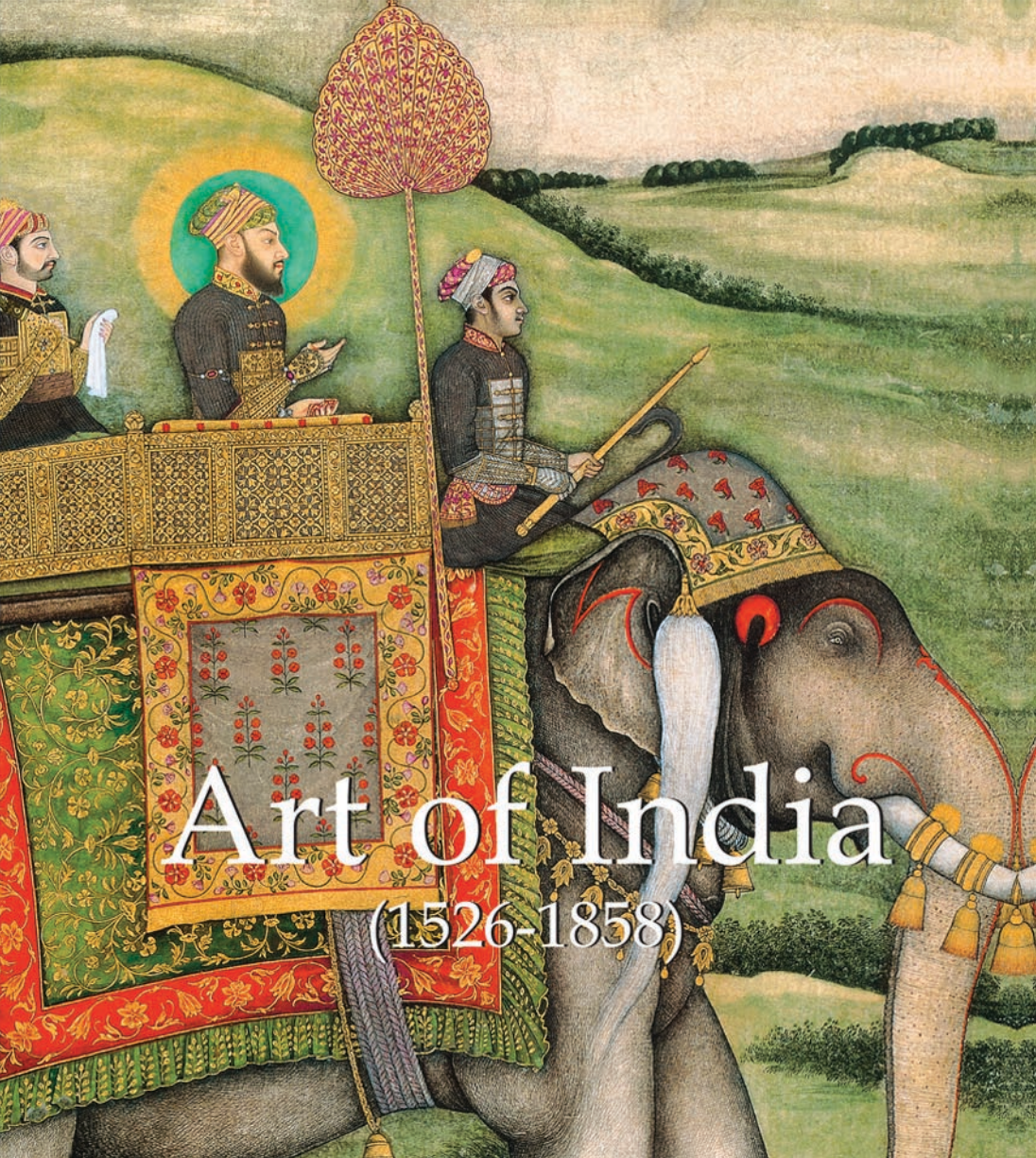




Art of India

(1526-1858)

Page 4:

Defying Mihrdoukht, page from a Manuscript of the *Hamzanama*, 1564-1569.

68 x 52 cm. Madame Maria Sarre-Humann

Collection, Ascona. (Switzerland)

Page 6:

Lord Pathan on horseback, armed with a spear, c. 1720.

