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# Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change<sup>1</sup>

Joseph R. Gusfield

## ABSTRACT

"Tradition" and "modernity" are widely used as polar opposites in a linear theory of social change. This theory is examined in the light of Indian and other materials on development. Seven fallacies in this contrast usage are presented. It is incorrect to view traditional societies as static, normatively consistent, or structurally homogeneous. The relations between the traditional and the modern do not necessarily involve displacement, conflict, or exclusiveness. Modernity does not necessarily weaken tradition. Both tradition and modernity form the bases of ideologies and movements in which the polar opposites are converted into aspirations, but traditional forms may supply support for, as well as against, change.

While riding the Kodama express from Tokyo to Kyoto several years ago, I saw what might be taken as a symbolic expression of transitional development. The Japanese passenger in the seat across from mine had made himself comfortable during his nap by unlacing his shoes and pulling his socks partly off. Half in and half out of both shoes and socks, he seemed to make a partial commitment to the Western world which his clothing implied. One could only wonder about his future direction either back into his shoes and socks or out of them and into sandals and bare feet.

This particular example has been chosen because it accentuates the idea of change in contemporary new nations and economically growing societies as one which entails a linear movement from a traditional past toward a modernized future.<sup>2</sup> A significant

<sup>1</sup> Presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Chicago, September 2, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> There is a wide literature analyzing concepts of tradition and modernity or development. Leading efforts to conceptualize these societal types are W. W. Rostov, *The Stages of Economic Growth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960); Gabriel Almond and James Coleman, *The Politics of Developing Areas* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960), chap. i; Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1958), chaps. ii, iii.

assumption in this model of change is that existing institutions and values, the content of tradition, are impediments to changes and are obstacles to modernization. It is with this assumption that our paper is concerned. We wish to call attention to the manifold variations in the relation between traditional forms and new institutions and values, variations whose possibilities are either denied or hidden by the polarity of the traditional-modern model of social change. We want, further, to explore the uses of tradition and modernity as explicit ideologies operating in the context of politics in new nations. Our materials are largely drawn from modern India, although we shall refer to other Asian and African countries as well.

The concepts of economic development and of economic modernization have now been generalized to many areas of national life by social scientists. There is now a discussion of communication development, educational development, and, most widely used, of political development.<sup>3</sup> While these are sometimes used to relate specific institutions to economic growth and develop-

<sup>3</sup> See the various volumes published by Princeton University Press under the series title "Studies in Political Development." Also see A. F. K. Organski, *The Stages of Political Development* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1965).

ment as possible correlative influences or effects, they are also utilized as independent concepts. Some writers have viewed political modernization as implying the necessary framework within which nationhood can be achieved and operate. Others have seen certain institutions and political values as inherently valuable and legitimate perspectives toward change.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time that the concept of development has become generalized, a large number of specific studies of new nations (many to be discussed here) have made us aware of the wide variety of outcomes and possibilities for change and continuity. These have led to a more critical appreciation of the many possible interrelations between new and old aspects of social, economic, and political life. The view that tradition and innovation are necessarily in conflict has begun to seem overly abstract and unreal.

In the study of economic growth we have come to be aware that Weber's conception of traditional versus rational economic behavior is a great distortion of the realities of many concrete situations. In the study of political alternatives and possibilities we have become sensitive to the reifying ef-

<sup>4</sup>We can distinguish several different uses of the concept "political development." Sometimes it is used as functional to economic development. Here the writer seeks to determine the political conditions essential to support effective economic change. For one example, see Wilfred Malenbaum, "Economic Factors and Political Development," *Annals*, CCCLVIII (March, 1965), 41-51; in the same volume, Lucien Pye uses the concept as independent of economic forms but gives it a substantive content (see Pye, "The Concept of Political Development," *Annals*, CCCLVIII [March, 1965]). Shils gives the concept of "modernity" a meaning closer to that of a goal toward which political elites aspire. This makes concern for a given state of society a perspective rather than an empirical theory and is thus closer to the use we make of it in the last section of this paper. "Our central concern will be with the vicissitudes of the aspiration toward the establishment of a political society" (Edward Shils, "On the Comparative Study of the New States," in C. Geertz [ed.], *Old Societies and New States* [New York: Free Press, 1963], pp. 1-26, at p. 6).

fect of unilinear theories. They make Anglo-American political forms either inevitable or necessarily superior outcomes of political processes in new nations. Functional theories of political and economic development now seem less viable.<sup>5</sup> An emphasis on what Shils calls the issue of consensus at the macrosociological level leads to a concern for how pre-existing values and structures can provide bases for identification with and commitment to larger social frameworks than those of segmental groups and primordial loyalties.<sup>6</sup> Here traditional symbols and leadership forms can be vital parts of the value bases supporting modernizing frameworks.

