

СЕКЦІЯ 6. ЕКОНОМІЧНІ ІДЕОЛОГІЇ ТА ЇХ КРИТИКА

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PHILOSOPHICAL SPECIFICS OF THE ECONOMIC CULTURE OF MANUSMRITI

Petlenko I. V.

*Candidate of Philosophical Sciences,
Senior Lecturer at the Department of Public Administration
and Management
Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
Kyiv, Ukraine*

Manusmriti or the laws of Manu are one of the oldest and most influential Dharmashastras. This is a text about social order, responsibilities, ethics, which was very important for the Indian management tradition. Although not an economic treatise in the modern sense, it contains many principles of economic significance, especially in the context of social hierarchy, property, taxation, labor management, and wealth distribution. The treatise was written approximately in II century BC – II century AD. The provisions described therein regulate various aspects of a person's life: from family, hereditary or trade relations to the social structure and the fulfillment of a person's purpose in life. Economic ideas are closely intertwined with a teleological basis. Topically, Olivelle classified the sections of Manusmriti as follows: “The structure that emerges from tracing the transitional verses consists of four major divisions of uneven length and importance:

- 1) Creation of the world.
- 2) Sources of dharma.
- 3) The dharma of the four social classes.
- 4) Law of karma, rebirth, and final liberation” [3, p. 8].

However, each of these topical units is presented in different chapters of Manusmriti with specific regulatory provisions and instructions regarding social, including economic, relationships. Within the framework of this guide, the following topics can be distinguished: property and its division, economic stratification according to the Varna system, tax systems, regulation of trade and agriculture.

The right of ownership is closely related to the social structure. Even though private property was recognized as inviolable, subject to the Varna, it could be restricted. For example, the Sudras were not allowed to have certain types of property reserved for the higher Varnas. The acquisition of property in Manusmriti is described in several ways: inheritance, gift, purchase, conquest, and even religious merit (for example, through the performance of sacred rites). Violations of property rights, i.e., theft, deception, illegal possession, are considered serious crimes with appropriate penalties, often severe and depending on the status of the victim and the perpetrator [2]. Inheritance was a clearly regulated transfer of property to children (mainly to the first-born son), which affects the preservation of family wealth. If a man has children by several wives, and these wives belong to different Varnas, then the fate of the property depends on the status of the mother: “Let the son of the Brahmana (wife) take three shares of the (remainder of the) estate, the son of the Kshatriya two, the son of the Vaisya a share and a half, and the son of the Sudra may take one share» [1]

This dependence on social status is determined not only for inheritance, but also for various types of activities. The Varna system also formed the economic structure of society. In a certain way, the classification of labor is economic stratification. Because labor is seen as a religious duty (dharma), and not just a source of profit. According to this, Brahmans are spiritual mentors (they could accept gifts, did not work physically). Kshatriyas are warriors, administrators (responsible for collecting taxes). Vaisya are merchants, farmers, pastoralists, forming the basis of the economy. Sudras are servants, workers engaged in physical work [4].

This shows that one of the most important economic roles was assigned to the Vaisya. Because they occupied such important fields as agriculture and trade: “The Vaisya to tend cattle, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Veda), to trade, to lend money, and to cultivate land” [1,1.90]. One of the main activities of the Vaisya is related to land cultivation, it is considered ethically higher than other crafts or trade. Manusmriti defines prohibitions on the use of other people's land without the owner's permission, damage to sown fields, for example, by walking livestock there.

Only Vaisyas are allowed to trade. At the same time, “profit ethics” and setting prices for goods that echo modern business ethics are regulated. The prohibition of usury and excessive interest rates on debts, especially those in need or Brahmans, is also defined by the laws of Manu. “In money transactions interest paid at one time (not by instalments) shall never exceed the double (of the principal); on grain, fruit, wool or hair, (and) beasts of burden it must not be more than five times (the original amount). Stipulated interest beyond the legal rate, being against (the law), cannot be recovered;

they call that a usurious way (of lending); (the lender) is (in no case) entitled to (more than) five in the hundred” [1, 8.151–152].

Another “economic unit” in Manusmriti concerns taxation and the role of the king in the process. As an economic administrator, the king shall collect moderate taxes: “After (due) consideration the king shall always fix in his realm the duties and taxes in such a manner that both he himself and the man who does the work receive (their due) reward” [1, 7.128]. The collected funds could be used to support Brahmins, protect borders, develop agriculture and trade, and do charity work.

Thus, Manusmriti forms an idea of an ethically oriented economy. Economic activity is strictly tied to social Varna. And making a profit is not a goal, but only a tool of dharma fulfillment.

The philosophical specifics of the economic culture of Manusmriti can be characterized as follows: the economy has a teleological character, activities should be evaluated according to moral criteria, and not just for profit, and the social hierarchy (Varna) is an instrument for regulating economic relations and the distribution of wealth and goods.

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