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Persistent mistranslations of samskrtam and Hindu scriptures

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Abstract

Unnoticed by scholars to this day, the beauty, clarity and accuracy of Samskrtam (संस्कृतम्) and Hindu Scriptures have been greatly diminished by mistranslations that persist in all Samskrtam to English (also to French, German, etc) dictionaries to this day, such as *dasa* (दास) as also "slave" (in addition to correct translation "servant") and *arya* (आर्य) as also "Aryan race" (in addition to correct translation "honorable"), originated by early European scholars who were the first to translate Hindu scriptures from Samskrtam into European languages during late 18th century and 19th century, with the good intention of making the treasures of Hindu scriptures available to the western world, but unfortunately tainted by their own newly invented erroneous theory of a superior fair skinned "Aryan race" that invaded or migrated to ancient India bringing with them the Vedic knowledge and enslaved dark skinned inferior natives. These mistranslations also create a false perception that Hindu scriptures are confusing and contradictory. While Indologists and anthropologists have debated at length (mainly in English and other European languages), often contentiously, whether the "Vedic Aryans" were indigenous to India or came from outside in ancient times, they all, guided by the dictionary translations, *seem to have assumed that* आर्य *also means race, and that* दास *also means slave*, *without questioning the translation itself*. Some anthropologists today have rejected the "Aryan race" theory, but it is persisting in Samskrtam dictionaries and hence in translations.

This paper reviews आर्य and दास in scriptures *without assuming the validity of Samskritam-English dictionaries which are all traceable to European origins in early 19th century,* and thereby establishes that there is no evidence of "Aryan race" or slavery in ancient Hindu society. This conclusion is arrived at by systematically analyzing the origins of the mistranslations, and by examining and showing how rectification of such errors removes contradictions and confusion*,* thereby enhancing the accuracy, clarity and beauty of Samskritam language and the Hindu scriptures in question, with relevant examples from *Arthasastra* (अर्थशास्त्र) and *Manu Smrti* (मनु स्मृति) dating back to BC era long before Europeans arrived.

In order to restore the translations of Hindu scriptures to their original clarity, accuracy and beauty, there is thus an urgent need to correct the dictionaries and also the large volume of books and papers that have been published and are continuing to be published. In this regard, this paper may urge the scholars at Deccan College, Pune, India, who have undertaken a massive effort to collect and compile all Samskrtam words and their meanings from ancient times, setting a reference data base for all to use (after many decades they are yet to reach आर्य let alone दास), to correct this and any other mistranslations that they may discover.

Key words: Sanskrit dictionaries, mistranslations, Arya आर्य, Dasa दास**,** Arthasastra अर्थशास्त्र, Manusmrti मनु स्मृति

Introduction

French scholar Gaston-Laurent Coeurdoux seems to be the earliest known European to note similarities between Samskrtam, Latin and Greek, in his 1767 memoire to French Academy of Science. Substantive developments by the English came shortly afterwards. As colonial Europeans with careers in India began their luxurious living with free time on their hands, some of them out of curiosity began learning Samskrtam in which ancient Hindu scriptures are written. They were thoroughly impressed by its beauty and richness. In late 18th century, William Jones, a judge posted in Calcutta who was also a philologist, was among the first

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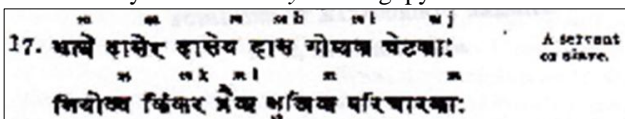**Sarma N Gullapalli**
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Englishmen to learn Samskrtam. Before coming to India he had earned a good reputation translating to English works in Greek, Arabic and Persian. Based on similarities that he noticed between Samskrtam, Greek, Latin and Persian, he felt that these languages may have a common origin, *observing that Samskrtam was richer and more complete than Persian, implying that Samskrtam may be the origin*. During 1784-94 he delivered a series of lectures on this subject to the Asiatic Society of Bengal that he himself had founded. This group of languages, expanded to include some more languages, came to be known as the *Indo-European Language group*. Jones also postulated a *common origin of the proto people* speaking these languages, and a *common origin of their proto religions* as well, speculating beyond his domain of philology. Jones' theories soon led to the European theory that the *Vedas* were brought to India from outside by a superior light skinned "*Aryan race*" that invaded ancient India and *enslaved* the inferior dark skinned natives of India. This theory influenced the Europeans' translation of Samskrtam word *arya* (आर्य) as "honorable *or race*", unwarrantedly (as shown in this paper) adding "race" to the proper meaning "honorable", and the word *dasa* (दास) as "servant *or slave*", unwarrantedly (as shown in this paper) adding "slave" to the proper meaning "servant". We shall show that these mistranslations result in contradictions, and that the correct translation must be for आर्य as "*honorable*" such as for a person *free from debt,* and for दास as "*servant*" including servant who is indebted (we shall shortly explain the term indebted servant), which will resolve the contradictions and dispel confusions and thereby enhance the real meaning, beauty and precision of Samskrtam language and of the translated documents.

