Indian civilization could claim a continuity of more than 5000 years which is unique in the history of man. The Hindus have had an organised social system for more than 3000 years. The secular Dravidians and the spiritual Aryans influenced each other for the better. The local elements have entered into the Sanskrit belief and custom, and their mythology absorbed the local tradition. There have been a perfect assimilation and merging of individuality to create a new order. This give and take process of cultural synthesis not only ensured the continuity but also promised variety. For instance Deepavali, Dussera, etc. are celebrated all over the country with their own regional culture peculiarities. The difference is only skin deep, the basic concept and faith is same everywhere. The Vedas, the Upanishads, the Epics, the Puranas and the Dharmasastras knit the people of India from the Himalayas to Kanya Kumari and give them all the sense that their country is sacred. Pilgrim centres with rich Shalapurana lie in every part of the country. Pilgrims never have the hurdles
of linguistic barriers and difference in custom and living of others. "Pilgrims who visit Rameshwaram in the south are expected to bathe in the sea there and carry a pot of sea water to be emptied in the Ganges. Again, the river Kaveri is called Dakshina Ganga or Ganges of the south, and the devotees believe that at its annual birth on the first of Libra, the waters of all the rivers of India and the sacred seas are present in the river source. The faithful are told that there is a secret tunnel from the source Kaveri to the Ganges."(1) Puranas link Gujarat and Assam by the mythical story of Usha and Aniruddha. Thus Indian civilization maintains its continuity through the ages encompassing the whole India.

The all India tradition pulsates through attitudes, faiths, customs and conducts of the people. Again local variation adds colour and beauty to the main tradition. The aim of the Indian tradition has been to pursue wealth as well as pleasure under the control of virtue, if one leads through 'dharma' (righteousness, duty and virtue), 'artha' (material gain) and 'Kama' (love and pleasure) he can attain 'moksha' (renunciation). The doctrine of 'Karma' holds man morally responsible for his own deeds. His actions lead to certain consequences and so he should be aware of this when he acts. It (Karma) implies hope for
one's future and resignation towards one's past. It influences the life and thought of the common man as well as the elite. Social hierarchy is expressed through caste system. Tolerance and non-violence are the two cardinal virtues of tradition. Buddha and Mahavira were champions of non-violence. Gandhi inherited non-violence from this great tradition. Harmony in the family, village, state, country, etc. bring peaceful co-existence. Society has the strong hold of kinship and kin obligation. Individuality merges with social solidarity, sinking the element which fosters the ego and the narcissism of identity.

Due to various invasions and influences in the north as well as greater social change there one finds a tremendous change in the tradition. The genuine residuum of Indian tradition one can find only in the south. It is, hence, worthwhile to study the history of south Indian culture and its distinctive features.

Origins with reference to Tamil or Dravidian Foundation:

The portion of the Indian peninsula to the south of Vindhyas, with the sea on the three sides was called Dravida-desa. At the later stage it shrunk to the tip of the peninsula to the south of Vengadam (Tirupathi). It was inhabited by three distinct races - the Nagas,
the Dravidians and the Aryans. The non-Aryan Tamils belong to this great Naga-Dravidian race. Evidence points to Nagas as the aboriginal inhabitants of this country. They were divided into two sections - the earlier or the savage section belonged to the Negrito race and the later or semi-civilized of a mixed race. Apparently both migrated to India from the south, when it was connected by land with Australia and Africa. These were the Vanaras and rakshasas of Ramayana. Then came the Dravidian Tamils from Asia Minor where the ancient Accadians lived. During the Mahabharata war, they lived in upper India. Immediately after the 'Great war' the Dravidians trekked southwards. From thence they proceeded in three separate bands and established by subduing the nagas three small kingdoms known as the Cholas, Pandyas and Cheras. This contact with the Nagas led to the fusion of races. Lastly came the Aryans, who were mostly Brahmans. The earliest band of them might have migrated to the Tamil country about the fifth or sixth century B.C., and from this period down to the fourth or fifth century A.D. a thin stream of Aryan emigrants seems to have flowed southward. (2)

Prof. Wilson and sir Monier Williams give the meaning of the word 'Dramida' as 'the country in which the Tamil language is spoken.' Tamil means 'sweet
language'. This language and its alphabets had been introduced directly from western Asia. It has no philological affinity with either Sanskrit or any Indo-European tongue. For example, the relations father and mother (English) are expressed as pitri and matri in Sanskrit; pater, meter in Greek; pater, mater in Latin; vater, mutter in German; pitar, miter in Zend whereas in Tamil they are 'Appan' and 'Tay'. (3) Later the dialects of Tamil like Telegu, Kannada, Tulu (around 5th century A.D.) and Malayalam (around 11th century A.D.) became independent languages with the influence of the foster mother, Sanskrit. So when we talk about the tradition and culture of the south we must keep this in our mind for the purpose of clarity and understanding.

