

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION

THE UNITY AND CONTINUITY OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION AS POSTULATE AND AS PROBLEM

The unity and continuity of Indian civilization is both a commonplace and a problem. It is usually taken for granted as a truth too evident to require proof. Yet when scholars begin to inquire into the exact nature of this unity and continuity and into the ways in which it is attained, they quickly encounter many unanswered questions. In a recent paper on "The Content of Cultural Continuity in India," the American indologist Professor W. Norman Brown concludes that, while there has been a highly developed civilization on the Indian subcontinent since the third millennium B. C. with many elements of cultural continuity, it remains a problem to say what has given this Indian civilization its distinctive character and vitality. He himself does not believe that this question will be answered by making a catalogue of the hundreds of cultural traits (such as the use of the swastika, the sacredness of the pipal tree and of the cow, the joint family and

the caste system, ascetism, the doctrines of *karma* and rebirth and of *abinsā*) which persist across large spans of Indian civilization. Even if the historical and ethnic origins of these traits could be traced, this knowledge would not be sufficient, he thinks, to discover the vitalizing principle of Indian civilization. That principle, he suggests, lies in the field of values and attitudes and not in the material productions of arts, literature, and the sciences, or in particular skills, customs, institutions, or forms of thought. He analyzes, as one example of such a basic value, the notion of duty and the stress on correct action.

Professor Brown's approach to the problem of cultural continuity in Indian civilization seems to me a most fruitful one. Unfortunately, not being a sanskritist, I cannot personally emulate it as much as I should like to. It is an approach, however, which appeals to the social and cultural anthropologist, because it poses the problem of cultural continuity in terms of the discovery of a distinctive organizing principle (or principles), rather than in terms of a catalogue of recurring cultural traits, and it directs us to look for these principles in the field of values and attitudes.

In another recent paper, on "The Nature of the Problem of Indian Unity," the Indian anthropologist Professor M. N. Srinivas sees Indian unity threatened by the tensions created by differences in locality and region, language, caste, and religion. These differences are not necessarily incompatible, he believes, with loyalty to the Indian nation, if there is a hierarchy of loyalties and if there is no overriding drive to homogenize the differences into a monolithic uniformity of language and culture. "Tensions and conflicts at a particular level maintain the identity and separateness of groups of the same order but these groups can and do unite at a higher level." The fact that a person stands for his village in relation to other villages, or for his caste against other castes, does not prevent him from being an Indian in relation to non-Indians. Moreover, each of the sub-national groupings performs some integrating function, since it may cut across other differences; for example, regional loyalties may cut across differences in caste, religion, village, and town. Given a balanced regional development, continued economic growth, and a tolerance for linguistic and cultural differences, Professor Srinivas sees India emerging as a strong and united country.

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I am not concerned here to argue whether Professor Srinivas' optimism or his implied commitment to a secular and democratic state is justified by current trends. What is more to the point of the present discussion is that he conceives the problem of Indian unity, not as a problem of attaining an all-India cultural uniformity and homogeneity, but rather as a problem in managing the complexities of a multilingual, a multicastrate, a multireligious, and a multilayered civilization. That the recent political unification of the country by a national movement dedicated to democratic political institutions and processes may indeed offer the best prospect of converting the "primordial ties" of traditional group associations into the "civil ties" of citizenship, is an opinion I personally happen to share with Professor Srinivas. His conceptions of India as a unity in diversity need not stand or fall, however, with any particular political form of organization, since it is possible to apply such a concept of unity in Indian civilization to the pre-British and pre-modern periods.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT A CIVILIZATION: THE KROEBER-REDFIELD MODELS

If the continuity of Indian civilization is to be looked for in some distinctive organizing values and its unity in an organized coherence of social and cultural differences, do we have any general forms of thought that will help us to sketch in imagination the profile and organization of a civilization so persistent and so unified? I believe such thought forms can be found in ethnology, culture history, and social anthropology. Although the main field of development for these disciplines has been the simpler primitive societies and cultures, the more complex cultures and civilizations have become subjects of study in recent years. This transfer of methods and concepts from the field of the "primitive" to that of civilization is not without its difficulties, and many changes in the disciplines are required to bring it off. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the progress so far made by anthropological studies in India, Southeast Asia, China and Japan, the Middle East, Europe, and North and South America, justifies us in speaking of an "anthropology of civilizations." I should like in particular to draw

upon the ideas of two of the foremost contributors to this recent development, A. L. Kroeber from the side of culture history and ethnology, and Robert Redfield from the side of social anthropology, for the kind of imaginative construct of Indian civilization we are seeking. I shall then examine some recent anthropological studies of Indian civilization to see how far they support such a construct. I shall also indicate possibilities of cooperation between the social-anthropological students of contemporary Indian civilizations and the historical and indological students of Indian civilization.

For Kroeber, every human culture is a composite historical growth from elements most of which have been borrowed from other cultures. This holds for those grand complex cultures called "civilizations" as well as for the simpler primitive cultures. In spite of the foreign origins of the bulk of their cultural inventories, however, most cultures succeed in reworking and organizing these elements into a distinctive overall pattern or style. Such total culture patterns or styles are not arbitrary and sudden impositions; rather they represent gradual drifts towards consistency and coherence of the subpatterns and substyles in the different spheres of culture—literature, music, painting, sculpture, religion, philosophy, science, social organization, etc. The total pattern or style of a culture thus represents an assemblage or organization of lesser styles and patterns.

A civilization, as the assemblage of the styles followed by the inhabitants of a certain area through a certain duration of time, could then consist of a style or manner of government, added to a style of law, and another of social relations; further, a characteristic manner of production and economy, of religious belief and organization; plus what we ordinarily call its styles of literature, art, music, and building. (*An Anthropologist Looks at History*, p. 40.)

Once crystallized, a total pattern or style gives a culture its distinctive character, and its changes a particular shape and direction. In this way, it represents an element of continuity and constancy in a culture. In the case of self-conscious cultures, total culture pattern and style may receive articulation in the form of a self-image and world view formulated by the more articulate members of the culture.

