chapter into German. He also translated the *Atharvaveda* into German, published under the title *Indische Studien*. A.B. Keith, was the student of McDonnell, who translated the *Taittiriya Samhita* into English, that was published under the *Harward Oriental Series* in 1914 in America. (Central Sanskrit University)

There are various schools of thought in contemporary India about the relevance of Sanskrit religious codes in the Indian sub-continent. It is popularly argued that this ancient language wrote the codes for its community, and it came to be adopted, maybe in an ad hoc manner, by kingdoms that accepted its ideology and hence, some of the codes dripped into society as social customs. It is also said and believed that the sub-continent was never one empire, and it never practiced Sanskrit codes as a constitution or legal book till the advent of the

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British. The diversity of India never permitted one single set of codes to create a mono-ideology – sections of intelligentsia continue to argue. The eminent Sanskrit authors as described by the Central Sanskrit University in India are Valmiki, Vyasa, Kalidasa, Bhasa, Harsha, Panini, Patanjali, Adi Shankaracharya, Kalhana and Jaideva.

The law in Sanskrit is known by the name of Dharmashastra i.e. the science of ordinance but the scope of Dharmashastra is more extensive than what is denoted by ‘law.’ Dharma can be defined as ordinance, duty, right, justice, morality, virtue, religion, good actions etc. *Kalpasutras* are the Primary source of ‘dharma’. These ‘Dharmashastras’ contain rules of conduct and rituals, duties of people at various stages of life. They discuss purification rites, forms of hospitality, daily oblations and judicial matters. After Dharmashastra, smritis define ‘dharma’. Although there is mention of eighteen smritis yet *Manusmriti* compiled by Manu in about 200-300 BC is the most authentic and popular. It has 2694 verses divided into twelve chapters. It deals with various topics such as cosmogony, dharma, initiation and Vedic study, the eight forms of marriage, hospitality, dietary, law, rights and duties of four castes and four stages of life (varnashramas) etc. Its influence has been enormous. Medhatithi Govindraja and Kulluka Bhatta wrote their commentaries on *Manusmriti* which are very popular. After *Manusmriti* comes the *Yajnavalkya Smriti*. It is related to the *Paraskara Grihya Sutra* of white (Shukla) *Yajurveda*. It has 1013 verses which have been distributed under the three headings of good conduct (achara), Law (vyavahara) and Repentance (pryashchitta). As compared to *Manusmriti* it is more progressive in thoughts and has been written in more systematic manner. Of all the commentaries, the commentary of Vignaneshwara written by the name of Mitakshara became more accepted. Besides these two smritis, the smritis of Narada, Brihaspati, Ushna, Harita, Katyayana, Parashara, Gautama, etc. are also well-known. The *Mahabharata* is one of the accepted texts of Dharmashastra. It is to be noted that the Smriti texts have been binding the Indians together till date. (Central Sanskrit University)

Indian academia claim that *Manusmriti* texts “have been binding the Indians together till date,” which may not reflect reality and lacks historicity, as narrated in the above mentioned passage. *Manusmriti* insisted on authoritarian model of social order, much celebrated by certain German academia, and it strongly insisted on patriarchy in public and private sphere and the worship of mother in the domestic space alone.

An Acharya is ten times greater than Upadhyaya. (Upadhyaya is one who teaches Vedas and Vedangas for a living; Acharya is one who performs the Upanayanam and initiates the disciple into Vedas and rituals along with their secrets.) The father is ten times greater than Acharya; but the mother is a thousand times greater in glory than father. (2:145) (*Manusmriti* 11)

The male scholar had to undergo rigid training. He had to be an ascetic and conduct himself with nobility.

The brahmachari, while living in the Gurukula, must observe these rules (of discipline) and have the senses restrained in order to enrich his self. (2:175) He must abstain from use of liquor (or honey), flesh, fragrant substances, garland, women and vinegar (substances remaining tasty over long periods of time) and never engage in violence to living creatures. (2:177) He must abstain from oil-bath, applying collyrium in eyes, use of footwear and umbrella; he should keep himself away from lust, anger, greed, dance and vocal and instrumental music. (2:178) He must abstain from gambling, meaningless gossip, talking of others' faults, indulging in falsehood, gazing at and embracing women and harming others. (2:179) (*Manusmriti* 12)

A student has to stand up in front of a senior in age or scholarship, offer his seat to him and go at the back of the senior when he leaves, as a mark of respect. The rigid discipline is like the one practiced in centres.