Opaque watercolour and gold, red border with golden garland,
margin of multi-coloured leaves, probably *Nepenthes*,

27.3 x 19.5 cm; folio, 40.3 x 27.3 cm.

Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

Author:

Vincent Arthur Smith

Layout:

Baseline Co. Ltd

61A-63A Vo Van Tan Street

4th Floor

District 3, Ho Chi Minh City

Vietnam

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"O Soul, thou art at rest. Return to the Lord at peace with Him, and He at peace with you. Enter you, then, among My honoured slaves, and enter you My Paradise!"

– passage from the Qur'an inscribed at the Taj Mahal



Chronology

- 1526: Zahiruddin Babur sets out upon the conquest of India. Later he becomes the first Mughal emperor. He dies in 1532.
- 1546: Nasiruddin Humayun, his son, is deprived of his empire by the Afghan, Sher Shah, and until his final victory in 1555 exists as a landless refugee.
- 1550: Two artists join Humayun's court at Kabul: Mir Sayyid Ali and Khwaja Abd as-Samad. The history of Mughal painting begins with the name of Mir Sayyid Ali, who is commissioned to supervise the illustration of *Dastan-e Amir Hamza* (*The romance of Amir Hamzah*) in twelve volumes of a hundred folios each.
- 1556: Jalaluddin Akbar ascends the throne of the Mughal Empire. He accords the title of nobility to Ustad Mansur, a Mughal painter and court artist. Another artist, Govardhan, is one of the illustrators of the *Baburnama* (*Book of Babur*). Akbar dies in 1605. The painter Basawan illustrates the *Akbarnama*, Akbar's official biography, which is an innovation in Indian art.
- 1569: The construction of the city Fatehpur Sikri heralds a new era of Indian rule. Architects, masons, and sculptors are involved. Painters decorate the walls of the public halls and private apartments.
- 1570: Completion of Humayun's mausoleum in Delhi.



- 1570: Begin of the Indo-Persian or Mughal School of drawing and painting.
- 1573: Illustration of a manuscript of *Hamzanama*, originally consisting of 1400 miniatures.
- 1590: A hundred artists are reckoned to be masters of their craft.
- 1605: Nuruddin Jahangir, Akbar's son, becomes the new Mughal Emperor. He reigns until 1627. During his reign Ustad Mansur creates a series of eight exquisite little miniatures for the *Waqiat-i-Baburi*.
- 1628: Coronation of Shah Jahan, the third son of Jahangir. He dies in 1657.
- 1628: Completion of the I'timad-ud-Daulah Mausoleum.
- 1648: Completion of the main mausoleum of the Taj Mahal in Agra.
- 1648: Completion of the Red Fort in Delhi for Shah Jahan.
- 1659: Coronation of Aurangzeb Alamgir, he dies in 1707.
- 1674: Completion of the Badshahi Mosk.
- 1820-1830: End of the Mughal School.
- 1857-1858: End of the Mughal Empire in consequence of the foundation of the colony British-India.



India and Its Art

In discussing Indian studies I am forced to acknowledge considerable diffidence arising from a survey of the huge bulk of material to be dealt with. In the face of this complexity I find myself inclined to rely on evidence that is subjective and therefore more or less unscientific, in which personal experience and interpretation is increasingly stressed. In speaking of India, a country that in its wide extent offers more beauty to the eyes than many others in the world,

Humayun Mausoleum

Red sandstone, 1570
Delhi





a descriptive vein may well be excused. India is multiple; neither geographically, ethnologically, nor culturally can it be considered a unity. This being so, I am led to suspect that the India of many writers is more imagination than fact, existing rather in pictorial expression than in reality.