In exploring the concepts of tradition and modernity we shall discuss the assumptions of conflict between them. These assumptions are inconsistent with recent studies which will reveal a wide range of possible alternatives and show that "tradition" is a more specific and ambiguous phenomenon than usually realized.

#### FALLACIES IN THE ASSUMPTIONS OF THE TRADITIONAL-MODERN POLARITY

In assuming that new economic and political processes face an unchanging and uniform body of institutional procedures and cultural values, the linear theory of change greatly distorts the history and variety of civilizations. In this section we will examine seven assumptions of this theory and indicate the difficulties in its use.

##### FALLACY I: DEVELOPING SOCIETIES HAVE BEEN STATIC SOCIETIES

It is fallacious to assume that a traditional society has always existed in its present form or that the recent past represents an unchanged situation. What is seen to-

<sup>5</sup>Moore has suggested that we now know that a variety of political forms are capable of both congruence and conflict with economic development (Wilbert Moore, *Social Change* [Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963], p. 112).

<sup>6</sup>This is a major problem discussed in Clifford Geertz (ed.), *op. cit.* See especially papers by Shils, Geertz, D. Apter, and M. Marriott.

day and labeled as the "traditional society" is often itself a product of change. The conquests of foreign powers and the growth of social and cultural movements deeply influenced the character of family life, religious belief and practice, and social structure in India over many centuries.<sup>7</sup> Islamic civilization provided vital alternatives to caste and to political groupings. The impact of British culture and institutions has been immense.<sup>8</sup> Even India's caste system has by no means been a fixed and invariant system.<sup>9</sup>

The conception of India as a non-industrial and agricultural society, only now opened to industrialism, also needs revision. The decline of native Indian industries in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was a consequence of the protection of British textile manufacturers, then spearheading the Industrial Revolution in England. The shift of both rural and urban artisans to the land was an important ingredient in the buildup of an agricultural surplus population. Even the system of land tenure in existence just before independence was the product of fairly recent changes.<sup>10</sup> To speak of the traditional feudal structure of India is to confuse recent history with past history. Tradition has been open to change before its present encounters with the West and with purposeful, planned change.

<sup>7</sup> For a critical analysis and refinement of those views of India based on Hindu scriptures, as were those of Max Weber, see M. N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1962), especially Introduction and chaps. i and xii. A similar point is made in Harold Gould, "The West's Real Debt to the East," *Quest* (January-March, 1962), pp. 31-39.

<sup>8</sup> Percival Spears, *India* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960); Charles Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), chap. i; Srinivas, *op. cit.*, chap. v; Gould, *op. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> Srinivas, *op. cit.*; Bernard Cohn, "Power, Land and Social Relations in 19th Century Banaras" (Paper presented at meeting of the American Asian Studies Society, Washington, D.C., 1964).

#### FALLACY 2: TRADITIONAL CULTURE IS A CONSISTENT BODY OF NORMS AND VALUES

In elaborating the distinction and interaction between the "great tradition" of urban centers and the "little tradition" of village communities, anthropologists have called our attention to the diversity and the existence of alternatives in what has been supposed to be a uniform body of rules and values. We must avoid accepting the written and intellectualized versions of a culture as only the literate form of a common set of beliefs and behavior patterns. The distinction between "popular" religion and the religion of the literati elite has long been a recognition of this difficulty in characterizing the "religion" of a society.<sup>11</sup>

Even within the literate forms of a tradition, inconsistency and opposition are marked; the Sermon on the Mount and *The Wealth of Nations* are both part of Western culture. Catholicism and Protestantism are Christian religions, and even within the single Church of Peter, diverse monastic orders have expressed a catholicity of values. Hindu philosophical and religious teaching is consistent with a number of diverse orientations to life. The

<sup>10</sup> R. C. Dutt, *Economic History of India* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1908), pp. 32, 261; S. Bhattacharya, *East India Company and the Economy of Bengal* (London: Luzac, 1954), pp. 158-59; Vikas Misra, *Hinduism and Economic Growth* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), chap. iii; Milton Singer, "Changing Craft Traditions in India," in W. Moore and A. Feldman (eds.), *Labor Commitment and Social Change in Development Areas* (New York: SSRC, 1960), pp. 258-76; Neil Smelser, *Social Change in the Industrial Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), pp. 109-16; Robert Frykenburg, "Traditional Processes of Power: Land Control in Andhra" (Paper presented to the meeting of the Association for Asian Studies Society, Washington, D.C., 1964); Daniel Thorner, *The Agrarian Prospect in India* (Delhi: University Press, 1956).

