Beyond Tradition and Modernity in Madras

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INTRODUCTION

The study of the modernization of non-Western cultures has been dominated by the metaphor of the 'take-off' introduced by the economists and by the assumption of incompatibility between 'modern' and 'traditional' cultures. These interpretations of modernization are shared by both those who view it as a process of diffusing Western culture and by those who view it as an internal process of development which may require an external stimulus to 'trigger' the 'take-off'. On either view, modernization becomes a problem of suddenly transforming a 'traditional' type of culture, society, and personality into a 'modern' type. This view of modernization is supported, and perhaps suggested, by the classical nineteenth- and early twentieth-century social science theory of 'traditional' and 'modern' societies as opposed types, a theory associated with the names of Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Maine, and Tönnies, among others.

While the history of English industrialization may have provided the stimulus for some of the more influential formulations of the dichotomy, extrapolations from this history of fixed uniform sequences of development in the transformation of 'traditional' into 'modern' societies have not been empirically confirmed by the later history of industrialization in Europe, Russia, Japan, China, India, and other countries. This later history has in particular cast doubt on the assumption that modernization is governed by the 'inner logic' of an internal law of development according to which a correlated set of traditional institutions is transformed into a set of 'modern' institutions. While it is possible to explain divergences from this 'law of development' by invoking such items as differences in culture, history and economic backwardness, the emulation of early arrivals, the increasing role of the state and of planning in development, and the differential strengths of 'traditionalism' and 'modernism' in transitional phases, such explanations 'save the hypothesis' at the cost of rapidly multiplying ad hoc and 'accidental' factors.

It is not surprising therefore to find that the recent literature on modernization shows a growing disaffection with the 'modern versus traditional'
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This typology of societies and cultures and a search for new theories. At least this typology is now increasingly recognized as a set of constructed ideal types and not as an empirical classification of societies or a set of generalizations about them. Those who continue to use the modern–traditional contrast at an empirical level do so by mapping the statistical distributions of traits designated ‘modern’ or ‘traditional’ in different countries or by making lists of such traits for a single country. The implications of such lists and frequency distributions for a theory of modernization as a process of social and cultural change are at best opaque.\(^1\)

Although no single comprehensive alternative theory has yet emerged to sweep the field, it seems to me likely that such a new theory of modernization will articulate much more closely with a general theory of cultural change than does the classical theory of ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ societies. It will not only go beyond the ‘traditional versus modern’ dichotomy but will also transcend the bifurcations between cultural diffusion and cultural evolution and between ‘culture’ and ‘society’. Above all, it will be grounded on the comparative and historical studies of literate civilizations as well as of primitive and peasant cultures. It will look at the process of modernization as it is envisaged by those engaged in it, in their cultural categories, world view, and value system, as well as at the ‘objective’ evidence of behavior and numerical magnitudes.

My own observations in India, and particularly in Madras City, over an extended period beginning in 1954, have led me to join the ranks of those disaffected with the classical theory of ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ societies. The point of departure for these observations was Redfield’s study of modernization in Yucatan, which to some extent derived from and empirically supported the classical theory. After the Second World War, when Redfield became interested in China, India, and the comparative study of civilizations, he began to explore in collaboration with historians of civilization the processes of cultural change in societies with literate ‘Great Traditions’. I was associated with him in these explorations and helped extend them to India. In my personal research I was particularly interested in exploring the question of what happens to the Great Tradition of Sanskritic Hinduism in a contemporary ‘heterogenetic’ urban center such as that of Madras City. In this setting, is it secularized and replaced by a modernizing ideology or does it continue to play an important role in the modernizing process? And if the Great Tradition is still

alive in the modern city does this imply, as Eric Wolf suggests, that 'perhaps there is always an interplay between traditionalizing and modernizing trends in any society?' (Wolf, 1967, p. 560). If there is such an interplay, what are its characteristic modes of operation and results?²

The detailed reports of my studies in Madras have been published elsewhere, but I should like to draw on these studies for answers to the above questions.³ As will soon become apparent, these answers not only confirm the fruitfulness of Redfield's approach and so say 'yes' to Wolf's suggested possibility, at least for India: they also point to the cultural ideology of 'traditionalism' as one of the major instruments of modernization. Structural differentiation occurs in the process, although it does not take the form of a linear progression through evolutionary stages of development.

It may be that India is a special case. In some respects it no doubt is distinctive. Its caste system and traditionalism are proverbial. Yet it also has the largest parliamentary government in the world, universal suffrage, a modern education system, an extensive network of modern media of communication and transportation, growing industrialization, and the first nuclear reactors in Asia. The coexistence of the traditional and the modern in India have not produced 'the schism in the soul' predicted by the classical theory. If India is a special case, it should be given special attention just for this reason, for it may teach us something about the process of modernization in a historic civilization that has not been dreamed of in the classical theory. Ronald Dore has recently written that India does not feel the strain between tradition and modernity so acutely as Japan or China 'partly because of the syncretic tradition of Hindu culture, partly because a modus vivendi between the traditional and the modern cultures has had time to become established, and finally because India and the West are not in political conflict' (IESS, 10: p. 407). This seems to me a reasonable suggestion, but it presents a set of problems for inquiry, not a set of findings. In such an inquiry we shall want to find out the nature of this modus vivendi between the traditional and the modern cultures, how it has come to be established, and what its relations are to the syncretic tradition of Hindu thought and to foreign influences. The rest of this paper will try to answer some of these questions and will return, in conclusion,
to the question of whether the processes of modernization in India are unique or can also be found in other civilizations as well.

TRADITION AND CHANGE IN INDIAN CIVILIZATION—THE THEORY OF SANSKRITIZATION

Indian society and culture are not ‘traditional’ in the sense of the nineteenth-century stereotype that it is dominated by unchanging traditions and immemorial customs, nor even in the sense that many characteristic institutions, culture patterns, values and beliefs have persisted in spite of the numerous changes which have occurred. The ‘traditionalism’ of Indian civilization lies elsewhere—in its capacity to incorporate innovations into an expanding and changing structure of culture and society. This capacity is reflected in a series of adaptive mechanisms and processes for dealing with the novel, the foreign, the strange. The operation of these adaptive mechanisms makes possible a kind of ‘cultural metabolism’ which ingests foreign cultural bodies, segregates them, breaks them down into usable forms and eventually builds them into indigenous ‘cultural protoplasm’. I should like to relate the processes observed in the ‘modernization of a Great Tradition’ in contemporary Madras to the more generic processes of change in Indian civilization.

The most comprehensive and widely accepted anthropological theory of social and cultural change in Indian civilization is M. N. Srinivas’s theory of Sanskritization. In a recent article he defines this as

the process by which a ‘low’ caste or tribe or other group takes over the customs, ritual, beliefs, ideology and style of life of a high and, in particular, a ‘twice-born’ (dwija) caste. The Sanskritization of a group has usually the effect of improving its position in the local caste hierarchy. It normally presupposes either an improvement in the economic or political position of the group concerned or a higher group selfconsciousness resulting from its contact with a source of the ‘Great Tradition’ of Hinduism such as a pilgrim centre or monastery or proselytizing sect. . . . In the case of a group external to Hinduism, such as a tribe or immigrant ethnic body, Sanskritization resulted in drawing it into the Hindu fold, which necessarily involved its becoming a caste having regular relations with other local castes.

Srinivas first stated and applied this theory in his monograph on the Coorgs of South India. Since then there have been a number of criticisms and revisions of the theory, in which Srinivas himself has actively participated. Among the most important of these amendments are the following.

(1) More than one varna model of the life styles and rank hierarchy of the twice-born castes is emulated in the process of Sanskritization. The models vary with region and with the locally dominant caste.


5 See M. N. Srinivas, Social Change in Modern India, pp. 6 ff.; also the articles by Srinivas,
(2) Sanskritization is not only and perhaps not even primarily a process of social change; it is also a process of cultural change which occurs in the fields of language, literature, the arts, music, drama, religious law, medicine, science and philosophy.\(^6\)

(3) The theory's account of the relationship of Sanskritization to Westernization and modernization has remained obscure and unstable. In his earlier formulation, Srinivas emphasized the manner in which Westernization leads to a strengthening of Sanskritization by providing improved communications and transportation. Later, influenced by the studies of Cohn, Gould and others, he stressed the way in which upper castes were modernizing and secularizing, while the middle and lower castes were Sanskritizing their life styles. In his most recent statements Srinivas is beginning to raise questions about the contradictions and oppositions between Sanskritization and modernization. Philip Mason's description of the overall position is both a concise summary of it and an indication of the need for more detailed specification of the relationship: ‘... It is clear that the two processes of Sanskritization and Westernization are both at work, that they are often opposed but sometimes in alliance, that here one prevails and here another, here there is revolt against one and here against the other.’\(^7\)

(4) Although Srinivas’s theory of Sanskritization has proved a fruitful and powerful explanation of how Indian civilization has been able to incorporate foreign groups and cultural products into the caste system and the ‘Great Tradition’ of Sanskritic Hinduism, it seems doubtful whether it can account for all the major processes of change without radical revision. In particular the theory seems unable to deal with those changes and social movements that make use of paths to mobility which constitute alternatives to Sanskritization, for example, modern political organization and administration, or conversion to Christianity and Buddhism.\(^8\) The social and cultural mobility associated with the operation of Sanskritization in the past has resulted, according to Srinivas, in changes in positions within the caste system but has not brought about a significant change in the system. The non- or de-Sanskritizing kinds of changes and the efforts of some

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\(^7\) P. Mason, *op. cit.*

groups to reject affiliation with Sanskritic Hinduism and to seek affiliation with other ‘Great Traditions’ raise the question of change in the system.

TRADITION AND INNOVATIONS IN MADRAS

The Madras studies help to answer some of these questions, in some respects supporting Srinivas’s theory of Sanskritization and in others going beyond it.