The Tamil people who belong to the Dravidian race were found in the pre-christian centuries throughout the whole of south India. Perhaps, at an earlier period, they had spread all over India. The Brahmi language, spoken on the border of Baluchistan, belongs to the Dravidian family, and the discoveries at Harappa and Mohanjo-Daro in Sind suggest that three millenia before Christ the people of Sind who might have had Dravidian link had developed a high civilization. Jawaharlal Nehru feels that the people of Indus valley civilization and their culture belong to indigenous
cultur e and its roots and offshoots may be found even in southern India. (4) Thus it is evident that the Dravidians have occupied the present position from extreme antiquity. The past history of the Dravidians on the basis of the way of the living, beliefs, attitudes, inclinations and culture can be roughly divided into three strata namely commercial, ethical and spiritual. Upto the advent of the Buddhism and Jainism commerce dominated the culture in general. The synthesis of the existing cosmopolitan native culture and the message of tolerance and non-violence of Buddhism and Jainism gave rise to an ethical culture. The advent and synthesis of sanskritic culture paved the ways for the culture of spirit.

"Indian sources are defective in professionally historical writings, but they are by no means lacking in the basic data for the reconstruction of the past, though the lacunae are perhaps much bigger than elsewhere." (5). Hence, though the literature lacks the 'historical sense', it should serve us as an unerring guide in our attempt towards fixing the relative ages of different periods of Tamils literature, at least in its broadest outlines. Judged by the standard of the mental make-up and way of life, each of the three groups mentioned above - the Commercial or Naturalistic, the Ethical or Moral and the Spiritual or Religious - reveals and
relates the advent and synthesis of different influences. They mark also three successive periods in the evolution of Tamil literature in which the continuity and the progress of the culture is reflected.

The period of commerce (upto early sangam period)

Before their contact with the Aryans, the Dravidians were mainly engaged in building up a material civilization and securing for themselves the many amenities of life individual and communal (vide Agastya in Tamil Land p.7 and pp.18-20). Naturally, therefore, their lives took on a secular colour and came to be reflected as such in the literature of that period. The impulse of religion, which came to possess them at a later period, was then absent. (6) In this period there was no caste-system in the south. We have abundant evidence from the Mahabharata, Ramayana and other earlier Sanskritic works, as well as from Greek and Latin writers, that in the pre-christian millenium the Tamils were a cultured, vigorous people, doing an extensive trade with the west, as well as with other parts of India, and affording a welcome hospitality to Aryan immigrants from the north. Aromatics and spices, jewels and cotton cloth were regular articles of trade exported from southern India to Egypt, Greece and Rome.
The Arabs and Greeks seem to have been the intermediaries in this trade. The three Tamil Kingdoms—Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas were well known to many Aryan and European authors of the millennium before Christ. King Solomon, in 1000 B.C. imported peacocks from Tamilnadu (Hebrew 'tukki' = Tamil 'tokai' which in ancient Tamil meant peacock). The Greeks who were the greatest intermediaries in the trade of India with Europe borrowed many Tamil names, which have found their way into most of the European languages. Among these are Greek words 'oriza' from the Tamil 'arisi', rice; 'Karipion' from 'Karova', cinnamon; 'ziggiberos' from 'injiver', ginger; 'peperi' from 'pipali', pepper; 'berrylos' from 'vaidurya', beryl and so on. In 20 B.C., the Pandyan King is said to have sent a commercial mission to emperor Agustus. Says Vincent Smith — The Tamil states of the far south became wealthy and prosperous by virtue of their valuable foreign trade and attained a high degree of material civilization at an early period. (7)

Some gallant attempts were made by the Tamils to correlate the moods of man with those of nature. The division of human life into 'aham' and 'puram' (Subjective and Objective) is an instance of point. Furthermore, the Tamils divided land into five 'tinai' (category) namely hills and hilly area, woods and
wooded country, fertile plains, sea-board and desert. An elaborate grammar was evolved nearly two thousand years ago, defining the customs and manners of those inhabiting the five different areas, the moods of nature in each area and the suitability of each area as background for different aspects of the human drama, such as love making, wedding, pangs of separation, re-union, etc. The seasons of the year and the different hours of the day were also correlated to human moods and the interplay between the two was extensively studied. These classifications revealed a penetrating study of man and nature.

