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CAT. 73. "SITA SHIES AWAY FROM HANUMAN, BELIEVING HE IS RAVANA IN DISGUISE." MINIATURE FROM A COPY OF THE RAMAYANA (THE STORY OF RAMA)

INDIA, MUGHAL; 1594

THE LEAF H: 37.8; W: 25.6 CM

The painting on this leaf illustrates an episode in one of Hinduism's most important scriptures, the *Ramayana*, the colorful tale of the legendary Prince Rama, an incarnation of Vishnu. His wife, Sita, is kept captive by the demon king Ravana, but Rama sends his ally, the monkey general Hanuman, to her with a message. But Sita reacts with horror to Hanuman, who she thinks is Ravana in disguise.

The scene is from a Hindu tale, and Hanuman's figure clearly reflects this. Nonetheless, the composition has rightfully been compared to the dynamics between Mary and Gabriel as reflected in some of the Renaissance's Christian scenes of the Annunciation. The influence of non-Muslim pictorial traditions was expressed in various ways in Indian painting during the Mughal period. It was due the Mughal rulers' fascination with foreign art that in the case of Akbar (r. 1556-

1605) was also combined with a lively interest in other religions and their holy scriptures.