THE TROUBLED IMAGE

AN ESSAY UPON MUGHAL PAINTING

By Eric Schroeder (U.S.A.)

LIVES fruitful for good in other lives, as Ananda Coomaraswamy's life has been fruitful, are often dedicated to the affirmation of generally neglected values By emphasising what is antithetical to the ephemerally prevalent they may be said to correct their times, and in a certain sense to throw the shadow of eternity into their own day For many Westerners, struck by the now unmistakable failure of our civilization to make mankind happy, Dr Coomaraswamy's has been the prophetic gesture pointing East, and his the authoritative and mordant voice affirming the existence of a Tradition, of a pattern of order more important to our well-being to-day than any scientific discovery or any international authority could possibly be And India, from whose art and thought he has drawn so many texts, has become to such Westerners a kind of Holy Land, to every station of whose historical pilgrimage a special and spiritual interest attaches

It is therefore in imitation and in gratitude that I take up the question of Mughal painting

Mughal painting[1] is to-day somewhat depreciated, not only by certain Western critics, who might be incompetent, but by many Indian writers, who generally speak of it without the patriotic enthusiasm and love which they lavish upon Ajānta or Rājput painting and upon Indian sculpture of almost all periods.

The Indian critic, as speaking from an Indian mind, speaks with authority upon these matters, and his testimony cannot lightly be set aside. And what is implicit in his judgments of XVIIth century Indian art is that Mughal painting is somehow external to the main trend of Indian culture, that it is an island in the stream, that it did not express the eternal and essential India, but something else

And yet it is Indian, painted in India by Indians and by a few Persians who once in India could not help but succumb to Indian influences We therefore wonder what is the essential India which is supposed to predominate at Ajānta and in Rājput painting but which, though it must be present, is so qualified in Mughal art that it is as it were disowned The question is a large one. But perhaps we think of India as the characteristically religious country, as the home of the oldest still current metaphysical discipline, and think of the persistent essential India of history as the most saturated with religion of the great cultures.

Man as creator, in Coellen's apparently skeptical phrase, re-presents the objective world as his own product, religion and art both being such results of his creative activity. Like religion, art puts existence as we perceive it into relation with its origin, exhibiting determinate forms given or suggested by the material universe under the light or apprehension of their indeterminate Cause. No art, therefore, of any period, is exempt from relationship with religion or metaphysics, and even the most naturalistic art projects some particular artist's sense of the Universal Ground of all being Meissonier and Gérome, for example, painted as they did paint because their deepest thought, translated into metaphysics, would have been philosophic naturalism So we need not hesitate to seek in the long consistency of the plastic forms of Indian art and the long consistency of Hinduism one underlying apprehension of the nature of the indeterminate Cause of the forms we perceive As to the character of that apprehension, it is natural to apply first to those who, claiming knowledge of the Cause, have tried to put their knowledge into words.

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Nowadays we hear a good deal about the essential identity of Eastern and Western mysticism, and much of what contemporary exponents of the Perennial Philosophy tell us in that regard is surely true But for all that, and recognizing the many texts which may be cited against me, I am aware of a certain difference between the two apprehensions The images in which Western mystics try to record their experience of God are predominantly images of a Light illuminating the soul, of Something which visits, embraces, surrounds, and even at times can desert the soul. Mysticism, says Fichte, is " far-sight " , God surrounds man, says Eckhardt, " as my cowl surrounds myself " But the Cause, the Self, the original One, it need hardly be said in the present publication, is most typically represented by Hinduism as having entered elementary bodies to quicken and fill them, the outer individuality being subject to its own inner self, which inner self *is* the original Self Roughly, simply, and too emphatically, we may say that for the West the indeterminate Cause of determinate forms surrounds, and for India It lies within. It is " that Interior Person of all beings."

At this level we may try to recover the relation between the Image in the spirit under presidency of which the artist works and the created material image which he bequeathes Actually the spiritual image is partly derived from the outer world perceived, however much such derivation is modified by intellectual factors And a comparison of the artist's work with objective nature may help us ourselves to envisage the image in the spirit of the dead maker , not that it is the function of art to imitate natural appearance, but because all well-made and meaningful works of painting and sculpture do in point of fact embody the appearances of objective nature more or less transformed.

We may consider first three figures of Yakshis from Mathura (fig 1) There is little need to expatiate on the obvious quality of these sculptures, their genial proclamation that " whatever lives is full of the Lord " Our feeling that life swells these exuberant forms from within is immediate But this is by no means all If we look more closely we are confronted with the most interesting departures from anatomical accuracy ; and *all these departures are in one direction* First, the sculptor selects for emphasis certain elements of the figure in themselves full and convex Next, in figures so very feminine it is curious that the artist has apparently not the slightest feeling for the beautiful brooding form of the shoulder and trapezius muscle which is so characteristic of women. We observe the inaccurate placing of the nipples, and the lack of any effect of gravitation on the flesh

And the waist—instead of the subtle undulations which a Greek or Renaissance sculptor would have given us, we have a plastic non-entity, on which the massive volumes of the chest and abdomen impinge. But most extraordinary of all is the form of the leg. Not only is there an absence of any modelling on the inner side of the thigh, any indication of that long graceful concavity between the extensor muscles on the front of the thigh and the adductors within which gives form to that part of the body, but below the knee the long, wide, and deep hollow between knee and calf, a concavity which is in nature almost half as long as the entire stretch from knee to ankle, is absolutely suppressed.

We are forbidden to explain these peculiarities as incompetence of eye or hand. The men who could model the convex outer surface of the thigh with such truth and eloquence that we can read the whole stance and character of the figure concentrated in that one marvellous form were not the men to miss one of the largest and most expressive shapes in the whole anatomy. No, these peculiarities, striking as they are, are far too consistent to be explained by want of capacity. Rather they seem to result from a feeling that convex volume is expressive, or " truthful," and that concave form is comparatively irrelevant. They are the direct plastic embodiment of a spiritual image metaphysical in emphasis. Their idiom speaks of a Cause hidden within the body, " within the heart as the fire is hidden within the firewood."

The Image in the spirit informed by an interior Cause could only be cast into a plastic image composed as far as possible of swelling surfaces, volumes expressive of interior power, while those parts of the natural body where external power—atmospheric pressure and gravitation—take advantage of the intermittent musculature to create hollows, those parts are not rendered. For the artist they are not true to the ultimate Reality which gives form to all things; and therefore his meditation eliminates them.

A thousand years later, the same apprehension of reality underlies the famous South Indian bronze (fig. 2) of a Śaiva boy-saint, in some ways far more subtly. The smooth unhollowed cheek, the transformation of the eye-socket, bringing the eye into the same plane as the brow and practically eliminating the whole concavity, the almost complete stylization of the legs which substitutes a conical form for the natural shape which could never be rendered in detail without exploiting its concavities: all these are representations of the same Image.

But it is more delicately embodied. Although the torso is composed exclusively of intersecting volumes, the intersections are so smoothed that even if we identify the rounded cylindrical surface which runs up the front of the body as a " falsification " of the divided flattish mass which lies on the natural body, even so the most pedantic eye could hardly be offended. The body of the statue is convincing; almost it persuades us that a human body could be like that.

The greatest arts are generally thus persuasive. Unnatural, " impossible " as they are, something in us affirms that somewhere, sometime, the Mother of God in the apse of S. Sophia and Greco's Saint Andrew have been, are, or shall be. Such creations are creatures transfigured, not de-natured.