This framework of 'aham', 'puram' and 'tinai' guided the creativity of the people. Though they were a practical, realistic and reason loving people, their thinkers held up before themselves almost impossible ideals of chastity, bravery and ethical perfection. The institution of prostitution appears to have been well established. Life was characterised by utter simplicity. Basic dress of men was two or three pieces of unsewn cotton cloth. Women used to wear the saree in such a way that though it brought out the curves of the body it did no violence to their modesty. Music, dance, etc. flourished in a classical way. They had a great love of flowers. They used to adorn
their hair with different flowers as the emblem and symbol of moods.

In his Presidential Address delivered at the All India Oriental Conference, Ahmedabad, in October, 1953, Dr. S.K. Chatterjee said, "The flower ritual of the Tamilians evolved on different lines from the fire rituals of the Aryans." He quotes Mark Collins in support of his thesis that the word 'puja' of Sanskrit is derived from 'Pu' meaning flower and 'Cey' meaning to do in Tamil. According to him, the Tamils invoked the divine spirit in an image, a pot, a pebble or a tree, poured water over it and offered it flowers and fruits and incense and music and dance, treating the divine spirit as an honoured guest like a king on a visit to a subject of his. He further points out that in the flower ritual of the Tamilians there was no place for animal sacrifice, but that such sacrifice was part of the fire ritual. The 'Tali' (Auspicious thread - 'Mangala Sudram') around the neck and the flower on the hairdress were the sacred ornaments of a married women. Pre-marital love without any base motive and inspired by high ideals was looked upon as something prompted by nature or God. Normally arranged marriage was in practice. The tonsure of widows was obviously a pre-Aryan Tamil custom taken over and perpetuated into later times.
The educated man was generally held in esteem. Palaces were constructed with strength and beauty. Each region had its own deity like Vendan, Varunan, Sevon, Mayon, Korravai, etc. The temples were made of perishable materials like plaster, timber and brick. From these points, it is evident that the ancient Tamils possessed a unique culture of their own in this period. The later Sangam period was influenced by Aryans first by Buddhists and Jains and then by Sanskritic Brahmanas.

The Age of Ethics (upto 5th century A.D.):
When the influx of the Aryans began, the Jains and Buddhists seem to have been the earlier batches of immigrants. These heretical sects, finding in the Tamil land no Brahmanic religion on any scale to oppose, had to content themselves with the composition of works mostly ethical and literary. The capacity of Tamils to assimilate the best in other culture and adapt it to the peculiar genius of the Tamil people is remarkable. Some of the brightest periods of Tamil history were brought about by an apparent clash of cultures and the consequent synthesis thereof. The 'Kural' and the way of living preached by it were the product of the interaction of old Tamil culture and the culture of the Buddhists and the Jains. The Tamil epics like 'Silapathikaram' of Ilango and
'Manimakalai' of Seethalai Sathanar belong to this period. 'Purananuru', 'Agananuru' and works like them still speak about the way of life of those people.

It is evident that the civilization of the south was in its essentials a Dravidian civilization, into which Aryan elements were then only slowly penetrating. During the time of Tiruvalluvar in south India the Varanasharama system of caste had not been adopted by the Tamils, but the people were classified, along with the earlier period's practice of regional inhabitation, in accordance with the occupations they followed. Says Mr. P.T. Srinivas Iyengar: "Notwithstanding the existence in their midst of Brahmanas and the attempts of Agattiyanar and Tolgappiyar to import Aryan culture into the Tamil country, the bulk of the people continued to live as if Aryan culture did not exist. They lived and loved just in the same ways as their forbears did in the olden times. Their occupations, customs and beliefs, superstitions or otherwise did not at all alter...The simple rural life of the pre-Christian centuries continued in tact and, notwithstanding its contact with Sanskrit culture the Tamil muse still sought inspiration from the humble scenes around, which he deserted a few centuries later when the artificial..."
poetry of Sanskrit subjugated the Tamil mind for all
time destroyed the beautiful realistic poetry of the
croly Tamils." (9)