<sup>11</sup> In a study of religious behavior among low-caste sweepers, Pauline Kolenda has recently presented a vivid picture of the differences in the Hinduism of higher and of lower social levels ("Religious Anxiety and Hindu Fate," *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXIII [June, 1964], 71-82).

doctrine of the four *ashramas*, for example, conceives of the good life as one in which men pursue different values at different stages in the life cycle.<sup>12</sup>

The importance of this diversity is that it provides legitimizing principles for a wide set of alternative forms of behavior. This point has been rather convincingly made in the recent discussion of economic development and cultural values in India.<sup>13</sup> Neither the behavior of popular religion nor teachings of the scriptures are devoid of moral bases for materialistic motivations or for disciplined and rational pursuit of wealth. Everyone need not be a *sadhu* (holy man) at all times.

FALLACY 3: TRADITIONAL SOCIETY IS A  
HOMOGENEOUS SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Like other societies, Indian society has institutionalized different styles of life in different groups, both within and without the caste system. Such divisions of labor make it possible for specific communal and status groups to be the bearers of traditions which differ from the dominant streams yet enable valued social functions to be performed. While Weber referred to "the Protestant ethic," the specific sects who carried the ethic were by no means typical of all Protestant groups.<sup>14</sup> The role of foreign and pariah peoples has often been commented upon as a source of economic

<sup>12</sup> For a description of the doctrine of Ashramas, see K. M. Sen, *Hinduism* (London: Penguin Books, 1961), chap. iii.

<sup>13</sup> Milton Singer, "Cultural Values in India's Economic Development," *Annals, CCCV* (May, 1956), 81-91. See the clash of viewpoints among Goheen, Singer, and Srinivas in the discussion of "India's Cultural Values and Economic Development," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, VIII (October, 1958), 1-13. Vikas Misra (*op. cit.*), similarly to Singer and Srinivas, does not see the cultural elements of Hinduism as an impediment to economic growth.

<sup>14</sup> For an account of the atypicality of Quaker economic rationality among American colonials, see F. B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House; The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682-1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948).

growth, innovation, and entrepreneurial behavior.<sup>15</sup> The Jews in Europe, the Muslims in West Africa, the Chinese in Indonesia, and the East Indians in East Africa are examples of groups whose marginality has rendered them able to engage in the impersonality of market behavior and to remain aloof from the status consumption demands of the indigenous population. In India, the Parsees and the Jains have been potent carriers of economic innovation and the development of large-scale industrial production.

Generalizations about the anti-economic character of the Hindu traditions lose sight of the provision for specific groups which are ethically capable of carrying a logic of economic growth and change. Within the caste system of Hinduism, the untouchables have been able to perform tabooed occupations necessary to the economy. Other castes have developed traditions of business and commerce which, although dishonored in Hindu "tradition," are permissible and even obligatory for the Marwari, the Chettiar, and the Baniya. It is their very legitimation within existing structure that permits their acceptance and implementation of innovating economic behavior.

FALLACY 4: OLD TRADITIONS ARE DISPLACED  
BY NEW CHANGES

The capacity of old and new cultures and structures to exist without conflict and even with mutual adaptations is a frequent phenomenon of social change; the old is not necessarily *replaced* by the new. The acceptance of a new product, a new religion, a new mode of decision-making does not necessarily lead to the disappearance of the older form. New forms may only increase the range of alternatives. Both magic and medicine can exist side by side, used alternately by the same people.

<sup>15</sup> Sheldon Stryker, "Social Structure and Prejudice," *Social Problems*, VI (1959), 340-54; Bert Hoselitz, "Main Concepts in the Analysis of the Social Implications of Technical Change," in Hoselitz and Moore, *Industrialization and Society* (New York: UNESCO, 1963), pp. 11-29, especially pp. 24-28.

The syncretism of inconsistent elements has long been noted in the acceptance of religious usages and beliefs. Paganism and Catholicism have often achieved a mutual tolerance into a new form of ritualism drawn from each in Spanish-speaking countries.<sup>16</sup> The "great tradition" of the urban world in India has by no means pushed aside the "little tradition" of the village as they made contact. Interaction has led to a fusion and mutual penetration.<sup>17</sup> We have become increasingly aware that the outcome of modernizing processes and traditional forms is often an admixture in which each derives a degree of support from the other, rather than a clash of opposites.