But the transformation of nature is very various. For a moment we may consider how European art, in the fulness of its expressive power, treats a subject not unlike that of the Mathura sculptures (fig. 3). For all the bulk and opulence of the form, for all the conscious opposition of its unified mass to the shadows behind, there is no mistaking the quality of Bernini's image. The muscles of the neck, the breasts, the flank and abdomen, the groin, all confess their function , it is to draw shadow across even a form whose broad illumination is the verbal content of the design—the Discovery of Truth by Time It is in the hollows under the shoulder and at the waist that the anatomy becomes most tender And in the drapery, where creative will was free, we realize that the whole was designed primarily in shadows, and cut to yield a poetry of darkness. The flow and radiation of the shadows is more vividly felt than the disposition of the lights Perhaps the difference between this and the Mathura sculptures can be summarily understood by imagining drawings upon tinted paper An expressive drawing of Bernini's work could be made with black chalk alone , an expressive drawing of the Indian figures could be made with white alone Bernini's figure is anatomically very rich. But the anatomy is much more arbitrary than it is easy for Westerners to realize For instance, in the foot which rests upon the globe, the shadows of the ankle and sole-edge are very beautiful in their rhythmic relationship with the little drapery below, but they are not anatomically correct The painting of Rembrandt or Greco declares even more unmistakably the reality of irresistible exterior power, calling form out of darkness and re-subjecting it to darkness The lights, feverish and brief or broad and qualified, the urgent shadows, creation and destruction enveloping the form and working upon it from without, how absolutely they are expressed in a language of hollows, as if only concave form was " truthful "

Painting and sculpture, of course, are two very different techniques But both own always a common master, the spirit itself What is generally termed classical Indian painting is known in the murals of the Ajānta caves Such a painting as the Riding of the Boddhisatva is too well-known to need reproduction , but it is significant that the same principles of composition the organization of the whole in compartments, the grouping of figures which fill these compartments with the unity of a curious introspective attention, the all-pervading lateral and diagonal rhythms which pass like waves from compartment to compartment over the whole painting, and, we are made to feel, beyond it—all these pictorial methods reappear in a Mughal manuscript-illumination painted a thousand years later, in which we see Humayun watching some dancing women (reproduced by F R Martin, *Miniature Painting* , Vol II, pl 183) It is the more interesting to see the same world come to life again because of this complete form no intermediate mural or illumination which has survived gives promise

But since I do not think that analysis of pictorial composition can help us to see the true character of Mughal painting so well as an understanding of the painter's relation to the natural world which supplies his art with forms for the embodiment of his ideas, we turn to a single painted figure from Ajānta

To us the linear beauty of such a figure as the offerer of the lotus (fig 4) is so bewitching that we notice only secondarily its plastic character. And yet its technique, the careful building of the form in gradated tones, is, within the outline, distinctly plastic The protuberance of the brow, the prominences around the eye-socket, the pressure of the eyeball through the heavy lid, and even the climbing of the long elevator muscle of the cheek, all these are so classically felt and so well rendered that we do not notice how comparatively inexpressive is the anatomy of the upper arm, for instance, its two concavities of contour being eliminated

In the painting of the striped garment about the hips we must consider something other than the plastic technique . the two-dimensional nature of painting The Ajānta artist dealing with this striped cloth summarizes it, with a simplicity which in comparison with his labours on the modelling of the body seems at first sight to be indifferent to the bulk beneath. But although the garment looks comparatively flat (and calculatedly so), the painter has given rotundity to the form of the hip by curving the stripes upward at the edge. Curiously enough, however, the middle stripes, unlike those above and below them, run almost uncurved as far as the outline Now these middle stripes run out to the point of the trochanter, the bulkiest part of the body , and we see, lurking within the classic moderation of the drawing, a principle or feeling that volume can be rendered on the flat surface by lateral thrust, by expansion And the relation between Indian sculpture and Indian painting can be summarily grasped in this figure the same feeling for volume informed from within results in a sculpture of convex surfaces and in a painting of sidewise movement and expansion. What swells the sculpture distends the silhouette, or " displaces " its parts (such displacement of course is in no sense erroneous, but a purposeful expressive means) Hence in this figure the rendering of a self-contained intensity of gesture, the expression of devotion, by a contraposto far more extreme than could readily be found in contemporary sculpture , this is the *graphic* language, to us almost violent in so masterly a work, of the essential introspective India

At the time when Akbar created the Mughal Empire in the latter XVIth century, painting in more than one style was being produced in Central and Western India Dr Kramrisch and Professor Norman Brown have published interesting examples of the mural and miniature art of the preceding age, and indicated the variety of traditions represented But one condition is common to Deccani painting, Jain painting, and the strongly coloured and crude style which has been called early Rājput, alike In all the predominance of the decorative over the significant is complete Nothing could be more admirable as ornamental pattern than Jain painting , no colour could be richer nor harmony of scale more confident and absolute than that of the best early Ragmala paintings But formal imagination (*sādrśya*) is to seek King, minister and dancer have the same face, the same quality of gesture An ascetic, a musical, or a pastoral scene are distinguished by iconographic accessory only, not by mood or flavour (*rasa*) Serenity of repetition, unembarrassed decorativeness of formula, these are marks of folk-painting , and of Indian painting when Akbar ascended the throne

Such work could never satisfy a cultivated Timurid prince Nor can we say that his instinct was unsound. In Jain painting, for example, the old compartment-composition has reached a rigid and inorganic end-state And that two-dimensional transmutation of the feeling for volume which we have called lateral expansion has also reached a dead end here . there are (fig 5) too many unthinking approximations to circular curves Skilful as it is, XVIth century Jain painting is perfunctory as well as monotonous , unintended intersections of line, for example, are the unmistakable result of carelessness The thing was not worth making well even to the man who made it But in an artist carelessness is sin Such an art may be truly called degenerate it is fallen from its own proper high estate Its formulae are deployed without love And it is not only far from nature it is, I hazard, far from God.

We recall Coellen's proposition that man as creator re-presents the objective world as his own product But art " imitates Nature (*Natura naturans*, God) in her mode of working " The re-presentation of the objective world which art is will therefore ideally partake of the nature of the original and eternal Creation, and the most noble arts will re-enact that Creation in the most Godlike or " natural " manner

Creative nature, of course, exemplifies infinite order, and we applaud the scholastic definition of beauty as " the sheen of order." According to an admirable modern working definition, the aesthetic value of works of art depends on the quantity and perfection of emotionally appreciable order in them

Now, though order is infinite in nature, variety is only less than infinite, and I suggest that art most highly imitates nature's mode of working when the artist embodies in his work as much variety as can still be felt to be entirely instinct with order If this suggestion is any novelty, it is perhaps because the great men to whom we owe the clearest thinking on these questions have themselves been preoccupied with the reduction of art's variety to order Cosmic creation works otherwise, reducing unity, which is order absolute, to variety *He wanted every form for He wanted to show Himself* And it was the law of creative variety which condemned old Indian painting in its XVIth century form to a most drastic change—almost to extinction.

For the very India which had uttered it now felt that this art was no longer a representation of reality but a travesty of it No sooner had Rajasthan and Gujarat seen Mughal painting than these hallowed formulae fell into absolute disuse, and the ancient concepts only re-emerge after an assimilation of certain elements of Mughal technique It is a remarkable moment in history the orderly simplicity of the spiritual Image was suddenly troubled by some gust of neglected Reality The sight of imported Persian or European paintings was not the inner cause of the change, it merely helped it We know that Akbar took Persians, Uzbeks, Qalmaqs, Arabs, and Hindus into his academy at Fathpur Sikri He noticed, we are told, that the Hindus were the most promising Abu'l-Fazl's enigmatic phrase " the Hindus did not paint their subjects on the page of the imagination " ought surely to be taken in its simplest meaning the Hindus were truer to objective fact than their colleagues And it was as variety of *fact* that variety, that essential motive in creation, re-entered the Indian spirit

It has sometimes been assumed that because Mughal painting was an art of comparative or apparent naturalism it was spiritually superficial, preoccupied with matters which Indian art was normally too metaphysical to care about But there is " a time to every purpose under the heaven," and it is the precise value of history as a spiritual discipline that it offers the opportunity for selfless contemplation of various manifestation in time *Non semper tendit arcem Apollo.* If India in Akbar's time appears to us less Indian than usual, then we are invited to correct our notion of India

Historians have noted the abrupt surcease of new sectarian formations in the XVIth century Analogy should warn us against interpreting the change as a symptom of spiritual degeneracy, in the United States, for example, extreme richness of sectarian crystallization has coincided with a comprehensive, dynamic, and sincere materialism