These studies show that the relationship of modernization (and of Westernization) to tradition is neither one of deep antagonism and struggle for dominance between them nor a relationship of harmony and mutual support. It is rather a historical process in which the new and the foreign are culturally differentiated as such from the indigenous traditions, then tried out in a ‘neutral’ area, and eventually selectively integrated into an ‘essential’ core of indigenous traditions, which has itself changed in order to incorporate the new items.

In this process the chief actors are not castes or religious communities as corporate groups but individuals and their families, generally making up a small fraction of a caste or community. The ways in which these individuals and families relate their modernizing activities to their castes and religious communities is important, but this does not imply that modernization is best studied as an activity of special castes and communities. The ‘lagging emulation’ theory which sees lower and middle castes Sanskritizing their life styles while upper castes are modernizing theirs, must be qualified by the finding that the same family and the same individual from an upper caste will simultaneously modernize and Sanskritize. They can do this because they tend to compartmentalize their lives, following a ‘modern’ model in a ritually neutralized work sphere and a ‘traditional’ one in their domestic and social life. The ‘Sanskritization’ is not in this case the same in aim, means, or result as it is in the case of lower castes described by Srinivas. The upper castes do not aim to raise their ritual status through ‘Sanskritization’, since their status is already high. They are interested rather in not losing ritual status as they modernize. The means they use—vicarious ritualization—involves a lapse of personal ritual observance, an acceptance of the omission, contraction and consolidation of rites as justified in present circumstances, and a reinterpretation of traditional norms and beliefs. The main line of reinterpretation is that modern urban and industrial life brings and requires a shift from ritual to devotional ecumenical religion and that the ‘essential tenets’ of Hinduism remain valid and relevant in this context even if the caste system should disappear.

Whether these lines of reinterpretation originate with religious leaders or with the modernizing families and individuals, they reassure the modernizers that they are still good Hindus. For most of the modernizers the
definition of a good Hindu is Sanskritic; a few have adopted an anti-Sanskritic model. The possibility and plausibility of this reassurance to those who are themselves active agents of modernization depends on certain adaptable general features of Hinduism and of Indian society. Some of these features are consciously recognized and appealed to, others are not always acknowledged but operate at a level of ‘cultural drift’.

Among the consciously acknowledged features is the view that Hinduism comprises many different ‘paths’ to salvation and enjoins different duties for different people according to their development and station in life. Within this conception, the ‘paths’ of ritual observance, devotion, ascetic withdrawal and meditation are all available options to those who are able to follow them. The householder in this view, for example, can pursue his salvation without ascetic withdrawal by doing his daily work and fulfilling his social obligations to his family and society. An important practical corollary of this doctrine is that there is no single authoritarian hierarchy for the interpretation and enforcement of religious law. Pundits who specialize in these matters of dharma śāstra say there is a rank order of ‘authorities’, with revealed scriptures (śruti) at the top, remembered scriptures (smṛiti) next, local and regional customs if they are not in conflict with the scriptures, the opinion of a learned and wise man, and individual conscience. In practice this hierarchy permits a very wide latitude of resort for interpretation and enforcement—to one’s father and relatives, one’s guru, a caste council, the head of one’s sect, local and national leaders and officials, and public opinion. Industrial leaders, for example, in Madras City seem not to have any difficulty in finding spiritual authorities to assure them they are doing their moral duty and pursuing a ‘path’ to salvation while following a career in industry.

A second general feature of Hinduism, one that supports its doctrinal pluralism and decentralized authority structure, is the notion that religious and philosophical truths have different levels of validity and application—a theoretical level and a practical level. Such doctrines as the eternally recurring cycles of world creation and destruction, the unreality and ephemeral nature of this world, the unimportance of the ego, are familiar to and even believed in by many of my ‘modern’ Madras informants. These leaders were not thereby prevented from leading an active practical life or from believing in the reality of the political and economic ‘progress’ which India had achieved since Independence; they are convinced that this progress is irreversible and that they have made personal contributions to it through their own careers. When asked about the apparent contradictions between these convictions and the religious doctrines, they usually reply that the religious doctrines are valid at a different ‘level’, a cosmic level, so there is no conflict. These same people, however, extend and apply other religious doctrines, such as those of fate, rebirth, duty, salvation, to
modern fields of practical activity. Their spiritual guides support them in both kinds of interpretation.

The extension of the doctrines of fate, rebirth, duty and salvation to industry and to other modern innovations is more than a convenient rationalization. At least since the Gita, these particular doctrines have had an inherent relevance for social life and practical activity. This relevance is manifest in a third general feature of Hinduism, its scriptural model of social organization. This model is the famous varna scheme of the four orders of society—Brahmans, Ksatriyas, Vaisayas, and Sudras—and the fifth order of untouchables and outcastes. Anthropologists and historians are fond of pointing out that this is a normative model and not an accurate description of the variety and movement of local castes, ethnic and occupational groups. Recognizing the validity of this point, M. N. Srinivas has nevertheless emphasized that the varna model has important validating and cohesive functions with respect to regional variations and mobility, and that these functions are performed chiefly in the linking of Sanskritization to the economic and political mobility of castes who acquire wealth and power and modern education. Sanskritization is in this case the process whereby groups outside the system are brought into it and groups already in the system can achieve mobility within it.

In several other respects the scriptural model of the varnas is more 'open' and dynamic than is usually recognized. As Max Weber and, more recently, Louis Dumont have noted, one can escape the constraints of the system by 'renouncing' and becoming an ascetic or a saint. This 'path' presumably leads to complete withdrawal from worldly activities and social obligations, although the example of Gandhi, as of many holy men, shows that it can have practical effects and stimulate social change.

The system is also 'open' in the worldly sphere in permitting, even in the scriptural formulations, members of all varnas to undertake occupations and activities which may be auxiliary to their traditional caste occupations or even departures from them. Historically the fields of agriculture, trade, and government administration were 'open' areas in this sense. To these have been added in recent times the modern professions and the whole field of industry. While economic necessity is frequently cited as a reason for departures from the traditional division of labor prescribed in the varna scheme, regional variations in the interpretations of this scheme and the difficulties of fitting new types of occupations into it are also factors.

THE CULTURAL METABOLISM OF AN INNOVATION

Granting that Sanskritic Hinduism has some features of flexibility built

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in, how are these made use of in the recurrent processes of cultural change? As a first approximation we may take ‘Sanskritization’ to represent a process of orthogenetic change, and Westernization and modernization to represent heterogenetic change. This cannot be a finally adequate account, however, since it does not explain the interrelations between the two kinds of processes. In particular, it leaves unclear the question whether culturally alien innovations can be incorporated into the traditional system and how such incorporation would change that system. We have been prevented from giving adequate answers to these questions by the equations of the traditional with the indigenous and of the modern with the foreign. On this assumption modernization is wholly an heterogenetic replacement of indigenous traditions by alien imports. Either one becomes ‘modern’ by transplanting a foreign culture or one stays otherwise by clinging to an outmoded and traditional indigenous culture. Since Indian civilization has during its long history incorporated many foreign groups and cultural elements while maintaining a recognizable continuity, there must be something wrong with the equation ‘modern equals foreign’ and the associated assumption that everything ‘modern’ in India was introduced by Europeans.

A more adequate theory of the interrelationship between ‘Sanskritization’ and ‘modernization’, and between ‘orthogenetic’ and ‘heterogenetic’ processes of change generally, is suggested by the study of the interactions between the ‘ritually neutral’ areas and the ritually restricted areas. Some of these interactions can be directly observed or documented in the life histories of individuals and families over a short-run time perspective of two or three generations. In this perspective the interactions are expressed in the active movements of individuals and groups into cities, modern education, the professions, government service, and industry. The conflicts encountered in these movements are masked, mitigated or resolved by a series of adaptive strategies which usually begin with a cognitive compartmentalization of the conflicting spheres of activity and are followed by mutual adjustments and modifications, the formation of new norms, and an eventual reintegration at a new level.

From the point of view of a longer-run, diachronic perspective, it is of interest to see whether these adjustments and adaptive strategies observed in contemporary Madras can be translated into recurrent processes of cultural change, and whether evidence can be found for their continued operation in social and cultural history. I believe this can be done, and I should now like to describe such recurrent processes in the form of a

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10 For the distinction between 'orthogenetic' and 'heterogenetic' changes see R. Redfield and M. Singer, 'The Cultural Role of Cities'.
1. Enclavement of Foreign Imports

Items new to the culture—whether artifacts, activities, styles of life, or people—are perceived as new or foreign, named accordingly, and segregated ecologically in a special ‘enclave’ with an appropriate symbolic designation. The early settlement of Europeans in Madras was within the Fort St. George area and in a segregated quarter outside the Fort called ‘White town’. The Indian settlement in another area just to the north was called ‘Black town’. These were of course English designations, and to an extent European originated. The Indian prototype for this in the form of segregated streets and quarters for different caste and occupational groups is well known. The graphic description in the Tamil epic, the Silappatikāram, of the ancient city of Puhār, a port city probably located not very far from modern Madras and Pondichery, includes both kinds of segregation, the foreign enclaves and the indigenous clustering of occupational and status groups, within a single passage:11

The riches of the Puhār shipowners made the kings of faraway lands envious. The most costly merchandise, the rarest foreign produce, reached the city by sea and caravans. The city spread wide, vast as the capital of the northern Kuru—beyond the Gandhara country—where dwell sages famous for their asceticism.

The sunshine lighted up the open terraces, the harbor docks, the towers with their loopholes like the eyes of deer. In various quarters of the city the homes of wealthy Greeks were seen. Near the harbor seamen from far-off lands appeared at home. In the street hawkers were selling unguents, bath powders, cooling oils, flowers, perfume, incense. Weavers brought their fine silks and all kinds of fabrics made of wool or cotton. There were special streets for merchants of coral, sandalwood, myrrh, jewelry, faultless pearls, pure gold, and precious gems.

Each trade had its own street in the workers' quarter of the city.

At the center of the city were the wide royal street, the street of temple cars, the bazaar, and the main street, where rich merchants had their mansions with high towers. There was a street for priests, one for doctors, one for astrologers, one for peasants. In a wide passage lived the craftsmen who pierce gems and pearls for the jewelers. Nearby were those who make trinkets out of polished nacre and sea shells. In another quarter lived the coachmen, bards, dancers, astronomers, clowns, prostitutes, actresses, florists, betel-sellers, servants, oboe players, drummers, jugglers, and acrobats.

