ANANDA COOMARASWAMY

— THE BRIDGE BUILDER

A STUDY OF A SCHOLAR-COLOSSUS

By S. Durai Raja Singam

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An Art Paper Edition of 3 MONOGRAPHS

SUPPLEMENT.....1

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From River Banks and Sacred Places: Ancient Indian Terracottas

THE BOSTON YEARS 1917-1947

Ananda Coomaraswamy, of whom it is said that single-handed, he brought recognition of the spiritual, idealistic and symbolic basis of the Indian cultural heritage through his work at the Boston Muesum of Fine Arts.

— M. V. Kamath,
The United States and India, 1776-1976.

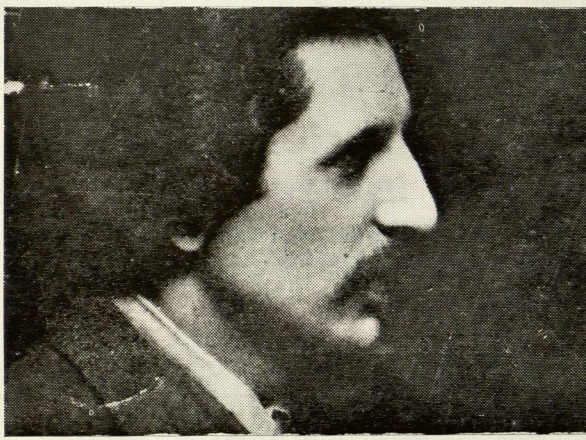
to commemorate
the one-hundredth anniversary
of the birth of
Ananda K. Coomaraswamy

by

S. Durai Raja Singam

A TRIBUTE

Museums do not usually celebrate the centenary of the birth of their curators, even when they have spent most of their lives in the service of a Museum and its collections. But then, Ananda Coomaraswamy was a most unusual curator and, if any exception should be made, few would seem to be more deserving of the honor than this great pioneer in the field of Indian art. The brilliance of his scholarly accomplishments lent great distinction to the Museum of Fine Arts while he was Keeper of the Indian and Islamic Collections. Most of his important work was published during those years and, with the generous help and support of enlightened patrons. particularly Denman Waldo Ross, Coomaraswamy succeeded in gathering outstanding works of art, enriching the holdings and the prestige of that department immeasurably.



The influence of even the most distinguished curators rarely reaches far beyond the walls of the institutions they serve. In the case of Ananda Coomaraswamy, one of his most vital contributions was to impress the importance of Indian art upon a world that had not yet accepted it. What resulted is the universal appreciation of Indian art as a part of the great artistic traditions of mankind, something we now often take for granted. The impact of his ideas affected not only the Western world, but also the countries from which the art had originated. In this respect, Coomaraswamy followed in the footsteps of two other pioneers in the history of the Department of Asiatic Art: Ernest Fenollosa and Okakura Kakuzo.

They are gone forever, those giants of the past, and our opportunities and aspirations have to be scaled down to more modest proportion in keeping with our talents and the circumstances of our times. The present exhibition and the accompanying catalogue are, therefore, merely an effect to commemmorate a great man by demonstrating how, starting from the firm basis laid by him, our knowledge has expanded as a result of new excavations and research. The field of terracotta figures, in which Coomaraswamy repeatedly expressed a profound interest and wide knowledge, seemed most appropriate for the occasion.

The Museum is most grateful to Joyce Paulson of the Department of Asiatic Art, who wrote the checklist and installed the exhibition, and to Professor Pramod Chandra, for his help, advice, and interest in this project.

JAN FONTEIN
Director and Curator of the Department of Asiatic Art.

— *Preface to the Catalogue.*

An exhibition
to commemorate
the one-hundredth anniversary
of the birth of
Ananda K. Coomaraswamy

Museum
of
Fine Arts,
Boston

August 23
December 31, 1977

THE BOSTON YEARS: 1917—1947

During his lifetime Dr. Coomaraswamy was very much a scholar's scholar, he remains so even now.