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But total patterns and styles may themselves undergo change even in the simplest and most stable of cultures (although the absence of documentary historical records makes this difficult to demonstrate). In the complex civilizations, changes in total culture patterns and styles are the rule, and these changes can be used to trace the profile for the rise and decline of a civilization. In his work on *The Configurations of Culture Growth*, Kroeber has collected data which show that the greatest intellectual and esthetic achievements of the major civilizations tend to cluster together in limited periods of time. In the case of Indian civilization, e.g., he finds two such periods of cultural florescence, the first around 500 B. C. and the second between 400 and 600 A. D. The Indus phase he sets aside as insufficiently documented.

Kroeber calls these peaks of culture growth "culminations" or "climaxes," and interprets them as the realization of the potentialities implicit in a particular *total* pattern or style. He also finds that these growth peaks tend to coincide with periods of successful organization of ideas, standards, and substyles. As a culture adds new elements, it also tends to become more highly organized, and this in turn increases its capacity to assimilate still more new elements. Successful incorporation of new elements can thus lead to greater productiveness. This kind of cultural creativity and assimilation of new elements Kroeber finds running ahead of cultural organization before a period of culmination is reached, but he finds it lagging behind after culmination, when organization leads to repetition, rigidity, and sterility. The civilization may then decline altogether, or may, after a period of dormancy, enter upon a fresh period of cultural creativity by "reconstituting" its basic patterns and styles.

Kroeber believes there is evidence for such reconstitutions in the case of China in the period between A.D. 200 and 600 and in the case of the West in the periods between 500 and 900 and between 1300 and 1550. The present strains and unsettlement in the West probably reflect the throes of a second stage of reconstitution of western civilization, analogous to that of 1300-1550, with population, wealth, curiosity, knowledge, enterprise, and invention still in an expanding phase.

In one of his very last essays, on "periodization," which has just been published, Kroeber refers to growth tendencies, at least

in the fields of art and science, which show an acceleration and internationalization of stylistic change. Because of rapid means of communication, modern man is no longer under the dominance of one style at a time, but has within reach "an international pool of styles." A gifted artist or scientist may, under these conditions, originate a number of different styles in a single lifetime. Kroeber cites Picasso as an example of this possibility, which he regards as "an indubitably new phenomenon and perhaps a precursor of more to come." This phenomenon has also been noted in the recent growth of science, but in this field the acceleration and spread of different styles of scientific thought and research is kept from turning into fad and fashion by the general cumulative and irreversible direction of growth.

These most recent observations of Kroeber's may be extended to changes in *total* cultural styles and patterns where the "new kind of phenomenon" also seems to be appearing. In the past the interflow between cultures and civilizations was generally a flow and fusion of culture elements or element complexes, not of total ways of life. To be sure, total style patterns or particular cultures did change, but this happened very slowly under conditions of "protective isolation" from other cultures, not often as a result of direct borrowing. Now with the increasing intensity of culture contacts, there is an acceleration not only in the interflow of culture elements or even of styles in specific arts or sciences, but of total life styles as well. The "international pool of styles" is now beginning to wash away the regional differentials of the world's cultures, although the pool may still contain a rich enough variety of styles to make possible differentiation on some basis other than the regional.

Redfield began his thinking about civilizations from the perspective of a study of small communities as they functioned in the present. In contrast to Kroeber's cultural historical approach, which is telescopic, diachronic, and cultural, Redfield's starting point was microscopic, synchronic, and sociocultural. In his later work, particularly after 1951, when he enlisted sinologists, islamists, indologists, historians and philosophers to cooperate with anthropologists in a project for the comparison and characterization of civilizations, Redfield began to develop ideas for a social anthropological study of civilizations that is macroscopic

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and historical. These ideas, however, grew naturally out of his first major study of *The Folk Culture of Yucatan*.

In the Yucatan study, Redfield and his co-workers compared four different communities (a tribal village, a peasant village, a town, and a city) in order to analyze and explain the cultural contrast between the Spanish and modern "urban civilization" of the northwest area of the peninsula and the more indigenous and "primitive" southeast. The general conclusion of this study was that the same relative order of the four different communities on the map of Yucatan, from tribal village to city, also corresponds to an order of decreasing isolation and homogeneity and of increasing secularization, individualism, and cultural disorganization. Redfield called this order a "folk-urban continuum," with a folk type of society and culture at one end and an "urban civilization" at the other. He also suggested the following general hypotheses: 1) that the primitive and peasant societies (as isolated, homogeneous local communities) tend to have the general character of a "folk" type of society; 2) that as these come into contact with urbanized society they change in the direction of an "urban" type; and 3) that the different changes are interdependent, as changes in some of the characteristics of a society tend to bring about, or at least "go with," other changes.

This "folk-urban continuum" is a one dimensional, linear continuum connecting different points on a map. The four communities selected for study are four separate "points," treated as if they all exist at the same time without essential interrelation; "Civilization," meaning chiefly Spanish and modern western, is associated with one of the "points," the capital city of Merida. The Mayan civilization, having been "decapitated" by the Spanish conquest, does not enter the picture. Redfield was quite aware that this model has historical implications, chiefly along the lines of the age-area principle. He writes, for example, that it could be used to reconstruct "a sort of generalized hypothetical account of the history of the culture" of Yucatan as a whole. "In a similar way it might be validly asserted that a comparative description of communities encountered as one goes from Paris southward through Marseilles, Algiers, the Sahara, and then the Sudan would provide the vague outlines of the culture history of western Europe." But he believes that this would be "a crude way to

derive even the most tentative historical conclusions." While he used the available history of Yucatan, the study of the whole "follows a comparison of present conditions in one community with present conditions in the others." The historical dimension is left to historians and archeologists (*Folk Culture of Yucatan*, pp. 340-42.)

In his later thinking, when he had become interested in the study of historic civilizations, it occurred to Redfield to adapt the "folk-urban continuum" to the study of the "human career" and to the development of particular civilizations. He first began to do this in his *The Primitive World and Its Transformations* and was actively preoccupied with this task at the time of his death in 1958. While he regarded his thinking along these lines as very tentative and exploratory, there is no question that this extension of the "folk-urban continuum" provides a most fruitful form of thought for research on civilizations.