On the arrival of a person, senior in age or learning, the vital airs of the junior (who is seated) tend to go up and leave the body. He gets back the vital airs by standing up and paying obeisance to the senior (2:120). One should pay obeisance to elders (who visit him) and offer his seat to them; he should sit close to them with folded hands and follow them behind when they leave (4:154). (*Manusmriti* 19)

Mother is established as the supreme power in the domestic sphere. She must have been the head of the domestic economic system, though physically she had to be protected by her sons.

The household economy is about how certain forms of labour get divided within the household (a group of people who live together and share a common life). The most basic tasks are childcare, food preparation, and especially in temperate climates, the cleaning, heating, lighting and maintenance of dwellings, and the provision and cleaning of clothes. In the pre-industrial world, there's also a strong overlap between domestic work, various agricultural tasks and textile production for the market. The household economy is also concerned with who

controls (financial) resources within the household and who receives any additional support coming from outside (government or charities etc). (Stone)

Patriarchy is constructed well as an economic unit at the macro and micro levels. As the man of the family takes care of the macro aspects, the mother has to take charge of the micro level economic aspects.

The sisters of one's father and mother and one's own elder sister should all be treated like one's own mother. However, of them all, mother is supreme (2:133). Wealth, relative, seniority in age, superiority in action and higher learning are all to be honoured. Of these, the latter shall be regarded as superior to the former (2:136). The father protects a woman in her childhood till she is married; husband protects her in youth after marriage; sons protect her in old age; woman should not be allowed freedom (9:3). One should not marry a bride who is grey-haired, has extra limbs, is diseased, has no hair or too much of hair on the body, is too loquacious and yellow-eyed (3:8). (*Manusmriti* 20)

The race has to be sustained and hence marriages are alliances of groomed bodies. Forms other than the ones prescribed were marginalized and perhaps excluded from mainstream life. A woman's form has to be pleasing and charming and gentle.

The girl should not bear names of stars, trees, rivers, ill-cultured, mountains, birds, serpents, servants, nor terrifying names (3:9). One should marry a girl, free from handicaps, having pleasing name, attractive gait of swan and elephant, thin hair on body and head and thin teeth and soft limbs (3:10). The gods rejoice in the homes where women are honoured. Where they are not honoured, all rites (including Vedic yagas) are fruitless (3:56). (*Manusmriti* 21)

World cultures have limited the role of women in society and in India even in her house. She is not given any power in the domestic space. "In childhood, a female should remain under the control of her father; in youth, her husband; when the husband dies, she must be under the control of her sons. She should not be allowed independence" (5:148) (*Manusmriti* 22). She need not follow any rituals like men. She cannot have the physical freedom of men. "By serving her husband well she is adored in Swarga (5:155). A woman, cohabiting with someone other than her husband, is vilified in this world and suffers from miserable diseases of sin; she is reborn as a jackal" (5:164) (*Manusmriti* 23).

After the death of her husband, the woman should live on sacred flowers, roots and fruits, thinning down her body; she should not even utter the name of another

man (5:157). Till her death a widow should observe forgiveness and chastity with discipline and desire to follow the supreme rules of dedication to her dead husband's memory (5:158). The eldest son alone shall inherit the entire parental property (on their death); the younger sons should depend on him in the same manner in which they were depending on their father so far (9:105). Every brother should give a portion from their share to his sister. Any brother failing to give one-fourth of his share to his sister shall have fallen from dharma (9:118). (*Manusmriti* 25)

Family life and hospitality are integral for the strengthening of social systems. A householder has to protect women who need nourishment as every civilization puts forth human values as benchmarking.