— *Pramod Chandra.*

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy served the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, for the last thirty years of his life, 1917-1947. He was Keeper of Indian Art (1917-1921), Keeper of Indian and Muhammadan Art (1922-1927), Keeper of Indian, Persian and Muhammadan Art (1927-1931) and Fellow for Research in Indian, Persian and Muhammadan Art (1931-1947). These were his most productive years, and the years during which his genius and his scholarship evolved from art historian to art philosopher to metaphysician. He became known all over the world for the hundreds of articles and books written during these thirty years. Richard T. Arndt[1] wrote, "The Boston Museum offered him a comfortable salary with few demands on his time. Thus he was able to work in complete freedom, economic as well as political, for thirty years, and to travel when and where it was necessary..... Coomaraswamy in America was like a fish in water. There he was able to reach his highest genius, his most vital goals....."

There can be no doubt from the list[2] of sixty-one incisive articles Coomarasamy wrote for the Museum *Bulletin* that the Museum of Fine Arts suffered nothing from the wide and varied interests and publications of its Indian scholar.

> Dr. Coomaraswamy's writing will become classics of Indian thought inter-related with Indian art, because of his extraordinary gift for the written word that has clarified spiritual ideas in unforgettable language.
>
> Beyond his principal concerns in Museum publications, in works on aesthetics, he also sought for the universal, truths found in Indian philosophy and religions, Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain, and in Christian thought. He wrote of the universality of religion, of 'one world type of thinking,' as one far ahead of his time.[3]

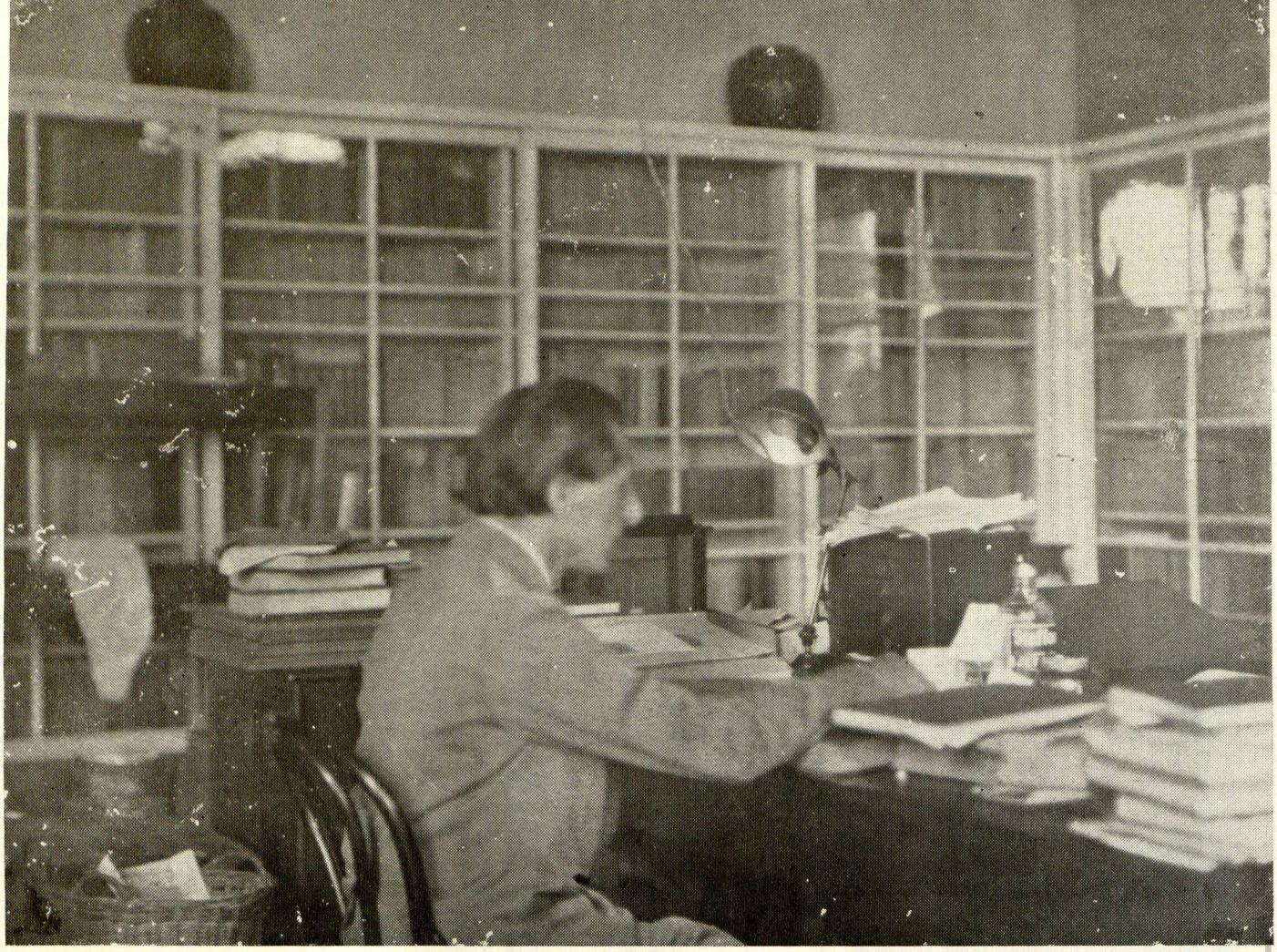
Metaphysical considerations have everything to do with art and the study of art whenever as with all Oriental pursuits, the prevailing metaphysics determines not only the content and motivation for art but also the meaning of the manner in which art is achieved and in which it is used in daily life.