By thinking of early civilizations as historical developments from the small, isolated precivilized "folk" societies and cultures, Redfield has added *time* as a second dimension to the "folk-urban continuum." He adds more than this: for civilization is reached not just with the appearance of a single urban center but with a transformation of the folk societies (by the food producing and urban revolutions) into a variety of new societal and cultural types interrelated in a variety of ways. Among these new types Redfield notes especially the "peasant," for whom living off the land is a way of life, but who is at the same time dependent on towns and urban centers for many essential goods and services. In these urban centers appear new specialists of all sorts, including reflective intellectuals and reformers, with new world views and ways of life.

Given historical depth, the "folk-urban continuum" is no longer a line on a map, but a great volume, perhaps a sphere, in which any point may be connected to other points by networks of lines. A civilization is now to be represented by such a great sphere in its totality, and not just by one point on a line. For Redfield, a civilization has both a "societal structure" and a "cultural structure." The "societal structure" consists of the total network of social relations which connect the communities of different kinds to one another over long periods of time. This

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is the structure formed by networks of marriage and kin, trade and work, religious pilgrimage, political administration and organization, which join together different villages with one another and with urban centers. It is a structure of networks and centers of many different kinds, in which communities, little and great, are the unit "points" and the social relations between them the connecting lines.

The "cultural structure" of a civilization is the structure of its ideas and the products of ideas, i.e., of its cultural traditions. This structure too is compound and complex, as is the societal structure, for there are in every civilization the "high" cultural traditions of the reflective few (the "great tradition") and the "low" folk traditions of the unreflective many (the "little tradition"). These different levels or dimensions of a civilization's cultural structure interact constantly with each other. The rates and results of this interaction depend on the kinds of social organization that exist in a civilization for the transmission of the different levels of tradition. In this respect, the cultural structure depends on the societal structure of the civilization. For the great tradition tends to be cultivated and transmitted by intellectual specialists ("literati") teaching in schools and temples located in special kinds of centers; the little tradition, on the other hand, tends to develop and to be transmitted among the unlettered without benefit of specialized teachers and institutions. Between the learned specialists of the great tradition and the unlearned masses, however, there generally exist in most civilizations many kinds of intermediary specialists and institutions which act as channels of transmission between the "higher" and "lower" levels of tradition. In fact the entire "societal structure" of social networks of a civilization may function as transmissive channels for the communication of the different levels of tradition among the different communities connected by the networks. Redfield's notion of "a social organization of tradition" invites us to study the societal structure of a civilization, not only for its own sake, but also as an organized means for communicating the different levels and components of a civilization's traditions from one generation to the next and from one community to another.

The precise rates and results of interaction between great and

little traditions will of course vary from civilization to civilization, depending on the kind of societal structure and the cultural content of the cultural structure. It will also depend on whether the civilization in question is in a "primary" phase of development or in a "secondary" phase. In the "primary" phase the great tradition has developed indigenously from precivilized local cultures and, although carried to a reflective level and systematized, it remains essentially homogeneous with the little tradition. In this phase, great and little traditions are dimensions of each other and there tends to be a consensus about the order of "highness" and "lowness" among the different communities in the civilization. In its "secondary" phase, a civilization tries to incorporate cultural elements from other cultures and civilizations. This will tend to weaken consensus about the order of levels in tradition and to weaken the cultural integration between city and country.

In our joint paper on "The Cultural Role of Cities," Redfield and the writer distinguished the primary and secondary phases of a civilization as "orthogenetic" and "heterogenetic" types of cultural change. We also tried to relate these two types of change to the cultural roles of different kinds of cities, specialists, and institutions, i.e., to the cultural roles of different kinds of societal structures. Although this analysis was illustrated with many references to particular civilizations, including India, it was intended as a mental construct, not as a history of one or many civilizations. Such a construct cannot be used to classify civilizations into "orthogenetic" and "heterogenetic" types, for every known civilization is a mixture of indigenous and non-indigenous elements. In the study of any particular civilization from this point of view, the main problem is not to disentangle the indigenous from the non-indigenous elements, but rather to identify the net results of the operation of both "orthogenetic" and "heterogenetic" change and to describe the processes and organized institutional arrangements which bring these results about. It may well be that a civilization can absorb many foreign elements over a long period of time without losing its essential character. Most of the major civilizations seem to have had this capacity in some phases of their careers. This capacity depends not only on the societal and cultural structure of a civilization but also on the character and rate of encounters with other cultures. The two

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peaks of achievement in Indic high culture which Kroeber has identified were undoubtedly influenced in some degree by foreign stimuli. Yet the continuity of form and content was so great that these developments now appear as different phases in the development of a single great tradition. Whether Indian civilization's encounter with Islam or with European civilization has resulted in a similar net balance of "orthogenetic" over "heterogenetic" change is a more controversial question. The encounters in these cases were far more massive, prolonged, and coercive, and the results are not yet stabilized.

I would now like to consider recent anthropological research on Indian civilization in the light of the Redfield and Kroeber models. These models were, of course, developed in relation to ongoing research, including that in India, not in a vacuum. We should also note the differences between the two models, as well as the similarities, when we try to apply them jointly to India. It is obvious, I think, that Redfield's later concept of "civilization" is broader than the earlier, not only in going beyond the notion of western urban civilization, but also in envisaging a civilization as a complex assemblage of communities and cultures of different levels and kinds, coexisting in mutual dependencies, of different kinds and degree, over vast stretches of time and space. This concept begins to approach Kroeber's notion of a civilization as an assemblage of culture patterns and styles, but it also differs from it in several important respects. Kroeber systematically abstracts the cultural aspects of a civilization from its social aspects. He is certainly aware of the social aspects, and occasionally takes them into direct account. But he sees the task of culture history as essentially a history of culture, with social structure and social organization subordinated.

Redfield, on the other hand, tries to maintain parity between culture and society. A civilization has both a social structure and a cultural structure. Redfield would, I feel sure, accept Kroeber's analysis of the cultural structure into component patterns, styles, and growth profiles. But he wants also to associate each cultural structure with an organized structure of communities, and to trace how each community, and groups within it, may develop sub-assemblages of life styles. These "subcultures" are for Redfield not only substyles of different spheres of culture—law, religion,

literature, art, music, etc.—just as they are for Kroeber; they are also the organized ways of life of a series of connected concrete communities.