One of the wandering bards of that day expresses the
patience, tolerance, and adaptability of the people in
the following ode:

To us all towns are one, all men are kin
Life's good comes not from other's gift, nor ill
Man's pains and pain's reliefs are from within.
Death's no new thing; nor our bosoms thrill
When joyous life seems like a luxurious draught.
When grieved, we patient suffer, for we deem.
This much - praised life of ours a fragile raft
Borne down the waters of some mountai stream,
That O'er huge boulders roaring seeks the plain.
Tho' storms, with lightening's flash,
from darkened skies
Descend, the raft goes on as fates ordian,
Thus have we seen in visions of the wise
We marvel not at the greatness of the great;
Still less despite we men of low estate.

- Purananuru 192 by Kaniyan Poon Kuntranar.
Tiruvalluvar epitomises the culture of this period. He
deals with virtue, wealth and pleasure in his 1330
couplets. Dr. Pope summarizes Tiruvalluvar's virtue as follows:

"The ideal house-holder leads on earth a consecrated life, not unmindful of any duty to the living or to the departed. His children are the choicest treasures. Affection is the very life of his soul, of all the virtues the first and the greatest. The sum and source of all is Love. His house is open to every guest, whom he welcomes with smiling face and pleasant word and with whom he shares his meal. Courteous in speech, grateful for every kindness, just in all his dealings, master of himself in perfect self-control, strict in the performance of every duty, pure, patient and forbearing, with a heart free from envy, modest in desire, speaking no evil, refraining from useless words, dreading the touch of evil, diligent and liberal, - he is one whom all unite to praise." (10)

We will just pull out a few illustrations to understand the intensity of each couplet on the wider topics:

Without rain neither festival nor worship
Neither charity nor virtue possible. (2:8)
What is poverty if the wife hath worth?
What is wealth if she hath no worth? (5:3)
The flute is sweet, the lute is sweet, say those
who've never heard the pretty prattle of
their littleones. (7:6)
The sore that's made by fire will heal again
Not the scar that by the tongue is made. (13:9)
Call him not 'man' who makes display of useless words
Call him but 'chaff of human kind.' (20:6)
The show of power of one who has no power within
Is like a cow in tiger-skin which quietly grazes on (23:3)
Be like the heron when 'tis time for lying low
But like its strike when time for action comes (49:10)
Even the fate can be conquered
By intense perseverance and energy. (62:10)
As hastes the hand to catch the slipping cloth
So hastes the friend to soothe another's grief. (79:8)
The deeds of men's shameless heart
Like puppets are on strings, just aping life. (102:10)
When eye to eye doth speak with answering look
What need is there for any spoken words. (110:10)

Tiruvalluvar exalts woman's position in every possible way. She evidently had charge of the family purse and was the mistress of this side of household life (6:1). He goes on to declare that there is nothing in the world nobler than a chaste woman (6:4). He regards the family life as high as the life of the sage. He praises monogamy; and it means the elevation of
womanhood. Ilango elevates Kannagi, a chaste woman (Silapathikaram) to the level of a Goddess (Pattini Deivam).

To Simon Casie Chitty the moral philosophy of this period involves four questions namely, (1) what is virtue, and how is it to be exercised? (2) What is wealth, and how is it to be acquired? (3) What is pleasure, and how is it to be enjoyed? (4) What is heavenly bliss, and how is it to be obtained? (11) Valluvar treated only of the three first questions i.e. virtue, wealth and pleasure. He might have left the fourth question thinking that if one lives the first three stages he will attain the Bliss. However, Auveiyar, a contemporary answers all the four questions within the compass of the following single stanza:

To give is virtue. That which is acquired without sin is wealth. The constant mutual affection of two, whose taste agree, is pleasure. To forsake these three, in the contemplation of the Supreme Being is Heavenly Bliss.

