

of merchants trading over the whole of India, the craftsmen who supplied them with goods, the new larger cities, especially those of the Maurya empire, and later the foreign conquerors. But the Maurya empire, imitated from Achaemenid-Persian and Hellenistic patterns and only held together by force, dissolved, after the death of the gentle Buddhist emperor Ashoka, once more into a loose confederation under the Sunga and Kanva emperors. Thus prevailed the nationalist counterreformation of the Brahmins, who on the one hand based themselves on the courts as court astrologers, sacrificing priests and ministers, and on the other hand organised the popular religions into a few large, theoretically monotheistic, for practical purposes polytheistic systems in which the innumerable local gods were incorporated as various forms of the supreme God, his "power" (Sakti, wife), his emanations (children), incarnations and heavenly following, and subordinated to the philosophy of cognition and love of God.

It was nevertheless to take centuries before this movement was strong enough, since the small states were an easy prey to central Asian conquerors, first (second century B. C.) the Greek satraps of Bactria (northern Afghanistan), then the Scythians (first century B. C. to second A. D.) (Cat. 103; 127), Parthians (about the time of the birth of Christ, Thomas the Apostle), the Yue-Chi (Tochari) and Kushana (first to third centuries A. D.). Meanwhile the town culture became more and more detached from its village background. Buddhism, proselytising in Afghanistan, eastern Turkistan and finally in China and Japan, became increasingly identified with Hellenism and the barbarians of central Asia. In its place the Hindu religions, Vishnuism (cult of the Heavenly King), Sivaism (cult of the Creator), Saktism (cult of the Mother God), and Surya Worship (of the sun) became respectable and won over many powerful foreigners to nationalism, the Sanscrit language of the Vedic cult became the uniform language of the Indian upper class and its literature especially the great national epics of the Mahabharata and Ramayana, became the bearers of a new national ideology.

This finally took shape in the realm of the Gupta Emperor (320 to 530/70 A. D.), the golden age of Indian culture, the classic model for all subsequent centuries. A "welfare state" embracing the whole of northern India and controlling the Deccan, tolerant, with a social and economic structure based on an even more elastic large-scale capitalism, the Gupta Empire still ultimately aspired to an aristocratic ideal, the most perfect, divinely inspired national way of life in which all foreign cultural stimuli would also

be absorbed. But under the continual attacks of new central-Asian hordes of barbarians, the "white" Huns (Hephthalites), Shulikas and Gurjaras, the Gupta Empire degenerated into a number of military states (c. 530—750 A. D.); the ravages of war, inflation and the pressure of taxes destroyed the middle class; the large cities dwindled away; the Buddhist church supported by the middle class lost its influence; the Gupta culture became submerged in the feudal traditionalism of the Middle Ages.

3. THE SOUTH: Southern India had from an early date direct relations, still inadequately explained, with Mesopotamia, Arabia, Egypt and Syria. From about 600 B. C. Brahmin and Kshatriya colonists, and later Jainas and Buddhists, pushed their way in from northern India, but had to conform to the native, originally megalithic culture. The spice trade with the Roman Empire enriched the furthest South (Tamil culture of the Samgam period, third century B. C. to third century A. D.) and promoted in the Deccan the evolution of the great Empire of the Satavahanas (third to first century B. C. until the beginning of the third century A. D.). From the fourth until the third century the Gupta culture penetrated the empires of the Vakatakas, Kadambas, Pallavas and Gangas, and in consequence, from about 600, an independent form of culture developed in the empires of the Kanci Pallavas (Conjeevaram) and Vatapi Calukyas (Badami, in the Deccan), borne by a popular reform first of Sivaism, then of Vishnuism.

4. THE HINDU MIDDLE AGES (EIGHTH TO TWELFTH CENTURY AND FOURTEENTH CENTURY): Between the eighth and tenth centuries, under the Pratihara Emperors of Kanauj and later under their former vassals, the Solanki and Vaghela, Chauhan, Paramara, Candella and Haihaya (Kalachuri) in the north, the Rashtrakuta, the later Calukya, Silahara, Hoyshala, Kakatya and Yadava in the Deccan, the Cola and Pandya in the South, the mediaeval culture of India assumed its final shape: on the one hand all splendour, power and wealth in the hands of the military aristocracy and the priests' councils at the great temples, on the other hand the poverty of the exploited peasants, and between the two a very thin layer of guilds of merchants and craftsmen. Since, however, the nobility wore out their strength in continual struggles for power, and the princes among them did likewise in jockeying for highly insecure leading positions, the influence and thus the wealth of the temples, whose favour was courted by all, grew stronger and stronger. The religious tradition, gradually extending and developing the Gupta inheritance, dominated the