1807: Attempt at systematic translation of Samskrtam words by H.T. Colebrook
An early attempt at Samskrtam to English dictionary appears to be the translation of *Umura (Amara) Kosha*, a 4th century CE Smaskritam – Samskritam *Kosha* (collection of vocabulary explanations of words authored by *Umura Singha*) by H.T. Colebrook (1756-1837) in 1807 [1].
In this *Kosha*, unlike in a European-style dictionary, words are not in alphabetical order, but are grouped by their meanings, and the explanation is in meter form. In Chapter X which covers the words of fourth "tribe" (caste) which includes servants, the word दास is explained as follows, reproduced directly from Colebrooke's book with his translation in the margin as "A servant or slave". For clarity of the old print the Samskritam words are also shown in English script above and below the two lines, with the meaning above and below them. None of the words even remotely suggest buying or selling of a person, the main characteristic of a slave. Given that the root of दास is दा to give, the servant simply *gives* service.

hired forms of word *dasa* guard servants
bhritye *dasera daseya dasa* gopyaka chetakah

niyogya kinkara preshya bhujishya paricharakah
master ordered servant (using) sinew attendants

Moreover, we shall show in the following examples from *Arthasastra* (a 4th - 2nd century BCE treatise by the great

statesman/scholar *Kautilya,* which includes legal rules governing all activities) that when an indebted servant (we shall explain shortly what we mean by indebted servant, it is not slave) is "sold" or "bought", the qualifying words of buying or selling are explicitly included. In the absence of such qualifying words the word दास cannot mean slave. Therefore the correct translation of दास must be "*servant*" as for example an indebted servant, which will also become evident from context in the examples from *Arthasastra* to be given shortly.
Chapter VIII of *Umura (Amara) Kosha* covers words pertaining to the second "tribe" (caste) *Kshatriya* (military, royal persons). The word आर्य does not even appear in this chapter, indeed nowhere in the entire book, clearly indicating that it does not represent a superior ruling race. As we shall show shortly with examples from *Arthasastra,* the word आर्य is just an ordinary word applicable to any honorable person not in indebted servitude.

1819: First dictionary, by H.H. Wilson
The first Samskrtam to English dictionary appears to be by H.H. Wilson in 1819 [2], who had translated दास correctly as "servant" in his translation of a hymn in Rg Veda,
उत दासा परिविषे स्मद्दिष्टी गोपरीणसा । यदुस्तुर्वश्च मामहे ॥१०॥
"Yadu and Indra speaking auspiciously, and possessed of numerous cattle, gave them like **servants**, for the enjoyment", *Rigveda 10.62.10, Translated by HH Wilson* (from Wikipedia).
But in his dictionary Wilson seems to have retained Colebrook's 1807 translation as "servant or slave" because Monier Williams who followed his (Wilson's) dictionary used "servant or slave".

1872: Dictionary by Monier Williams
The next one was by Monier Williams in 1872 [3] (it seems he was asked to complete Wilson's work, and there may be versions earlier than 1872), who had followed Wilson's dictionary but translated दास even more removed from truth, with primary meaning as "evil, barbarian, infidel, servant, slave", and with secondary meaning as the totally opposite "knowing man, knower of universal spirit", creating utter confusion for a simple word from the root दा "to give"! The reason why these European scholars, who truly loved and admired Samskrtam and went out of their way to translate Hindu scriptures in their spare time and to prepare dictionaries in order to bring this treasure of knowledge to the English speaking world, nevertheless committed such errors, is because they were biased by their own newly conceived superior "Aryan race" theory and of an "Aryan invasion" of ancient India that enslaved inferior natives. This theory heavily colored their translations as they read the Hindu scriptures, almost as if they were looking for evidence of an "Aryan" invading race that enslaved the natives. Moreover, *when Europeans arrived in India there was slavery in India*, but it was brought by Muslim conquerors beginning around 1000 AD, and later on practiced also by Europeans until it was abolished in mid-19th century, and this may also have colored the Europeans' translations. Thus we see how their dictionary translations were made to suit their theory of enslaving "Aryan race", and then these dictionary translations were used by others to infer from the scriptures that there was an "Aryan race" and slaves in ancient Hindu society, a circular logic which is clearly inadmissible. Unrelated word "dasyu" was also brought into this, causing even more

confusion. These mistranslations transformed the precise language of Samskritam into a confusing collection of conflicting meanings, for Euro-Americans to choose as they liked to suit their "Aryan race" theories.