FALLACY 5: TRADITIONAL AND MODERN FORMS  
ARE ALWAYS IN CONFLICT

The abstraction of a "traditional society" as a type separate from a specific historical and cultural setting ignores the diversity of content in specific traditions which influence the acceptance, rejection, or fusion of modernist forms. Japan is unlike the Western societies in the ways in which "feudalism" and industrial development have been fused to promote economic growth.<sup>18</sup> Commitment to emperor and to family, a col-

lectivistic orientation, and a high degree of vertical immobility have been factors supporting social and economic change in the Japanese context while they appear to have been factors producing resistance in the individualistic culture of the West. In this context the hardened commitment of labor to a specific employer operated to promote economic growth while the same process appeared an impediment in the West.<sup>19</sup>

Traditional structures can supply skills, and traditional values can supply sources of legitimation which are capable of being utilized in pursuit of new goals and with new processes. In one Indonesian town, Geertz found the sources of economic expansion largely among the *prijaji*, the Muslim group representing new forces in religion as well as in business. In another town, the source of economic innovation and business expansion was in the traditional nobility. The *prijaji* could build on, but were also hampered by, the characteristics of the bazaar modes of trading and the closed social networks of a pariah group. The traditional nobility, however, was well equipped to form a business class through the wide social networks and the strength of their authority, which rested on a traditional base.<sup>20</sup>

Anthropologists have made the same point in connection with problems of selective culture change. One traditional culture may possess values more clearly congruent with modernization than another; another may cling more tenaciously to its old ways than another. Ottenberg's study

<sup>16</sup> For one account of such syncretisms, see Robert Redfield, *The Folk Culture of Yucatan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941), chap. ix.

<sup>17</sup> "While elements of the great tradition have become parts of local festivals, they do not appear to have entered village festival custom 'at the expense of' much that is or was the little tradition. Instead we see evidence of accretion in a transmutation form without apparent replacement and without rationalization of the accumulated and transformed elements" (McKim Marriott, "Little Communities in an Indigenous Civilization," in M. Marriott [ed.] *Village India* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955], p. 196).

<sup>18</sup> For some analyses of this phenomenon in Japan, see Reinhard Bendix, *Nation-Building and Citizenship* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1965), chap. vi; Robert Scalapino, "Ideology and Modernization: The Japanese Case," in D. Apter (ed.), *Ideology and Discontent* (New York: Free Press, 1965), pp. 93-127; Everett Hagen, *On the Theory of Social Change* (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1962), chap. xiv.

<sup>19</sup> For a description and analysis of labor commitment in Japan, see James Abegglen, *The Japanese Factory* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1958); Solomon B. Levine, *Industrial Relations in Post-war Japan* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1958), chap. ii. Richard Lambert describes a similar process operating in western India but sees it as a possible impediment to economic growth (Lambert, *Workers, Factories and Social Change in India* [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963], especially chap. iii and pp. 214-21).

<sup>20</sup> Clifford Geertz, "Social Change and Economic Modernization in Two Indonesian Towns," in Hagen, *op. cit.*, chap. xvi.

of tribes in West Africa found them able to accept and utilize the British culture in Nigeria to a much greater extent than was true of the other major Nigerian tribes. The Ibo's system of voluntary associations, coupled with their values of individualism and achievement, adapted them well to the kinds of opportunities and demands which British colonialism brought. In contrast, the Masai in East Africa are a notorious case of resistance to culture change, fiercely upholding existing ways with very little accommodation.<sup>21</sup>

FALLACY 6: TRADITION AND MODERNITY ARE  
MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE SYSTEMS

A given institution or cultural system contains several aspects or dimensions. Each dimension does not function in the same way in response to new influences on a society. Tradition and modernity are frequently mutually reinforcing, rather than systems in conflict.

Earlier theories of economic growth viewed extended family systems and caste structure as impediments to economic growth.<sup>22</sup> We now recognize, however, that such relations are complex and can vary from one context to another. Caste as an unalloyed impediment to economic growth has been much exaggerated through failing to balance its role in the division of labor and in caste mobility (one dimension) against its tendencies toward status demands as limitations on desire to accumulate capital (a second dimension).<sup>23</sup> Efforts

<sup>21</sup> Simon Ottenberg, "Ibo Receptivity to Change," in M. Herskovits and W. Bascom, *Continuity and Change in African Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), pp. 130-43; Harold Schneider, "Pakot Resistance to Change," *ibid.*, pp. 144-67. Also see the description and analysis of labor commitment in East Africa in A. Elkin and L. Fallers, "The Mobility of Labor," in W. Moore and A. Feldman, *op. cit.*, pp. 238-54.

<sup>22</sup> For a generalized statement of this view, stressing an open system of social mobility as a prerequisite for economic growth, see Kingsley Davis, "The Role of Class Mobility in Economic Development," *Population Review*, VI (July, 1962), 67-73.

on the part of castes to become mobile, to attempt improvements in their material as well as their ritual position are by no means new to Indian life. The expanded scope of regional castes, the development of caste associations, and the importance of castes in politics are not impediments to economic growth.<sup>24</sup> They enable credit facility, occupational sponsorship and training, and political influence to be made available on a basis of segmental, traditional loyalties. This brings an element of trust and obligation into an economic context where suspicion and distrust are otherwise frequently the rule between persons unconnected by other ties than the "purely" economic.