FROM VILLAGE TO CIVILIZATION

When, after India had achieved independence, social anthropologists began to do field studies in that country, they generally selected a village community as the unit of field observation. Some of the reasons for this selection were practical: most Indians lived or had lived in villages and regarded them as the basic units of social life; also, the villages were becoming the concern of uplift movements and of community development programs. There was, however, another reason: the village seemed to represent a small, relatively isolated and self-contained community, in which the social anthropologist might study how the different parts of village social structure were related to one another and to village culture. The Indian village seemed to fit the social anthropologists' image of a "primitive isolate," which had been made the hallmark of social anthropology, as distinct from the fields of ethnology and ethnography, by Malinowski, Radcliffe Brown, and their students.

As they learned more about India, however, some of these social anthropologists came to recognize that their choice of the village community as a unit of field study reflected more the prevailing preconception of their discipline and of general opinion than it did the realities of Indian social life and culture. In 1953-54, Robert Redfield, McKim Marriott, and the writer organized at the University of Chicago a seminar on Indian village studies for which we invited eight outstanding social anthropologists to discuss their respective field studies in eight different regions of India, in the light of two questions: 1) to what extent is the Indian village an isolated and self-sufficient "little community?" and 2) what can be learned from village studies about Indian civilization as a whole? These social anthropologists unanimously found that their villages no longer fitted the image of a "primitive isolate," and some were sceptical about the isolation and self-sufficiency of the Indian village in the past.

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They reported, on the contrary, that each village was linked to other villages in its region, and to towns and cities, by complex networks of social relations based on caste, kinship, and marriage, trade and occupation, religious pilgrimage and administrative and political organization. In some respects and under certain conditions, the village was an organized unity with which a villager identified, but the numerous "extensions" of a village embedded it inextricably in a wider society and culture.

At about the same time as the Chicago seminar, five of these social anthropologists, together with eight others, were contributing brief progress reports of their field studies to the *Economic Weekly*. With the exception of one isolated village in Kulu studied by Colin Rosser, none of the villages reported upon in the *Economic Weekly* series suited the classical "isolate" image. Prof. M. N. Srinivas, who contributed to both series, concluded in his Introduction to the volume of the *Economic Weekly* reports, which he edited under the title of *India's Villages* (Asia, 1955, 1960), that "the villager's social field is ... much wider than his village. Kin, economic, religious and other social ties enlarge the field to include a circle of neighboring villages... The completely self-sufficient village republic is a myth; it is always part of a wider entity."

If the discovery that the village is an integral part of Indian society and culture has made the social anthropologists' image of the "primitive isolate" obsolete in Indian anthropology, it has also created new opportunities and new problems for the anthropological study of Indian civilization. The small community of the village with its extensions now offers the scholar an opportunity to study many features of Indian civilization in microcosm—to learn how, e.g., parliamentary institutions operate at the village level. Many social anthropologists have responded to these opportunities by making specific studies of the networks of marriage, caste, trade, politics, and religion which link particular villages to the wider world of Indian civilization. Their researches are gradually disclosing in what ways the societal structure of India varies in nucleated and dispersed villages, in different regions, and particularly as between the loosely meshed networks of the north and the closely meshed networks of the south. Underlying this variety, there also seem to be many

interregional networks and similarities which give considerable plausibility to the assumption that India is characterized by a distinctive societal structure of networks and centers, a structure which has enabled it to integrate communities of many different degrees of complexity and types of culture.

Once we postulate an intricate structure of networks and centers as comprehending the societal structure of Indian civilization, we are free to select a great variety of social units for a field study. In addition to the village, we may choose, as units, castes, tribes, sects, *sadhus*, temples and *maths*, sacred cities, specialists, markets and towns, as well as regional segments of particular kinds of networks. Each of these represents a special kind of microcosm of the macrocosm which is Indian civilization, and will therefore contribute to our knowledge of the total societal structure. The choice of a unit should not, however, be too much influenced by apparently "natural" territorial divisions, for as M.L. Dumont has emphasized, it is the structure of social relations associated with a territory that makes the territory culturally significant and not conversely. In his own study of the social organization and religion among the Pramalai Kallar of South India, M. L. Dumont found that the smallest independent social unit among these Kallar was not the village but the province (*nād* in Tamil) which comprises a collection of patrilineal, patrilocal lineages with a common religious cult. In this case the chief of the province is also the chief of the lower lineage chiefs as well as of the lineage cults.

The significance of the networks and centers of Indian civilization is not exhausted when their structure of social relations has been traced and described. Equally significant is the function of these networks and centers as media of cultural communication and cultural exchange between village and village, village and urban center, region and region, region and center, caste and tribe, educated and uneducated. The networks which extend the villager's social relations beyond the village also extend his cultural horizons. Oscar Lewis, noting the widespread intervillage networks of intermarriage and caste in North India, contrasts this "rural cosmopolitanism" with the more formal networks of trade, administration, and pilgrimage which characterize relations among the more "inward looking"

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Mexican villages. It is not only the cultural consciousness of the villager which is affected by networks and centers; everyone's is. The societal structure circulates culture (material, mental and spiritual) through the sphere of Indian civilization, and it needs to be studied in this role as organizer and transmitter of cultural traditions. Only with the help of such studies shall we be able to understand the gradual and emerging synthesis of different language-groups and cultures which seems so characteristic of Indian civilization.

A study of the social organization of Indian civilization is not likely to result in the demonstration of the existence of a single homogeneous culture or of a single set of values and beliefs. But it does seem likely to demonstrate how certain commonalities of the culture spread, and why the spread may have been wayward and uneven in some places.

Since this is a new field of study for social anthropologists, there are not yet many new researches to report. A pioneer study is Prof. Srinivas' book on *Religion and Society among the Coorgs*, in which he analyses the manner in which the domestic and local cults of the Coorgs are linked to regional and all-India cults. I will have more to say about the contributions of this study in a moment. Dr. Marriott, in "Little Communities in an Indigenous Civilization," has also shown that the festivals and pantheon of an U.P. village are related by processes of "universalization" and "parochialization" to the wider cultural traditions of "Sanskritic Hinduism." In 1958, I edited a symposium on *Traditional India: Structure and Change* for the *Journal of American Folklore*, including papers by eleven social anthropologists, as well as several Sanskritists and cultural historians, on the social organization of the transmission of cultural traditions in Indian civilization. This volume also includes a report of my own study of "cultural performances" in Madras City as channels for the transmission of both folk and classic culture, both traditional and modern values.