A householder should not himself consume food, which has not been served to the guest. Entertaining guest respectfully leads to attainment of wealth, fame, long life and also heaven (3:106). Newly married women (daughters, daughters-in-law), unmarried girls, sick persons, pregnant women - these should be fed prior to the guests without second thoughts (3:114). (*Manusmriti* 28)

Cleanliness and hygiene are emphasized as marks of a well-managed household. People will have to aim at living a longer duration, and food has to be consumed with care and not become a kind of an unhealthy passion to which one should not become a victim.

One should not give remnants of eaten food to anyone. One should not eat between meals (the two meals eaten in morning and evening). Overeating should not be done. One should not go anywhere without washing properly after meal (2:56). Excessive eating is unhealthy and opposed to longevity and religious merit and is condemned by people. Hence that should be shunned (2:57). (*Manusmriti* 34)

These ideologies slowly controlled the monarchic systems and established themselves as rule books. With great difficulty the western colonizer acquired this language and began translating the cultural works and codes into European languages and arrived at theories of philology, linguistics, anthropology, philosophy and even themes and styles for literary works.

William Jones came to India in 1783 appointed as a judge in the Supreme Court. He wanted to produce a "collection of fundamental works in Indian jurisprudence." He translated "*Al Sira-jyiyah* or *The Mohammedan Law of*



*Inheritance*” in 1792, and “*The Laws of Menu*” in 1796. “*A Digest of Hindu Law*” was written by his successor “judge H.T. Colebrooke” in 1801. After Jones established the genealogical linking of Indian and European languages” he began “linking Menu to Roman law, with the suggestion that like European and Indian languages, they all shared some common primordial revelatory source (Haldar 2007: 118–19)” (Young).

Jones begins the Preface to *The Laws of Menu* with two sentences that take up a page apiece. In the first, he writes: It is a maxim in the science of legislation and government, that *Laws* are of no avail without manners, or, to explain the sentence more fully, that the best intended legislative provisions would have no beneficial effect even at first, and none at all in a short course of time, unless they were congenial to the disposition and habits, to the religious prejudices, and approved immemorial usages, of the people, for whom they were enacted; especially if that people universally and sincerely believed, that all their ancient usages and established rules of conduct had the sanction of an actual revelation from heaven: the legislature of Britain having shown, in compliance with this maxim, an intention to leave the natives of these Indian provinces in possession of their own *Laws*, at least on the titles of contracts and inheritances, we may humbly presume, that all future provisions, for the administration of justice and government in India, will be conformable, as far as the natives are affected by them, to the manners and opinions of the natives themselves; an object, which cannot possibly be obtained, until those manners and opinions can be fully and accurately known. (Young)

Jones interpreted *Manusmriti* as “a system so comprehensive and so minutely exact, that it may be considered as the Institutes of Hindu Law” and this remark transformed the “identity of Menu at a stroke into the systematic form of a European legal text (Brine 2010).” Jones wished that the law had “to be systematized further, beyond *Halhed’s Digest*” and suggested: “introductory perhaps to a Code, which may supply the many natural defects in the old jurisprudence of this country, and, without any deviation from its principles, accommodate it justly to the improvements of a commercial age (Jones 1796: 75–6)” (Young).

Thus, British India categorized religion and caste during the nineteenth century.

W.R. Cornish, who supervised census operations in the Madras Presidency in 1871, wrote that “regarding the origin of caste we can place no reliance upon the statements made in the Hindu sacred writings. Whether there was ever a period in

which the Hindus were composed of four classes is exceedingly doubtful." Similarly, C.F. Magrath, leader and author of a monograph on the 1871 Bihar census, wrote, "that the now meaningless division into the four castes alleged to have been made by Manu should be put aside." Anthropologist Susan Bayly writes that "until well into the colonial period, much of the subcontinent was still populated by people for whom the formal distinctions of caste were of only limited importance, even in parts of the so-called Hindu heartland... The institutions and beliefs which are now often described as the elements of traditional caste were only just taking shape as recently as the early 18th Century." (Chakravorty)