Several important years led to Coomaraswamy's association with the Boston Museum. In 1909, he travelled extensively in India and visited the Tagore family, making contacts with people who were to have great influence on his thinking. The following year he returned for a second visit and was asked to organise the all-India Exhibition at Allahabad. He collected works of art and craft for this exhibition, growing more fascinated by the beauty of Indian art as he worked. His innate discernment[4] resulted not only in a fine exhibition but also in two volumes of *Indian Drawings* (published in 1910-1912) and his *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon* (1913).

> This was just the time when his sensitive mind was very keen to artistic reactions, that the inherent beauties of line, colour and form in the Rajput paintings dawned on him and this aesthetic reaction entered his soul like a flood making him conscious of new sources of beauty and joy.
>
> This period was of great mental unrest for him. His mind was constantly expanding, his heart was burning with a fierce spirit for the revival of ancient arts, but he was finding no avenues and no shelter for this aims.[5]

Nor was he finding a home for his magnificent collection of Indian art. He intended to give the collection to the Indian government, but no institution was forthcoming to receive the national treasures.[6]

Dr. Denman Waldo Ross, a professor at Harvard University, a connoisseur of Oriental art and a Trustee of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, had been interested for some time in creating a collection of Indian art at the Museum. He had already loaned the Museum some fine examples from his own collection. In 1917, he arranged to purchase the Coomaraswamy collection and to donate it, along with his own collection, to the Museum to establish the first Indian collection in an American Museum. On April 26, 1917, Ananda Coomaraswamy was appointed Keeper of Indian Art for the purpose of studying and cataloguing the Ross-Coomaraswamy Collection.[7]



Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy at work in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (about 1924).

— Courtesy: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy.

The acclaim which this collection won in the years to follow can be shown by the following quotes, chosen from many like them:

> With so remarkable a scholar as Ananda K. Coomaraswamy in charge, and with Denman Ross's collecting continuing at its normal pace, the possessions of this new section multiplied like the loaves and fishes.[8]

> The ensemble of Indian art in Boston has been widely recognised as the most important in the United States and the collection of Indian paintings unequalled in the world..... Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, with this impeccable good taste and expert discernment.....devoted himself to research and a multitude of serious studies that expound the richness of meaning and the profundity of religious significance of the objects with the intent of making the art of India better known and extending our understanding of it in the West.[9]

> .....his enduring monument is the collection of Oriental art in the Boston Museum.[10]

> The Museum of Fine Arts collection of Asiatic Art is pre-eminent. It includes the world's largest collection of Mughal and Rajput painting, and a group of sculptures of a number and size that very few museums outside India possess.[11] By 1931 when Dr. Coomaraswamy was appointed a Fellow for Research in Indian, Persian, and Muhammadan Art, it was well known that with the support of Dr. Ross he had built up the most important collection of East Indian art in America.[12]

Dr. H. Goetz, Curator of the Baroda State Museum at the time, discussed Coomaraswamy's merit as an art scholar in *Art and Thought*:[13]

> A.K.Coomaraswaamy is to us the greatest living authority on Indian art..... he has (interpreted the message of Indian art) with a penetrating sensitiveness, a depth of knowledge and grandeur of cultural and religious vision..... There is hardly a branch of Indian art to which he had not contributed some pioneer research work.