There is also some interesting material on the social organization of cultural traditions in Dr. Dumont's study of the Kallars and in Dr. L. P. Vidyarthi's study of Gaya as a sacred center and of the Gayawals as sacred specialists. Professor Ghurye's book on the *Indian Sadhus* also belongs in this field.

Beyond this, there are a number of journal articles, and undoubtedly some new monographs in preparation.

The amount of work already published does enable the social anthropologist to say something about how the transmission of cultural traditions has been socially organized in India and by what processes different levels of tradition have been brought into contact and a position of mutual influence in villages and in urban centers. I shall begin with the process of spread which Professor Srinivas calls "Sanskritization."

SANSKRITIZATION AND CULTURAL MOBILITY

The most fruitful and influential anthropological study of the interrelations between little and great communities and between little and great traditions in Indian civilization is that of Professor M. N. Srinivas on *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*, published in 1952. This study is notable not only as a monograph on Coorg society and religion but even more for its analysis of "sanskritization" as the process whereby the Coorgs, and many other groups, have been integrated into Indian society and culture. Professor Srinivas' use of this concept has stimulated much discussion and research. As a result of this, the concept has undergone some revision and generalization, in the course of which some scholars have questioned the appropriateness of the term "sanskritization" for the various processes now connoted by it. I shall retain the term in Professor Srinivas' original usage and indicate in what ways later discussion and research call for the recognition of different processes and perhaps new terms.

As used in the Coorg study, "sanskritization" refers essentially to a specific kind of cultural mobility—a mobility which brings groups outside of Hinduism into the fold, and raises the cultural status of groups already in it. This cultural mobility takes place within the caste system. Non-Hindu groups are Hinduized by becoming castes, and lower castes rise to the cultural status of higher castes as they adopt vegetarianism, teetotal rules, and the deities, rites, and myths of "Sanskritic Hinduism" as defined in Sanskrit literature and philosophy and as practiced by Brahmans.

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Many groups have thus Hinduized themselves in a generation or two, Srinivas believes, by taking over the customs, rites, and beliefs of the Brahman and other higher castes. He believes, moreover, that this process has been going on for over 2500 years and has been responsible for the spread of Sanskritic ideals and beliefs throughout the subcontinent and to the remotest hill tribes.

"Sanskritic Hinduism" is, in Srinivas' conception, a model style of life, embodying a complex of practices and values associated with Brahmans, and with the Sanskrit scriptures—a model style which has spread throughout India and even abroad through the process of "sanskritization." It includes vegetarianism and teetotalism, wearing of the sacred thread, performance of life cycle rites by Brahman priests, with the use of vedic mantras and vegetarian offerings, prohibition of widow remarriage, acceptance of the *varna asrama* system, a pantheistic bias in theology, and belief in the doctrines of *Karma*, *Dharma*, rebirth, and release. This life-style thus would seem to provide such a standard and measure for the unity and continuity of Indian Civilization as we are seeking. It specifies a stable complex of values and attitudes which may contain Professor Brown's vitalizing principle of Indian civilization. It approximates, as well, the great traditional dimension of Indian civilization. And since "sanskritization" is a twoway process, in which elements of local culture are absorbed into "Sanskritic Hinduism," we have here a mode of interaction between little and great traditions.

Further research by Professor Srinivas and other anthropologists has resulted in some revisions of his original formulations. These have not in the main invalidated the existence and importance of "sanskritization" but have rather made more precise the conditions and scope of its operation. I shall indicate how these revisions have led to a more general theory of cultural mobility.

Although a particular group may profess to adopt the values and life-style of "Sanskritic Hinduism," they may fall far short of it in their daily practice. Meat-eating and drinking of alcoholic beverages, e.g., has been frequently observed among such groups. Some of them acknowledge the discrepancy, and simply take the position that "Sanskritic Hinduism" is an ideal way of life to

which they aspire. They may not succeed in realizing it in full detail; they are content to achieve some of its diacritical marks: the wearing of a sacred thread, using one of the *varna* labels, employing a Brahman *purohit*, etc. Other groups, however, will not admit that their behavior is discrepant; they insist that they are indeed conforming to a model of "Sanskritic Hinduism" which sanctions meat-eating, drinking, aggressive behavior, gambling, etc.

This anomalous situation may be clarified by distinguishing local versions of "Sanskritic Hinduism" from all-India versions. The local version may use the four *varna* labels—Brahman, Ksatriya, Vaisya, and Sudra—but the defining content of these labels varies with locality and needs to be empirically determined for any particular locality. It has also been discovered that the relative prestige and rank of the different *varnas* tend to vary with locality, time, and group. In many areas, e.g., the kingly or martial life-style has a rank equal with or sometimes higher than that of the Brahman. Groups in these areas who wish to improve their status do so by adopting some of the stigmata of the Rajput life-style, i.e., by "Rajputizing" their way of life (Sinha). Even the life-style of the merchant and peasant have been taken as models in localities where these groups are dominant.

In view of these findings, we must say that "Sanskritic Hinduism" does not set up one single life-style, that of the Brahman, as an ideal model, but that it allows for a number of different model life-styles, each with a distinctive complex of values, and that the precise content and the relative rank of these models vary with time and locality. The indologist will probably not find this conclusion very surprising; it seems to agree with the way in which the *varna asrama* doctrine is interpreted in the sacred texts. Yet it remains to be seen whether the results of textual studies will coincide with those of the contextual studies of the anthropologist. One textual scholar, Dr. J. F. Staal, criticizes Professor Srinivas and other anthropologists for underestimating the geographical and historical variability of the great tradition of "Sanskritic Hinduism." So far as the past is concerned, this is a research problem for historians and indologists, not for social anthropologists. Dr. V. Raghavan's

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preliminary survey of the variety and integration of Indian civilization indicates the kind of studies that need to be done to determine the formation of "Sanskritic Hinduism" as a great tradition and its later transformation by contact with regional and local traditions. In a recent paper "On the Archaism of the Bhagāvata Purāna," Dr. J. A. B. van Buitenen has, with considerable success, applied and extended the concept of "sanskritization" to the authors of the Bhagāvata who were probably trying to transcend the *varna* scheme through a *bhakti* movement.