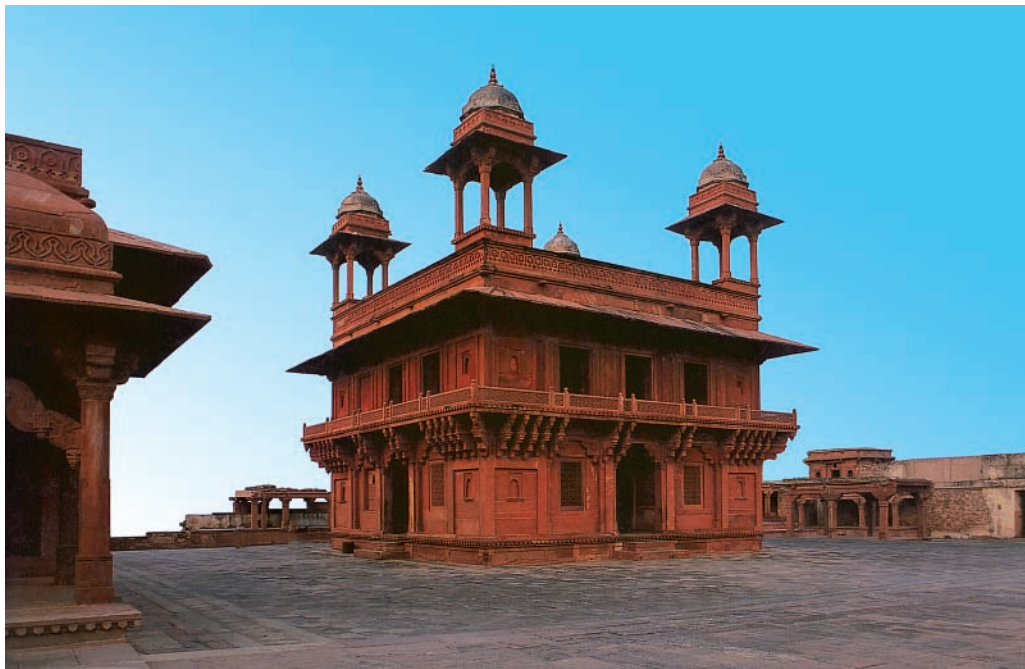
The appeal of the pictorial, rising from a craving for colour and movement, is general among the generations of the present, continually chaffing against narrowed horizons and an experience bounded by economical necessity.

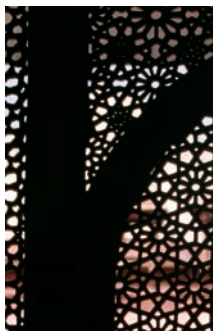
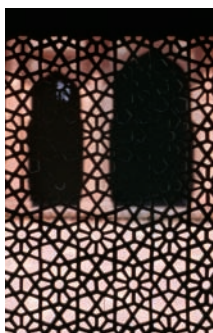
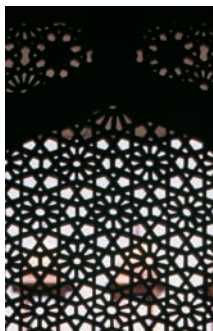
Diwan-i-Khas (Hall of Private Audience)