1890: Dictionary by Vaman Shivram Apte

By late 19th century more and more Indians, learning under their English professors, were becoming proficient in English. In 1890 Vaman Shivram Apte [4] prepared a Samskrtam to English dictionary substantially using Monier Williams' dictionary to which, in his own words, "I have been greatly indebted. I have constantly kept it by my side, and I have freely utilized his renderings … I must freely acknowledge the assistance it has often rendered me in the explanation of words and expressions". It is understandable that 19th century Indians relied on Englishmen's translations because naturally the Englishmen knew English better. The net result was that Englishmen's mistranslation of words दास and आर्य freely entered Apte's dictionary, and moreover, whenever "servant" showed up in translation of words other than दास, it invariably became "servant or slave", thus propagating this error throughout the dictionary.

1893: Dictionary by Arthur MacDonnell (Oxford)

Arthur MacDonnel translates दास as "demon, infidel, slave, servant". Notice how the correct translation "servant" is moved to the last place. He translates आर्य as "Vedic Indian" and does not use the word "race", but may be implying foreign origin, or the upper castes, which is incorrect.

2018: Heritage Dictionary (Samskrtam-French) edited by Gerard Huet

Gerard Huet ranslates दास as "esclave" (slave), "serviteur" (servant), and आर्य as "noble", "de race aryenne" (Aryan race). Thus such mistranslations persist to this day in all dictionaries.

1909: Translation of *Arthasastra* by R. Shamasastry

Through the use of these dictionaries this error propagated into translations of all Samskrtam documents including the translation of *Arthasastra* by R. Shamasastry in 1909 [5], which as shown below results in contradictions, which are removed only when the translations of दास and आर्य are corrected as "servant or indebted servant" and "honorable" respectively.

Before discussing the examples from *Arthasastra* it is important to understand what we may call an "indebted servant" for lack of a better English term, the closest being "indentured person" which was a limited service contract in exchange for free travel, a custom in British Empire, and does not exactly mean what "indebted servant" means. In ancient India, as in many other ancient societies, one could offer to do some service in lieu of cash payment, similar to barter trade. *As indicated below in the examples from Arthasastra, this arrangement was not limited to lower castes*. The person can be from any caste, such as a priest (*Brahmana*) perhaps offering ceremonial service, or a warrior (*Kshatria*) perhaps offering protection service, or a merchant (*Vaisya*) perhaps offering sales or transportation service, or a laborer (*Sudra*) offering manual labor, all in exchange for goods or services. Such a person then becomes an indebted servant *till the agreed upon work is completed*. A person can *volunteer* to become an indebted servant. An indebted servant thus

becomes a service commodity that can be bought or sold, *only for the value of remainder of the original contract*. If the indebted person dies before fulfilling the contractual obligations, the remainder becomes the responsibility of his or her children, and thus one can become a *born* indebted servant, and subsequently become honorable again upon fulfilling the contract, as examples below show. There were laws and regulations governing all such activities, such as defined in *Arthasastra*.

A Samskritam text of Kautilya's *Arthasastra* (dating back to 4th - 2nd century BCE) was printed in 1924 by Ganapati Sastry [6], an eminent Samskrtam scholar who had access to old documents. The following three examples are excerpts from Book III Chapter XIII which is about the rules concerning servants and laborers, along with Shamasastri's translation which must have been according to Samskritam-English dictionaries originated by Europeans and adopted by Indians. We highlight the contradictions that make no sense, followed by correct translations which make sense with no contradictions. These three examples are sufficient to show beyond any doubt that European translations of दास and आर्य are wrong.

NOTE: Given the dictionary meaning of Samskritam word आर्य to be "race or honorable", when the translator translates आर्य into English as "Arya", he means Aryan race, as otherwise he would have used "honorable". Therefore, in the following examples translator uses the "race" meaning of आर्य.