Goetz credits Coomaraswamy as the "sole discoverer" of Rajput art. "His great work on *Rajput Painting* (1916) introduced us to a whole unknown world of chivalry, romantic love and bhakti mysticism." G. Venkatachalam calls *Rajput Painting* "his most valuable and exhaustive work," and notes that "some of the choicest and rarest pictures are in the Boston Museum." He continues,

> .....it was Coomaraswamy that first drew the attention of the world to the significance of this unique feature in Rajput painting, that of interpreting abstract things in terms of pictorial representations.[14]

This insight was of the nature of Coomaraswamy's many incidents of understanding art because of his understanding of the underlying metaphysics of the artist.

There is proof of the test of time upon Coomaraswamy's work in a recent appreciative article by John Kenneth Galbraith for the *New York Times* Book Review Section:[15]

> This sensitive and eloquent scholar published the first study of (Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills) and, more than incidentally, rescued some of the best of the paintings for the collection of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.
>
> Coomaraswamy's description has never been bettered. It creates, he said, "a magic world where all men are heroic, all women are beautiful, passionate and shy, beasts both wild and tame are the friends of man, and trees and flowers are conscious of the Bridegroom as he passes by. This world is not unreal or fanciful, but a world of imagination and eternity, visible to all who do not refuse to see with the transfiguring eyes of love."

As a curator, Coomaraswamy was not always fully appreciated. It was easily understood by Westerners that his emphasis on sources, religious, and metaphysical aspects was directly related to the works of art he studied. Thus when he wrote articles explaining the religious background of a piece of art such articles were considered by many to the philosophical rather than contributions to the art world. Coomaraswamy wrote to

Curators of 1930

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Margaret Marcus,[16] "formerly and in Asia art was not an alternative to, but a means to life." His critics failed to understand that art, philosophy and religion were one to the Oriental artist and craftsman.

Ashton Sanborn observed Coomaraswamy's increasing interest in metaphysics as though it were not quite connected to art:

> During the earlier years of his service with the Museum he was active in recommending to the Trustees additions to the collection and in preparing a Catalogue, as well as a Portfolio of more than a hundred plates illustrating the collection. These were issued by the Museum between 1923 and 1930. In his later years sa Fellow for Research in Indian, Persian, and Muhammadan Art, he devoted his attention almost primarily to reveal what he considered the common basis of Oriental and Western philosophic thought.

Even many of Coomaraswamys's supporters seem not to understand what he meant in his letter to Margaret Marcus—he himself was not a student of art nor a student of philosophy, but a student of life. He wanted to explain to the West what life meant in the East, and Eastern life meant, among other things, an art based upon the philosophy and religion of the artist. Art and craft work are visible objects to use as a grounds for demonstrating, through art, philosophy and religion, the meaning of Oriental life. Ardelia Ripley Hall seems to grasp this idea as she writes,[18]

> His explanation of the significance of the creations by the anonymous Indian artists, demonstrated how the religious purpose: the indwelling symbolism and spiritual thought, transcend the identity of the devout and skillful makers.

And yet many testimonials overlook this connection:[19]

> Few scholars in any field have thought more profoundly or written more prolifically than Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. He was physically and intellectually a unique ornament to the Museum of Fine Arts for three decades, although only intermittently a methodical curator..... As a mind like his never rests, he continued through aesthetics to metaphysics, and in his later years had become rather completely a philosopher and theologian.....