c. 1571, Akbar period

Red sandstone

Fatehpur Sikri, Uttar Pradesh



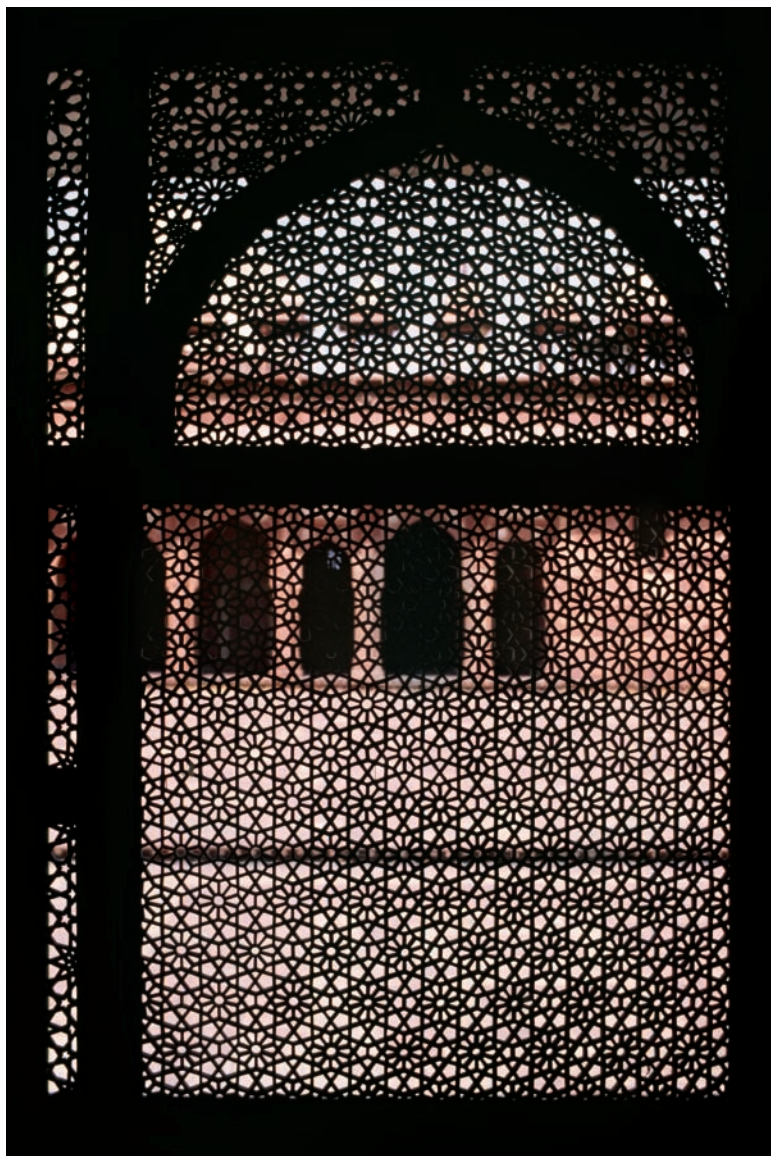


There is magic to be found anywhere between Cancer and Capricorn. There the demands of necessity would seem to be more easily fulfilled and life to run more rhythmically, in the train of the tropic alternation of the seasons. There, bread is to be gathered direct from the rich lap of the earth. There, colour fills the day with its wealth, leaping to the eye, like the sudden glow of fruit and flower caught by the sunlight, or of kaleidoscopic crowds in narrow streets. To enter a tropic town is to enter, as in a dream, the life of a dead century.

Arches in the Great Mosque Jama Masjid