Historians are doubtful if "caste had much significance or virulence in society before the British made it India's defining social feature." It is argued that official records in royal courts and "traveller accounts" that have been "studied by professional historians and philologists like Nicholas Dirks, G.S. Ghurye, Richard Eaton, David Shulman and Cynthia Talbot show little or no mention of caste." Scholars opine that "social identities were constantly malleable" as "slaves and menials and merchants became kings; farmers became soldiers, and soldiers became farmers; one's social identity could be changed as easily as moving from one village to another." Historians argue that "there is little evidence of systematic and widespread caste oppression or mass conversion to Islam as a result of it. All the available evidence calls for a fundamental re-imagination of social identity in pre-colonial India." The sub-continent has had "astonishing diversity." British India read and interpreted written texts and institutionalized them as a mainstream culture. The administrators tried to "frame all of that diversity through alien categorical systems of religion, race, caste and tribe." The bureaucracy collected census data and simplified categories. The middleclass officials, trained by a monotheistic culture, constructed an Indian social identity out of the diverse social identities. Their purpose was to create "a single society with a common law that could be easily governed." British administration simplified a "large, complex and regionally diverse system of faiths and social identities" and created "new categories and hierarchies" and "flexible boundaries hardened" (Chakravorty).

Nietzsche's response to Sanskrit texts is explained by scholars as a reaction to monotheism.

Nietzsche's superman represents the highest principle of the development of humanity and the affirmation of man's full potentialities. He posits the superman as a critique on Christian religion and the crisis of modernity. This is because, according to him, the Christian morality stifles the development, freedom and creativity of humanity/man, as well as making him dependent on faith.

Consequently, he advocates for the total rejection and abolition of the Christian moral ideals in order to make way for the freedom of humanity/man and consequently the emergence of super-humanity. (Ojimba et al)

Periyar addressed the Sanskrit intervention into Indian socio-politics during the rule of Britain in a straightforward manner and challenged its hegemonic principles. Brahmins influenced British India to bring Manu's codes into action; henceforth, Hindu law was equivalent to Manu's law, he argues.

After the advent of the British rule, which succeeded the Tamil kings, the Brahmins permitted only the Criminal Acts to be changed on the lines of western countries. For all civil matters, Hindu law based on Manu's code alone was brought into force. Can there be a law like Manu's law that provides a very favourable position only to one particular community? How could it be tolerated with the authority of our own law of the land? How can we permit the courts and judges to base their judgement on Manu's code? (Periyar 86)

Without much research and analyzing the reality, the government began to follow the laws of Manu, Periyar argues. They took an obsolete code and revived it to rule the people, he says.

Today our high courts are giving judgments based on the Hindu Law. As the justice is given to all taking into consideration mainly what the Manu law, rishis and devas have said sometime long ago, I am telling you all these things for deep consideration. So far as the Hindus are concerned, where there is a problem to be decided, the dharma sastras are deemed to be the main basic rock of determination. Of all, the Manu code is the most important one. The Privy Council has categorically stated about the Manu code thus: "However obsolete and out of date it might be, judgments based on it are final." Not only this, the Constitution of India is also laid down according to the Manu law. The very fact that the measures taken by the Government of Tamilnadu to enable all communities to do the job as priests in temples were nullified by the Supreme Court of India clearly demonstrated that the Manu's law is still under full sway. The Act passed by the elected representatives of the people in Tamilnadu Assembly has been set aside as derogatory and against Manu law. Now let us further see what are the laws contained in the Manu's code and how far they are just and fair. The Courts decide matters strictly conforming to the laws laid down in the Manu's code, forgetting the fact that the Manu's code is mainly intended to make a particular community (Brahmins) prosperous. (Periyar 92)

Periyar “announced a struggle in 1970 demanding that all communities should be allowed to work as temple priests, he called the discrimination a thorn in his heart.” The “government asked Periyar not to go ahead with the protests and passed a law” and “in 1972, the law was challenged in the Supreme Court, which ruled against it.” Later “when passing the order in 2006, the chief minister M. Karunanidhi famously said that the thorn in the heart of Periyar was finally removed” (Muralidharan).

The codes were written to suit monarchy and the laws were supposed to be a secret, so that it would not be questioned by the common man. The king and the Brahmin were protected under this law, Periyar argues.