Fortunately, there is extant a remarkable description of religious India in Mughal times—Mohsan Fani's *Dabistan* Although that book describes many dogmas which are more fully known to us in more ancient sources, its description of the XVIIth century exposition of those dogmas is first-hand, and we may say that the work enables us to *know* the religious life of the times, as it appeared to a much-travelled observer whose own sympathy with the philosophic cast of Hinduism at its best was profound It seems symbolic that Mohsan, himself a Sufi, was also " godson " to the great Hindu saint Chadrup Along with the variety of religious formulation which the author remarks as characteristic of Hinduism, he allows us to make out an element of exchange, of amalgamation as well as argument, a mutual curiosity among the sects, and in certain cases an evident disbelief in the exclusiveness of creeds " The tribes of mankind, high and low, with the existing diversity of creeds and difference of customs, which are all under the trust of a beneficent Lord, ought to dwell in the shade of the protection of a just king, and persevere in the performance of their own worship, and the exigencies of their devotion " is Mohsan's interpretation of the Code of Akbar two generations after its promulgation The Hindu saint Pertabmal " is not confined to any faith, he knows that every faith is a road that leads to God " And a Brahmin, questioned because he was eating and drinking with Musulmans, answers " God forbid you should be (mere) Musulmans." Of the characteristic Vaishnavism of the age he observes " Whoever, Hindu, Musulman, or other, wishes is received into their (Viraga) religion , none are rejected On the contrary, all are invited." In spite of Brahmin exclusiveness, and of sectarian brawling on the vulgar level, we have an impression of mingling and discussion, of comparison and fusion of truths, of the charitable tolerance of variety, of an organic and general religiousness It is the spirit of *love* which the book enables us to discern moving in Indian life of the XVIIth century Vaishnavism was then widely diffused and fervent , and " by Viśnu is meant God's attribute of divine love, as well as the universal soul "

" Show love to all creatures and thou shalt have bliss, for when thou lovest all things thou lovest the Lord, for He is All in all " was the *bhakti* of Tulsi Das, one of the master spirits of that age It is the discipline of the Mahayana as distinct from that of the Hinayana Such testimony should be the more precious in India for being exceptional In Śri Aurobindo's words, " It may be said that the supraphysical can only be really mastered in its fullness—to its heights we can always reach—when we keep our feet firmly on the physical *Earth is His footstool*, says the Upanishad " And as Aldous Huxley, commenting upon this passage, writes, " to discover the Kingdom of God exclusively within oneself is easier than to discover it, not only there, but also in the outer world of minds and things and living creatures " He adds this pertinent criticism from the *Lankavatara Sutra* " the Śravakas and the Pratyekabuddhas fail to realize that the visible world is nothing but the Mind , they are still in the realm of individuation The Boddhisatvas know that the visible world is nothing but a manifestation of Mind itself "

Such knowledge, and such knowledge alone, can explain the infinite variety of carefulness which we see in the best early Mughal art The masterpieces of portraiture, the unequalled representations of the animal world, could never be made, as any painter knows, except in self-forgetting love And we shall probably be wise as well as charitable to believe that such spirituality goes beyond pantheism, when India is its theatre. It was surely for India that Akbar spoke when he said " It always seems to me that a painter has very special means of recognizing God, for when he draws a living thing, and contemplates the thing in detail, he is driven to thinking of God, Who creates the life which he cannot give *his* work, and learns to understand God better " It is not necessary to press this point the power of Mughal portraiture is only too well recognized, although it has been ill explained as the fruit of a wholly secular mentality We should remember that it was in no secular but in the most solemnly religious and transcendental spirit that Milton longed in his blindness for the sight of

> Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn,
> Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
> Or flocks or herds, or human face divine

Devout vision of the world of divine extension produces an art far other than the art of ages dominated by theology, but that the art of the great Mughal portraitists and animal painters, like the art of Rembrandt, is not " religious " is a conclusion based on slight experience of the actual practice of painting

Such work is intensely sacrificial, no mode requires a completer degree of devotedness, a more intense emptying of self in the work, a more " mortified " attention to reality That reality is God unformulated, wholly free of theological canon But the actual relation of theology to spirituality is historically various " Who beholds Me formulates it not," says one of the greatest Muslim saints, " and whoso formulates Me beholds Me not A man who beholds and then formulates is veiled from Me by the formulation " This is perhaps the original sin of theology, but there have been others Theologians have often succeeded in subjecting painters to their own (sometimes ambitious) ends, but " any meddling of one class with another " as Plato says, " may be most justly termed evil-doing " By and large, it is the serious painter who knows what and how he should paint *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, not the theologian The hostility of the theologians to Michelangelo's " Last Judgment " is a case very much in point, but at least the Pope, touched by a grace to which the canonists were apparently impermeable, was of the painter's party when at the unveiling he broke spontaneously into prayer " Lord, charge me not with my sins when thou shalt come on the Day of Judgment."

That Asiatic art has in many ages been more docile to theology than was Mughal art, and that it has generally proceeded in a more narrowly intellectualizing mode, is very generally known Dr Coomaraswamy has demonstrated the existence of an Asiatic *Summa Theologica* in which the theory of that mode is subsumed under a dogmatic Tradition envisaging the totality of social and spiritual life The importance of *pramāna* " the norm of properly conceived design," to such painting or sculpture is paramount But Dr Coomaraswamy has also indicated the existence of an art " typically developed throughout Asia in the second millennium" in which "no distinction is felt between what a thing ' is ' and what it ' signifies ' " It is to this broad category that Mughal painting constitutes India's chief contribution, for India's " vision of the Abstract-Universal " as Mr Okakura calls it remained as a preoccupation during the centuries when the Far East was producing the art of Sung Iconoclastic unitarianism in the Muslim states may not have done more to impoverish artistic procedures than the overpowering effect of a complete stylization and a vast canonical corpus in the Hindu states Neither painting nor sculpture can live at their best except in fairly direct communion with the visual world, either in the ardent incorporation of natural beauty and variety or, when such assimilation has been accomplished by a great tradition, in the interval devoted to the *perfecting* of a style The subsequent *perpetuation* of it can only lead to senescence Habit, as Scott said, is a form of death

Happily, no senescence is ever final At rhythmic intervals the human spirit reaches out again in love to this goodly frame the earth, this brave o'erhanging firmament, and man, the beauty of the world Dr Coomaraswamy has called attention to a wonderful passage in the Mahabharata · " When the body-dweller, controlling the powers of the soul that seize upon what is their own in sounds and the rest, *glows*, then he sees the Spirit (*ātman*) extended in the world, and the world in the Spirit " It would be hard to find a more accurate description than this of those moments in history when Beauty seems to be absolute as a determinant, for only so can we explain Greek art of the early Vth century B C, and Persian or European art of the early XVIth century