1571, Akbar period

Red sandstone with white marble
and green and blue enamel inlay
Fatehpur Sikri, Agra, Uttar Pradesh





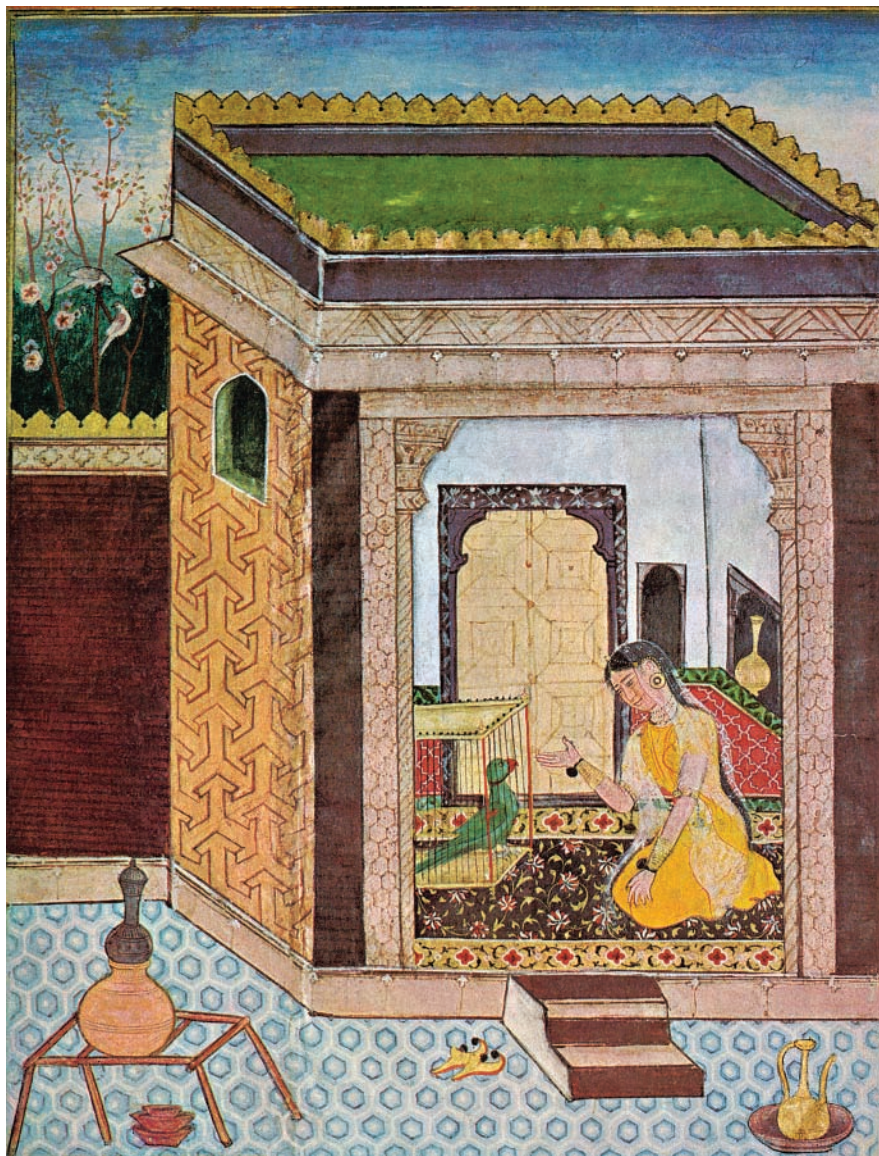
The movement is not without parallels, and the pictorial and interpretational play a great part in its exposition; there is, indeed, something of the Pre-Raphaelite about it. The materialism of today is to be checked by Indian spirituality. Arts and crafts are to flourish everywhere, centred upon the social organization of the village. India is to arise from the ashes of India. It might be claimed, therefore, that there could be no better time than the present for the publication of a survey of Indian Fine Arts,