The Tamils of this period believed in Omens and auguries. They believed in astrology. Silapathikaram
presents the life of the people with their beliefs and
faiths, values and attitudes almost like a historical
mirror. During this period the prevailing religion was
a most remarkable mixture of Saivism, Jainism,
Buddhism and the ancient demonolatry. Normally they
buried the dead bodies. They worshipped those who died
in war by erecting a stone (Nadukal). Dance, music and
outdoor sports like cock-fights, bull-fights, ram-
fights, etc. flourished in the Tamilnadu. Bharat in
his prologue to the Natya sastra makes the modest
statement that he is unequal to the task of codifying
the art of dancing which was in vogue in Tamilnadu for
hundreds of years before him. The wide variety of
ragas and musical instruments known to the Tamilians
has been graphically described in the Silapathikaram
of the 2nd century A.D. Music was employed also as a
background to manual labour of ploughing, boating,
hunting, etc.

The Era of Religion (upto 13th century A.D.):

The catholicity and cosmopolitan outlook of Tamilians
in the early period of history was mainly due to their
distinctive maritime character. Their refreshing lack
of jingoism is evidently due to the intimate
international contacts they had from the earliest
times. History abounds in examples - i) Solomon in
D.C. mentions of the commodities imported from south India. ii) R.B. Dixon, the celebrated archaeologist and historian asserts that the Tamils had extensive trade with Malays, North Borneo and Northern Philippines even in the first millennium B.C. and that trade led to colonisation and conquest of those countries. iii) According to Paul Pelliot, there is evidence in Chinese literature of diplomatic relations between south Indian coasts and the Chinese empire as early as the 2nd century B.C. Chola kings sent embassies to China (vide K.M. Panikkar, 'India and China', pp.17-19). iv) Strabo, a Greek who wrote his geography in the 1st century A.D. makes mention of the embassy sent by the Pandyan king to emperor Augustus. v) Pliny, who wrote his Natural History gives an account of his voyage to south India. vi) Fr. Heras says that proto-Tamil language and culture was as rich as that of the Aryans. (12) She (south India) gave Burma her earliest script.

During this long period, slowly and steadily the contact and mutual influence of Dravidian and Aryan cultures continued. This is evident from the facts that Sanskrit has absorbed a number of Dravidian social practices. The progress of Tamil civilization from its primitive rude restlessness and wild aggressive valour to its ordered sense of humanity and
exalted moral and religious aims of a later day is undoubtedly the result of the operation of various momentous influences. Thus the synthesis resulted out of the fusions helped their cultures to become better, enriched and purified.

There were three major waves of migration from Aryavartaha to Dakshinapatha. The first wave of immigrants moved south in the times of Panini (4th century B.C.). These people should have moved south to escape from the : a) Continuously deteriorating political condition in the north due to Persian and Greek invasions; and b) Political crisis in the days of Chandragupta Maurya in Magadha. So the Sramanas and Brahmans, getting upset by the impieties of the Persians and Greeks, must have left for distant lands beyond the Vindhyas. The Buddhist proclivities of Ashoka must have also been the other causes for such migration. The state might have sponsored the Buddhist migrations, while the Brahmanical migrations might have been due to the intolerant religious policy of the state. Famine and over population in the Gangetic plains might be the other reason. (13) When the Buddhism and Jainism could become instant success to bring out the best in the Tamilians and guided the age of ethics, Hinduism was just preparing the grounds and
paving the ways for the future and could become more than the native culture after the final migration.

The second wave and the third wave of migration from the north could be said to have taken place before the Imperial Gupta period. The influence of these waves of migrants had become an accomplished fact in the southern society. In the Sangam days there was pleasant co-existence of all the religions namely Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism of north and the native demonalatry and the nature worship including the regional deities. It was only after 6th century A.D., that the southerners were fully engaged in a life of religious pursuits and then even the names of places and persons came to be Sanskritized and Sanskrit puranic mythology was becoming responsible for these changes.

The princes of the south treated with great respect the Brahmin priests who came south. They were provided whole villages tax free for their exclusive occupation. In their turn, the priests legitimized the dynastic status of the local rulers. There was religious tolerance and social co-existence from both the sides. Firstly as a result of the contacts with these immigrants, the lives of the natives underwent a considerable change. In philosophy and mythology they borrowed much from the Sanskritists. This cultural
fusion was a long drawn out one. Sanskrit came to influence the Dravidian linguistic pattern and literary forms and in course time became the foster mother of Kannada, Tulu and Malayalam.