PLATE XV

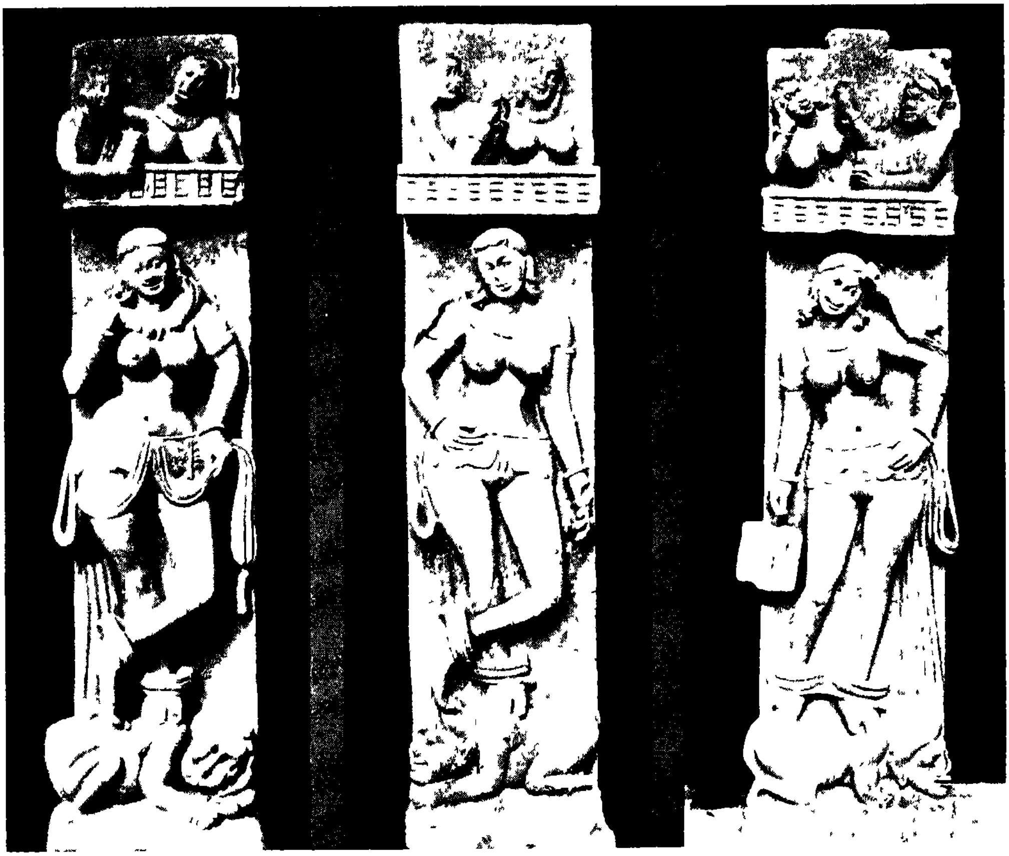

FIG. 1 YAKSHIS, FROM MATHURA

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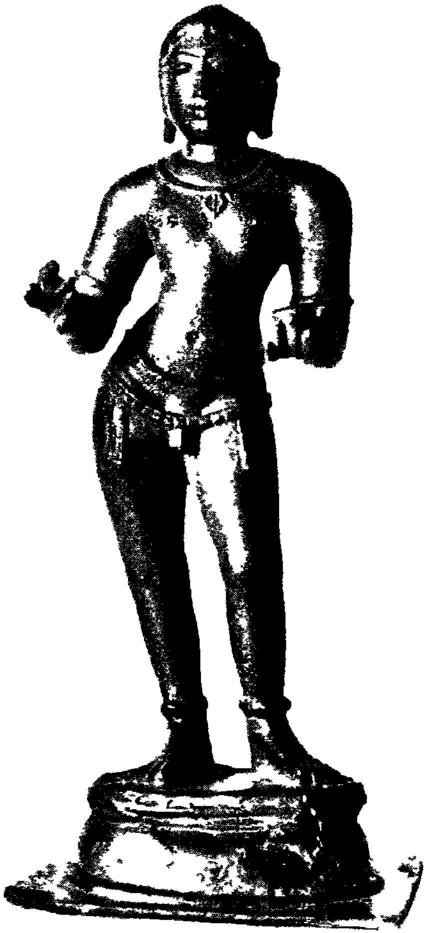

FIG. 2—TIRU JNANA SAMBANDHA SWAMI
(Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) South India
Ca XIV Century

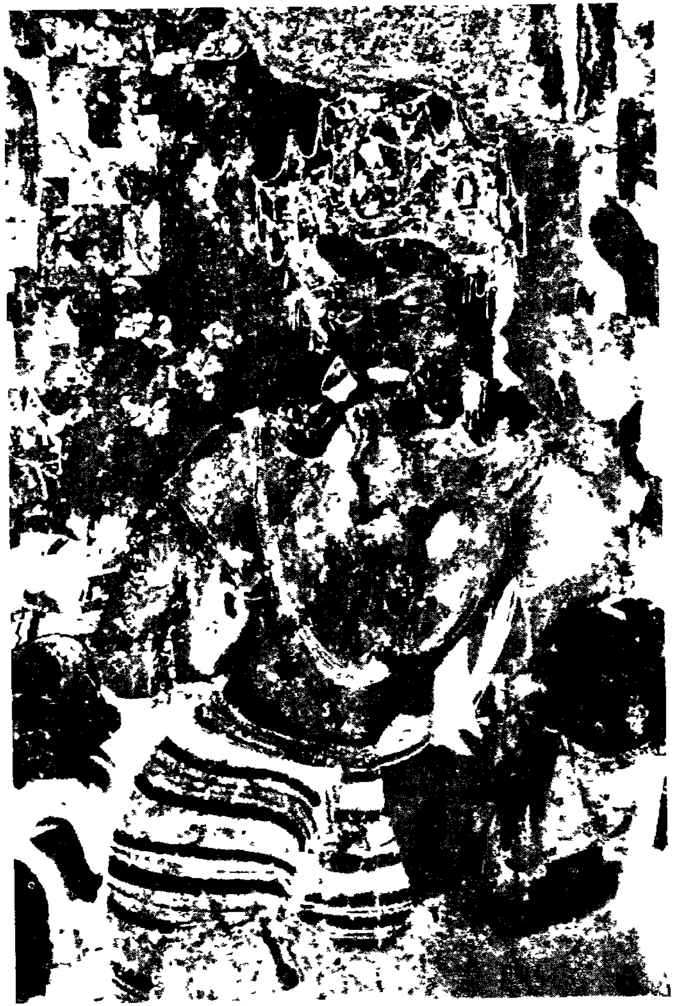

FIG. 3 LOTUS-OFFERER AJANTA

PLATE XVII

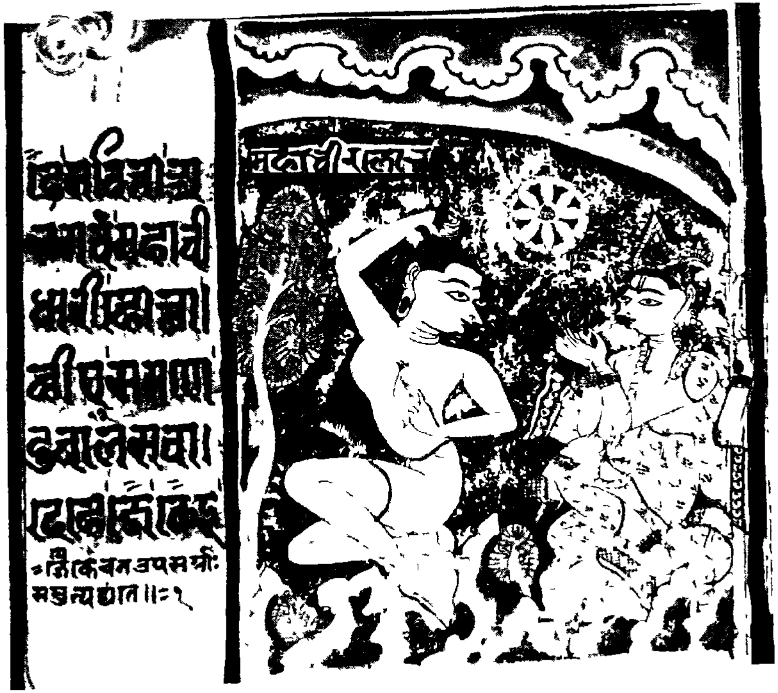

FIG. 4—KALPA SUTRA Miniature (Jain)

Museum of Fine Arts Boston

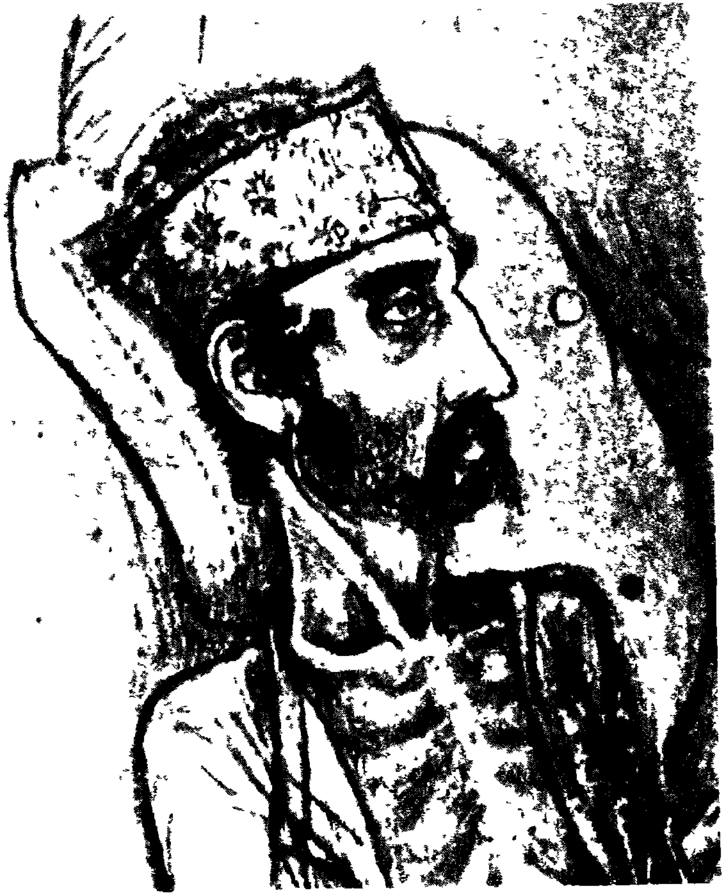

FIG 5—DEATH OF INAYAT KHAN. DETAIL GREATLY ENLARGED

MUGHAL 1628 A.D.