Studies of the impact of industrialization on family life in preindustrial and primitive societies similarly indicate the compatibility of extended family forms with industrialism.<sup>25</sup> In the context of Indian economic growth, the large extended families of the Tatas, Birlas, and Dalmias are among the most striking instances of major industrial organizations growing out of and supported by traditional family units. Berna's study of entrepreneurship in Madras provides additional information, among small businesses, of the extended family as

<sup>23</sup> This is a major conclusion of V. Misra, *op. cit.*

<sup>24</sup> Caste associations and caste loyalties appear to be important sources of social support in urban India and are growing in size and number (see Srinivas, *op. cit.*; M. Weiner, *The Politics of Scarcity* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1962), chap. iii; Bernard Cohn, "Changing Traditions of a Low Caste," *Journal of American Folklore*, LXXI (July-September, 1958), 413-21; Lloyd and Suzanne Rudolph, "The Political Role of India's Caste Associations," *Pacific Affairs*, XXXIII (March, 1960), 5-22.

<sup>25</sup> William Goode, "Industrialization and Family Change," in B. Hoselitz and W. Moore, *op. cit.*, chap. xii; Jean Comhaire, "Economic Change and the Extended Family," *Annals*, CCCV (May, 1956), 45-52; Manning Nash, *Machine Age Maya* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1958).

a major source of savings and capital accumulation.<sup>26</sup>

The role of traditional values in the form of segmental loyalties and principles of legitimate authority are of great importance in understanding the possibilities for the occurrence of unified and stable polities at a national level. The contemporary Indian political process utilizes caste, village, and religious community as basic segmental groups through which the individual and the family are drawn into modern political institutions. Primary ties of kinship and clan are in process of fusion to centralized structures of national, participative politics.<sup>27</sup>

The "stuff" of much modern politics in India is itself drawn from the pre-existing struggles between caste, religion, region, and economic groupings. We have become aware that much of what appears to be ideological and economic conflict in Indian politics is actuated and bolstered by struggles for social and economic position among the various caste groups.<sup>28</sup>

The setting of traditional and pre-existing conflicts in the context of new institutions is crucial to understanding Indian educational change. Critics of Indian education often point to the intensive desire for humanistic curriculums among both educators and students, contrasting this with the presumed necessities of technical and agricultural skills in economic development. They fail to see that the politics of egalitarianism revolves around the quest for status in traditional terms. Groups that

<sup>26</sup> James Berna, "Patterns of Entrepreneurship in South India," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, VII (April, 1959), 343-62.

<sup>27</sup> This is a dominant theme in contemporary discussion of Indian politics (Joseph Gusfield, "Political Community and Group Interests in Modern India," *Pacific Affairs*, XXXVI [Summer, 1965], 123-41, and the literature cited there).

<sup>28</sup> "The 'revolution of rising expectations' is in reality an explosion of social competition . . . not aimed at American, British or Russian living standards, but are demands by one group for improvement . . . vis-à-vis another group within India" (Weiner, *op. cit.*, p. 71).

have not been part of the educational structure in the past now utilize it to gain status increases as well as jobs. This is of great importance in a nation attempting to draw formerly isolated groups into a national identity.<sup>29</sup>

#### FALLACY 7: MODERNIZING PROCESSES WEAKEN TRADITIONS

This discussion of Indian education suggests that new institutions and values may, and often do, fuse and interpenetrate the old. In his influential paper on caste mobility, M. N. Srinivas has shown that, while higher social levels appear to be "westernizing" their life styles, when lower and middle levels seek mobility they do so by becoming more devotedly Hinduistic, following more Brahminical styles, and otherwise Sanskritizing their behavior.<sup>30</sup> The fluidity introduced by political competition under independence and democracy becomes harnessed to a more traditional orientation.

The technological consequences of increased transportation, communication, literacy, and horizontal mobility, in furthering the spread of ideas, also intensifies the spread and influence of the "great tradition" into more and more communities and across various social levels.<sup>31</sup> Pilgrimages to distant shrines become easier and enable

<sup>29</sup> The social composition of university students in India shows a very high preponderance of high castes in the student bodies, although leveling processes are at work. This situation, and its significance is described in my forthcoming "Equality and Education in India," in Joseph Fisher [ed.], *Social Science and the Comparative Study of Educational Systems* (Scranton, Pa.: International Textbook Publishers, 1967). For a general analysis of Indian higher education, see Allen Grimshaw, "National Goals, Planned Social Change and Higher Education: The Indian Case," in R. Feldmesser and B. Z. Sobel, *Education and Social Change* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, in press).