Ardelia Ripley Hall said of Coomaraswamy's ability as a collector, "His erudite learning and good taste assured the supreme quality of the outstanding works of art which he collected."[20] She notes that in the sixty-one articles he wrote for the *Bulletin*, "his account of each object is complete and exemplary."[21] "For twenty years he himself arranged the exhibits of the objects of first importance in the Indian and Muhammadan Galleries."[22] F.W. Coburn wrote, in 1924, that Coomaraswamy, "working quietly and unobtrusively, has in half a decade built up at the Boston Museum such a collection of Indian works of art as no one ten years ago would have thought possible of attainment."[23] Not even his critics would have argued with any one of these facts. Surely this is the work of a fine curator, even if this were all Coomaraswamy accomplished during his thirty years with the Museum. Add to this the world-wide reputation his scholarship earned, both for himself and for the Museum, and one must wonder how anyone could have desired more from him.

Of course, not everyone had the kind of understanding of the meaning of art as a part of life that Coomaraswamy possessed. He wrote that "one must be not merely a sensitive man but also a spiritual man.....seeing in things material a sensible, a formal likeness to spiritual prototypes of which the senses can give no direct report."[24] As he explained in one of his *Bulletin* articles, "like Blake, the poet artist thought there were listeners in other worlds than this."[25]

The *Bulletin* of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, kept a record of "Publications on Museum Topics by Officers of the Museum"[26] on an annual basis. Looking at the publications it records for Ananda Coomaraswamy, 1917-1947, one can see several interesting trends.

Ananda Coomaraswamy's contributions to this listing increase steadily through the period 1935-1939 and then decrease just as steadily thereafter, if viewed in groupings of five years. Of the publications given in this listing, those which could be said to be

CATALOGUE OF INDIAN ART, Ananda Coomaraswamy, 1923, 4to. Part I, General Introduction, pages 54, price, postpaid, $2.25. Part II, Sculpture, pages v, 145, with 86 plates of half-tone reproductions, price, postpaid, $6.25. Price of Parts I and II bound together, postpaid, $7.75.

The Museum is the first museum of art outside of India to establish a collection of Indian art. It is especially rich in Rajput and Mughal paintings, Nepalese painting, illustrated Jaina manuscripts, Nepalese and Sinhalese bronzes, Indian colonial sculpture, textiles, and jewellery. The introduction to the Catalogue gives a comprehensive account of the ideas of life and religion which underlie the art of India. The Catalogue classifies the objects according to their source and character and gives a description and illustration of each. Further parts in preparation.

Part IV, Jaina Paintings and Manuscripts, 74 pages, 39 plates. Price, postpaid, $3.75.

Internal evidence indicates that these manuscripts may all be dated from the early fifteenth to the early seventeenth century, and several bear dates within that period. The descriptive list of the paintings and manuscripts is prefaced by chapters on Jainism: its legends, literature and paintings, with a bibliography.

PORTFOLIO OF INDIAN ART

Ananda Coomaraswamy, 1923, 4to. Price, postpaid, $35.75.

The Portfolio consists of 108 heliotype plates of which 4 are in color, each accompanied by a description of the object illustrated with references to the Catalogue. The plates offer a representative choice of objects from all branches of the Museum collection.

AN ARABIC TREATISE ON AUTOMATA, Ananda Coomaraswamy, 1924: (Communications to the Trustees, No. VI). 21 pp., 8 illustrations. Price, postpaid, $2.25.

The Museum possesses six leaves of a well-known manuscript by al-Jazari, an Arabian craftsman of the thirteenth century, describing and illustrating a number of automatic machines ingeniously contrived as water-clocks, fountains, etc. The Treatise of al-Jazari is a noteworthy document in the history of that Arabic culture which kept alive for the modern world the Greek spirit of investigation and invention. The illustrations include one leaf belonging to the Fogg Museum and one belonging to Professor Paul J. Sachs.

primarily aesthetic in nature occupy the majority within each year until 1944, after which metaphysical papers predominate. However, while there are some aesthetic papers in every year, one can see the beginning of a trend to also include some metaphysical papers flowing gently in the decade prior to 1933 and then rising from that year on; so that after 1933 Coomaraswamy's publications seem to be approximately evenly divided between aesthetic and metaphysical interests in the last decade of his life—the metaphysical papers only began to outnumber the aesthetic ones in the last three years. Thus, one can say that while there certainly was a rising interest in the metaphysical aspects of art, aesthetics remained of interest to Coomaraswamy for almost all of his life.[27]