In wide fields near the town were encamped horsemen and their swift mounts, war elephants, chariot drivers, soldiers fearful to look upon. Near these were palaces of knights and princes. Between the quarters of the workers and the nobles lay an open square, large as a battlefield where two great armies might have met. There, under rows of trees, the sheds of a market were set up. The haggling of buyers and sellers could be heard there all day long.

The lovers crossed the main street, with its warehouses of merchandise from overseas.

11 Silappatikāram (the Ankle Bracelet) by Prince Ilango Adigal, tr. by A. Danielou (London, 1967). A. K. Ramanujan has suggested that Puhār and Madurai as described in the Silappatikāram are literary representations of 'heterogenetic' and 'orthogenetic' cities respectively. See his paper 'Toward an Anthology of City Images' (MS., 1969).
Then they came to the low-lying quarters near the sea, where flags, raised high toward the sky, seemed to be saying: 'On these stretches of white sand can be found the goods that foreign merchants, leaving their own countries to stay among us, have brought here in great ships.'

Near the shore lighthouses had been built to show ships the way to the harbor. Far away one could see the tiny lights of the fishing boats laying their nets in the deep sea. All night lamps were burning, the lamps of foreigners who talk strange tongues, and the lamps of the guards who watch over precious cargoes near the docks. Bordered by rows of aloes, the seashore was more enchanting even than the fields with their lotus ponds and streams. The lamps gave such abundant light that one could have found a single mustard seed had it fallen on the clear sand, spread evenly like fine flour [p. 30].

2. Ritual Neutralization of Foreign Enclaves

For various reasons of curiosity or economic interest, individual groups of the indigenous population associate themselves with the foreigners and foreign imports, as interpreters, brokers, servants, traders, and in other capacities. This association brings them into close contact with the innovations and innovators and gives them the opportunity for direct observation, emulation and production of the new products and styles. At first the terms of association are presumed to be influenced by the social code of the foreign group, however deviant it may be from the traditional code. Those who associate themselves with the innovations and innovating groups do so at their own risk, and that risk may include ostracism by their own social group and other severe sanctions. The early servants of the East India Company and converts to Christianity probably found themselves in an uncomfortable, marginal position.

As the number of the indigenous population that is economically and socially dependent on the innovations increases, the new products are accepted and used by a larger group, and those closely associated with their introduction prosper and strengthen their conformity to traditional norms in the domestic and religious sphere, there is a tendency for social attitudes towards the innovators and their associates to relax and for the particular innovational sphere to be seen as a 'neutral' area where scriptural and customary norms need not apply with the same rigor as they do in 'traditional' spheres. In the 'neutral area' the cultural differences between the foreign and the indigenous tend to become reduced and new cultural norms to arise.

Industrial technology, industrial enterprise and industrial employments have been undergoing just such a process of 'neutralization' during the last hundred years. The modern professions of law, medicine, teaching, and the clerical and supervisory office work connected with government administration probably went through a similar process almost a hundred years earlier.

The recognition that some fields of activity are not the monopolistic preserve of any particular caste or religious group creates 'ritually neutral'
public areas open to all castes. The 'ritual neutrality' of such areas derives from three different sources.

(a) The fact that the field of activity may be so recent an innovation that there has not been time to determine its relations to the traditional social code. This is true, for example, of television and electronic equipment, the manufacture, sale and use of which is too recent to have received social and cultural definition.

(b) The fact that different castes and groups with different norms of conduct interact in these public areas without severe social sanctions. It is not simply the intercaste mixing that is decisive but the social recognition that such mixing will not incur heavy social sanctions. In many villages today a member of a clean caste cannot enter an untouchable settlement without being heavily polluted, and an untouchable cannot enter a Brahman street without being beaten. Yet on buses, street cars, shops, in offices and plants, theatres and movie houses, political gatherings, members of these same castes mix freely, incurring only a mild form of pollution or hostility, if any.

(c) As new techniques, products, and social relations are introduced and developed in these 'ritually neutral' public areas in relative freedom from the rigors of the traditional code, new norms governing such innovations also emerge in these areas. In this way new standards of speech, dress, diet, belief and conduct very different from the traditional standards are formed and become accepted in the 'neutral' areas, without necessarily being accepted in other areas of domestic and social life.

An individual's daily passage between 'ritually neutral' public areas and private domestic areas subject to traditional ritual restrictions does not result in traumatic and schizophrenic emotional reactions or lead to a dominance in his life of the public area over the private, or conversely. It results instead in an adaptive modus vivendi that I call 'compartmentalization'. He mentally categorizes the two areas as socially and culturally different in behavior, belief and norms. This reduces direct conflicts between the areas and provides the time and opportunity to try out innovations and develop adjustments in the religious and domestic sphere through vicarious ritualization and restructuring of observances and beliefs.

While the growth of urban centers and of industry has expanded the areas of 'ritual neutrality', such areas also exist on a smaller scale in village and small town life—in agricultural work teams, in shops, bazaars, in public festivals and processions. In fact one can discern the basic matrix of 'ritual neutrality' in the mildly impure 'normal ritual status' in which every Hindu, according to Srinivas, finds himself as he goes about his daily affairs. Urbanization and industrialization have brought the

12 For M. N. Srinivas's account of 'normal ritual status' see his Social Change in Modern India, p. 121 and the Coorg study, pp. 106–7.
Hindu into new arenas where he can conduct these affairs with new materials and techniques. He is able to maintain 'a normal ritual status' in the conduct of his affairs because those new arenas, materials and techniques have been socially recognized as areas of 'ritual neutrality'.

Orthogenetic and heterogenetic innovations. Not all innovations in Indian society and culture have entered the system through the 'ritually neutral' areas. Many innovations and changes have been made within the family, hereditary occupation, caste organization, or religious sect. These innovations, however, are seen as minor changes within a long-established structure of accepted cultural traditions. They are 'orthogenetic' changes which attract little attention, except appreciation for unusual performance. The innovations which originate in the 'ritually neutral' areas, on the other hand, frequently appear to be alien to and in conflict with cultural traditions, and they require special treatment and selection before they can be reconciled or absorbed. They are the 'heterogenetic' changes perceived and regarded as culturally 'foreign' or 'strange', calling for special adaptive reactions and strategies. Enclavement, ritual neutralization and compartmentalization are some of the adaptive strategies which have been developed in Indian civilization for introducing 'heterogenetic' innovations. In the later phases of this process, which we shall describe, are found the strategies for incorporating 'orthogenetic' innovations.

3. Foreign Imports Become a Typological Option in the Culture

When an innovation along with its associated sphere is 'neutralized' it becomes available to a much larger group of the indigenous population both as potential producers and as consumers. This extended availability does not yet mean assimilation of the innovation and the innovating group into the indigenous culture and society. It marks rather an intermediate step in this direction and is distinguished by classification of the import as a stylistic or typological variant among a set of options. Western-style clothes now manufactured and worn by Indians are still referred to as 'European dress', modern medicine taught and practiced by Indians is designated as 'allopathic' or 'modern' medicine in contrast with the 'homeopathic', 'ayurvedic', 'yunani', and 'siddha' systems, which are all included in the category of 'indigenous Indian medicine'. Systems of dance, music, astrology, law, philosophy have all been introduced in this way, and have in many cases retained their diacritical class names to designate variant styles long after all ties of foreign origin have disappeared.

Several features of this phase of innovation are especially noteworthy. The specific groups and historical contexts associated with the innovations are subordinated to a conception of them as cultural types and styles. As such they are dissociated from racial, ethnic, religious affiliation or historic
origins and become available options to anyone in the society who is willing and able to use them. The adjective ‘European’ applied to dress, cuisine, medicine, science, or education in India, now refers to cultural styles followed by ‘modern’ Indians; the materials, techniques and personnel involved in their production are often all Indian. When European-owned and managed firms were ‘Indianized’ after Independence, the Indian owners and managers who took them over continued many of their predecessors’ practices—the use of the English language, European-style clothes, and industrial organization—because they believed that these were still functionally useful cultural styles.

A particularly striking cultural-historical example of this process of stylistic ‘typologizing’ of foreigners and of foreign innovations is the word yavana. This has been documented in the history of Tamil language and literature by Kamil Zvelebil, whose conclusions I shall summarize.13

About three dozen references to Yavanas occur in old and medieval Tamil literature. Zvelebil finds that in the earliest Tamil texts the Yavanas are traders coming by sea from the West; slightly later, they are soldiers, bodyguards and guards employed by Tamil kings; still later, some Yavanas settled down in the South, mostly as craftsmen and traders, and in some aspects their handiwork and craftsmanship seem to have been superior to native craftsmanship (this concerns mainly some kinds of lamps and earrings). Ethnically, the term yavanyar referred probably to Greeks, Syrians, Jews, Southern Arabs and East Africans, Romans and Byzantines; later it covers also early Arabs and Muslims (cf. the related term cōṇakar, cōṇakar used for some Muslim communities, especially in Eastern Ceylon). One thing is certain: yavanyar came to denote all aliens coming to South India from the West, and the adjective yavana means ‘foreign, alien/Western’, just as the term cīna ‘The Chinese’ was used (in a somewhat more limited sense) for all aliens coming from the East.

In later medieval Tamil literature references are frequent to yavana artisans, villages (yavanyaceri), and works of art. The term cēri implies, according to Zvelebil, that these villages were outside the Tamil village or town proper. The same term cēri is still used in Tamilnad to refer to villages and settlements of untouchables, as well as in a more generic sense. The yavana craftsmen who settled in these villages worked in wood-engraving, wood carving, carpentry, sculpture.