<sup>30</sup> "Sanskritization and Westernization," in Srinivas, *op. cit.*

<sup>31</sup> McKim Marriott, "Changing Channels of Cultural Transmission in Indian Civilization," in L. P. Vidyarthi (ed.), *Aspects of Religion in Indian Society* (Meerut: Kedar Nath Ram Nath, 1961), pp. 13-25.

the conception of a unified, national religion to take firmer root. Caste groups can now be formed on regional and even national lines, buttressed by associational life and written journals. The spread of community development and of educational facilities brings in its wake new, semiurban personnel who carry the Sanskritic traditions fully as much, if not more so, than they do the westernizing influences.<sup>32</sup> The communities of the "little tradition" are, in fact, more open to such traditional winds of change than to wholly new movements. The holy men and the wandering players who carry religious messages and dramas drawn from the Hindu great traditions are more likely to effect attention than the movies.<sup>33</sup>

#### TRADITION, IDEOLOGY, AND NATIONHOOD

Tradition is not something waiting out there, always over one's shoulder. It is rather plucked, created, and shaped to present needs and aspirations in a given historical situation. Men refer to aspects of the past as tradition in grounding their present actions in some legitimating principle. In this fashion, tradition becomes an ideology, a program of action in which it functions as a goal or as a justificatory base. The concern for tradition as an explicit policy is not an automatic response to change but is itself a movement capable of analysis.

In similar fashion, to be "modern" appears in many new nations as an aspiration toward which certain groups seek to move the society. "Modern" becomes a perceived state of things functioning as a criterion against which to judge specific actions and a program of actions to guide

<sup>32</sup> The schoolteacher, in these decades of expanding primary education, is a source of Sanskritic as well as Western influences. See David Mandelbaum's account in "The World and the World View of the Koda," in M. Marriott (ed.), *Village India*, pp. 223-54, especially pp. 239 ff.

<sup>33</sup> John Gumperz, "Religion as a Form of Communication in North India," *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXIII (June, 1964), 89-98.

policy. In Scalapino's apt phrase, intellectuals in new nations utilize "teleological insight"—the assumed ability to read the future of their own society by projecting it in accordance with the experience and trends of "advanced" nations.<sup>34</sup> Such insight operates as a crucial determinant in developing goals, but it too is a creation of choice among possibilities, not a fixed and self-evident set of propositions.

The desire to be modern and the desire to preserve tradition operate as significant movements in the new nations and developing economies. It is our basic point here that these desires, functioning as ideologies, are not always in conflict; that the quest for modernity depends upon and often finds support in the ideological upsurge of traditionalism. In this process, tradition may be changed, stretched, and modified, but a unified and nationalized society makes great use of the traditional in its search for a consensual base to political authority and economic development.

#### TRADITION AND NATIONAL UNIFICATION

Writing about African intellectuals in the formerly French colonies, Immanuel Wallerstein remarks that these parts of Africa are the chief centers for the ideological development of "Negritude"—the preservation and development of a uniquely indigenous African culture.<sup>35</sup> Here, where the intellectuals were trained in the French language and where they fully accepted the French culture, it is necessary to identify and discover a national cultural tradition and to self-consciously aid its development. In a similar fashion, an Indian colleague of mine once remarked that "Indians are obsessed with Indianness."

Many observers have noted the phenomenon of the revival of indigenous tradition as a phase of nationalistic and independence movements, especially where intellec-

<sup>34</sup> Scalapino, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

<sup>35</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *Africa—the Politics of Independence* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), pp. 75-76.

tuals had come to look to some other country as a basic source of new values.<sup>36</sup> Such reactions have set in among Russian intellectuals against France in the nineteenth century, among the Indonesians against the Dutch, among the Japanese against Europe; and against the British among the Indians both during and after the struggle for independence. The Indian intellectuals, westernized and European in cultural orientation, underwent a renaissance of traditional Hinduism as one aspect of the struggle against colonial dominion.<sup>37</sup> Despite their general commitment to modernization (often against the British post-Sepoy rebellion policy of maintaining native custom), a recrudescence of Indian national identity was partially fostered by explicit adoption of customs and styles which were both traditional and closer to popular behavior. It was this ideology which Gandhi gave to the movement, even as he sought the abolition of many features of that tradition.

The issue of the nationalist movement is not abated in its victory. For the new elites of newly independent nations, the issue is not so much that of overcoming tradition but of finding ways of synthesizing and blending tradition and modernity. While it is now possible for the urbanized and intellectual elite to wear Saville Row and avoid the clothes of Chowri Bazaar without being a traitor, the issues of personal integrity and of political functions still remain.

Those who depict the elites in India as cut off from roots in an indigenous civ-

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. vii; John Kautsky, *Political Change in Underdeveloped Areas* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1962), pp. 53-54; Heimsath, *op. cit.*, chap. xii; Mary Mattosian, "Ideologies of Delayed Industrialization," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* (April, 1958), pp. 217-28.