Brahma is the creator of the Manu Dharma. Later it was strictly disclosed by him to rishis. (Chap.1.S.59)

Atheists Vedas and Dharma Sastra should not be questioned or debated. He who does so will be considered an atheist. (Chap.2.S.11)

Such an atheist who blames the vedas will be considered as accuser of god. (Chap.2.S.11)

Brahmins should not disclose this Manu Dharma Sastra to any other people. (Chap.1.S.103)

A King’s duty is to excommunicate the gamblers, actors, musicians, bad elements, those who defy the vedas and rituals, those who change their trades, and those who are found to consume intoxicating drinks. (Chap.9 S.226)

Division By Birth To Safeguard the world, Brahma, created the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras from his face, shoulders, thighs, and feet respectively and evolved different duties and responsibilities for each section separately. (Chap.1.S.87) (Periyar 93)

Complete freedom was given to one caste, Periyar says, that oppressed the rest of the people. He has analysed how Brahmins are similar to other communities in India, and practiced similar cultures, though socially considered superior for no particular reason.

A Brahmin could eat any living being every day for the sake of his health. There is no sin attached to brahmins eating the flesh of living beings. (Chap.5.S.30)

Particulars are given in the Manu Sastra, to please the dead forefathers by offering meat. Flesh of different birds and animals were also offered by Brahma to please God for different periods! Here are the details:

1. Paddy, rice, water, black gram, roots and fruits satisfy the dead for one month.

2. Fishes please the dead for two months.
  3. Stag's flesh pleases the dead for 3 months.
  4. Goat's flesh pleases the dead for 4 months.
  5. Bird's flesh pleases the dead for 5 months.
  6. Whitegoat's flesh pleases the dead for 6 months.
  7. Reindeer's flesh pleases the dead for 7 months.
  8. Black stag's flesh pleases the dead for 8 months.
  9. Kalaiman flesh pleases the dead for 9 months.
  10. Flesh of Porcupine, pig, bison, pleases the dead for 10 months.
  11. Flesh of rabbit, tortoise pleases the dead for 11 Months.
  12. Cow's milk, curd, ghee, pleases the dead for 1 year.
  13. A male goat's flesh pleases the dead for 12 years.
  14. With vegetables grown in the season, a fish variety 'Valai', flesh of a red coloured lamb, rice grown in forest lands, please the dead eternally. In the month of 'Purattasi' after the full moon on the 13th day, if honey, and Payasam are offered to the dead, that offering gives them full satisfaction. (Chap.3.S.267 to 273)
- If the Brahmin refuses to eat the flesh offered at the ceremonies he will be born as a cow 21 times. (Periyar 94-95)

The age-old codes have to be kept aside and new laws have to be enacted, Periyar suggests.

After the advent of Europeans, the "search for indigenous histories of early India began in the late eighteenth century." The "European scholars, familiar by this time with historical writing as a distinct category of literature, looked for the same in the Sanskrit articulation of what came to be called Hindu/Indian civilization, and were unable to find it." The "philologist William Jones suspected that there might be history in the myths and legends of the Puranas" and historians did not accept this view. (Thapar 556)

The officers of the East India Company, primarily interested in law and religion to assist them in administering their Indian colonies, derived information from their Brahman informants. Inevitably, the texts of Vedic Brahmanism, such as the Vedas, setting out ritual and belief, and the Dharmasastras, the codes governing caste and social obligations, had priority. Other systems of knowledge, especially the Buddhist and the Jaina, were assessed as inferior branches of Hinduism, particularly since they were regarded as deviant by brahman as there was little attempt at placing texts in a wider discourse of alternative systems of knowledge.