ATTRIBUTES VS INTERACTIONS IN CASTE MOBILITY

In the meantime, the social anthropologist who studies the very recent past needs to learn a great deal more about how the local versions of the great tradition are related to local behavior and to all-India models and behavior. Dr. McKim Marriott has brought some new light to this problem by distinguishing between attributional and interactional criteria for ranking of castes in a locality. He believes that the relative ranking of different castes in a locality depends not on the attributes of their way of life, actual or professed, but on the kinds of interactions they have with other castes, particularly in the taking and giving of food and water and in their participation in ritual services. In his view, a caste may sanskritize its way of life without rise in status, if it does not change its interactions with other castes. On the other hand, a caste may raise its status without changing its attributes in dress, diet, pantheon, rites, and beliefs, if it changes its interaction with other castes.

Dr. Marriott's interactional analysis offers a promising objective technique for determining caste ranking which, in preliminary studies, coincides with the subjective collective opinions of the villagers. Studying collective opinions, he and four other anthropologists have compared caste ranking in villages of West Bengal, Bihar, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh. Out of 176 castes in these villages occurring in regional lists of 36 each, only nine types of castes were common to the four regions: Brahman, Rajput, Merchant, Barber, Potter, Weaver, Washerman, Oilman, and Leatherworker. These nine castes form

a similar hierarchy of just five ranks in the different regions, with Leatherworker at the bottom; Weaver, Washerman, and Oilman always above Leatherworker; Barber and Potter always above them; Rajput and Merchants always above Barber and Potter; and Brahman and Rajput always ranked at the top. Within each of the five ranks, the ranks of particular castes vary by region and locality. The technique of studying local opinion can thus use the data of local studies to build regional and inter-regional comparisons and can eventually lead to an objective all-India rank hierarchy.

It remains to be discovered whether this five-rank hierarchy of castes is the same in other regions and does represent an all-India hierarchy. It is already evident that this kind of analysis has important implications for any definition of "Sanskritic Hinduism" as an all-India great tradition, especially if the all-India classifications and rank hierarchy of castes determined by opinion and interactional analysis do not coincide with the classifications and rank hierarchy in "Sanskritic Hinduism." In that case there would be two all-India versions of the caste system, one, called "the *varna* theory," based on the opinions of the educated and the doctrines of the texts, the other based on the behavior and opinions of the uneducated villagers. Professors Srinivas and Mandelbaum seem to take this duality as the real state of affairs. A second possibility, and one that is no less interesting, is that the two versions may coincide. In that case, one would have to say either that the villagers know the *varna asrama* doctrines of "Sanskritic Hinduism" and conform in their actions accordingly, or that "Sanskritic Hinduism" has incorporated village behavior and opinion into its doctrines.

Dr. Marriott seems to incline to a third possibility, different from both the hypothesis of dualism and that of non-dualism. He envisages a kind of parallelism between interactional and attributional ranking based on a division of jurisdiction between them. Interactional ranking is "more to be expected as the logic of untutored, untravelled villagers," and rests on detailed objective knowledge of daily interaction in a particular locality. Attributional ranking, on the other hand, is more likely to be found in situations of cultural heterogeneity where educated people, lacking an intimate acquaintance with the day-to-day interactions

in a village community, fall back on "the generalities derived from Brahmanical texts." He predicts therefore that it is more likely to be used by Brahmans, the educated, the urban, the more westernized Indian, the western social scientist, and, generally, by the stranger to the village community. He believes that each mode of analysis "has peculiar reference to social relations of a distinctive type—interactional to social relations in the little community, attributional to those in the great community."

Attributional analysis thus seems to express a cultural or mythological generalization about the social structure, whereas interactional analysis is based on "highly particularized intensive studies" from which "an accurate and intelligible picture" can be "constructed only by laborious comparison." Until these intensive studies and comparisons are made, attributional theory, "inaccurate as it may be and untrue to the nature of village thought...offers an approximation to general truth which is at least more accessible than knowledge of the details of ritual interaction in hundreds of thousands of villages." Dr. Marriott also expects that "interactional ranking will become increasingly difficult to find and study" because "interactional ranking may be expected to give way increasingly to an actual spread of attributional ranking" with the increase in urbanization, education, geographic mobility, and the influence of Brahmanical and Western social ideologies.

There is a fourth possibility, a kind of modified dualism, which I should like to propose. This arises from the fact that even uneducated villagers all over India show familiarity with some version of the *varna asrama* system and apply its categories and philosophy to themselves as well as to others. Many of these villagers also seem to believe that rank does depend on the possession of diacritical marks and that they can improve their rank by adopting some of the attributes of "Sanskritic Hinduism." Dr. Marriott is probably correct when he suggests that villagers think this way more in reference to a remote supravillage context than in reference to their own village, in which context their thinking is more interactional. Yet it is difficult to believe that the villager compartmentalizes his thought and action into two distinct and parallel systems, one for use in

the little community, the other for the great community. It seems to me more plausible to assume that there is a constant and mutual interpenetration between the two systems, even at the village level. The villager's experience with his local village social structure is bound to influence his conceptions and understanding of the wider structure of Indian civilization. Conversely, what he has learned of the wider structure from teachers and sacred texts must have some influence on the way he conceptualizes the local structure. If this assumption is valid, then there are likely to be some connections between the system of rank and classification he uses locally and the system he uses for supralocal reference. Changes in local realities which affect rank and mobility will probably be reflected, however loosely and indirectly, in the villager's thinking about the supralocal system, just as national political, legislative and economic changes are beginning to change some villagers' thinking (and action too) about the local rank hierarchy.

It is not possible in the present state of our knowledge to determine which of these four possibilities represents the closest approximation to the truth. Each certainly deserves to be taken as a working hypothesis for further research which uses both interactional and attributional analysis.