But just as the meaning of yavana referring to people was generalized and extended to any type of foreigner from the West, so the references to yavana works of art and craftsman were generalized and extended to any yavana style of art and craft whether made by foreigners or by Indians. Zvelebil notes that some types of products are mentioned so often and in such a stereotyped manner, that it seems that the term yavana refers not to their origin (‘made by Yavanas’) but to the type,

13 The material on Yavanas has been kindly made available to me by my colleague, Kamil Zvelebil. See also his article on ‘The Yavanas in Old Tamil Literature’, Charisteria Orientalia (Prague, 1956). A. K. Ramanujan has called my attention to a linguistic process similar to ‘ritual neutralization’ which is also called ‘neutralization’. He believes that linguistic neutrali-
to the model—that is the term is used typologically: this concerns especially the two items *yavana* (pāvaiyanai) *vilakku*, ‘the Yavana lamp (held by, or adorned by, or in the shape of, a statue)’, and *yavana peḷai* ‘Yavana chest, box’. Also, the term *yavana kaivinai* ‘yavana craftsmanship’ is almost a cliché in early Tamil medieval texts. It just seems to refer to foreign, Yavana-like and/or foreign-like handiwork, craftsmanship.

4. The Foreign Innovation Enters the Sphere of the Indigenous

Typologizing of foreign groups and imports marks an acceptance of them as optional variants of indigenous groups and products but does not yet mean their acceptance as parts of the indigenous culture and society. Such ‘indigenization’ takes place in the succeeding phases of incorporation. In these phases the innovation is recognized as ‘modern’ but its foreign origins are forgotten or ignored. The ecological or symbolic foreign enclavement is dropped or loses its charge, leaving the innovation to mix freely in the indigenous culture and society, both ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’. Foreign loan-words such as ‘thanks’, ‘hotel’, ‘station’, enter colloquial speech and are used without any self-consciousness about their foreign origin except on the part of the specialist in language. A great many literary and social forms, techniques and technical products, which may have been foreign in origin, are now accepted as ‘modern’ and indigenous. The use of sewing machines, wrist watches, radios, telephones, bicycles and automobiles; eating from plates on tables while sitting on chairs; working for a college degree in a ‘modern’ subject—all these are now recognized as parts of a ‘modern culture’ that is produced as well as consumed by Indians. Sometimes a special class of people is associated with these items as a ‘modern’ class because it follows a style of life which uses the ‘modern’ items or because it has the adaptability and desire to do so. These are frequently the better educated and well-to-do groups living in urban centers, but one can find general recognition of the prestige and value of ‘modern culture’ in the scale of dowries offered to the different kinds of professions (the civil service and modern medicine get the highest) and in the popularity of wrist watches, transistor radios, and bicycles as wedding gifts even among poor villagers.

‘Modern culture’ is not confined to any one class but may be found distributed unequally among members of the same family, caste, or village. Children in college tend to be more ‘modern’ than their parents, and husbands more than their wives.

Brahmans have the reputation in Tamilnad of being very ‘modern’ and ‘adaptable’ because they have acquired modern education and have gone into the professions, business, and industry, although they are also regarded as representatives of Sanskritic Hinduism and the ‘great tradition’.

Zonation plays an analogously important role in the formation of new colloquial standards of speech from literary and colloquial Tamil. See his paper ‘The Structure of Variation: a Study in Caste Dialects’, esp. pp. 470–2 in M. Singer and B. S. Cohn, eds., *Structure and Change in Indian Society*. 
Modern and indigenous. Modernity, then, is a permanent layer or dimension of indigenous culture and not simply a collection of recent foreign imports or the fashionable life-style of a privileged class. When an innovation has entered this layer, it is no longer associated with strange and foreign groups nor is it segregated from the rest of the indigenous culture. It may be recognized for its functional or esthetic value as an innovation and acquire prestige and status on that account. In any case it is differentiated from the traditional culture, from which it may be a departure and to which it may also offer a challenge. This challenge is usually not very deep or threatening, because when it has reached this phase, the innovation of foreign origin has been desegregated, neutralized, and appears as a freely available variant in the culture. Such innovations ('heterogenetic') are hardly distinguishable from the innovations of local origin ('orthogenetic') except to the historians of culture. When an hereditary image-maker in contemporary Madras finds and uses a finer grade of sand than his father used, when members of a Brahman family go into agriculture and trade, when a musician improvises on a classical raga, or a Sanskrit scholar writes and produces a play in Sanskrit, these are orthogenetic innovations. They may even be admired and desired for their originality, workmanship, resourcefulness, and taste, just as some of the heterogenetic innovations are. But the orthogenetic innovations have a different point of origin and a different career from the heterogenetic. Let us note some of these significant differences between a foreign innovation and an indigenous innovation.

Because an indigenous innovation emerges within the system and is not associated with the alien and strange, it is not regarded as a threat to tradition and requires no special segregation and neutralization. It is permitted to develop on its own merits or demerits, so to speak; its eventual acceptance or rejection is not posed as a dilemma of either accepting or rejecting all the basic institutions, values, and beliefs of the traditional system. On the contrary, the cultural presumption is that the acceptance of such innovations will not change the traditional system in any essential way; they represent merely varying manifestations of the system. This presumption is given metaphysical expression in Sankara's Vedānta philosophy of causation, which regards the cause as unchangeable, giving only an appearance of suffering change:14

... The clay is spoken of as the only reality in all its transformations as the pot, the jug or the plate. It is said that though there are so many diversities of appearance that one is called the plate, the other the pot, and the other the jug, yet these are only empty distinctions of name and form, for the only thing real in them is the earth which in its essence remains ever the same whether you call it the pot, plate, or jug... all the various modes in which the clay appear are mere appearances, unreal, indefinable, and so illusory....

14 S. Dasgupta, A History of Indian Philosophy (Cambridge, 1922). I am indebted to F. Staal for this reference to the Sankara theory. See also his article on Sanskrit and Sanskritization, p. 269.
So in all world-phenomena the one truth is being, the Brahman, and all the phenomena that are being imposed on it are but illusory forms and names [Dasgupta: 53, 468].

The lady from contemporary Madras who insists that her sari is essentially a 'traditional' one although it is made of modern material (nylon) and in the 'modern' colors of pink and beige is echoing, perhaps unknowingly, Sankara's philosophy of causation. That nylon happens to be a recent foreign import and the colors are an indigenous departure from the dark-greens, reds, and browns of the traditional South Indian sari does not matter in this philosophy. Both kinds of change are merely varying 'appearances' of an unchanging eternal tradition.

5. The Foreign Import Becomes 'Traditional'

By the time a foreign import (or heterogenetic innovation) has entered the layer of the 'modern' and the 'indigenous' culture where it is no longer distinguished from an orthogenetic innovation, it may be said to have been 'accepted' and 'incorporated' into the culture. Yet this does not represent complete acceptance. That comes when the import is no longer regarded as simply 'modern' but also as 'traditional'. It may sound paradoxical to speak of a foreign import becoming 'traditional', but this is precisely what happens in the final phase of incorporation. In this respect there is an asymmetry between the curves of the orthogenetic and heterogenetic innovations although both kinds may end up as 'traditional'. The heterogenetic innovation follows a career, when accepted, from the foreign and recent to the modern, indigenous, and traditional. The orthogenetic innovation, on the other hand, follows a path from the indigenous traditional to the indigenous modern and back to the traditional.

For a foreign import or group to enter the hallowed realm of the 'traditional' it must become old, it must conform to customary or scriptural norms, and it must have an origin myth in which it is linked to a great traditional set of ancestors or precedents. These three requirements for traditional status are closely interrelated but they are not identical. To become old and ancient is to persist for many generations. A family, its property, an institution, an artifact which has so persisted is called 'traditional' (paramparaiyānga from paramparai, 'generation'). Such an old family also acquires a reputation for solidity and integrity. Its customs will be considered 'civilized' and educated in 'traditional culture'—(palanākārikam). In the sense of social customs and social institutions, 'traditional culture' (palampānpu), connotes that it is good and moral because it is old and traditional. When a family's genealogy can be traced to the deities, sages, kings and cultural heroes of the epics and puranas, it has established its claims both to antiquity and moral righteousness. One need not, however, furnish a complete and scientific family history in order to establish these claims. Professional genealogists and bards are usually able
to connect the four or five generations of a family's remembered genealogy to the epic and puranic dynasties. Sometimes these genealogists and their families have maintained oral and written records of family genealogies from generation to generation (Shah and Shroff). But it does not really matter whether the reconstructed genealogies that intervene between living memory and those in the scriptures are 'scientific'. The important thing is to have one's claim to an ancient affiliation socially recognized in the present, since such recognition is one of the major ways to validate one's present status, change in status, or status aspirations.15

Not only families, but also castes, tribes, villages and towns, temples, sects, and _maths_ have genealogies which go back to ancient scriptural origins. Artifacts and aspects of civilization such as the dance, drama, music, have their scriptural genealogies to validate their status as 'traditional' arts and crafts. Westerners are sometimes astonished and amused by the efforts of Indian 'traditionalists' to find evidence in the Vedas and other scriptures for the airplane or nuclear fission or fusion. This is not really different in form and principle from the process of incorporating foreign groups into the caste system or raising the status of a lower caste through Sanskritization. The origin myth gives the foreign group or innovation a local habitation and name within the structure of an Indian great tradition. By so doing, its present acceptance into the society is culturally validated. For to deny the alleged novelty of an innovation by asserting its antiquity is to recognize and accept it as an integral part of the indigenous culture. Archaiization is in this case also a form of modernization.

_Plus ça change_ . . . During the last two hundred years traditional Indian arts and crafts, social institutions, religious practices and beliefs have undergone widespread and profound changes—in materials, techniques, methods of training, design, name, use and status. Yet most of my Madras informants do not look upon these changes as a process of 'modernization' which transforms items of traditional culture into items of a modern culture. They see some of these changes as leading to neglect, corruption, even destruction and disappearance of tradition but not to 'modernizing' transformations. The traditionally minded among them participate in efforts to reconstruct, revive and restore the fading cultural traditions, but they certainly do not regard this as an effort at 'modernization'.