Museum of Fine Arts Boston

PLATE XVIII

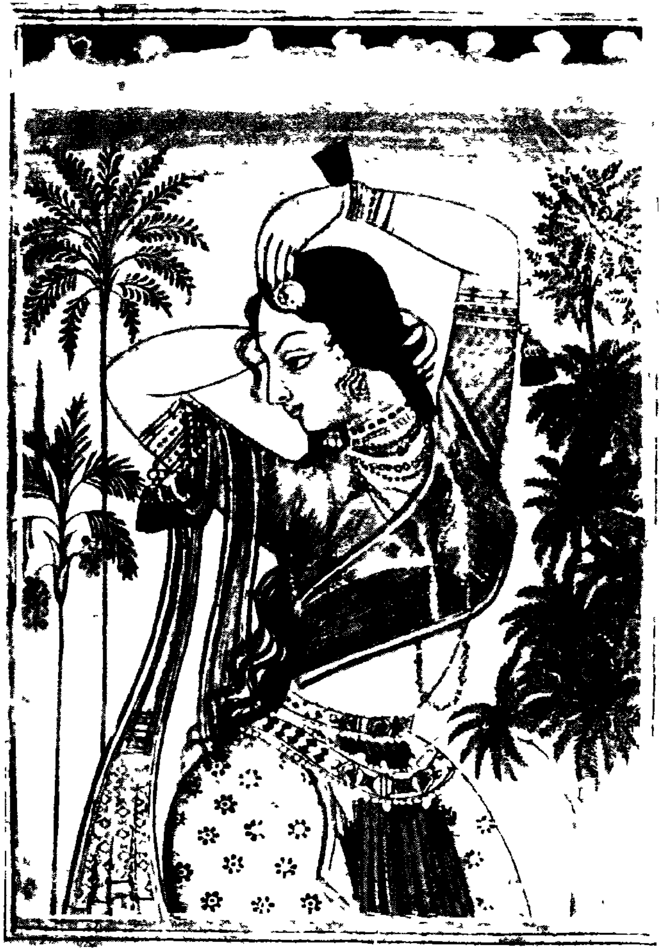

Fig. 6.—Woman with Fruiting Trees
Mughal XVIIth Century
Author's Collection Cambridge Mass

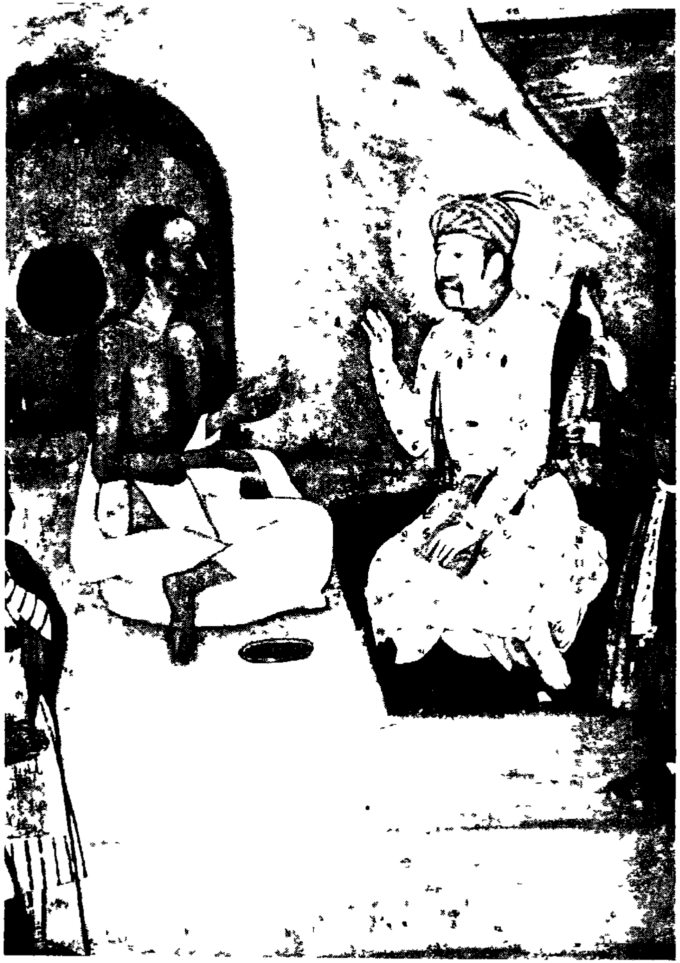

Fig. 5 Akbar and Chadrup (Detail),
Mughal Early XVIIth Century
Fogg Museum Cambridge Mass

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PLATE XIX

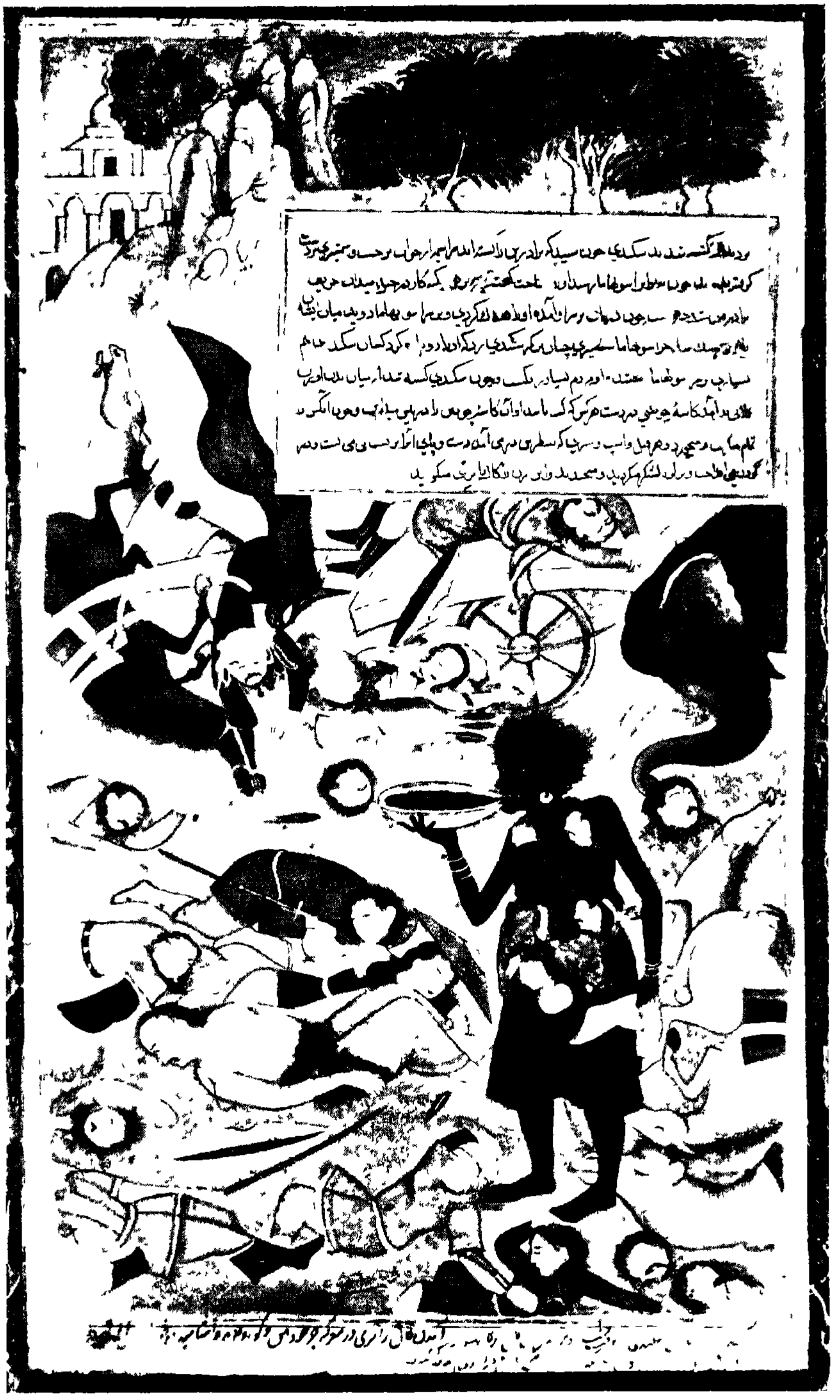

FIG. 7 KALI-DURGA VISITS THE PANDAVA CAMP
Miniature from a Razmnama MS Mughal, Ca 1580-1590
Author's Collection, Cambridge, Mass