<sup>37</sup> This "revivalist" stream was only one of the major themes in Indian nationalism, but it had a great impact throughout the movement (Heimsath, *op. cit.*; A. R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* [Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1959], chaps. xiii, xviii).

ilization ignore the ways in which Hinduism and Indian family life exert strong pulls as continuing aspects of Indian life, even where highly westernized. Almost always the Indian intellectual speaks a regional language as his mother tongue, is steeped in classic Sanskrit literature, and is deeply tied to an extended family. Parental arrangement is still the very dominant mode of marital selection, and he is often married to a highly traditional wife.<sup>38</sup>

Independence, even within the westernized circles, has given continuing support to a movement toward the recapturing of Hindu folklore and the furtherance of tradition as a source of national unity in a common culture. What Indian book or journal does not have its section that links modern thought or institutions to analogues in Hindu scripture? How often is the romanticization of the village and the rejection of the city not found among vigorous exponents of political democracy and economic change? This ideological construction of Indian tradition is offered as a "great tradition," and this Indian populism is found among intellectual and urbanized elites as it is in the provincial and peasant villages.

Nationalism is deeply committed to both horns of the dilemma of tradition and modernity. The effort to define a national heritage in the form of a set of continuing traditions is also a way of coping with the wide gap that separates elite and mass, city and village, region and region in the Indian context. It is a complement to the modernizing processes which are involved in the aspiration toward a unified nation. A common culture that cuts across the segmental and primordial loyalties is a basis for national identity and consensus. Without it, the modernization based on nationhood lacks a foundation for legitimating central authority.

In describing these movements we are

<sup>38</sup> Shils has made this point in his study of Indian intellectuals (Edward Shils, *The Intellectual between Tradition and Modernity* [The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1961], especially pp. 60-67).

not referring to efforts to pit tradition against modernity. This is certainly to be discovered in populist and aristocratic movements which call for the rejection of economic growth and the resistance or abolition of imported institutions and values. In India this can be seen in the xenophobic and militant Hinduism which characterized the RSS and still is a potent political force in the Hindu Mahasabha and, to a lesser degree, in the Jan Sangh party.<sup>39</sup> This appeal to an undisturbed society avoids the dilemma fully as much as does the ideology based on a linear theory of change.

The synthesis of tradition and modernity is evident in Gandhian influence. Was Gandhi a traditionalist or a modernizer? Asking the question poses the immense difficulty in separating the various streams in reform and social change blowing over the Indian subcontinent. Certainly his genius lay in uniting disparities, in utilizing the traditional authority of the holy man for social reforms and for political union. His leadership of the independence movement gave India a common experience which has been one of the crucial legacies of the independence movement to its present national existence and to the authority of the Congress Party.

The Gandhianism of the neo-Gandhians, such as Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan, represents an important ideological development in the search for political institutions which will cope with the problems of nationhood within indigenous cultural forms.<sup>40</sup> But Gandhian Socialism represents only one form in which this drive toward a synthesis is manifest. The recent movement toward the development of local

<sup>39</sup> See Richard Lambert, "Hindu Communal Groups in Indian Politics," in R. Park and I. Tinker (eds.), *Leadership and Political Institutions in India* (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 211-24). Even in the Swatantra Party, a movement led by an antitraditionalist set of ideologies, its anti-Congress character has drawn to it strong forces of antimodernism (see Howard Erdman, "India's Swatantra Party," *Pacific Affairs* [Winter, 1963-64], pp. 394-410).

autonomy and participation in India rests both on the growing political power of village communities and the ideological force which has recreated a tradition of Indian village democracy. In the various proposals for a system of Panchayati Raj (movement toward greater local power in economic decisions at the village level), Indian government and politics are wrestling with the problem of creating a consensus for developmental policies which will have the legitimating support in tradition, even if the tradition is newly discovered.<sup>41</sup>

#### THE MEDIATING ELITES

Elsewhere we have analyzed the growing political power of new, less westernized, and more localistic political elites and sub-elites in India.<sup>42</sup> Such people, with sources of power in state and region, mediate between the westernized elites and the mass of the Indian society in ways which bring a greater degree of traditional commitments and styles, of caste and other primordial ties, into the political and cultural arena.

The very process of political egalitarianism and modernization contains the seeds of new ideologies of tradition. Literacy in India not only stimulates a common cultural content but has also led to ideologies of regionalism, extolling the virtues of regional languages and cultures.<sup>43</sup> While

<sup>40</sup> This quest for an indigenous form of political democracy is marked in Narayan's writings, as well as in conversation (see Jaya Prakash Narayan, *The Dual Revolution* [Tanjore: Sarvodaya Prachuralaya, 1959]; *Swaraj for the People* [Varanasi: Akhkh Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh, 1961]).

<sup>41</sup> See the analysis of the Panchayats in my paper on Indian political community, cited above (n. 27); and in Reinhard Bendix, "Public Authority in a Developing Political Community: The Case of India," *Archives Europeennes de Sociologie*, IV (1963), 39-85, especially 61 ff.