This attitude creates a seeming mystery about the process of cultural modernization and is very often misinterpreted as a denial of real change and innovation. The mystery is quickly cleared up if we recall that it is people who ‘modernize’ and not depersonalized cultural artifacts. Individuals, families, communities can and do ‘modernize’ by entering modern occupations, using modern artifacts or adopting a modern life style. These individuals or groups are considered ‘modern’ (murpōkkur) (etymology: mur ‘forward’ plus pōkkur ‘movement’) in the sense of being psychologically adaptable or progressive. Modern occupations, artifacts and life styles are not the outcome of a linear transformation of traditional occupations, artifacts and life-styles. They are produced by orthogenetic or heterogenetic innovations, that is, by the endless variety of ‘unessential’ modifications in a substratum of cultural traditions, by the recurrent novelties in the births and declines of such traditions through the ages, as in the ‘eternal renewal’ of life in the green shoot of rice and in the new-born infant, and by the acceptance into the culture of neutralized and desegregated foreign imports.

Consistently with this view, one can classify most items in the cultural universe as either ‘modern’ (putumārakikam) or ‘traditional’ (palamārakikam, palampapnu), some items as mixtures of both (e.g. the pink nylon sari), and some as neither ‘modern’ nor ‘traditional’ (e.g., television), because they are such recent innovations (putumputiya, paccapputiya) (‘brand new, green, fresh-new’) they have not yet been processed and classified. From this view it is also possible to see modernization as a process of incorporating innovations into the indigenous culture, while denying that it is a process which automatically transforms corresponding items in the ‘traditional culture’ into items of ‘modern culture’.

This is a world view which recognizes innovation and novelty in many forms yet looks on modernization as a cultural process which turns the new into something old, i.e. as a form of ‘traditionalization’, and not as a cultural process which makes something new out of that which is old. It seems likely that this asymmetry in the conception of modernization is based on the observation of growth and aging in nature. Young plants, animals and infants do grow old, but old ones do not ‘grow young! At the same time this world view recognizes that culture is different from nature, that it can be acquired by man as a member of society in each generation. People are not considered ‘modern’ or ‘traditional’ in culture because of racial or even ethnic criteria but because of their life styles and of the

16 In Tamil putitu ‘that which is new or wonderful’ also refers to the first sheaves of a rice crop; putiti akkutal means ‘to modernize, to make new’. Putumai, putivatu, putai are words for ‘newness, novelty’, ‘anything new’, ‘novelty’, respectively. Putappalakkam, ‘new habit, usage, fashion’, does not mean a renovated old habit or usage but that something not previously habitual or a matter of usage has become so. To ‘traditionalize’, ‘to make old’, is expressed by pannai akkutal, palamai akkutal. Linguistic information from K. Zvelebil and A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary by Burrow and Emeneau.
artifacts they use. Psychological differences in dispositions to adapt to change and to learn new things are recognized among individuals and groups, but these differences are not necessarily linked to biological traits. They are accepted as observed differences in psychological adaptability. Even the most traditional-minded can learn 'modern' ways if they are adaptable. They may explain their psychological abilities in terms of biological inheritance (e.g. Brahmans) but they are also widely considered by non-Brahmans to be very adaptable to modern conditions.

NEW MODEL FOR A GREAT TRADITION

The different phases which have been described in the incorporation of a foreign innovation into a traditional society and culture represent the 'normal' cultural metabolism involved. Not every import or innovation goes through every phase. Some may be rejected or arrested at a particular phase, some may skip phases and be directly archaized.

Some foreign imports or groups may meet with extreme resistance and hostility because they become symbols of threats to the indigenous society and culture. The alleged lard-greased cartridges of the 1857 mutiny and the more recent vegetable cooking-fats, such as Dalda, are symbols of this kind, and for a short period may became targets for xenophobic emotions. Items of traditional culture may similarly become symbols of an indigenous 'great tradition' and of 'little traditions', and rallying points for movements of cultural nationalism. Gandhi's use of the spinning wheel and the movements for cow protection and for reviving indigenous medicine are examples of such symbols and movements.

The process of selecting symbols of a tradition and of an anti-tradition is a highly selective and creative one. Much of it goes on at the unconscious level of 'cultural drift' that pushes the growth of cultural traditions in one direction rather than another. Some of it, however, is a product of deliberate planning and 'cultural policy' by 'cultural policy makers'.

The success of a cultural policy that aims to revive or restore selected indigenous traditions is not always easy to evaluate. Gandhi's campaign for weaving hand-spun Khadi, for example, did not succeed in replacing factory looms with the ancient spinning wheel. Yet it does seem to have succeeded in dramatizing concern for cottage industries and village under-employment, while providing a symbol for a self-respecting cultural identity in a successful mass political movement. From this point of view one might argue that the charkha really articulated in an archaic idiom the voice of Congress and of the sewing machine.

Many of the revivalist and restorationist movements and their associated

symbols turn out to have this Janus-faced character—‘traditional’ from a front view and ‘modern’ from a back view. In this respect their ‘traditional’ face serves the same function as the archaizing of a modern innovation—it puts a seal of legitimacy and acceptance on an imported foreign institution or product, just as the lion-headed capital from an Asoka pillar was chosen to be the official seal and emblem of a modern democratic government in independent twentieth-century India.

Cultural movements and policies which select or reject specific items of foreign and indigenous cultures around which to build a cultural identity for a modernization program are not confined in India to the movement for cultural nationalism and political independence. Such movements have been organized by tribes, castes, religious communities and sects, and political and linguistic groups, as vehicles of change. In general, these movements aim to validate an actual or proposed change by claiming great antiquity for the proposal, a biological or spiritual line of genealogical descent from the ancestral origins, and conformity to accepted cultural norms and values. In practical effect, this mode of ‘traditionalizing’ validation implies that the proposal for change is restorationist, that is, that it aims to restore an original status which has for some reason been lost or forgotten.

A particularly interesting example of such a cultural movement is the Dravidian movement in Tamilnad, which not only has all the characteristics of other movements which seek to validate modernizing changes with archaic models, but in addition attempts to construct an alternative model of a ‘Great Tradition’. This model depicts a Dravidian civilization with a complete culture that preceded the Aryan civilization of Sanskritic Hinduism. The Dravidian culture, in this model, is independent of the Aryan and self-sufficient and different in language, literature, architecture, sculpture, dance, music, religion, philosophy and social structure. Sanskritic Hinduism is represented as a foreign intrusion into India and especially into South India, where it was brought by its Brahman custodians and imposed on the indigenous Dravidian culture and population. The practical policy of the Dravidian movement is to ‘de-Sanskritize’ and ‘de-Brahmanize’ South Indian culture and society by restoring the original Dravidian civilization. This restoration program has included attempts to remove Sanskrit, Hindi and other ‘foreign’ elements from Tamil language and literature, smashing of idols and images, simplifying rites and ceremonies by not using Brahman priests and rituals, reinterpreting the Ramayana, the Puranas, and the Vedas to reveal the ‘oppression’ and ‘calumny’ of the Dravidians, and attacks on Brahmans and the ‘superstitious’ beliefs and practices of Sanskritic Hinduism. On the social side, the movement has advocated later age of marriage and widow remarriage; a quota system for Brahmans in education, government administration and politics; the
rejection of the *varna* classification, and the use of Tamil as the medium of instruction in schools and universities.

While the Dravidian movement has found support for its reinterpretations of South Indian history in the rediscovery and translations of such ancient Tamil classics as the *Silappatikaram*, the *Tolkappiyam*, the *Sangam Anthologies*, and the *Tirukkural*, its significance does not lie in its contributions to Tamil or comparative Dravidian studies. These studies, which were given a great impetus in the nineteenth century by such Western scholars as Beschi, Caldwell and Pope, as well as by some Brahman and non-Brahman scholars, are now becoming a part of the world of international scholarship and culture, in the same way in which Sanskrit language and literature, or Latin and Greek, have been made available to a world audience. The significance of the Dravidian movement lies rather in its use of such studies and of the modern techniques of propaganda and political organization to propagate a cultural ideology and model of a Dravidian Great Tradition, and to make it the cultural basis for a successful political party, the Dravidian Progressive Federation, D.M.K., which is now in power in Tamilnad.

Although the cultural ideology of the Dravidian movement has declared Brahmans and various aspects of Sanskritic Hinduism ‘the foreign enemy’, it nevertheless incorporates many foreign imports. E. V. Ramaswami Naicker, the founding father of the Dravidian movement, described in an interview a trip to Europe in the early 1930s as the source of many of his ideas and organizational techniques. On this trip, he said, he discovered Lenin’s communism, Mussolini’s fascism, Bertrand Russell’s rationalism, and Robert Ingersoll’s atheism; and in each of these he found something useful. In view of this acknowledgment, it is perhaps understandable why he chose the colors black and red for the flag of his party, the Dravidian Federation (D.K.), and for his own station wagon, especially since these colors also have significance in Tamil culture. It is also clear by now, although perhaps not transparently so, why this radical innovator should have become the leader of a restorationist movement.

As a cultural phenomenon the Dravidian movement has followed a pattern familiar from the wider cultural history of India and of many other countries. Archeological, historical, linguistic and literary studies inspire a vision of a ‘classical golden age’. The post-classical ‘middle period’ intervening between the golden age and the present is viewed as a decline brought in by foreign intrusion. A ‘renaissance’ aiming to rediscover and emulate the classics of the ‘golden age’ generally also becomes a vehicle for ‘purification’ of and repression of the ‘degraded’ traditions of the middle period and for modernizing reforms.

This pattern is approximated by the view of Tamil cultural history which has been accepted by the ideology of the Dravidian movement.
According to Zvelebil, a scheme of five ages is envisaged in this ideology. 
(1) A classical 'golden age' of the Sangam period.
(2) A 'dark age' following under the influence of Aryan Buddhism and Jainism.
(3) An age of inimical Aryanization beginning with the bhakti movements of the Pallava period. Kamban's translation of the Rāmāyana is given as a typical representative of the literature of this age.
(4) An age of decadence and ruin that is brought on in the late medieval period by over-all Sanskritization and 'corruption' of Tamil language and literature.
(5) A Tamil 'renaissance' and restoration of the 'golden age' models that begin about the eighteenth century.