Excerpt 1 from *Arthasastra* Book III Chapter XIII

This passage was translated into English by R. Shamasastry ([5], 1909) apparently according to Samskrtam – English dictionaries which as discussed earlier translate servant दास also as "*slave*" and honorable आर्य also as "*Aryan race*":

"The selling or mortgaging by kinsmen of the life of a *Sudra* who is not a born slave, and has not attained majority, but is an *Arya* in birth shall be punished with a fine of 12 *panas*; of a *Vaisya*, 24 *panas*, of a *Kshatriya*, 36 *panas*; and of a *Brahmin*, 48 *panas*. If persons other than kinsmen do the same, they shall be liable to the three amercements and capital punishment respectively: purchasers and abettors shall likewise be punished".

This translation has the following contradictions: (1) A *Sudra* who is lowest caste of inferior natives, can be an *Arya by birth* of the superior race! (2) All castes (*Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya* and *Sudra*) can be *Arya*, that is, the vast majority of Hindu society (except the *Mlecchas* who are the outcastes) can be of *Arya* race. So it raises the fundamental question: who were the alien superior *Aryan race*?

Correct translation (with *dasa* as indebted servant, *arya* as honorable):
"The selling or mortgaging by kinsmen of the life of a *Sudra* who is not a born indebted servant, and has not attained majority, but is honorable in birth shall be punished with a fine of 12 *panas*; of a *Vaisya*, 24 *panas*, of a *Kshatriya*, 36

panas; and of a *Brahmin*, 48 *panas*. If persons other than kinsmen do the same, they shall be liable to the three amercements and capital punishment respectively: purchasers and abettors shall likewise be punished".

It is clear that there are no contradictions in this corrected translation. It also shows how precise the rules were, and how precise Samskrtam is, whereas dictionary translation is confusing and contradictory.

Incidentally, note that in the first line the sale or dealing is explicitly indicated by the word विक्रय, to sell or deal. Thus, as pointed out earlier in the context of H.T.Colebrooke's 1807 translation of *Umura (Amara) Kosha*, the word दास whose root is दा to give, by itself does not imply selling or dealing (of slave).

NOTE: Caste system defined in original (Vedantic, Bhagavat Gita) Hindu scriptures is based on one's *innate ability* (स्वभाव) and NOT on birth. Caste by birth was unfortunately practiced, especially in the post-Vedantic era. This issue merits a separate discussion and paper but is outside the scope of this paper.

Excerpt 2 from *Arthasastra* Book III Chapter XIII:

dasa's aryahood
dasasya aryabhavam

विक्रपद्वारिणो वा ॒ डासस्यार्येभावमपहरतोऽर्धेदण्डः । निष्प-
तितमेनव्यसनिनामाधाता मूल्यं भजेत ।

Note that this passage refers to a *dasa*'s aryahood, that is, a *dasa* is inherently capable of *arya* nature.

Shamasastry [5] translates this (apparently according to dictionaries originated by Europeans) as:

"Deceiving a slave of his money or depriving him of the privileges he can exercise as an *Arya* (*Aryabhava*) shall be punished with half the fine (levied for enslaving the life of an *Arya*)"

In this translation clearly there is a contradiction that a slave (of inferior native race) can also be an Arya (of superior invading race).

The correct translation, without such contradiction:

"Deceiving an indebted servant of his money or depriving him of the privileges he can exercise as an honorable man (due to innate honorable nature) shall be punished with half the fine (levied for making an honorable person an indebted servant)"

Excerpt 3 from *Arthasastra* Book III Chapter XIII:

sold by oneself
atma vikrayinah

आत्मविक्रयिणः प्रजामार्या विद्यात् । आत्माधिगतं स्वामिक-
र्मोविरुद्धं लभेत, पित्र्यं च दायम् । मूल्येन चार्यत्वं गच्छेत् । तेनो-
द्वरदासाहितकौ व्याख्यातौ ।

This passage refers to a person who sells himself (into servitude, perhaps in return for goods and services).

Shamasastry [5] translates this (apparently according to dictionaries originated by Europeans) as:

"The offspring of a man who has sold off himself as a slave shall be an *Arya*. A slave shall be entitled to enjoy not only whatever he has earned without prejudice to his master's work, but also the inheritance he has received from his father. On paying the value (for which one is enslaved), a slave shall

regain his Aryahood. The same rule shall apply either to born or pledged slaves".

Clearly there is a contradiction here: How can the offspring of a slave (of inferior native race) be an *Arya* (of superior invading race)?

The correct translation, without contradictions, again showing how precise and just the rules were:

"The offspring of a man who has sold off himself as an indebted servant shall be a debt-free honorable person. An indebted servant shall be entitled to enjoy not only whatever he has earned without prejudice to his master's work, but also the inheritance he has received from his father. On paying the value (for which one is indebted servant), an indebted servant shall regain his honorable status. The same shall apply to either born indebted-servant or pledged indebted servant".