<sup>42</sup> Gusfield, "Political Community and Group Interests in Modern India," *op. cit.*

<sup>43</sup> Witness the rise of self-conscious rediscovery of Hindi literary tradition. The linguistic and cultural renaissances in many parts of India are post-independence phenomena (see Selig Harrison, *In-*

such movements impede the development of an all-India cultural consensus, they are neither antimodern nor specifically anti-India. They do, however, presage the decline of that form of national elite that has been associated with colonial cultural influences. India appears to be approaching and entering a phase in which modernization will be directed and implemented by persons whose loyalties and ideologies are considerably more traditionalized than has been true in the past decades.

#### THE AMBIGUITIES OF MODERNITY

Just as "tradition" is renewed, created, and discovered, so too "modernity" as a goal toward which men aspire appears in some specific historical guise. The post-colonial elites owed much to the cultures of the colonial powers in India. Through travel, through language and literature, through colonial educational institutions, they had absorbed a picture of modernity as it was practiced in one country at one time. It is not a random selection that led the Indian elites to conceive of politics in the British mode or led Nehru's political pronouncements and judgments of the 1950's to echo the liberalism of Harold Laski in the 1920's.

But being modern is far more ambiguous than being British. The disappearance of the postcolonial elites carries with it an increase in the range of alternatives ideologically open to the new, more traditionalized political groups. The possible routes to economic wealth and political nationhood are considerable, as we have shown in the earlier section of this paper. As countries come onto the scene of self-conscious aspiration toward the modern, they are presented with more and more successful models of the process. England, Germany, the United States, Japan, the Soviet Union are highly diverse in political institutions and histories. In the sense of having achieved high standards of living and equali-

tarian societies, they are all reasonably "developed."

#### THE CULTURAL FRAMEWORK OF MODERNITY

We cannot easily separate modernity and tradition from some *specific* tradition and some *specific* modernity, some version which functions ideologically as a directive. The modern comes to the traditional society as a particular culture with its own traditions. In this respect it has been impossible to divorce modernization from some process of westernization. McKim Marriott has made this point most vividly in analyzing the reasons for villagers' rejection of Western and westernized doctors. The role of the doctor, as a technical expert, grants him authority in modern culture but not in the Indian village where technical and commercial skills have a low approval. Efficiency and thrift, those two great Western virtues, are not such in the eyes of the peasant in Uttar Pradesh.<sup>44</sup>

The social scientist's designation of specific institutional forms as modern may also function as ideology and as aspiration, specifying what it is in a particular culture which is emulative. The concept of political development is far more difficult and culture-bound than is that of economic development. Even with the latter, we clearly recognize a diversity of institutional routes to industrialization and higher incomes. To label, apart from a specific context, either a capitalistic, socialistic, or communistic approach to economic growth

<sup>44</sup> "It is important to note that a distinction can be made between 'Western' and 'scientific' medicine. Westerners conceive of a Western medicine as a system of curing based on 'rational' techniques and 'scientific' concepts of cause and effect. But this characteristic . . . only partly determines the total range of practices involved in treatment and cure. Treatment is bedded in a social as well as a scientific matrix, and many practices of the Western doctor are based on cultural values and ideas of personal relationships that are peculiar to Western society" (McKim Marriott, "Western Medicine in a Village of Northern India," in S. N. Eisenstadt [ed.], *Comparative Social Problems* [New York: Free Press, 1964], pp. 47-60, at p. 59).

as antithetical to economic growth would certainly seem fallacious to the economist. Similarly, the industrialized and egalitarian societies of the West have by no means demonstrated either a uniform or an unchanging form of polity. The Soviet Union, France, Germany, and the United States (and we might well include Japan) are hardly a single form of political structure, and each of these has in turn undergone many changes during its history. They are all national polities, to be sure, and all ones in which the population is mobilized, to a degree, to political participation and loyalty. These facts, however, state problems in a wider fashion, without specific institutional directives.

To conclude, the all too common practice of pitting tradition and modernity against each other as paired opposites tends to overlook the mixtures and blends which reality displays. Above all, it becomes an ideology of antitraditionalism, denying the

necessary and usable ways in which the past serves as support, especially in the sphere of values and political legitimation, to the present and the future. We need a perspective toward change which does not deny the specific and contextual character of events.

I do not know much about the total style of life of that passenger on the Kodama express. To think of him as fixed on a continuum between tradition and modernity (as well as between Kyoto and Tokyo) hides the immense variations and possibilities, the capacity for blending opposites, which human beings and nations possess. In the concepts of the traditional and the modern, we are certainly wrestling with a feature of social change. We need to recognize that there is a variety of events on the wrestling program and that the outcomes, unlike many wrestling matches, are quite in doubt.

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