Although the Dravidian movement suggests that the rejection of a foreign import involves processes of cultural metabolism similar to those involved in the acceptance of such an import, it nevertheless represents an extreme case of the process, since the 'foreign import' that is being rejected is not a recent innovation but the long-established great tradition of Sanskrit Hinduism. Within the Dravidian ideology, the justification for the rejection is in the argument that this is necessary to restore the 'pure' Tamil great tradition which has been 'corrupted' by foreign influences. Practically, such a restoration would involve the re-evaluation and elimination of an entire linguistic, literary, and cultural heritage in Tamil which begins with the bhakti literature of the sixth and seventh centuries, and which has undergone much creative development since. Whatever the merits of this view of Tamil cultural history, it cannot be taken as an accurate historical account of the nature of and development of Sanskritic Hinduism in South India. It represents rather a cultural ideology whose function and meaning is to be found in contemporary political, economic and social conflicts, not in historical precedent. The portrait painted of Sanskritic Hinduism by the Dravidian movement is a very simplified one in which a few elements are highlighted to symbolize the whole tradition.18

Cultural differences among peoples are not absolute facts of nature or biology but derive their importance from the manner in which they are perceived, evaluated, symbolized and acted upon. They are, in other words, themselves cultural facts, expressions of world views and values, shot through with the subjectivity, relativity and volatility of such facts. This anthropological dictum applies to the 'Aryan–Dravidian' opposition.


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The Sanskritic tradition at first came into South India from the North in a gradual and limited way. As early as the third and fourth centuries A.D., during the Sangam Period, clear distinctions were already being made, according to Zvelebil, between vaṭa, 'northern, Aryan, Sanskritic' and ten 'southern, Dravidian, Tamil'. These distinctions were not, however, conceived as antagonistic. But with the massive Sanskritization of Tamil culture during the Pallava period and later, the 'Aryan-Dravidian' distinction expresses hostility and opposition to various aspects of Brahmanism and Sanskritic Hinduism.\(^\text{19}\)

In historical Tamil linguistics and literature the distinction between 'indigenous culture' and 'foreign culture' was expressed in Old Tamil, according to Zvelebil, by the contrastive pair of terms akam and puram. This pair of terms, which is also of basic importance in the ancient Tamil poetics of the Tolkappiyam, links the cultural difference between the 'indigenous' and 'foreign' to the difference between what is 'inside' and belongs to the family, household, and village, and what is 'outside' and belongs to a 'public' world. In the field of ancient classical Tamil poetics the akam–puram contrast represents a classification of two kinds of poetry, love poetry of an ideal 'interior landscape, and 'public' poetry 'placed in a real society and given a context of real history' (A. K. Ramanujan, The Interior Landscape, p. 101.)\(^\text{20}\)

This ancient contrast seems to attach no great importance to the difference between a foreigner or strange object which comes from another village or province and one which comes from another country. Both are 'foreign' in the sense that they do not belong to the 'inner world' of my kin and household. The distinction between the two kinds of foreigners, on the other hand, is sharply drawn in medieval and modern Tamil and is probably related to cultural and political nationalism. In modern Tamil the distinction between 'indigenous culture' and 'foreign culture' is expressed by the pair of terms contam, 'what is ours, our own' (from a Sanskrit loan word svanta-) and ayal, 'alien, foreign', 'what does not belong to us' (a Dravidian word). On the surface this seems similar to the ancient usage, but ayal refers to the sum total of non-Tamil features, so the line between 'indigenous' and 'foreign' is now drawn at the level of an entire culture—Tamil versus non-Tamil, Dravidian versus non-Dravidian, Indian versus non-Indian, rather than at the level of family, household, and village. The older usage is continued in such words as ariyāṭavaṇ, 'he who is not known by the village', 'stranger', and in the compartmentalizing tendencies of

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\(^{19}\) K. Zvelebil, personal communication; for another interpretation, see A. L. Basham, 'Some reflections on Dravidians and Aryans', Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures (Madras, 1963).

\(^{20}\) The information on historical Tamil usage has been obtained from K. Zvelebil. For ancient Tamil poetry and poetics see A. K. Ramanujan, The Interior Landscape (Bloomington, 1967), and K. Zvelebil, op. cit.
modern Madras, but this usage has been overshadowed by those expressions that connote regional and national great traditional cultures.

While the ancient Tamil contrast between ‘one's own culture’ and ‘alien, foreign culture’, in terms of _akam_ and _puram_ seems much closer to the outlook of a ‘primitive’ or ‘folk’ mentality, in other respects it was more universalistic than the later distinctions, as the following remarkable _puram_ poem testifies:

Kaniyar Pünkunран

Every town's a home town,  
every man a kinsman.  
Good and evil do not come  
from others;  
pain and relief of pain  
come of themselves  
Dying is not new.  
We do not rejoice  
that living is sweet,  
nor in anger  
call it bitter.

Wise men  
have shown that lives  
are but logs in a raft  
rushing in a torrent  
sounding over rocks  
after a lightning storm.

So  
we're not amazed by great men  
we do not scorn the little.

Genre: Potuviyal  
Theme: Porumoríkkânci  
Translation: A. K. Ramanujan

IS INDIA’S MODERNIZATION UNIQUE?

The account I have sketched of the adaptive mechanisms that India has developed for incorporating or rejecting innovations would tend to support those who characterize India as essentially ‘traditionalistic’. The usual connotations of this characterization, however, are not supported by this account. The ‘traditionalism’ of Indian civilization is _not_ opposed to innovation and change, to modernity, to the foreign and the strange. ‘Traditional’ India is not a monolithic and immovable accumulation of immemorial customs and beliefs blocking the road to progress. India’s ‘traditionalism’ is rather a built-in adaptive mechanism for making changes. Essentially it is a series of processes for incorporating into the culture and validating innovations. These processes include enclavement, neutralization, compartmentalization, vicarious ritualization, typological stylization,
reinterpretation, archaization, and, undoubtedly, others. The validation culminates when a change can be related to the 'traditional' layer of the culture. This requirement does not really impose a very narrow constraint on the innovating process. The 'traditional layer' contains such a rich reservoir of oral and written myth, legends, histories and genealogies that the professional genealogists and mythographers, as well as the amateur ones, have no difficulty in finding ancient precedents for modern change. Since, moreover, there is no single 'official' definition and interpretation of 'the tradition', ample latitude exists for commentators and interpreters to adapt it to changing needs and circumstances.

This fluidity and relativity in the definition of 'tradition' is given philosophical sanction in Indian systems of thought whether or not they acknowledge the reality of novelty and change. Even Sankara's *advaita vedānta*, whose doctrine of causation recognizes change only as illusory appearances of an unchanging Being, allows for several different 'paths' to truth and salvation, as well as for choice among these 'paths' according to individual temperament and capacity, education, degree of spiritual development and other factors. Other systems of thought, such as that of the Sāmkhya school, developed a theory of causation (the *Parināma*) which holds that 'the effect is a product of a real change in the cause through the action and combination of the elements of diversity in it'.

A contemporary Indian scholar writing on Indian theories of knowledge denies that these theories elevate memory as the only valid or most important form of cognition: 'Most thinkers hold that novelty should also be regarded as a necessary character of knowledge worthy of the name. So memory (which is a reproduction of knowledge acquired in the past through perception or any other sources) is not regarded as a separate kind of valid cognition.' Other thinkers regard memory as a substantive source of knowledge about 'the pastness of an experience or its object—information which could not be obtained from any other source without its aid'.

Given this variety and flexibility in Indian conceptions of 'tradition', one can see how easy it would be for Indians to accept all sorts of innovations and changes by 'traditionalizing' them. One looks for these changes not in a self-conscious ideology of 'progress' and innovation but in the ways in which 'structural amnesia' and 'patterned memory' operate to select from the rich storehouse of 'tradition' each group's or each cultural product's genealogical links to its remote ancestors. In this process 'traditionalization' is not simply a blind handing-down of meaningless and


functionless ‘survivals’ but rather a creative incorporation of contemporary events and innovations into the living and changing structure of tradition.

It is often said that the flexibility I have been describing exists in Indian civilization at the level of tolerance for a wide range of beliefs but is not to be found at the level of conduct, which is rigidly prescribed and proscribed. This distinction, which has played so important a part in the Western liberal tradition, does not quite describe the Indian situation. For the question is not the actual behavior of some individual or group, but the normative structure within which the behavior occurs. At the level of Indian civilization’s normative structure, its culture, the variety of alternative ‘paths’ of conduct is as great as the variety of systems of ‘thought’.

The flexibility in interpreting and applying these normative structures to individuals and groups in particular circumstances is equally great in the two cases. When a group wishes to change its position in the structure, it must change not only its own and others’ behavior but its ‘thought’ as well. Frequently it may be more difficult to change its ‘thought’ than its behavior. One of the general psychological mechanisms involved in such changes is the acting out of some role with which the actor has identified in order to change his own and others’ beliefs, attitudes, and sentiments. In Srinivas’s ‘Sanskritization’, the identification is with a claimed position in the varna structure and the ‘acting out’ includes a set of beliefs as well as behavior. In the Dravidian movement, the identification is with a whole Tamil ‘Great Tradition’ and the ‘acting out’ includes the disestablishment of the old ‘Great Tradition’ of Sanskritic Hinduism as well as the restoration of the Dravidian traditions. In the Radha-Krishna bhajans, the identification is with Krishna and the milkmaid gopis of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and the acting out is the singing and dancing which represent Krishna’s ‘sports’ with the milkmaids. In all these cases the success of the identification and of the acting out can be measured only by the actor’s subjective conviction that he has attained the state he is seeking and by social recognition of that attainment.