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PLATE XX

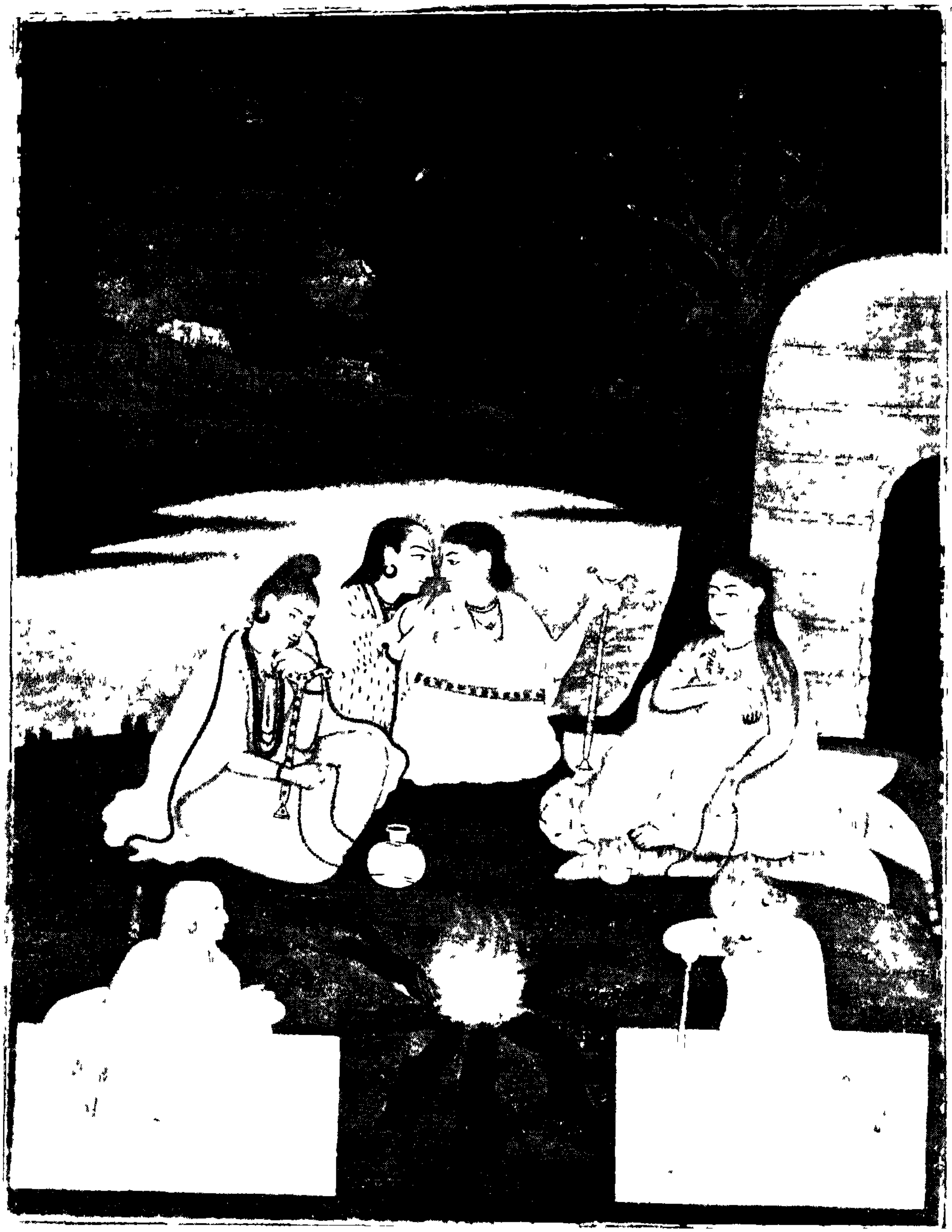

FIG. 9. A NOCTURNAL GATHERING OF ASCETICS. MUGHAL, LATE XVIIITH CENTURY

Collection: Mrs. Eric Schroeder, Cambridge, Mass.

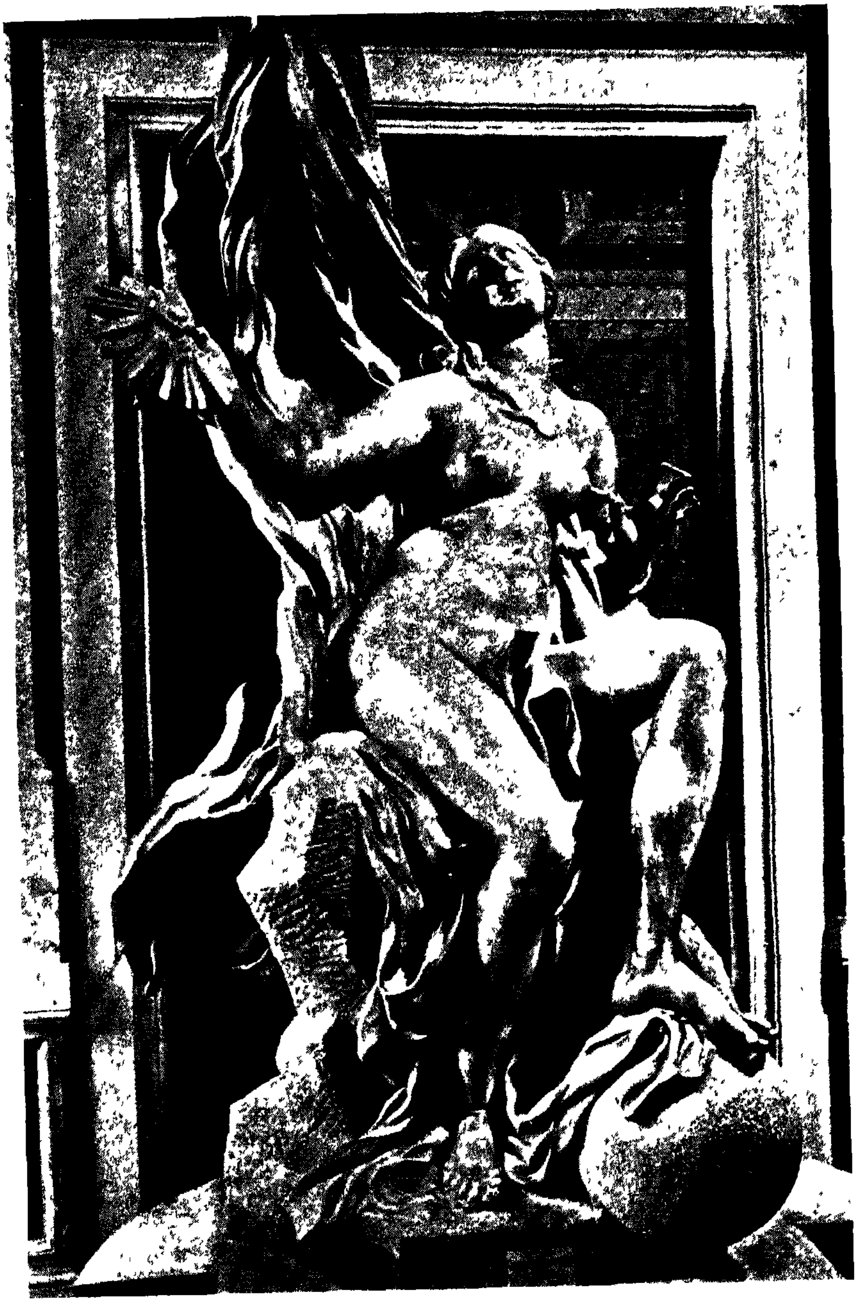

Fig. 10 Troubled Image-Schoreder

Statue of Truth Discovered by Time (Rome) by Bernini

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These so-called " classical " periods appear to find issue in dark historical processes which may perhaps be as well understood by reference to the Primal Myth as by any other means To the blissful vision of the utter extension of God succeeds a moment of horror the utter *division* is apparent There is little use, I believe, in searching political or economic history for the causes of that strange spasm which troubled so many cultures in the late XVIth century We can only say that something then seemed to shake men's minds In Italy appeared Caravaggio, not, as he is so often called, a "realist"—God save the mark !—but the first Western painter of human loneliness, of the concrete, blemished, desperate soul in the blackness of its isolation in England the Tragedy of Blood and the Shakespearean Wheel of Fire , in Persia, for the first and only time so far as extant paintings testify, the representation of evil