Coomaraswamy began his publications within the Museum period with a translation of "The Mirror of Gesture"[28] from the Sanskrit and an article on "Indian Music."[29] An article on "The Art of Asia."[30] and his masterpiece, *The Dance of Siva*[31] are listed in the 1918 *Bulletin*. The next three years, the balance of his tenure as Keeper of Indian Art, saw many articles on specific pieces in the Museum's collection[32] and an essay on 'Buddhist Art in Asia: Its Origin and Development in India."[33]

Appointed Keeper of Indian and Mohammadan Art in 1922, Coomaraswamy continued to write upon pieces in the Museum[34] and also provided a number of essays, such as a "Bibliography of Indian Painting,"[35] an article on "Mediaeval and Modern Hinduism."[36] and "An Introduction to Indian Art."[37]

Coomaraswamy's masterful *Catalogue of Indian Art*[38] began with Parts I and II (General Introduction and Sculpture, respectively) in 1923. Part IV[39] (Jaina Paintings and Manuscripts) appeared in 1924, along with an essay on "The Appreciation of Art."[40]

In 1927, Coomaraswamy was named Keeper of Indian, Persian and Mohammadan Art, and Part V of his *Catalogue*[41] was published. A book on the *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*[42] was published, and the *Bulletin* lists some nine other articles including "The Origin of the Buddha Image."[43] The following year his book, *Yaksas*[44] appeared along with ten articles on objects of art and an essay entitled, "Early References to Fly-Fishing,"[45] for the London *Fishing Gazette*.

1929 was Coomaraswamy's most prolific year, at least in terms of the *Bulletin* listings. There were 29 articles that year and 23 the next. Along with articles on individual pieces of art, there is one on "The Javanese Theatre"[46] with Stella Bloch, many contributions to the Fourteenth Edition of the *Eycyclopedia Britannica*, including "Indian Dance," "Indian Architecture," and "Textiles and Embroideries in India."[47] Other than articles on individual works of art, one finds in the 1930 listing "The Art of Bookmaking in Islam,"[48] "Sense About Art,"[49] and "The Shadow-play in Ceylon."[50]

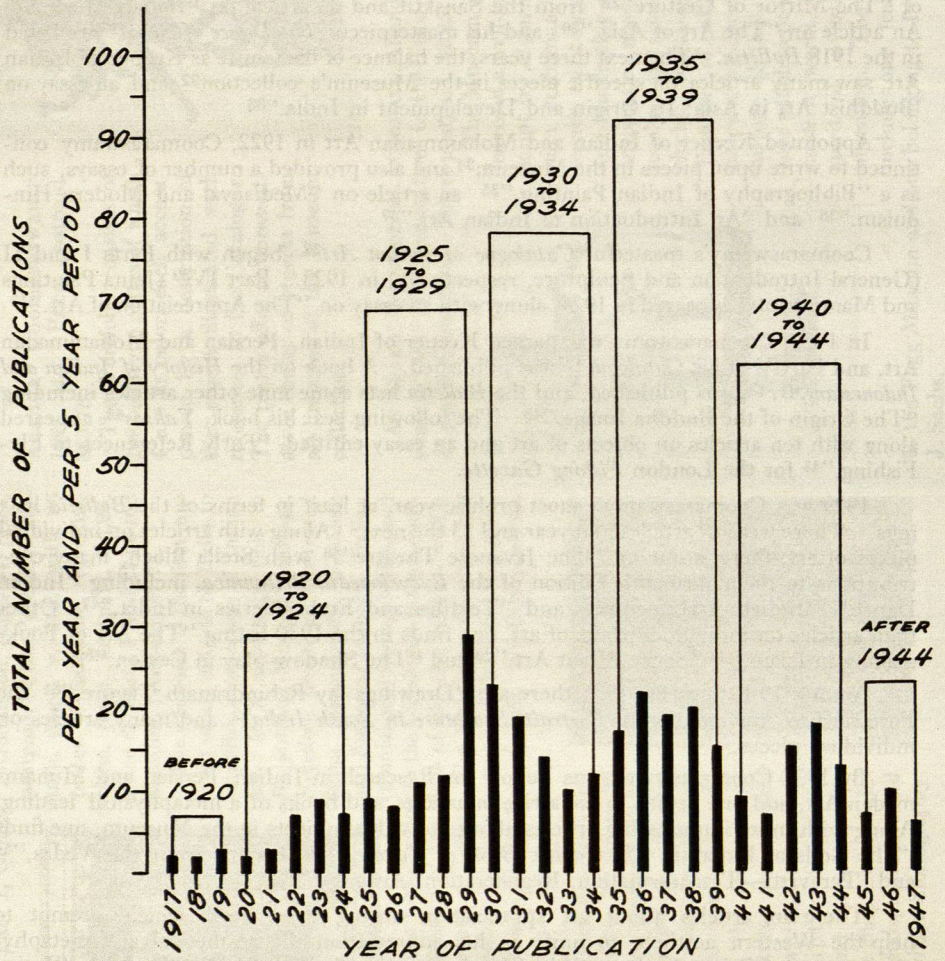
Among 19 listings for 1931 there are "Drawings by Rabindranath Tagore,"[51] the Foreword to Aravamuthan's *Portrait Sculpture in South India*[52] and many articles on individual pieces.

By 1932 Coomaraswamy was Fellow for Research in Indian, Persian and Muhammadan Art, and one begins to see a rise in articles and books of a metaphysical leaning. Along with more illuminating articles about individual objects in the Museum, one finds "The Gods of India" in *The Golden Book of Tagore*,[53] "Versions from the Vedas,"[54] and "Paravrtti—Transformation, Regeneration, Anagogy."[55]

There are articles about art appreciation during these years which attempt to help the Western aesthete to unify in his appreciation the aesthetical and metaphysical aspects of Oriental art—notably, "Understanding the Art of India."[56] and an "Introduction to the Art of Eastern Asia,"[57] and especially the book of essays, *The Transformation of Nature in Art*.[58]

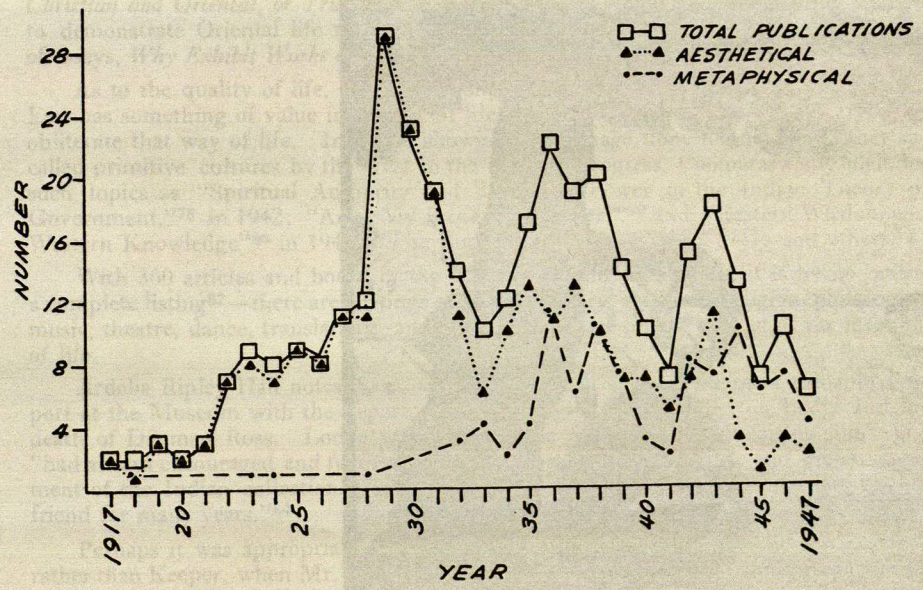
Coomaraswamy published several Vedic studies during this period: *A New Approach to the Vedas*[59] in 1934; "Two Vedantic Hymns for the Siddhantamuktavati, "Angel and Titan, an Essay in Vedic Ontology,"[60] and *The Rg Veda as Land-Nama-Bok*[61] in 1935; "Vedic Monotheism,"[62] and "Vedic Exemplarism,"[63] in 1936; and "The Vedic Doctrine of 'Silence' "[64] in 1937, among others. Some representative Buddhist studies include the following: "Rebirth and Omniscience in Pali Buddhism"[65] in 1936; "Tathagata"[66] in 1938; "The Reinterpretation of Buddhism"[67] in 1940; and of course his *Hinduism and Buddhism*[68] in 1943.