WESTERNIZATION AND SANSKRITIZATION

In his Coorg study, Professor Srinivas made several references to Western influence and noted briefly that improvements in communication—newspapers, radio, films, and books—have contributed to greater sanskritization. Several years later, he published an essay, "A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization," in which he analyzes how westernization and sanskritization reinforce one another and in what respects there is a conflict between these two processes. Although this analysis refers chiefly to Professor Srinivas' own studies in Mysore, it also takes account of observations by other anthropologists in Madras, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh, as well as of the discussions at several conferences to which Professor Srinivas presented his views. The paper represents, therefore, a generalized analysis of

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the relations between westernization and sanskritization in the light of recent field research and critical discussion.

Under "westernization" are included technical improvements in communication and transportation, urbanization, industrialization, and the new occupational opportunities that come with these, and western style education, as well as the civil and military institutions of parliamentary democracy and the new occupations associated therewith. Most of us would probably prefer to call this collection of changes "modernization," although many of them were introduced into India under British auspices. In any case, these changes do seem to have contributed to an increase in "sanskritization." Many castes have successfully sanskritized their way of life and improved their ritual status as they have improved their economic, educational and political positions. Cultural mobility has been closely tied to economic and political mobility, in the present as in the past. The only major exception to this rule are the *harijans*, who are sometimes prevented from improving their cultural status by the dominant castes of their localities. These now have available to them the alternatives of withdrawing from the local system completely, by migration to other areas or by conversion, or of taking advantage of the administrative, judicial, legislative and political means now available for the improvement of depressed and scheduled castes. Recent studies by F. G. Bailey show that both alternatives are being adopted.

The alternative of "sanskritization" also continues to remain popular with lower castes, in spite of its social ineffectiveness. Dr. Bernard Cohn has reported that in the U.P. village he studied, while a depressed caste was trying to raise its status by "sanskritizing" its customs and beliefs, the locally dominant caste was modernizing theirs. This has been observed in other areas, and has led Professor Srinivas to formulate the generalization that while the lower and middle castes are sanskritizing, the upper castes are modernizing. However, this generalization should be taken along with another asserted by Professor Srinivas: That the upper castes are both more westernized and more sanskritized than the lower and middle castes, implying that sanskritization generally tends to precede westernization.

This tendency for westernization (or modernization) to super-

se "sanskritization" has suggested to some that traditional Indian culture as well as the caste system is about to disappear. Professor Srinivas is sceptical of this opinion and I must say I share his scepticism. There are several different kinds of changes going on with modernization; one of these is the introduction of a new life-style model—the western and European—which does not replace the old models but is simply a new addition to the traditional repertoire of model ways to live. There is some indication that this new model is being accepted by the "U-sector" of educated Indians all over the country. With some it may be chiefly a matter of dress, diet, speech, and manners; with others it goes deeper into modern science and political ideologies. Yet this group is far from having alienated itself from the traditional culture and social structure of family, caste, region, or nation.

Those who have not accepted the new western life style as an ideal model are nevertheless subject to many modern influences as regards education, occupation, political activity, performance of ritual obligation, etc. There are many orthodox Brahmans, e. g., especially in the urban centers, who have received modern education in India or abroad and who have gone into the modern professions of law, medicine, engineering, scientific research and teaching, industrial management, parliamentary politics and civil service. These people continue to regard themselves as good Hindus, even if they do not have time for all the traditional ritual observances and Sanskrit learning. They are also often among the chief contributors to Hindu *maths* and temples and the leaders of movements for cultural revival.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, as Professor Srinivas points out, these people may have experienced some cultural shock and conflict when they first encountered the British and European style of life, which sanctioned cow slaughter and beef-eating, alcohol, remarriage of widows, and divorce. They must also have been stung by the European criticisms of many Indian customs and beliefs. Today, however, these groups are accommodating themselves to modern ways with little psychological or cultural conflict. The explanation for this smooth accommodation lies not so much in the individual traits and qualifications of

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the group—although they are very intelligent, well trained, and enterprising—but in the richness of Indian culture and the flexibility of its social structure, which enables them to modernize without losing their cultural or social identities. Brahmans, and other castes too, have always been allowed to take up new occupations if their traditional occupations could not support them. The distinction between sacerdotal Brahmans (*vaidikas*, *yogis*) and worldly Brahmans (*laukikas*, *niyogis*) is of old standing. And the values of wealth, power, and pleasure, while perhaps subordinated to those of doing one's duty and of attaining release, have always been accepted as essential to the complete scheme of life. If, today, castes of all kinds participate in politics, in business, or in science and the professions, they can apparently do so without renouncing their cultural heritage or even all of their caste rules. Modernization is not for them or for the "U-sector" incompatible with "sanskritization" or with the preservation of the traditional social and cultural structure. In some studies of shifts away from traditional occupations in Bengal, Nirmal Kumar Bose has found that while the upper castes have shifted to modern professions requiring higher education, the lower castes have shifted to modern jobs requiring little literacy. Similar results have been reported by Dr. Lambert for Poona factories and by Dr. Orans about Santals working in Jamshedpur. The Santals who work in Jamshedpur have accepted industrial employment as an acceptable alternative to living on the land, without giving up all their traditional culture. "Having a job at Tata is like having land," they say "you can pass it on to your son."

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The unity and continuity of Indian civilization is for the scholar both a necessary postulate and a problem; a postulate because the impression of unity and continuity is overwhelming, a problem because objective and precise verification of this impression, in the face of a long and changing history and a great diversity of languages, castes, tribes, religions, regions, villages, towns, and cities, is often difficult to provide. For a clarification of the problem, this paper draws upon recent

trends of thought and research in anthropology, particularly ethnology, culture history, and social anthropology. The models of a civilization developed by Alfred Kroeber and Robert Redfield offer in combination a fruitful way to think about the continuity and unity of Indian civilization. From Kroeber we take the conception of a civilization as a coherent and historically derived assemblage of culture styles and patterns. Civilizations in this view have distinctive growth profiles, which show culmination of their patterns, reconstitutions in new styles, or decline. This growth is in part influenced by the absorption of new culture elements and styles from other cultures. Under modernization, civilizational styles have shown a tendency to accelerate and to internationalize.