Secondly, the immigrants, in their turn, began to adopt the life patterns and habits of the people of the south. For instance, they started practicing vegetarianism, cross-cousin marriage, wearing flowers, tying 'tali' (mangala sutra-auspicious thread) around the neck of the bride to raise her status to that of wife, etc. They accepted most of the local deities to the Aryan pantheon. They rather gave equal status to them with the Aryan deities. For example, they identified Seyon with Rudra, Mayon with Vishnu, Vendan with Indra, Murugan with Subramanya, Korravai with Kali or Durga and Sasta with Hariharaputra (son of Siva and Vishnu in the Mohini form). Also a new mythology was created. Sanskrit language began to assimilate many Dravidian words.

Thirdly, a compromise was effected between the two different value system, and a new one was created. Caste system was the outcome of the interaction between the Aryan 'Varna' system on the one hand, and the tribal system of the pre-Dravidian and the occupational class system of Dravidian on the other.
The flower rituals of the Dravidians and the fire rituals of the Aryans got synthesised.

Thus the impact of the Aryan culture is of the three fold - Sanskritisation (synthesis), Dravidanisation (Acceptance) and Unification (Synthesis). Whether we are to call this fusion as "Aryanisation" or "Dravidanisation" (as S.K. Chatterjee puts it), we have to accept the inescapable truth "that the two cultures met to exchange ideas and institutions and never to part." (14) The interaction of these two force is still going on.

The secular-minded, commercial, wordly Tamils of the earlier age were transformed into people given to devotion and other wordliness. The robust optimism of them and heroic urges in them fading away, yielding place to a philosophically- adjusted fatalism. Temples came to be preferred to harbours and marts. Religious architecture took the place of secular structures. Arts and letters devoted themselves more to the service of the Lord. It was during this period that the Saints, the Alwars and the Nayanmangans were in full swing spreading the Bhaktism. Kamban sang the Ramayana. The cholas, the pallavas and later other dynasties' architecture and sculpture acquired a new dimension of depth. It was during this period that
Sankara and Ramanuja preached their great gospels throughout the length and breadth of India. Aryans got translated Tamil Agamas and Dravidians got translated RigVedas into their languages. Vedas, epics, upanishads, etc. were translated into Tamil. "Some of the deepest things in Hindu religious culture like the practice of Yoga certainly go back to pre-Aryan period..." (15) Dr. Chatterjee adds.

Due to frequent invasions of various cultures, there were conflicts and gradual adulteration in the north. Whereas comparatively the south was almost free from any such dangers and so it could maintain up-to-date its culture and tradition in serene purity. Ironicaly speaking the only invasion which could influence the south was Brahminism, the Sanskritic culture and tradition of the north. As Buddhism flourishes grandly in the foster lands while struggling to survive in its own birth place, Brahminism is preserved with its true spirit only in the south. Prof. V.K. Bokak feels that "the south, which is supposed to be the house of Dravidians, has preserved classical Hindu culture in its purity." (16) Raja Rao echoes the same thought, "...truly speaking, Aryan wisdom seems to have found a more permanent place in south India than in the Aryan north." (17) South too faced the threat from time to time. But the rulers Cheras, Cholas, Pandyas,
Pallavas, Chalukyas down to Krishnadevaraya jealously guarded the religion by patronising and preserving it with its glory.

The South India Today:

Due to the spread of western education, expansion of modern technology and rapid growth of electrical and electronic devices, the cultural and traditional values are fast disappearing from this ancient land. But still the villages preserve them to a great extent. M.N. Srinivas in his The Remembered Village captures the survival of these great values from the village Rampura (which can be the story of any village in the south). They are farmers. They follow the caste system very rigidly. They lack privacy and donot have any inhibition regarding answering the call of nature, discussing about marriage, pregnancy, etc. Hospitality is the hall mark of their culture. The conspicuous lack of privacy, often, develops the tendency to gossip. It is not easy for them to ignore the opinion of kinsfolk and castefolk in a small, face-to-face community in which people are bound to each other by a multiplicity of ties. Thriftness is a virtue for them. Pilgrimage is a great blessing. They treat their deities as they treat their friends and neighbours. There are many kinds of deities from the Gods and
Goddesses of all India Hinduism in their various manifestations, incarnations and identifications to local ones presiding over epidemics such as cholera, small pox and plague and others who have an intimate association with lineages and households. They believe in astrology. Individuals are expected to spend lavishly on such occasions as weddings and funerals. They have strong faith in Karma, Dharma, Papa, Punya, Moksha, etc. Parting with ancestral land is a serious matter. Belief in the existence of God is universal in the village. The low castes like, smiths, barbers, washer-man, harijans, etc. serve the farmers and in return the patrons pay them the harvest products from the field itself. Cross-cousin and cross-uncle-niece marriages are in practice. This practice not only mitigates the injustice which agnatic and virilocal principles inflict on daughters but also maintains the link with the parental family and puts an end to the dowry and allied problems. Sex is regarded as a primordial urge in the same manner as hunger. Unlike North India, marriage rituals are performed only in day time and that too before noon. Women have a dread of sterility. The quality of reciprocity is basic to rural life. A sense of humour is an integral part of village. (18)
The Roots of Traditional Way of Life in the South