These identifications with and ‘acting out’ of social roles not only operate at the levels of both ‘thought’ and conduct; they also simultaneously express an individual’s decision to affirm some aspect of his cultural traditions, through the selection of myths and rituals which are the vehicles of the identification and the acting out, and to change another aspect of it by giving the myth and ritual a contemporary relevance. This dual set of tensions between affirmation and innovation, between thought and behavior, was eloquently expressed in the following description which a Krishna devotee in Madras gave me of his search for salvation and brotherhood in the Radha-Krishna bhajans:

The relation between devotees as one of complete equality is only their ideal. They wish to make it a matter of fact and a reality. But, at the same time, it does not replace the traditional respect of sons for fathers, of young for old, of the less devout for the more devout, of the lower castes for the higher castes, and so forth. Devotees fall at each other's feet and take the dust of the feet of each other and place it on their heads, embrace each other, and do other such things. It needs constant practice of these things so that they may become perfect equals. In actual life, the equality has not yet been achieved or realized. It is only the ideal and devotees wish to reach this ideal sooner or later. It has not yet come, as I have said before. Fathers do think that they are superior to their sons, the elders do think that they are superior to youngsters, the more devout do think that they are superior to the less devout, the high-caste devotee thinks that he is superior to the low-caste devotee, and so forth. Thus they think one way and do another way when they exhibit equality or express democratic sentiments. There is no correlation between their mind and body. They do not act alike. They think one thing and do another thing. When by constant practice, their minds imbibe equality as their bodies express it, the ideal is reached by the harmony between the mind and the body. The two then act alike and there is correlation between them. Till then there is no talk of complete equality as the body expresses equality and the mind does not. What the body expresses is thus only a gesture of the ideal to be attained and constant gesture of this kind will bring about the ideal in its own good time. The body expressing equality and the mind expressing inequality produce insincerity in a person, a great sin in a devotee.

India's traditionalizing 'cultural metabolism' is probably not unique, although it may have a distinctive rate and style. The comparative cultural study of how different societies deal with innovation and change is too underdeveloped to permit precise comparisons. The old dichotomy of 'traditional' and 'modern' societies, and the alleged linear laws of development which inexorably transform 'traditional' into 'modern' types of society, have not been supported by the highly differentiated picture beginning to emerge from recent research. In particular, this theory has not been able to give an adequate explanation of the mixtures of 'tradition' and 'modernity' which are to be found in India, Indonesia, Japan, China and many other countries. To place these cases on a linear graph of 'transition' to modernity is a plausible interpretation consistent with the general theory. But this requires the addition of so many special variables, taking account of differences in history, culture, leadership, degree of underdevelopment, etc., to account for the differences in degree of 'transition', that a simpler theory seems called for. The 'transition' interpretation, moreover, does not take seriously the possibility that the mixture of 'tradition' and 'modernity' may reflect important long-run interactions and adjustments, that it may be a 'permanent transition' as Geertz suggests in the case of Indonesia, and not simply a prelude to 'take-off' or a mismanaged modernization program.\(^{24}\)

The Indian case points to an alternative possible interpretation which should be further explored, especially as societies with 'Great Traditions'

modernize. Perhaps such exploration will reveal, as I believe it does in the case of India, that the cultural problem which modernization presents to these societies is neither one of blindly imitating some Western model of development nor one of reaching through internal transformations the 'modern' rung on a universal ladder of social evolution. The problem is of the same general kind that these societies have had to solve again and again in their history in order to survive and maintain any culture at all, namely, how to adapt to change and innovation, whether it originates abroad or inside the country. If the process of modernization is studied comparatively in terms of strategies which different cultures and civilizations have developed to cope with change, we shall see that modernization does not pose a new dilemma of either rejecting one's 'traditional' culture as a whole in order to replace it by 'modern culture' or rejecting 'modern culture' in its entirety in order to preserve one's traditions. The problem faced by these 'traditional' societies is how to continue their 'normal cultural metabolism', that is, how to continue converting the 'raw' and 'uncooked' events of history into 'cooked' and assimilable 'cultural traditions'.

The application of this approach to the modernization of cultural traditions in India suggests that the processes of cultural intake and assimilation operate with artifacts, technical processes, idea systems and social institutions, as well as with social groups. Innovations in these fields are introduced into the system, tried and tested, accepted or rejected in somewhat the same manner as are human newcomers. While there are many differences of detail in the process, depending on whether the innovation has been brought in by members of a particular foreign group or has been introduced by 'natives' who have travelled and studied abroad, whether it has originated within the indigenous culture, in what cultural field the innovation occurs, etc., the reactions to and eventual selection and incorporation of an innovation probably follow the sequence of phases which I have outlined.

One writer who makes some interesting comparative observations on the process of cultural innovation, especially in the economic field, is Max Weber. I do not now refer to Weber's well-known theory of how the 'Protestant Ethic' was converted into a 'this-worldly asceticism' and so became a motive force for technical and economic innovation. The Protestant Ethic, is in any case, supposedly absent in India, according to Weber. I have in mind rather his more marginal discussion of how 'guest people' and 'pariah people' may be sources of economic innovation.25

Weber's discussion is a suggestive one and provides a good starting point for an analysis of the sources and phases of cultural innovation, especially


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if considered in the more general context of institutionalized hospitality to strangers and cultural attitudes towards the new and strange. Weber's treatment unfortunately is brief and emphasizes rather the low ritual status occupied by 'guest' and 'pariah' peoples and some of the transitional stages by which groups outside the caste system are brought into the system by conforming to its norms or by which low-caste groups rise in the rank order by emulating the higher castes. Although he describes these groups as providing indispensable trade, services, crafts and industry which the local population cannot or will not provide, he does not stress their role as importers and innovators, nor does he trace the career and assimilation of the innovations within the system. His analysis concentrates on the 'enclavement' phase of innovation and restricts that primarily to the acquisition of a particular ritual status in the caste system. Weber limited his analysis so narrowly because of his assumption that 'Hinduism is primarily ritualism' and his interpretation of this ritualism in terms of unconditional and unchanging ritual obligations (dharma) inherited by each caste. This assumption is also the source of his characterization of the 'inner spirit' of the entire Hindu system in terms of a 'ritual law' in which 'every change of occupation, every change in work technique, may result in ritual degradation' and which is 'certainly not capable of giving birth to economic and technical revolutions from within itself or even of facilitating the first germination of capitalism in its midst'.

In spite of this unrealistically rigid conception of Hinduism and the caste system, Weber in passing also cites evidence, drawn chiefly from the Census reports, of the adaptability and mobility of different groups as well as of the system as a whole. Ritual barriers, he finds, have not stopped everyday economic transactions in the past:

the law of caste has proved just as elastic in the face of the necessities of the concentration of labor in workshops as it did in the face of a need for concentration of labor and service in the noble household. All domestic servants required by the upper castes were ritually clean, as we have seen. The principle, 'the artisan's hand is always clean in his occupation', is a similar concession to the necessity of being allowed to have fixtures made or repair work done, personal services or other work accomplished, by wage workers or by itinerants not belonging to the household. Likewise, the workshop was recognized as 'clean'. Hence no ritual factor would have stood in the way of jointly using different castes in the same large workroom, just as the ban upon interest during the Middle Ages (in Europe), as such, hindered little the development of industrial capital, which did not even emerge in the form of investment for fixed interest.

He finds contemporary trends destructive of the ritual system:

Today the Hindu caste order is profoundly shaken. Especially in the district of Calcutta, old Europe's major gateway to India, many norms have practically lost

their force. The railroads, the taverns, the changing occupational stratification, the concentration of labor through imported industry, colleges, etc., have all contributed their part. The 'commuters to London', that is, those who studied in Europe and maintained voluntary social intercourse with Europeans, were outcasts up to the last generation; but more and more this pattern is disappearing. And it has been impossible to introduce caste coaches on the railroads in the fashion of the American railroad cars or station waiting room which segregate 'white' from 'colored' in the southern states. All caste relations have been shaken, and the stratum of intellectuals bred by the English are here, as elsewhere, bearers of a specific nationalism. They will greatly strengthen this slow and irresistible process. For the time being, however, the caste structure still stands quite firmly.28

Such departures from the 'ritual law' Weber saw only as temporary European intrusions into the Hindu system. This system and the 'Hindu character' he thought would reassert themselves when the Europeans withdrew:

When, today, the penetration of Indian society by capitalistic interests is already so extensive that they can no longer be eliminated, it is still possible for some eminent English students of the land to argue on good grounds that the removal of the thin conquering strata of Europeans and the Pax Britannica enforced by them would open wide the life and death struggle of inimical castes, confessions, and tribes; the old feudal robber romanticism of the Indian Middle Ages would again break forth.29

Weber obviously was not able to reconcile the evidence of change of the system with his conception of it as governed by a fundamental 'ritual law' which prevents change. He concluded, contrary to the evidence he himself presented, that because the system had great adaptive and assimilative powers, the result of this adaptation and assimilation did not change the system but continued to express its unchanging 'spirit'. While he recognized 'traditionalization' and 'archaization' as forms of legitimation, he does not seem to have appreciated their roles as sources of change. In particular he underestimated the extent to which changes originating outside the system ('heterogenetic' changes) are selectively incorporated into it through the mechanisms of compartmentalization and neutralization. His discussion of the role of the Jews as a 'pariah people' in the economic life of Europe should have alerted him to the importance of these mechanisms as the proving ground for innovation and for the formation of new cultural norms within the system. He was not led to this insight because he saw the compartmentalization only in terms of a 'double standard of morals' as between strangers and one's own community, rather than as an encounter between different cultural standards, an encounter which is not 'ethically indifferent' but which gradually neutralizes and reduces the differences and may even produce an integration of the alien and the indigenous standards into a new positive ethical code or ecumenical religion.

The degree of conflict between these different cultural standards depends

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in part on how the parties to the encounter perceive and react to the differences. Ecological enclavement of a foreign group or of foreign-returned 'natives' is one expression of such perception and reaction and may be linked to a deliberate cultural policy towards foreigners. European colonial powers in Asia, for example, frequently did create enclaves for Europeans even where there was no need for extra-territoriality. In Indonesia, as Geertz has shown, the 'dual economy' and the 'dual society' were, in part, creations of Dutch policy. The neutralization of the conflicts in cultural standards encountered in these enclaves and the cognitive compartmentalizing which reduce the conflicts for the participants may develop in partial independence of any deliberate cultural policy. This seems to have been true of the bazaar area of Modjokoto, the Indonesian town studied by Geertz, as it was of the industrial plants in and around Madras City (Geertz, 1963: 139).