Now in India the classical or beauty-dominated period is not so easily defined. For the southern Hindu states the reign of Krishna Deva Raya of Vijayanagar may serve as focus But it seems as if the classical period had been " postponed " in central and northern India, so that the celebration of worldly beauty which had to be was carried over into the darker age of tragic individuation which runs from Akbar's time to Shah Jahan's, precisely contemporary with the corresponding age, from Titian to Rembrandt in painting, in Europe For the similar troubling of the cultural image in India is unmistakable, there is a sudden and partial tincture of materialism in the normal theism of the land, expressed externally in certain aspects of Mughal imperialism and artistically in the acute hunger for fact as such of the Indian painters who went to work for the Emperors

In such a drawing as the " Death of Inayat Khan " (fig 6) the unreserved and unshrinking pity, the fearless love even of most terrible fact with which it was painted, seem almost superhuman, like the compassion of Rembrandt's " Slaughter-House " in the Glasgow Art Gallery These triumphs of pity over horror are among the greatest human achievements , if Boddhisatvas were painters, so might they paint

Portraiture (the revelation of divine order in the face as character and destiny have left it) and drama (the reconstruction of order in the variety of individualised wills), such are the most characteristic activities of the soul looking homeward toward God in these periods In the literature of India, its great monument is the so-called Rāmāyana of Tulsi Das, whose " phrases have passed into the common speech and are used by everyone (even in Urdu) without consciousness of their origin " as his translator writes, " and whose doctrine actually forms the most powerful religious influence in present-day Hinduism No one can read it (the Rāmāyana) in the original without being impressed by it as the work of a great genius Its style varies with each subject There is the deep pathos of the scene in which is described Rama's farewell to his mother , the rugged language depicting the horrors of the battlefield—a torrent of harsh sounds dashing against each other and reverberating from phrase to phrase , and, as occasion requires, a sententious aphoristic method of narrative teeming with similes drawn from nature herself, and not from the traditions of the schools His characters, too, live and move with all the dignity of an heroic age Each is a real being with a well defined personality as lifelike and distinct as any in occidental literature "

This, and precisely, is the spirit of Mughal painting , and it fulfils with curious exactness an older Indian ideal Very interesting texts translated by Mr Raghavan from the Nārada Silpa Śāstra lay it down that the proper function of picture-galleries shall be to give joy to the eye, their use being proper to the relaxation of the afternoon The proper subjects for such galleries are depictions of " Devas, Gandharvas, Yakshas, and others , in some places great sages , in other places great kings hunting and doing similar things , and forms of brave warriors in action with weapons, showing their strength, and taming wild beasts, etc . depiction of theatrical entertainers, of fighters, of various subjects and of various animals elsewhere horse-pictures, elephants, winged elephants, elephants with mahuts, or hobbled, or playing, or snared, or lying down " The king himself should paint " paintings human and divine (in theme), paintings of birds and wonderful forms of varied nature, rivers, mountains , all these various kinds according to his inventive skill and methodically "

The ancient list reads like a summarized iconography of Mughal manuscript and album painting It suggests an encyclopedic art , and although it is of course in its specification of Devas and so forth Hindu in character (historically it could hardly be otherwise), it indicates an old Indian concept of art's function absolutely different from that of the theologians who went so far as to say that " images of the angels are productive of good, and heavenward-leading, but those of men or other mortal beings lead not to heaven nor work weal " (Śukranītisāra) Since Mughal painting is not definitely Hindu, it may be worth while to consider one or two Mughal works embodying ideas markedly Hindu or old Indian

No clearer example could be found than an album-painting done in the middle XVIIth century, mounted on a leaf the verso of which bears a calligraphic exercise by Khwaja Muhammad Futuh (fig 7) The female figure with arms raised over her head is simply the same girl associated with fruiting trees which has appeared upon innumerable Buddhist and Hindu shrines, the iconography of which is well known from the writings of Dr Coomaraswamy, the late Dr Cohn-Wiener, and others She is a " Yakshi " Here in a Mughal album the eternal India finds characteristic utterance , this drawing is perhaps closer to the sculpture of Mathura and Konarak than anything in Rājput painting. It is particularly interesting as evidence of the rapidity with which, after no more than two or three generations, painters of middle Mughal times had relapsed into the Indian norm of vision The hands are already highly stylized and the anatomy in general is that of the Mathura Yakshis which we began by considering The hips are rounded with a line which exemplifies what we termed " lateral expansion " at its most uninhibited The contrast with works of great intellectual tension such as the " Death of Inayat Khan " or the marvellous drawing of an elephant in the Boston Museum is very marked, for in those somewhat earlier masterpieces the Indian normal predisposition to render form in convex shapes is almost entirely suspended , the concept follows devoutly and strenuously upon the real natural form

An illustration (fig 8) for the Razmnama (the Persian version of the Mahabharata made for Akbar, copies of which his nobles were urged to have made) represents the Devi, Kali in terrible form, visiting the camp of the Pandavas, tearing their flesh and drinking their blood Nothing could be more complete than the incorporation here of meaning in form, the " correspondence of mental and sensational factors in the work " as Dr Coomaraswamy has translated *sādrśya*, that " essential to the very substance of painting " (Viśnudharmottara) The dreadful figure which dominates the scene by its size and the energy of its gesture and expression, or " flavour " (*rasa*), is painted in the blue-black of the goddess's iconographic norm But so much darker and colder is the hue than those of the landscape or the dead bodies, that as the eye travels among the gruesome details of the slaughter it is only aware of something indeterminate and disturbing in the place where Kali stands The devi can be clearly made out only when she is directly examined well-distributed strong yellows in costumes and harness prevent her being perceived with normal clarity in peripheral vision The device is mainly colouristic, and monotone reproduction neutralizes it , but by it the artist accomplishes the extraordinary feat of making us feel that the bright scene is permeated by an *unseen* presence, which can yet be seen, in all the precision of a complete visualization, as soon as we turn our attention to it exclusively A blackish grey, and various dark and middle-value blues in the costumes, are sufficiently close to Kali's hue to show that she has been deliberately coloured with a tone from another and unrelated key her colour is that of *another world*

Her features, which include the third eye of Śiva, are alight with remorseless joy and avidity, and yet are typically and strongly ascetic in cast some resemblance to a famous ascetic of Akbar's time who served as " model " for Vasishta in the Beatty Jog Bahisht may be traced in them The contrast between her absolute and terrible liveliness and the absolute and terrible deathliness of the corpses reveals an intellectuality of conception to which the naturalism of the execution serves merely as proper ornament " He understands painting who can represent the dead without vital movement" (Viśnudharmottara) By this venerable criterion, Mughal art meets a standard set by the vanished monuments of former flowerings of Indian painting, a standard of which most traditional Indian work falls short

There are certain evidences of remarkable formal imagination in the miniature The chaos of death tumbling to Kali's feet and the swirling forms in her wake are such, but perhaps most admirable of all is the dreary flapping of the red banner in the silence, and the rhythmic emphasis its folds convey to the head and neck of the dead horse and the carcase hanging from the shaft below We are reminded of the description Somadeva wrote five hundred years previously of a village temple to this same devi, Kali-Durga , " terrible with a long waving banner of red silk like the tongue of Death hungering to devour the lives of creatures "

The intensity and completeness of realization in this work is no accident Kali-Durga in this special aspect as waster of camps was an object of formulated belief at this period " When a hostile army comes to attack them," writes Mohsan Fani à propos of the people of Bister, " they believe that the divinity (Durga-Maveli), in the form of a woman selling vegetables, goes into the enemy camp , and whoever eats what she offers dies , and by night she comes in the form of a prostitute, and whoever is attracted and calls her meets death They tell many strange and wonderful things of her When in 1658–9 Tavalji Khan Beg besieged the fort of Kot Bahar, there died so many men and animals that their number exceeds all computation , this they attribute to the goddess's power "