The application of Redfield's theory of a "folk-urban continuum" to historic and living civilizations gives us a conception of a civilization as a structure of communities of different scales of complexity and of different cultural levels. On this view, the earliest civilizations probably developed indigenously from local precivilized folk societies through the agricultural and the urban revolutions. These transformations created many new social and cultural types within the societal structure of these "primary civilizations," including the peasantry. They probably differentiated as well the cultural traditions into the "higher" levels cultivated in special centers by the educated and sophisticated ("great traditions"), and the "lower" levels ("little traditions") familiar to the uneducated in the villages and towns. Encounters of primary civilizations with alien precivilized or civilized cultures were in some cases traumatic and disastrous, in others a stimulus to a "secondary" phase of growth and development. The outcome in each case depends both on the character of the encounter and on the character of the civilization. The study of such encounters is advanced through detailed study of the institutions, specialists, and media of which a civilization makes use for the transmission of cultural traditions, internally and externally (i. e., the social organization of tradition).

Viewed in the light of this model, Indian civilization has a long growth profile in which several culminations are visible (probably at about 2500 B. C., 500 B. C., and between 400 to

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600 A. D.) and during which its style patterns have been reconstituted several times without loss of continuity in total culture pattern. It probably entered quite early on its "secondary" phase of development without essential impairment of cultural creativity or of its "great traditions" of high culture. It is debatable whether a cultural decline set in after 1000 A. D., in the middle period. But it seems likely that another phase of cultural "renaissance," reconstitution, and creativity emerges in the modern period, stimulated by the encounter with Europe.

This telescopic view of Indian civilization, while congenial to the culture historian, does not find favor with the social anthropologist who wishes to understand the social structure and workings of contemporary villages and other small communities. Recent village studies in India reveal, however, that the social anthropologist has discovered that the Indian village is not an isolated, self-sufficient social unity; rather, it is tied to the wider society and culture by many ties of marriage, caste, trade, religion, and politics. This discovery is producing a kind of research which gives considerable support to the conception of Indian civilization as a coherent structure of rural networks and urban centers which at the same time acts as a medium for the mutual communication of great and little traditions and of other cultural differences between and among tribes and castes, linguistic regions, regions and Center, town and country.

One of the most widespread ways in which this cultural exchange takes place is through the process which Professor Srinivas first studied and called "sanskritization." This is essentially a process of cultural mobility through which groups have been incorporated into Indian civilization by adopting a set of practices, beliefs, values called by Professor Srinivas "Sanskritic Hinduism," and identified by him primarily with the Brahman way of life. This same process of "sanskritization" has enabled lower castes within the civilization to raise their status in a generation or two.

Further research and critical discussion has contributed to a more general conception of "sanskritization." In the first place, the Brahman way of life is not the only model for sanskritization. The life-styles of the warrior, even of the merchant and peasant and of saints, are also sometimes adopted as models for

cultural mobility. In the second place the process incorporates into the system not only Hindus, but also Jains, Buddhists, Parsis, Muslims, Christians, and other groups who do not consider themselves Hindu. In view of these considerations, it would be more appropriate to think of "Sanskritic Hinduism" not as a single set of beliefs and practices defining one life-style, that of the Brahmans, but rather as a complex pattern of beliefs and practices associated with several different life-styles. For this normative pattern, Professor S. K. Chatterjee's word "Indianism" is perhaps a more acceptable designation than "Sanskritic Hinduism." If we accept this change, then we might also refer to the process of "sanskritizing" as "Indianizing."

Whatever the process of cultural mobility is called—"sanskritization" or "Indianization"—it is compatible with westernization and modernization, a conclusion which Professor Srinivas and some other social anthropologists accept, although their view has been challenged by others. The weight of present evidence seems to me to show that, while modernizing influences are undoubtedly changing many aspects of Indian society and culture, they have not destroyed its basic structure and pattern. They have given Indians new alternatives and some new choices of life style, but the structure is so flexible and rich that many Indians have accepted many modern innovations without loss of their Indianness. They have, in other words, been able to combine choices which affirm some aspects of their cultural tradition with innovative choices.

In a civilization as old and developed as is that of India, the sense of cultural identity is highly self-conscious, variable, and many-layered. One begins to understand something of it from reading Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's *Discovery of India* or President S. Radhakrishnan's *Hindu View of Life*. Some of it is expressed, as well, in the myths and histories of local tribes, castes, families, and regions. At the village level, as at the national, there are many images of the past, not one. Dr. Bernard Cohn, in an interesting account of the different "pasts" he found in one village, speculates "that a society is modern when it does have a past, when this past is shared by the vast majority of the society, and when it can be used on a national basis to determine and validate behavior." Because of regional,

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communal, and class differences in their views of the past, Indians do not as yet share such a past, he believes. This is, of course, a highly subjective question, not very much studied as yet by objective methods. If our thesis that there are socially organized patterns of cultural continuity and unity in Indian civilization is valid, then there should also be, as the subjective expression of this, some widely shared sense of a multi-layered common culture with a common past. My impression is that there is, and that there has been, such a self-image of Indian civilization, which expresses itself in mythology, traditional history, and the cultural performances of the festival calendar. Such a self-image varies in degree of sophistication and accurate knowledge among different groups and may also include different local histories for different local groups, each of whom may look at the past from its own point of view. But each local history and mythology tends to be linked to all-India history and mythology by the very social networks, institutions, and specialists that extend the villagers' social field. In his article on "The Historical Value of Indian Bardic Literature," Professor von Fürer-Haimendorf writes that a class of traditional bards in West India "not only recount the history and mythology of their clients, but being literate, are also familiar with Hindu mythology, and have in their repertoire a number of episodes from the *Rāmāyāna* and other Hindu epics." How another group of living bards and genealogists, the Barots of Gujerat, actually go about converting local into national myth and history has recently been described by A. M. Shah and R. G. Shroff. This process of building a single collective memory is, moreover, not restricted to bardic genealogists. All the literary, graphic, and performing arts have contributed to it—through recitation and dramatization of puranic and epic materials, dance forms, songs, sculpture and painting—as Dr. V. Raghavan in particular has emphasized. The modern media of film, radio, newspapers, magazines and books have reinforced the traditional cultural media in this function. Through historical and devotional films, recordings, temple ceremonies, articles and books on Indian history and archaeology, as well as through Republic Day celebrations, the sense of a shared culture and past seems to grow every day more vivid, making Indian society more "modern" without making it any less "Indian."

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