The above examples from *Arthasastra* (from 4th – 2nd century BCE, long before European mistranslations entered the picture) clearly demonstrate that (a) the European theory of a superior Aryan race invading India and enslaving inferior natives is a false and unsubstantiated figment of European imagination, and (b) the European-originated Samskrtam-English dictionaries are flawed and are in dire need of corrections in order to translate Hindu scriptures correctly.

In early 20th century this fictitious theory of a superior Aryan race was used by Hitler and his Nazis to exterminate the Jews, one of the biggest crimes in human history. Since then Aryan race theory has been mostly debunked. But Aryan race continues to this day in the dictionaries and mistranslations of Hindu scriptures. The following example illustrates how some (not all) Euro-American scholars continue this falsehood to ever larger dimensions, as they quote each other in hundreds of "research" papers.

Excerpt 4 from *Rg Veda*

The word *varna* in Samskritam means "color" but some Euro-Americans have persisted on erroneously translating it as "race" in order to push their fictitious theory of invading Aryan race. Rg Veda Hymn 10-124 [7] poetically describes how the floods fed by rain waters shine in various hues of colors:

कविः कवित्वा दिवि रूपमासजदप्रभूती वरुणो निरपः सृजत्
क्षेमं कृण्वाना जनयो न सिन्धवस्ता अस्य वर्णं शुचयो भरिभ्रति
varnam

In 1889 Ralph T.H. Griffith had translated this hymn as follows, with *varna* correctly as color, not race [8]: "The sage has fixed his form by wisdom in the heavens: *Varuna* with no violence let the waters flow. Like women-folk, the floods that bring prosperity have eau lit his hue and color as they gleamed and shone".

In stark contrast to Griffith, commenting on this same hymn, Wendy Doniger, who teaches Hinduism to graduate students at University of Chicago's Divinity School, chooses to interpret the word *varna* (color) racially as follows ([9] page 112): "Indra, the poet, places his stamp upon his dominion again, both in form and color. His color (*varna*) is both the sign that typifies his species (gods in contrast with Asuras), and, perhaps, the bright color of the gods and Aryans in contrast with the darkness of the Asuras and Dasas". She thus stretches the simple meaning of colors of prosperity-giving rain flood waters to racist meaning of skin color of light skinned Aryans versus dark skinned natives pictured as Dasas! The words Arya, Asura and Dasa do not even appear in this verse! Not only is this racial interpretation of *Rg Veda*

totally unwarranted, it also reveals her ignorance: *Asuras* (the evil ones) as well as gods (the good ones) come in all colors. For example, *Ravana-Asura* (the villain in the epic *Ramayana*) is light skinned, whereas god *Lord Rama* (the hero and savior in the epic) is dark skinned, and so is god *Lord Krishna*.

Examples of mistranslations of *Manu Smrti* (मनु स्मृति)

G.Buhler [10], translating मनु स्मृति for Max Muller (who included it in his encyclopaedic treatise "Sacred Books of the East" that has been widely acclaimed, translated and used all over the world), translates दास mostly as slave and not as servant, and आर्य mostly as race and not as honorable, resulting in confusion as shown below. Through Max Muller's treatise such mistranslations and resulting confusions about Hindu scriptures have spread all over the world, quoted in large numbers of papers and books that have been blindly accepted by all to be true, to this day.

Mistranslations of दास as "slave" in मनु स्मृति

As pointed out earlier in the context of *Arthasastra*, we remind ourselves that contract labor is not slavery. Moreover, a resident servant is not necessarily a slave just as Buckingham Palace has many resident servants who are not slaves. Also, adoption is not slavery. Paying for service rendered is not slavery. The criterion for slavery is buying, selling and *ownership* of human beings like a commodity (not contractual labor). In all of मनु स्मृति there appear to be just four verses that have words pertaining to buying. Two have to do with buying (adoption of) a son, another has to do with buying a servant (for service) and the fourth has to do with types of servants. The word used for "bought" in all four verses is *kriita* (क्रीत).

1. Manu Smrti verse 9.160:

कानीनश् च सहोडस् च क्रीतः पौनर्भवस् तथा ।
स्वयम्दत्तश् च शौद्रश् च षड् अदायाद्वान्धवाः ॥

Buhler [10]: "The son of an unmarried damsel, the son received with the wife, *the son bought*, the son begotten on a re-married woman, the son self-given, and the son of a Shudra female, (are) the six (who are) not heirs, but kinsmen".