Young girl with parrot

Page from a Manuscript of the *Tutinama*
(*Tales of a Parrot*), 1580-1585

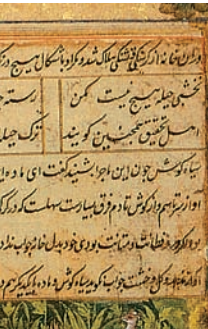
17 x 13 cm

Chester Beatty Library, Dublin





that the credit and loss of the exchange between the occidental and the oriental may be appraised. Indeed this nationalization of the subject has been set forth at length by certain authors. It is, however, in contradistinction to the spirit of true criticism and full appreciation. The opposition of Eastern spirituality to Western materialism is a generalisation without support, while the postulation of a metaphysical basis for any art is equally as sterile, and in fact as inconsequential,



Episode from the tale of *The Lynx and the Lion*

Niccolò Manucci, page from a Manuscript of the *Tutinama* (*Tales of a Parrot*), 1580, Akbar period, Gujarat, Patan
Opaque watercolour and ink, 31.9 x 22.9 cm
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond



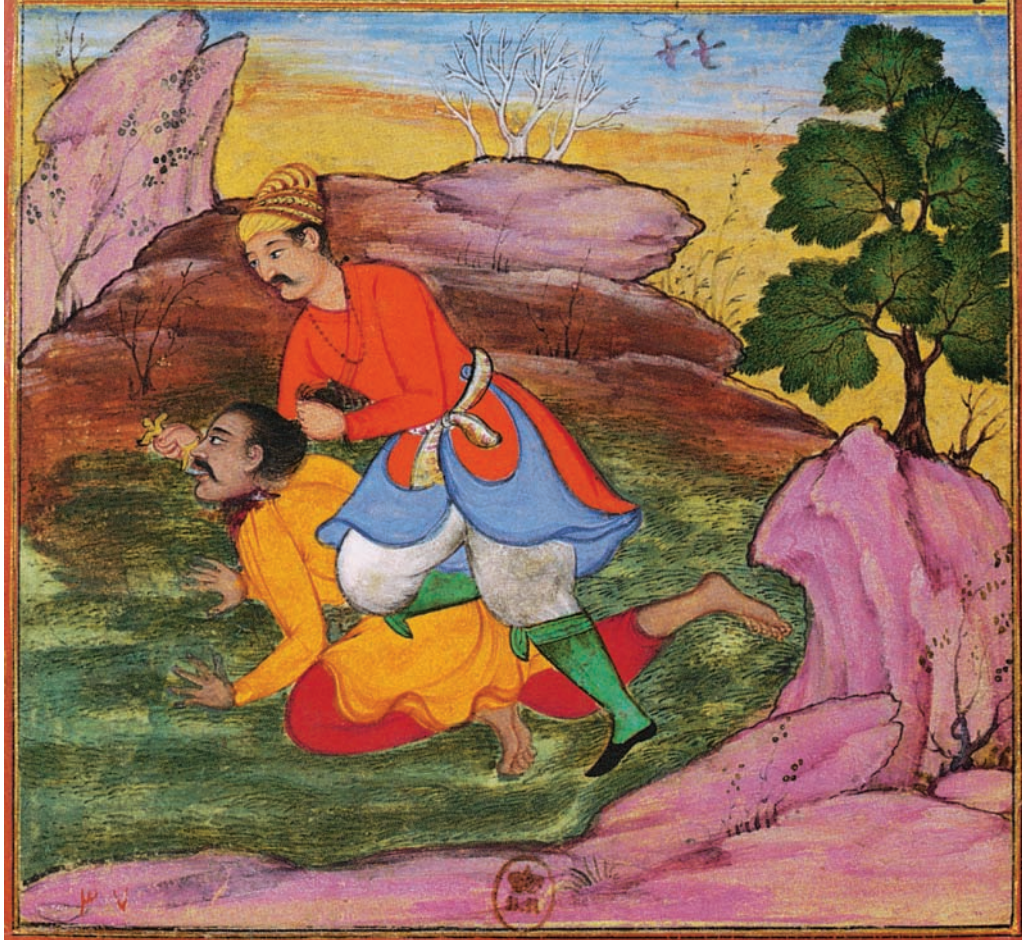
as the postulation of the existence of eternal, immutable classical standards. Art cannot be localised, at least if the humanities upon which our culture is based have any meaning, and geographical differences should be no bar to appreciation, but rather an added attraction in these days, when for most of us our voyages of discovery do not exceed the bounds of the local time-table. It is, however, unfortunate that in the minds of many people the East has a certain

Murder in a landscape

c. 1580

Opaque watercolour and gold
orange border with gold-plated garland
margin adorned with polychrome flowers and gold
13.6 x 14.7 cm; folio, 32.5 x 29 cm
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris

ز مردی مردی را شد طاصح عنبر باز کرد اندکی را دست میداری آن چنان



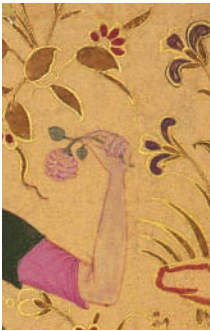


romantic but quite indefinite lure about it, which accentuates the unusual and leads to the substitution of curiosity for appreciation. Modern painting and sculpture provide a definite line of advance and logical precepts to an extent that almost makes academicians of many of the younger school. This process is directly comparable to that of the modern scientific method; modern art is indeed the result of methodical, aesthetic research. From the painting of Manet to that of Cezanne and the men of today,

Cockfight

Illustration from *'Aja 'ib al-makhlukat*
(*Wonders of the creation*) of Qazvinic, c. 1585
Opaque watercolour, red border with gold chevrons
margin with blue flowers, 10.4 x 20.1 cm
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris





the story can only be told in terms of intellectual adventure and aesthetic discovery. The effect of the personal vision of the creators of modern art has been a widening of the circle of aesthetic interest and a revaluation of things unknown or unconsidered: Chinese painting and sculpture, Gothic sculpture, archaic Greek sculpture, African sculpture, the harmony of fine carpets, the virility of primitive design, and not least among these, Indian Art in all its branches.

Davalpa mounted on a man

Illustration from *'Aja'ib al-makhlukat*
(Wonders of the creation) of Qazvinic, c. 1585
 Opaque watercolour and gold, border on blue paper
 margin with bouquets of colorful flowers, 20.6 x 11.6 cm
 Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris



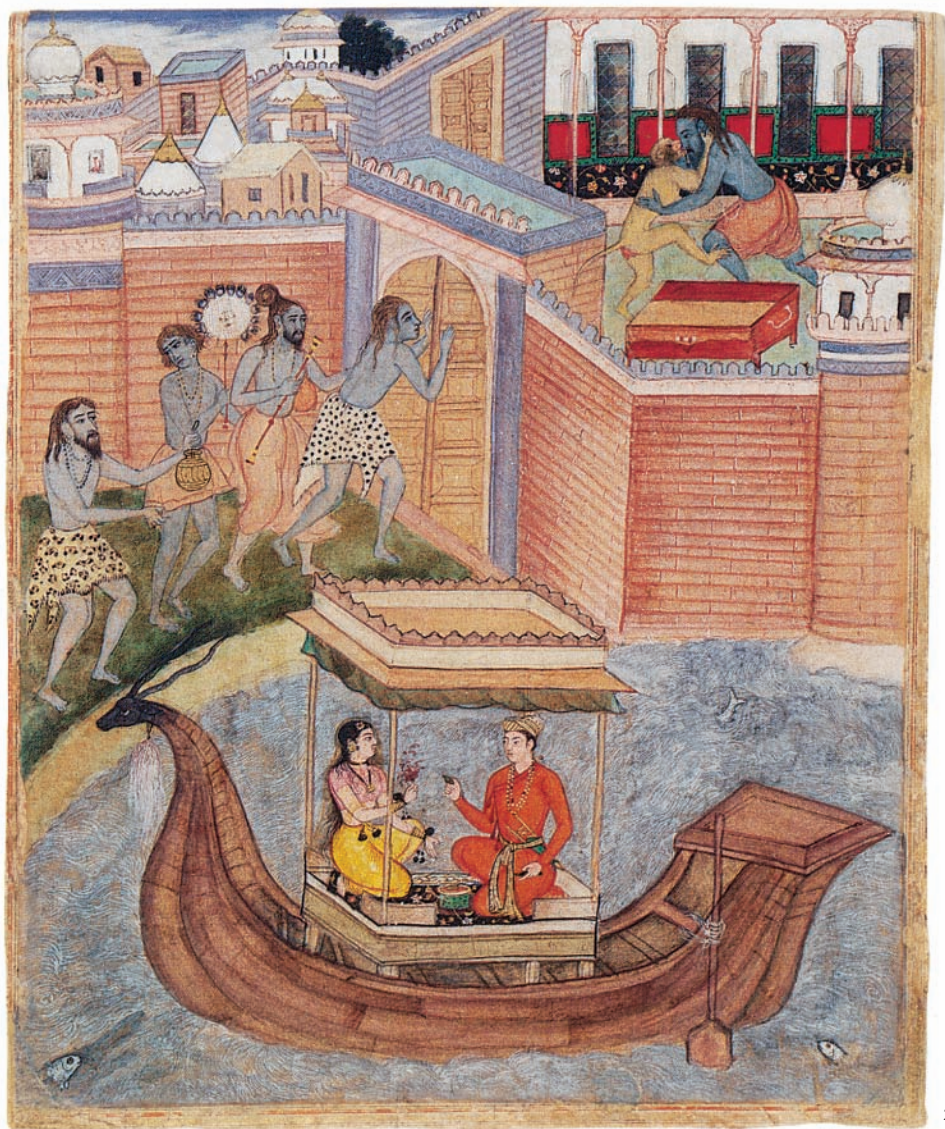


In the face of these riches, once despised and rejected, the dogmas of the past generations with all their complacency, intolerance, and ignorance seem wilful in their restriction and impoverishment of life. So vital and so well founded is this movement that I would choose, as the theme of a review of Indian Art, aesthetic discovery rather than archaeological discovery, and for support I would rely upon the word of living artists whose creative vision and



Episode from the tale of *The False Ascetic*

Page from a Manuscript of
the *Kathasaritsagara*, c. 1585-1590
Opaque watercolour and ink, 16.4 x 13.5 cm
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond





fellow appreciation provides the basis of a criticism of greater precision than archaeological logic or the ulterior ends and confused categories of evidence of those who would carry the discussion beyond the proper field of art. I cannot believe it is necessary or even desirable to prelude the vision of a work of art with many words. Nor can I accept as sound criticism a discourse which shifts the foundations of a true understanding of art from the visual into the literary or historical or metaphysical.

The arrival of Nanda and his family in Vrindavan

Page from a Manuscript of the *Harivamsha*
1586-1590

Akbar period, Gujarat, Patan
Opaque watercolour and ink, 40.8 x 30 cm
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond