

The Wisdom King posed with compassionate countenance, and his body was extremely fair. The skin visible under silk gauze was enhanced by such magnificent jewelry as the crown on his head, the necklace around his neck, the earrings hanging from his ears, and the bracelets at his wrists. A cool weariness lingered on the heavy lids of the half-open eyes as though the deity had just awakened from an afternoon nap. Imparting boundless mercy and saving people without number might produce in one an emotion similar to the idle sleepiness that Honda had discovered in the bright, vast expanses of India.

In contrast to this absolutely white and serene image, the extended feathers of the peacock that acted as a halo were dazzlingly polychrome. Of the plumage of all birds, that of the peacock was closest in hue to the evening clouds. Like an Esoteric Buddhist mandala that rearranges a chaotic universe into an orderly one, the feathers presented the methodical organization of the riotous disorder of color seen in the evening clouds, their amorphousness, and the play of light upon them, in a geometric and patterned brocade. Gold, green, indigo, purple, brown—such dusky brilliance, however, indicated the end of the evening glow when the disk of the setting sun itself was no longer visible.

The tail feathers lacked only scarlet. If there were such a bird as a scarlet peacock, and if the Peacock Wisdom King had been seated upon it, tail fully open, he would be none other than the goddess Kali herself.

Yukio Mishima, *The Temple of Dawn*