2. Manu Smrti verse 9.174:

क्रीणीयाद् यस् त्वू अपत्यार्थं माता पित्रोर् यम् अन्तिकात् ।
स क्रीतकः सुतस् तस्य सदृशो असदृशो अपि वा ॥

Buhler [10]: "If a man buys a (boy), whether equal or unequal (in good qualities), from his father and mother for the sake of having a son, that (child) is called a (son) bought (Kritaka)".

Note that in these two verses Buhler does not translate buying of son as slave. Thus, buying of a human being does not necessarily mean slavery, it depends on the context.

3. Manu Smrti verse 8.413:

शूद्रम् तु कारयेद् दास्यं क्रीतम् अक्रीतम् एव वा ।
दास्याय एव हि सृष्टो असौ ब्राह्मणस्य स्वयम्भुवा ॥

Buhler [10]: "But a Shudra, whether bought or unbought, he may compel to do servile work; for he was created by the Self-existent (Svayambhu) to be the *slave* of a Brahmana".

Note that here Buhler *arbitrarily and unwarrentedly* chooses to translate दास as slave, whether or not he is bought! The correct translation must be: "But a Shudra, whether bought or unbought, he may be compelled to do servile work; for he was created by the Self-existent (Svayambhu) to be the *servant* of a Brahmana", which simply states the caste system by which all Shudras are meant to be laborers and servants serving the upper castes.

4. Manu Smrti verse 8.415 (seven kinds of servants):

ध्वजाहृतो भक्तदासो गृहजः क्रीत दत्रिमौ ।
पैत्रिको दण्डदासश् च सप्त एते दासयोनयः ॥

Buhler [10]: "There are slaves of seven kinds, (viz) he who is made a captive under a standard, he who serves for his daily food, he who is born in the house, he who is bought and he who is given, he who is inherited from ancestors, and he who is enslaved by punishment"

Here the word bhaktadaasa (भक्तदास) is translated by Buhler (published in 1886) as "he who serves for his daily food", which is exactly same as that in the Samskritam-English dictionary published by Monier Williams in 1851. V.S. Apte also carries this translation in his dictionary published in 1890, faithfully copying and indebted to Monier Williams as acknowledged by himself. Apte's dictionary has been widely used to this day by all Indians. But this translation makes no sense whatsoever. The word bhakta (भक्त) means "devotee", and bhaktadaasa (भक्तदास) therefore means "devoted servant". Examples are Kali-daaa (काळि दास) and Krishna-dasa (कृष्ण दास) which mean devoted servant of goddess Kali and devoted servant of god Krishna respectively. Bhakta Ramadas (भक्त रामदास) means devoted servant of Lord Rama. Brahmana priests who serve gods and goddesses in temples are all devoted servants (bhaktadaasas).

Also, here Buhler *chooses* to interpret the word "buy" (क्रीत) to imply slavery (and not as buying service of a servant) whereas in previous verses cited he *chooses not* to interpret the same word to imply slavery. Moreover, "Born in house" (गृहजः) does not mean a born slave, it simply means born in a house of servants, such as in a Shudra family all of whom (in the post-Vedantic caste system by birth advocated by Manu Smrti) would be laborers or servants. Note that the other six types of servants need not be Shudras, they can be from any caste! Bhaktadasa can be a Brahmana!

With dasa translated as "servant" this verse simply states seven ways one enters servitude:

"There are servants of seven kinds, (viz) he who is bound to a standard (flag), he who is devoted, he who is born in a house (of servants), he whose service is bought, he whose service is given, he who is inherited from ancestor (for whom he was servant), and he who serves as his punishment".

Manu Smrti verse 9.179:

दास्यां वा दासदास्यां वा यः शूद्रस्य सुतो भवेत् ।
सो अनुज्ञातो हरेद् अंशं इति धर्मो व्यवस्थितः ॥

Buhler [10] "A son who is (begotten) by a Shudra on a female slave, or on the female slave of his slave, may, if permitted

(by his father), take a share (of his inheritance); thus the law is settled".

There is confusion here as to the notion of "slave of a slave" which is extremely unusual and unlikely – if a slave is rich enough to own slaves he or she would be able to buy freedom and not be a slave! On the other hand, a well-to-do servant can have a not-so-well-to-do servant. Note that Shudras are laborers who are not necessarily poor, and so can have their own servant. Also, servants (providing service) can be from any caste, and are not necessarily poor. Therefore, translating दासदास्यां as "servant of servant" and translating दास as "servant" and not as "slave", we have much clarity and no confusion:

"A son who is (begotten) by a Shudra on a female servant, or on the female servant of his servant, may, if permitted (by his father), take a share (of his inheritance), thus the law is settled".