These two examples enable us to turn with a deeper feeling for the content of Mughal painting to consider its handling of a commoner theme the visit of a king or prince to a saint The subject is invaluable as an accurate gauge for the seriousness of a work of art, since it is a practically universal theme of Asiatic thought, and type of the relationship of spiritual and temporal power. Even in the Islamic world the Indian personalities of King Dabshalim and the Sage Pilpay are normal Mughal painting very frequently represents the theme as the visit of Akbar or some other prince to some actual ascetic An example in the Fogg Museum of Harvard (fig 9) shows Akbar as an old man with the famous Dandahari Sannyasi Chadrūp The visit took place early in 1601 At this time the Sannyasis believed explicitly in the possibility of the incarnation of Narayan, the " majesty without tincture " as Mohsan translates the term, in human form, Datāteri having been such an incarnation We should therefore judge this particular work of art according to the success or vividness with which the relevant concepts, themselves very serious, are embodied in the painting It is immediately evident, as we contemplate the royal and the saintly figures, that we are in the presence of one of the most significant representations of the ancient theme which Asia has ever produced The two faces furnish all we could ask in the way of aid to the realization in our own minds not only of the ideal relation between sanctity and royalty but also of the nature of worldly attachment The saint, upright in pose—a " qutb "—reproduces physiognomically the complete elimination of emotion in knowledge , there is a kind of Alpine remoteness in his aspect which is almost chilling Akbar leans forward slightly, disturbed by eagerness , his face is intelligently quick and discursive , but its fussy dignity is momentarily troubled by an uncertainty which persuades us that any habitual complacency would have been fatuous He looks like a man on the defensive, trying in the presence of Truth to establish his self-respect by " making his point " It is no doubt significant that when Akbar paid this visit he was on his way back to the capital from the least edifying of his public achievements, the capture by treachery of Asirgarh Indian statecraft, not only in practice but in the Brahmin Kautilya's monumental treatise, has condoned such measures But neither in India, as Bana's condemnation of Kautilya shows, nor elsewhere has the general moral character of man ever been actually de-moralized by metaphysicians The saint may be beyond good and evil, but only the saint is so Only the purely good in fact (in the sense in which for Aristotle goodness was prior to being) may well do as they like Though Akbar could quote good canonical authority to justify an evil deed, it is not probable that so wise a man was much deceived as to the essentially hypocritical character of its authors Ambition, like avarice and lust, may quote scripture in excellent Sanskrit , but it will wince in the presence of Angiras

Both faces are benevolent, but the saintly benevolence is that of pure dispassionate attention, while the royal is that of an intermittent though usual kindliness

It is to be remarked that in this miniature, which is Mughal painting at its greatest, the artist has transcended all relaxed habit there is hardly a trace, in this consummate handling, of the usual Indian convexity of shape The painter was truly but not merely Indian , he has achieved universality even in the character of his forms, just as the sculptors of the noblest work at Elephanta and Elura, and the master who carved the Bhagiratha at Mamallapuram, also transcended the habitual convexity of rendering they had inherited

If we compare with this any of the numerous Jain miniatures representing the King and Ascetic theme, it is unmistakable that the Jain miniature, however " decorative," is comparatively unmeaning , the principal difference between one figure and the other being that the king wears crown and necklace and the holy man does not *Cucullus non facit monachum* If we are to seek in Indian for the embodiment in works of the typically Indian inward and spiritual religiousness, Mughal painting will be found to be comparable in seriousness with the Gupta painting of Ajānta and with that alone In much of the more canonical and iconographically conventional art of India, for all the beauty of what Dr Coomaraswamy has called " its aesthetic surfaces," intellection too often gives way to habit , we cannot avoid the conclusion that the artist is neither copying an internal model nor transforming natural appearance, but is merely reproducing the outward shape of a previous image Such an icon is not, in Dr. Coomar-aswarmy's words, a proper " support of contemplation ", it is, in its unthinking repetitiveness, an appropriate support of mumbo-jumbo

It reinforces the adjustment of our views upon Mughal painting to reflect that Hinduism at its best in the XVIIth century was also in reaction against the traditional iconography of its mediaeval past No only in doctrine such as that of the early Sikh Gurus, but in the material " iconography " of the great temples to Viśnu raised by the influence of the gosains in Mughal times at Brindaban, devotion has almost eliminated imagery It was at this, the highest, level that " Muslim " and " Hindu " came to so close an understanding in that great age Jahangir speaks of " the science of the Vedanta, *which is* the science of Sufism " In his rebuke to the Vaishnava pandits " If what you mean (by the ten incarnations of Viśnu) is the manifestation of the Divine Light in these bodies, that Light Itself is existent equally in all created things ", and in their final reply, at the end of a long discussion " As our imagination fails to conceive a formless personality, we do not find any way to know Him without the aid of a form We have therefore made these ten forms the means of conceiving and knowing Him," we see two intellectualities sharply distinguished, but it is the Emperor, and not the pandits, who appears as the " Comprehensor " of the ancient texts The humility of Jahangir's relationship with Chadrup is in marked contrast with his contempt for sectarian superstition, we may see in him as in Akbar the "classic" type of truth-seeking Indian king

Akbar, moreover, one of the few kings in history known to have been visited by mystic illumination, was thereafter, if not before, unbound from any exclusiveness of creed He was not a Muslim His saying " Divine worship in monarchs consists in their justice and good administration," as an equation of Sacrifice and Works, might if translated into Sanskrit be flawlessly interpolated into the Bhagavad Gita

It is unnecessary to say more The arts which Mughal patronage elicited from the inexhaustible reservoir of Indian craftsmanship exhibit Indian art at its best as Akbar and, to a less degree, Jahangir exhibit Indian kingship at its best Mughal art is no more " Muhammadan " than Akbar was a " Muhammadan " It is only as narrow sectarians, of the type which Akbar and the saints alike contemn, that we can make any attempt to segregate the achievements of Mughal art from the main stream of Indian culture Those XVIth and XVIIth century manuscripts and albums are the Ajānta of our millennium, and their delight is, like Ajānta's, in the beauty of the visible world at the noblest heightening of personality. The kingliness of kings and the humbleness of the poor, the wisdom of the wise and the fever of the gambler, and always the serenity of the " family of Nirvana ", all the difference between ape and elephant and the unity of the vital spirit in both—such things can only be painted when art is at its most athletic

Perhaps our attempt to restore Mughal painting to its rightful place as India's most serious painting, at least since Ajānta, may best end in the application to it of Dr Coomaraswamy's profound characterization of Gupta painting, with his references appropriately transposed " This is an art ' of great courts charming the mind by their noble routine ' (Harsa-carita), adorned with *alamkāras* and well acquainted with *bhāva-bheda* The specifically religious element is no longer insistent, no longer anti-social, it is manifested in life, and in an art that reveals life not in a mode of opposition to spirituality, but as an intricate ritual fitted to the consummation of every perfect experience . The ultimate meaning of life is not forgotten, witness the reverent ascetic portraits and the peace, profound and intimate, of the contemplative gatherings (fig 10), but a culmination and a perfection have been attained in which the inner and outer life are indivisible , it is this psycho-physical identity that determines the universal quality of Mughal painting All this is apparent, not in the themes of the pictures, but intrinsically in the painting itself Nor is there any stronger evidence of the profundity of recognition characteristic of this golden age than that afforded by its extensions " For no sooner had Rajasthan and the Deccan, Gujarat and Bengal, come into contact with Mughal painting than the old " superstitious " modes passed away, and new styles, embodying what they wanted and what they could of Mughal variety and expressive power, arose

The parallel with Europe is curiously close Just as we see the fascinating women of Correggio and the mere noblemen of Van Dyck playing in that dream of Nature which is the park of Watteau or Gainsborough, but look in vain for the virile ferocity and craft of Titian's sitters, or the virile sanctity of Rembrandt's, so we find the modest beauties and the adolescent princes of the Mughal albums, dressed as Rādha and Kriśna, or even as Parvati and Śiva, playing at love among the groves and terraces of Brindaban, in the exquisitely delicate and sentimental rococo of Rajput hill-painting But not Akbar, not Chadrup, nor Asaf Khan The " old wolves of the state " would have been presences hardly more unsuitable than any authentic saint in that feminine and soulful art so dear to belated chivalry in a changing world

This is not to wish that the art of Kangra were other than it is—far from it Dr Coomaraswamy has said in what is to a historian one of his most valuable essays · " to wish that the art of any period had been other than it was is the same as to wish that it had never been Every style is complete in itself, and to be justified accordingly, not to be judged by the standards of a former or any other age.

> With one voice which is wondrous
> He giveth utterance to thoughts innumerable,
> That are received by audiences of all sorts,
> Each understanding them in his own way "