**Question: Discuss Manu’s understanding of social order?**

**Answer**

**Manu and his Social Law**

The term Manu is found with various meanings in Hinduism. In early texts, it refers to the archetypal man, or to the first man in the earth. The Sanskrit term Manu means, 'human'. In later texts, Manu is the title or name of fourteen Kshatriya rulers of earth.He is the first teacher according to legends. He revealed the essence of humanity to mankind and was the first legislator to prescribe norms of social life and practices, later incorporated in various Dharmashastra and Samhitas, premised on a moral view of history.

**Manusmriti (Manava Dharmashartha)**

Manusmriti or Manava Dharmashartha is a mythical book of Hindu religion. It wasprobably Compiled in 220 BCE to 400 CE by mythical first man and lawgiver. There are 12 chapters 2694 Shlokas. 1034 verses are related to Dharma of Brahmins and how to conduct and 971 verses for Dharma for Kshatriyas. It gave more importance on these upper Castes. First Sanskrit text has been translated into English in 1794, by Sir William Jones. Some Indian scholars commented on the Vivekananda, Amebedkar and Gandhi did accept the script whole heartedly.

**Aim or purpose of Manu’s Social laws Prescribed in Manusmriti:**

1. Firstly, aim of social law of Manu is make people virtuous. Manusmriti prescribes some ‘codes of social conduct’ for both individual and society for virtuous life and attainment of supreme individual good.
2. Secondly, Manu desired to make a particular social structure in society and he considered it as just and virtuous. It is similar to the Platonic ideal state. Hierarchical and Patriarchal social order of Manu was based on Varna system as prescribed in Vedas. The sequences from the top position of Manu’s hierarchical system was the Brahmin, Khastrya, Vaysa and in the bottom the Sudra.
3. Thirdly, the aim of Manu was to maintain the traditional social order of Hindu religion through Manusmriti. He was not the lone sage who said about the social order based on Veda. He just attempted to prescribe laws and to maintain the order and attainment of highest personal and social Good.

**Basis or Sources of Manu’s Social laws**

Manu prescribed four bases of social laws and these are

1. According to Manu the main basis of social order was the Shrutis as prescribed in Vedas, and Upanishads.
2. Other basis is social practices, traditions, conventions and conduct of virtuous people, sages and of wise persons.
3. Self satisfaction is another important basis of social law. Individual should not follow the social law blindly. If his conscience allows him he should follow the social laws, otherwise not.
4. There are three scales - Inferences, Perception and Authority through which the social laws can be proved and it was called Pramanas (proof). To justify the social laws no logic and reason should be applied. Because according to Manu all laws are given by God through His Vedas and therefore, it is not possible for people to justify these on the basis logic and reasons. These are the basis of social laws.

**Society: Social Structure**

Manu’s Views regarding society and its structure is multi-fold and these are explained as point wise as follows;

1. Society, for Manu, is the creation and manifestation of the self existing supreme Brahma, i.e. the creator who created the universe, air land, heave, hell etc.
2. According to Manu society is an organic whole. The four Varnas or social classes as its limbs. The organs of human body have no any existence if it is separated from the body. The body can perform functions with co-operation of different parts. Likewise, the society can perform its function with the co-operations with different Varna. This is similar to Plato’s ideas.
3. There are four fold divisions in society – Brahmans, Khastrya, Vaisya and Sudra. According to Manu this division of society is not just functional. It supposes a specific social hierarchy in society. The position of each Varna in the social hierarchy depends on the limb from which the Varna is said to have originated. It is assumed the four fold divisions are created from different parts of Brahma.
4. Unity of personal and common good Common good depends on proper discharge of duties by all the members of society. Similarly, personal good depends on the functioning of society as a whole, just like the health of body and of its limp are identified. It leads to the common good of society.

Thus, Manu’s social law was based on Manusmriti. To maintain social law he perceived its purpose, basis and structure in his book. Manu desired to continue Varna system through his social law. On the other ways it can be said that the main goal of Manus was to maintain the Varna system in society through his social law.