There are many verses in Manu Smrti in which the word दास occurs, and in almost all instances Buhler blindly translates दास as "slave" and not as "servant". If "servant" is used, all those verses read much better, make more sense and give a totally different and better picture of ancient Hindu society compared to the picture of slavery portrayed by Buhler.

Mistranslations of आर्य as "race" in मनु स्मृति

Confusion arises due to Buhler's mistranslation of आर्य as *Aryan race* instead of as "honorable", and अनार्य as "*not Aryan race*" instead of "dishonorable", as seen from his translation [10] of the following four verses. The first two verses define the caste rankings of offsprings of mixed-caste parents, *covering all four castes*. The next two verses define race rankings of offsprings of Aryan-non Aryan mixed-race parents, giving rise to the unanswered question: *Who are race Aryans that are other than all four castes?*:

Manu Smrti verses 10.64 – 67:

शूद्रायाम् ब्राह्मणाज् जातः श्रेयसा चेत् प्रजायते ।
अश्रेयान् श्रेयसीम् जातिं गच्छत्या सप्तमाद् युगात् ॥

Buhler [10]: "If (a female of the caste), sprung from a Brahmana and a Shudra female, bear (children) to one of the highest caste, the inferior (tribe) attains the highest caste within the seventh generation"

शूद्रो ब्राह्मणतां एति ब्राह्मणश् च एति शूद्रताम् ।
क्षत्रियाज् जातं एवं तु विद्याद् वैश्यात् तथा एव च॥

Buhler [10]: "(Thus) a Shudra attains the rank of a Brahmana, and (in a similar manner) a Brahmana sinks to the level of a Shudra; but know that it is the same with the offspring of a Kshatriya or a Vaishya"

अनार्यायां समुत्पन्नो ब्राह्मणात् तु यदृच्छया ।
ब्राह्मण्यां अप्यनार्यात् तु श्रेयस्त्वं क्व इति चेद् भवेत् ॥

Buhler [10]: "If (a doubt) should arise, with whom the preeminence (is whether) with him whom an Aryan by chance begot a non-Aryan female, or (with the son) of a Brahmana woman by a non-Aryan"

जातो नार्यां अनार्यायां आर्याद् आर्यो भवेद् गुणैः ।
जातो अप्यनार्याद् आर्यायां अनार्य इति निश्चयः ॥

Buhler [10]: "The decision is as follows: He who was begotten by an Aryan on a non-Aryan female, may become (like to) an Aryan by his virtues; he whom an Aryan mother bore to a non-Aryan father (is and remains) unlike to an Aryan".
The last two verses (which raise the unanswered question as to who are the "Aryans" outside of all four castes) become clear once we translate आर्य as "honorable" and अनार्य as "dishonorable", and the verses simply define the honorable or dishonorable status of the offspring:
"If (a doubt) should arise, with whom the preeminence (is whether) with him whom an honorable man by chance begot a dishonorable female, or (with the son) of a Brahmana woman by a dishonorable man"
"The decision is as follows: He who was begotten by an honorable man on a dishonorable female, may become (like to) honorable by his virtues; he whom an honorable mother bore to a dishonorable father (is and remains) dishonorable".
That is, honorable or dishonorable status of the offspring follows the status of the father. It is worth noting that *the honorable or dishonorable status is different from the caste ranking*. Honor or dishonor may be with a person of any caste, depending on the person's conduct, especially performing all duties assigned to respective castes, and discharging all contractual obligations and debts, just as we saw in the case of *Arthasastra*. That is why caste ranking and honorable / dishonorable status of mixed-marriages are treated separately in the above verses.
There are many other verses in Manu Smrti which involve honorable (आर्य) and dishonorable (अनार्य) status of people. All those verses are thoroughly confused by Buhler by introducing Aryan and non-Aryan race interpretations and mistranslations. Buhler *assumes* that Manu Smrti was a code of law of an Aryan race. In the following verse that mentions आर्यावर्त Buhler *chooses* to translate it as "the country of the Aryans" instead of the correct translation "the land of honorable people".