Judging from the Madras example, as well as from other recent studies by cultural anthropologists, cultural geographers, and cultural historians (such as Clifford Geertz, Paul Wheatley, T. G. McGee and Rhoads Murphey), the cultural processes associated with Westernization and modernization are neither unilateral diffusions of elements of Western culture into 'traditional' societies nor do they originate with European colonialism. They are processes endemic in the history of these societies.

30 C. Geertz, Agricultural Involution (Berkeley, 1963), esp. p. 61; and The Social History of an Indonesian Town (M.I.T. Press, 1965), esp. p. 54; C. Geertz, Peddlers and Princes (Chicago, 1933), p. 139. In this passage Geertz uses 'compartmentalized' and 'compartmentalization' to refer to three processes which he has called: 'enclavement' (the 'sharp social and cultural segregation of both traders and trading'), 'ritual neutralization' (trading develops as 'an interstitial pursuit, one to which the values of the wider society are held by common agreement not to apply'), and 'compartmentalization' in the sense that 'the nearly total insulation of commercial behavior from the general nexus of cultural activities' provides 'a preserve for the exercise of economic rationality independently of non-economic constraints'. Geertz also sees a normative ethical code developing from the combined operation of these processes, at least in the situation of the bazaar economy if not at the level of more complex industrial organization.

Geertz's development of the 'compartmentalization' theory is, so far as I know, independent of mine. My own interest in this concept was first aroused by the widely noted observation of 'modern' Indians adhering to 'traditional' practices and beliefs, and the usual interpretations of this as somehow paradoxical, anomalous and contradictory. When I found that most Indians I met did not experience this coexistence of the 'modern' and 'traditional' as a cultural contradiction or even a conflict, it seemed to me that the compartmentalization theory offered a better explanation than the theory of 'modern' and 'traditional' societies as mutually exclusive types with mixed cases interpreted as 'transitional' from the 'traditional' to the 'modern'.

The 'compartmentalization' theory is implicit in Edward Shils's study of The Intellectual Between Tradition and Modernity: The Indian Situation, Comparative Studies in Society and History Supplement I (Mouton, 1961); R. S. Khare has applied it explicitly to an analysis of the home-office adjustments of Kanya-Kubja Brahmans (see CSSH, Vol. XIII (1971)).

and represent a kind of 'cultural metabolism' which regulates for each society a distinctive balance between cultural continuity and cultural innovation.

When the author first became interested in Madras City in 1954, it was in the context of a general theory of the cultural role of cities in the comparative history of civilizations. Madras appeared at that time to be playing the 'heterogenetic' role of a former colonial city, that is, it seemed to be serving as a 'headlink' for Westernization and modernization through its commercial, administrative, educational, and transportational functions. The research question which interested me then was how to relate contemporary and limited field observations in Madras City to the wider context of Indian civilization. I formulated the question in the short-hand operational form of 'what happens to the Great Tradition of Sanskritic Hinduism in a metropolitan center'.

It was something of a surprise to find, on greater familiarity with Madras, a good deal of 'Sanskritic Hinduism' alive in this 'heterogenetic center' and also many movements for cultural revival and restoration. This was not a complete surprise, since in the 1954 paper on 'The Cultural Role of Cities', Robert Redfield and the author had concluded that 'the progressive spirit of Asia and Africa is not simply a decision to walk the road of progressive convictions that we have traversed, but rather in significant part an effort of the so-called "backward" peoples to recover from their disruptive encounters with the West by returning to the sacred centers of their indigenous civilizations'. The paper also suggested that these encounters be viewed not as cases of 'simple diffusion or spread of urban influence from a city', but rather as 'a cultural interaction which takes place against a background of ancient civilization with its own complex and changing pattern of urbanization now coming into contact with a newer and different civilization and giving rise to results that conform to neither'.

As we take a fresh look at these former 'colonial cities' in this perspective of cultural history, we shall find further evidence in them, I believe, not only of efforts in the post-colonial period to recover the 'orthogenetic' 'great traditions' but also of efforts to continue the ancient 'heterogenetic' roles as harbors for foreign imports and indigenous innovations, for heresy and reform. Both these roles will be found in Madras today and in the past. Their operation and interrelationship can best be understood as a sequence of phases in the selection and incorporation of foreign and domestic innovations into the 'modern' and 'traditional' cultural layers of an indigenous civilization.

As modes of adaptation to foreigners and to foreign imports, enclave-ment and the associated adaptive strategies have been practiced in all these civilizations for many hundreds of years before the coming of European colonialism. The Europeans, and later the Americans, brought in products,
peoples, and national flags new to those civilizations. They also brought out many new to the West. And this kind of exchange of cultural 'novelties' has been going on for a long time, as the ancient references to Europe's 'luxury trade' with the orient indicate. This trade has left its own record in the many loan words in European languages for pepper, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, gold, diamonds, pearls, precious stones, ivory, silks, and cottons. The record continues to grow with the entry into English of such words as sitar, tabla, yoga, swami, ashram, ahimsa, satyagraha, and many others. The cultural processes for dealing with the reception and assimilation of these 'novelties' within each civilization have also been developed as distinctive aspects of its own historic growth and transformations. To assume that these processes originate with the 'modern' European intrusions is simply 'temporal ethnocentrism'.

J. H. Plumb, the historian, has recently published a set of lectures on The Death of the Past in which Comte's law of intellectual progress is brought up to date with great eloquence, erudition, and sophistication. The progress of rationalism and science, argues Plumb, has made obsolete the religious–metaphysical interpretations of the past as a sanction for the present or as a source for divining a millenial manifest or hidden destiny.

Men and women today are not conditioned in their daily lives to a world that is tied to an imperceptibly changing past, in which the patterns of work, the relationship between fathers and children, or even between the social classes, possess the sanctity of tradition. Life is change, uncertainty, and only the present can have validity and that, maybe, not for long. The consequence, of course, is to accept a similar attitude in ideas of conduct, in the concepts of social structure or family life. They can be judged by what they do, but lack validity because they have been. So we are witnessing the dissolution of the conditions which tied man to his past and gave him his Janus face [Plumb pp. 58–9].

The past is dead, long live the present! And scientific history, 'which (is) . . . so deeply concerned with the past, has, in a sense, helped to destroy it as a social force, as a synthesizing and comprehensive statement of human destiny' (p. 136).

But the scientific historian can no more than Comte give up his saving remnant of a religious–metaphysical view of man's past and future, albeit a universal and rationalistic 'religion of humanity'.

Any historian who is not blindly prejudiced cannot but admit that the ordinary man and woman, unless they should be caught up in a murderous field of war, are capable of securing a richer life than their ancestors. (There is more food in the world, more oppo-
tunity of advancement, greater areas of liberty in ideas and in living than the world has ever known: art, music, literature can be enjoyed by tens of millions, not tens of thousands. This has been achieved not by clinging to conservative tradition or by relying on instinct or emotion, but by the application of human ingenuity, no matter what the underlying motive might be.) The great extension of rationalism has been a cause and a consequence of this development. In field after field, rationalism has proved its worth. It still has vast areas left to conquer in politics and social organization which may prove beyond its capacity, owing to the aggressive instincts built so deeply into man's nature. Nevertheless, the historian must stress the success, as well as point out the failure. Here is a message of the past which is as clear, but far more true, than the message wrung from it by our ancestors. The past can be used to sanctify not authority nor morality but those qualities of the human mind which have raised us from the forest and swamp to the city, to build a qualified confidence in man's capacity to order his life and to stress the virtues of intellect, of rational behavior. And this past is neither pagan nor Christian, it belongs to no nation and no class, it is universal; it is human in the widest sense of that term [Plumb, pp. 140–1].

If the analysis of the 'traditionalization' of innovations in India has any validity, then Plumb's announcement of the death of the past may be premature and exaggerated. For this analysis suggests that life is always 'change and uncertainty' and that it derives meaning and validity not from 'scientific history' but from the cultural philosophy—the world view and value system—of a society. The fact that one society's cultural philosophy bestows meaning and validity on incessant change and the present, and another's bestows it on the traditional past, does not enable us easily to decide which is the 'scientifically true' cultural philosophy. It may be as great a myth for one society to assume that it can get along without any traditions, except 'the tradition of the new', as it is for another to assume that all change is eternal recurrence of an ancestral past.

Myths or no, these two contrasting cultural philosophies lead to contrasting attitudes towards modernization. The interesting comparative cultural problem is not especially the nature of these contrasts in cultural philosophy or in attitudes toward modernization but the complementary questions: how does a society with a 'traditionalistic' cultural philosophy deal with change and innovation? And, how does a society whose cultural philosophy attaches supreme value to 'progress' deal with tradition? The answers to these questions will probably show greater affinity between the 'traditionalistic' and 'progressive' cultural philosophies at the living, contextual level than is apparent at the textual level. For India, at least, this contextual approach suggests that its traditionalistic cultural philosophy, which Weber has called the 'theodicy of the caste system', is capable of becoming a 'theodicy' for a changing industrial system.

For Madras industrial leaders this 'great transformation' is taking place within two or three generations as they assimilate their innovative industrial roles to the 'traditional' structures of joint family, caste, ritual and belief. They do this not by rejecting the existence and value of novelty
or their cultural traditions but by making a series of adaptive adjustments both in industry and in the ‘traditional’ structures. In the long-run cosmic time-perspective of Hindu cosmology these innovations and adjustments may look like the ephemeral ‘appearances’ of an absolute reality, or the recurring ‘disorders’ of a Kali age. In the short-run time-perspective of human life and cultural history, however, these changes are very ‘real’ and ‘progressive’ even to a devout Hindu. To ‘traditionalize’ them is to seek legitimacy and meaning for them in an accepted world view and value system.