In Europe, German Romanticism made much of what came to be called the Oriental Renaissance. (Thapar 556)

Western scholars created “an influential theory of language, race, and culture—that of the Aryan race. Applied to India it became the explanation for the Aryan origins of Indian civilization, and this in turn was equated with the Brahmanism of the Vedas” (Thapar 556). William Jones referred to “itihāsas and purānas” as under the power of the British. “Lord Curzon saw the intellectual discovery of the Orient as the necessary furniture of the empire. The collection of manuscripts and artefacts for the reconstruction of history became an avid activity.” This search for manuscripts ignored “the oral compositions of the bards, collected and written about by James Tod and L. P. Tessitori” which “were generally bypassed by historians.” Historians began describing the “Orient as ‘the Other’ of Europe.” For example, “Karl Marx emphatically denied the existence of a sense of history in India.” Also, “Max Weber attributed the lack of transition to capitalism—as a manifestation of Otherness—to a failure of economic rationalism” (Thapar 557).

Contemporary voices have taken up Marxian and Weberian criticism into their discourses. Devdutt Pattanaik’s narratives reflect these ideologies.

The European mind struggled to locate this colossal and all encompassing multiculturalism - with thousands of Gods, thousands of tribes or clans, thousands of systems of religious worship that thrived gleefully with two distinct races, two classical languages and ancient literatures, multiple unwritten languages and their literatures - and understood India through the lens of a particular coding system, unconsciously looking at it as an equivalent to the entire Christian world with one ideology. It can be claimed that the nineteenth century concept of Hinduism is a child of European translation of Sanskrit texts into European languages. Extensive research is required in these areas by experts to grasp the pyramid formation with its impact, highly eulogized by Nietzsche in his interpretations of Indian culture.

Uma Chakravarti aims at understanding study caste and gender hierarchies from the perspective of ancient Indian social order.

Caste hierarchy and gender hierarchy are the organising principles of the brahmanical social order and are closely interconnected... Notions of the excessive sexuality of women were not unique to brahmanical literature and were widely prevalent in the Buddhist texts too, indicating the permeable boundaries of the two textual traditions... A marked feature of Hindu society is its legal sanction for an extreme expression of social stratification in which women and the



lower castes have been subjected to humiliating conditions of existence. Caste hierarchy and gender hierarchy are the organising principles of the brahmanical social order and despite their close interconnections neither scholars of the caste system nor feminist scholars have attempted to analyse the relationship between the two. (Chakravarti)

Other scholars have begun to view the way migrations had intervened Hindustan maybe even before 5000 years. The emerging perception is that the land has become highly heterogeneous over thousands of years. It has produced thinkers who have constantly risen above hierarchical ideologies and religious theories. There is a lot more about India that we have to explore – the rationalism of the south that lived healthily along with the revival of religions, the Sufi mysticism, the political strategies exemplified in Northern epics, the construction of the pyramid model of society – about Indian thinking practices. No one ideology could bring the sub-continent under its hold completely, as it did in Europe. This diversity is its innate nature, and experts have to delve into these areas of thought as we are confronted with the fact that no one ancient text could control the mind of these diverse people completely. One is reminded of Kabirdas:

Tell me, Brother, how can I renounce Maya?  
When I gave up the tying of ribbons, still I tied my garment about me:  
When I gave up tying my garment, still I covered my body in its folds.  
So, when I give up passion, I see that anger remains;  
And when I renounce anger, greed is with me still;  
And when greed is vanquished, pride and vainglory remain;  
When the mind is detached and casts Maya away, still it clings to the letter.  
Kabīr says, "Listen to me, dear Sadhu!  
The true path is rarely found." (Kabirdas V.1.63 translated by Tagore)

Kabir breaks away from the bondage of ideas and aims at living a life, liberating from the present or past – a life that is closely connected to the universe, just relishing the act of living. Wandering ascetics and minstrels sang songs like this across the country, building parallel thought processes, and encouraging people to connect directly with the universe. The western system of thought has branded this as Oriental mysticism, but it is much more than that. It is a symbol of Indian independent mind that strives to live on its own and that resists any kind of mono-ideology at all. There are only various groups or communities with their private religions or group religions, food habits, rituals, and practices. If one chooses to call it Hinduism for the sake of convenience, perhaps for writing purposes, it might help us. As Romila Thapar continues to insist, we have to arrive at other methods of examination and interrogation to re-understand Indian thought and practices.

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Sanskrit Renaissance and the Re-construction of Socio-cultural Power in Nation: Colonial European Cultural Interactions

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