Manu Smrti verse 2.22:

आ समुद्रात् तु वै पूर्वाद् आ समुद्रात् तु पश्चिमात् ।
तयोर् एव अन्तरम् गिर्योर् आर्यावर्तं विदुर् बुधाः ॥

Buhler [10]: "But (the tract) between those two mountains (just mentioned), which (extends) as far as the eastern and western oceans, the wise call Aryavarta (the country of the Aryans)".
The two mountains mentioned in the previous verse are the Himalayas and the Vindhyas, which makes the land in question the entire north India. But this simply defines the said land to be that where *honorable people* live, as contrasted (in the following verse) with land of Mlechchas who are outcastes (outside the four castes) incapable of honorable living (per the four-caste system)

Manu Smrti verse 2.23:

कृष्णासारस् तु चरति मृगो यत्र स्वभावतः ।
स ज्ञेयो यज्ञियो देशो म्लेच्छदेशस् त्व् अतः परः ॥

Buhler [10]: "That land where the black antelope naturally roams, one must know to be fit for the performance of sacrifices; (the tract) different from that (is) the country of Mlechchas (barbarians)".

Here the comparison is between the land that is suitable for the people who follow the four-caste system (per scriptures) who are thus the honorable people, and the other land occupied by those who do not follow the four-caste system and hence are outcastes labeled as Mlechchas.

Why Buhler and other Euro-Americans translate दास as "slave" and आर्य as "race"?

The reason can be traced back to the origins of "Aryan race" theory in late 18th century. Buhler's, Max Muller's, Monier Williams', H.H. Wilson's, H.T. Colebrook's and William Jones' intent was clearly to find slavery in ancient India to suit the European-invented theory of a superior Aryan race invading and enslaving inferior natives, bringing with them the Vedic knowledge from outside India, a theory that was launched by philologist (not an anthropologist) William Jones towards the end of 18th century, which captured the imagination of Euro-American scholars of 19th and 20th centuries, and continues to dominate their literature to this day, even after archaeologists, after evaluating all evidence before them, are beginning to conclude that there was no such "Aryan invasion", some questioning the "Aryan race" itself.

Max Muller (1823 – 1900), a philologist (not an anthropologist), was a strong supporter of the Aryan race theory. He included Buhler's translation of Manu Smrti in his voluminous compilation "Sacred Books of the East" that contributed to spreading this falsehood. To this day, Buhler's (Max Muller's and other Europeans') mistranslations are unquestioningly accepted and copied by most scholars, both in the West and in the East, referencing each other, contributing to a growing bubble of falsehood. Samskrtam-English dictionaries continue to carry erroneous translations.

Conclusion

Compilations of new dictionaries (in any language) usually draw from the prior dictionaries, mostly by listing all meanings for any given word that are given in various prior dictionaries. When the validity of prior translations is not questioned, the errors carry over. This is particularly true in the case of Samskrtam which is no longer in active use by any large population, and most discussions are conducted in English which is the dominant world language (an example being this paper itself) or in French or German. Threfore it is vitally important that Samskrtam – English and other dictionaries are accurate.

We have shown in this paper how the dictionary mistranslations of आर्य as "race" and दास as "slave" have rendered some verses from Athasastra, Manusmrti and RgVeda as confusing and contradictory, greatly diminishing their beauty and accuracy, and how correcting these errors restore the beauty and accuracy of these scriptures and of Samskrtam language. These are just two words. There may be many more that may have been mistranslated. Adopting the approach taken in this paper, by critically examining the original versions in Samskrtam long before the European translations began, and by comparing with translated versions, without blindly accepting the validity of such translations, we may uncover more mistranslations.

There is a massive effort started in 1976 by the Department of Sanskrit and Lexicology at Deccan College, Pune, to compile an Encyclopaedic Samskrtam Dictionary (progressed to date from अ only to अप्रमाणसमाधिचर्या according to their website). It is hoped that they will also address the question of mistranslations as they are in a good position to uncover

errors. However, their current sequential alphabetical effort has been extremely slow. A parallel approach on all alphabets from अ to ह will be better, allowing usage sooner, and could be enriched in course of time. In view of the seriousness and urgency of this issue of mistranslations as indicated by this paper, an all-India all-out effort with various colleges participating with funding from the government may speed up the progress.

The enormous volume of papers and books in English and other languages that already carry the mistranslations, especially by Euro-Americans such as Wendy Doniger who cite pages upon pages of references but all based on wrong translations to begin with, thus creating an illusion that all that must be true, a growing bubble of falsehood that needs to be dispelled and corrected as well. But that is a separate task, a Herculean one. Systematically generating the correct translations of scriptures and making them available to all at a suitable website, and making this known to all, may stem the tide of the mistranslations.

Of paramount importance is accuracy, attention to detail, and dispassionate pursuit of the truth, unbiased by one-sided opinions that seem to thrive in both West and East.

Satyameva jayate (सत्यमेव जयते) – Truth alone will triumph

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