The present day philosophy of life and the elements of distinctive features in the way of living in the south, to a great extent, are the offshoots of the evolution of the three periods namely, Naturalistic, Ethical and Religious. Naturalistic period gives them the broad-outlook, the cosmopolitanism, the secular mind and the peaceability. It makes them avoid any sort of social friction and encourages the hospitality. Adjustment and peaceful harmonious co-existence are the results of this materialistic philosophy. This quality made them receive the Aryan immigrants and be receptive of Jainism, Buddhism and finally Sanskrit Hinduism. As they were pleasure seekers music, dance, art, institution of prostitution, etc. flourished. During the later periods, they became the part and parcel of temple culture. Humour in life is the direct result of this period.

Jainism and Buddhism flourished alongwith the native nature worship. Vegetarianism was popularised by them. Concern and compassion to all the living creatures, non-violence even to dumb creatures, respect and reverence to one and all, love and sacrifice, tolerance, etc. of these twin religion, became the
guiding principles of the age of ethics. Tiruvalluvar, Ilango, Auviayar and other poets codified ethics and morals for the benefit of generations to come. Gratitude was shown not only to human beings but also to cattle. This tradition still continues during ‘Pongal’. Women enjoyed an elevated status as mother principle. Monogamy was in practice and womanhood was honoured. Marital status was honoured and parenthood was considered as a bliss. Love marriage was accepted as a noble form of union. Cross-cousins, that is, a man and his mother’s brother’s daughter or father’s sister’s daughter were treated made for each other. This custom is a conventional compromise to retain matrilineal inheritance under patrilineal forms. Also it puts an end to the dowry and allied evil practices. Betrothal ceremony was performed only in the morning hours. Unmarried and married women wore flowers on their hairs. The precious ornament of a married woman was the ‘tali’ (auspicious thread). The tenure of widows was practiced.

The religious period brought the myth and faith of Brahminic tradition. Catholicism gave way to conservatism. The individual became insignificant. There was suspicion of all modern ideas but if the whole society was caught up in it there was an attitude of adjustment rather than struggle. There was
a tendency to link up the human with super human and sub-human. This stressed unity and continuity of life at different levels from the smallest atom to the supreme universe. The line between the fact and the fiction thinned out. Their intimacy with God occasionally forgot to revere him. They had staunch faith in fatalism. Cosmic power became greater than human will. Fate should be revered and not challenged. Humility became the virtue. They preferred the self-denying joy of anonymity and created towering temples. Caste system became more rigid.

The philosophy of Life in the South:

The south Indian way of life promotes certain attitudes which are distinctively south Indian in nature. Lack of aggression, tolerance and non-violence are ingrained in that way of life. Buddhism and Jainism might have contributed elements in that outlook. Basically people are peace loving. These philosophies make them extend a welcome to everyone. People could follow different faiths without conflict and confrontation. Harmonious co-existence of all are found there. Communal clashes are comparatively less in the south. Even now one can see people of different sects and religions congregate at Annai Velankanni Temple (a Christian Church), Karumari Amman Aalayam
(a Hindu Temple) and Nagpur Andayvar Koil (a Muslim Mosque) in Tamilnadu to pray and seek blessings. Vegetarianism may be the direct result of these philosophies. Love and compassion to all the living creatures could be possible. During Pongal festival in January people offer gratitude to the cattle.

