**Question: critically Manu’s concept of women. (2014)**

**Or**

**Question: Critically discuss the status of women as depicted by Manu in the Manusmriti. (2018)**

**Answer**

**Introduction**

In Manusmriti some where he respected and recognized the woman positioned her in high place in society and again in somewhere he ignored her and even said that the women is the symbol of evils. Some contradictory and objectionable slokas regarding the status of women are found in the Manusmriti. Both these are explained as follows;

1. **Daughter/Maiden:** In Vedic period the male offspring was given preference. On the contrary to the Vedic preference Manu considered that both boy and girl are equal. Therefore he used the term ‘santati’ to denote the child instead of using the gender. Manu said that the girl child should be well kept, well dressed and well ornamented in her own house as well as in her husband house. Her unhappiness and dishonor will loss the sanctity of the house. Thus, it is seen that Manu gave special places and preferences to the girl child. He viewed that the father is her real guardian and protector till her marriage.
2. **Wife:** Manu had high regard for the women and according to him; woman is the centre of man’s life. She is the Goddess of property, half part of her husband and without wife the life of man is incomplete. The unity between husband and wife is the divinely ordained by the creator. The wife is not purchased like cattle or gold rather then she is the gift of God. She cannot be deserted unless doing any crime, even the husband cannot utter hard words against his wife and otherwise husband has to be fined. On the contrary, it is the duty of wife to obey her husband and not to displease him whether he is alive or dead.
3. **Widow:** Manu never recommended the widow should die with her husband. He expected that she should live after the dead of her husband. Manu did not support the marriage of widow. He viewed that second husband is not allowed to protect her virtues. The marriage of women is not mentioned in the procedure of marriage. For widow Manu supported that she can adopt she son so that after the dead of her husband she could perform the religious ritual, *Shardda* by her adopted son. The marriage of widow would violate the duty towards her deceased husband and for which she would never go heaven.
4. **Mother:** According to Manu the *neobrhamachari* receives first aims and of goals of his life from his mother. It is the duty of each and every people to be obedience to his mother. The sons should take permission of marriage from his mother. Manu viewed that no son can abandon his mother and if he does the same it will be considered as crime and for this he will be punished. He treats of type sons as outcaste and they should not be allowed to participate in any social and religious ceremony. According to Manu the motherhood is the gift of creator. The mothers were provided some concessions such as during the pregnant period the women were exempted from the pay too-tax.

**Criticism**

1. **Women are not independent:** However, despite the praise showered on women, Manu has kept the woman under male domination. Sloka 3 of chapter IX has described that the women are not independent. “In childhood the father protects her, in youth she is protected by her husband and in old age sons protect her.
2. **Views regarding Prostitutes and Slaves:** In his book, Manusmriti Manu also commented some negative sentences against women. The views of Manu regarding prostitutes and slaves were not good. He said that the Brahmins should not take food from prostitutes. He regards them as the social evil and therefore, they should be killed. He supported that slave girls should serve the king and king should fix wages for their service.
3. **Women are restricted to perform Religious Functions:** Manu did not recognized women’s right to strengthen herself by prayer for her duties, and to purify her by penance. The religious duties which consisted in reciting, reading and teaching the Holy Scriptures was restricted for women. Manu commanded her to make oblations. He threatened with hell the young woman who should sacrifice to fire.
4. **Women are the gateway to hell:** Manu held that a woman was fickle minded, lascivious and a seducer of man. Her body was the gateway to hell. She was impure in her thoughts and desires. Therefore he advised a wise man to avoid a woman. He even prohibited a disciple to be alone with his Guru.
5. **Domination of husband on his wife:** Manu believed that the woman should worship her husband. He said the “husband is the lord and master of his wife; he must be adored and obeyed even if he is devoid of all virtues.” Manu prescribed heavy penalties for the unfaithful woman and the adulteress. He emphasized on the domination of husband on his wife.
6. **Restrictions on Women by Manu:** A woman in the household must be cheerful and must be an adept in house management. She must be dedicated to the husband during her life time. The wife should not perform any *Yarsana* without the permission or presence of her husband. The wife should not do anything which will displease her husband during his life time or even after his death.
7. **Tried to Brainwashed the Women:** In accordance with his analysis, the women at every stage of her life is treated, brainwashed and taught that she is not wanted, she has no separate identity, she is helpless, she is weak and worthless. This is a psychological pressure always exerted on the women that in every sphere of life they are inferior to men.
8. **Contradictory Views: :** On the one hand Manu considered that both boy and girl are equal and used the term ‘santati’ to denote the child instead of using the gender. But in actual practice he gave more importance to the boy child.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion it can be said that Manu’s views regarding the position of women is both positive as well as negative. In somewhere he depicted that woman are to be respected and in some where he compared them with evil. From both of these types of analysis it can be concluded that Manu preferred to man dominated social system where the women cannot enjoy their liberty. At the age the maiden she has to remain under the control of her father, after marriage under her husband and at time old age under her sons or else other.