Conservatism and conformism are the two philosophies which make the people of the south more orthodox in religious matters and more rigid in their social custom. Social hierarchy, caste-system, sub-divisions within the castes, etc. are the offshoots of these philosophies. Blind faith in superstitions, rigid social customs, etc. of the people make them more conservative. They accept whatever is said in Vedas and Puranas uncritically. The social practices such as tenure of widows, child marriage, etc. were imposed by the conservatism. Marriage between the sub-sects within the caste is also not allowed. For instance Brahmins are broadly divided into two sects — Shaivites and Vaishnavites. The Vaishnavites again are divided into 'Vadakalai' and 'Thenkalai' branches. Marriage between 'Vadakalai' and 'Thenkalai' can not take place. Such rigidity exists still today in Tamilnadu. The one who violates these customs or questions the system has to face the threat of excommunication and social boycott.
The philosophy of Fatalism dominates the mental make up of every south Indian whether he is literate or not. They believe that one has to live out his 'Karma'. As it can not be challenged one has to accept it by surrendering himself to the supreme soul. Cosmic power is greater than human will. In submission to that great power there is peace, tranquility and security. If one understands this there is no tragedy in life. By leading a life of virtue on the earth one can attain the 'moksha', and the bliss of the other world. Having immense faith in this philosophy makes a person do his duty sincerely and lead a contented life. The happiness of this world is the promise of the next world. This develops a sense of humourous outlook in life.

Life is 'leela', a play. Everyone plays his or her role under the direction of God. Everything is preordained. As such everything has to end in good. Therefore, there is no tragedy in life. Sufferings prepare a person for a better life after the death. Nothing is permanent - neither the pain nor the pleasure. Such attitudes and philosophy develop a sense of healthy optimism and humour in them. This sense of humour acts as non-antagonistic solution to all contradictions and problems of life.
Individuality loses its identity by merging itself for the greater cause of social solidarity. People in the south seek happiness in the system of living known as 'Joint Family' in which several members of a family live under the same roof. Qualities like, reverence to elder, love and sacrifice, care and share, family responsibility, etc. came automatically in everyone. As a whole individuality is discouraged for encouraging social solidarity. This immemorial custom offers a sense of security. Strict conformity is demanded for that.

R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao represent this timeless tradition and culture in their works. It is this historical sense, the perception of not only the pastness of the past but of its presence compels and guides their works. One may find the presence of all India tradition in their works. This is inevitable. At the same time none can miss the distinctive salient features of the tradition of the south in their works.

Taking Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's religious analogy of water and soil we can talk about the relation between all India tradition and local tradition - as water acquires the colour of the soil and remains the basic component of all the coloured water, inspite of the rich variations in local cultures and traditions, the
all India tradition with its Indianness remains a unifying factor. The roots of any form of literary expression, therefore, are nourished by the attitudes and behavior of the people over the years. Both R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao are orthodox south Indian Brahmins. Therefore Indianness flows quite naturally in their works with the flair and flavour of the south. C. Paul Verghese quotes Prof. McCutchion's concept of Indianness as "life attitudes" and "modes of perception" and Prof. V.K. Gokak's definition as "a composite awareness in the matter of race, milieu, language and religion — an awareness leading to tolerance and broadbased understanding...an integral awareness of the Indian heritage, not a fragmented approach to it...a simultaneous cultivation of science and spirituality, a passionate involvement in the implications of the Time Spirit as well as of Eternity" *(19) to bring out the concept of Indianness. Both Narayan and Raja Rao are intensely aware of these gifts of eternity and of their epoch, the past and the present as well as the milieu and the moment of continuity of spirituality. Their works are, therefore, neither water nor soil but a beautiful blend and amalgam of both. They are the representatives of K.M. Panikkar's culture: "the complex of ideas, conceptions, developed qualities,
organised relationships and courtesies that exist generally in a society..." and includes "a community of thought, a similarity of conduct and behavior, a common general approach to fundamental problems which arise from shared traditions and ideas. " (20)
NOTES AND REFERENCES


5. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Sources of Indian History with Special Reference to South India* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1961), p.16.


12. Based on *op.cit.*, Dr. Justice S. Maharajan.


15. See : Presidential Address delivered by Dr. S.K. Chatterjee at the All India Oriental Conference, Ahmedabad, in October, 1953.


20. Ibid., p.2.