PUBLICATIONS ON TOPICS
RELATED TO FINE ARTS
BY ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY, 1917–1947



(BASED ON M. F. A. BULLETIN LISTINGS)

COMPARISON OF AESTHETICAL
AND METAPHYSICAL PUBLICATIONS
BY ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY, 1917–1947



(BASED ON M.F.A. BULLETIN LISTINGS)

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS: By KIND PERMISSION
of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Rasa Mandala,
Kangra Pahari, Rajput
late 18th century.

Various aspects of Hinduism, and many other metaphysical studies of individual religious viewpoints are discussed in his articles and books between 1932 and 1947. Beginning around 1939 however, Coomaraswamy found more unity than diversity among the religions of the world, including the Western world, and his metaphysical articles and books begin to show the unity of his thinking. In 1939 he discussed "Vedanta and the Western Tradition"[69] In 1942 he compared "Eastern Religions and Western Thought,"[70] and wrote about "Mind and Myth."[71] "Paths that Lead to the Same Summit, Some Observations on Comparative Religion"[72] tried to "put it together" for the Western world in 1944.

Two other currents run through the last decade of Coomaraswamy wisdom, the place of art within life; and the quality of life, or social concerns. Beginning with "Oriental Aesthetics"[73] in 1932 continuing through "What is the Use of Art Anyway?"[74] and "Is Art a Superstition or a Way of Life?"[75] in 1937, to the group of essays, *The Christian and Oriental, or True, Philosophy of Art*[76] in 1939, Coomarasawamy wanted to demonstrate Oriental life through art and philosophy and religion. A collection of essays, *Why Exhibit Works of Art,*?[77] compiled many of these ideas.

As to the quality of life, Coomaraswamy wanted the West to understand that the East has something of value in its way of life and what the West must cease trying to obliterate that way of life. In essays showing the damage done to India and other so-called primitive cultures by the West in the name of progress, Coomaraswamy includes such topics as "Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government,"[78] in 1942; "Am I My Brother's Keeper?"[79] and "Eastern Wisdom and Western Knowledge"[80] in 1943; "The Bugbear of Literacy"[81] in 1944; and others.

With 360 articles and books in the Museum listing alone—and it is by no means a complete listing[82]—there are writings on art, art history, aesthetics religion, philosophy, music, theatre, dance, translations, and more.[83] All are on the subject of the meaning of life.

Ardelia Ripley Hall notes that Coomaraswamy lost some of his most valuable support at the Museum with the departure to Washington of John Ellerton Lodge and the death of Denman Ross. Lodge was "a colleague who greatly appreciated him" and "had always encouraged and furthered Dr. Coomaraswamy's interests and the advancement of the Indian collection." Dr. Ross had been "his chief supporter and his old friend for many years."[84]

Perhaps it was appropriate for Coomaraswamy to be named Fellow for Research rather than Keeper, when Mr. Tomita was appointed Curator of the Asiatic Department; as Walter Muir Whitehill wrote in his Centennial History, this "was better related to the manner in which he then exercised his mind." He adds that Coomaraswamy "might with equal appropriateness have been designated as 'resident guru' of the museum."[85]

Whitehill includes an incident related by Dr. Eric Schroeder, who worked briefly as a volunteer in Coomaraswamy's department:

> Most of my first day was spent down in a cellar storage among dusty unexhibited objects; but when I emerged at the end of the darkened winter afternoon to speak to Mr. Tomita, the Curator of the Asiatic Department, Coomaraswamy walked into Mr. Tomita's office and sat down to listen. Some of the antiquities had interested me: and I was expatiating upon them with enthusiasm. Mr. Tomita who disapproved of Dr. Coomaraswamy's negligence in his purely curatorial functions, observed pointedly that it would be a very good thing if someone would put that storage in proper order, for it had long been a disgrace. There was a short silence. Then Dr. Coomaraswamy's rather mumbling tones emerged from the shadow beyond the lamplight.
>
> "Perhaps one of these days I ought to take a run down and have a look at the old place,' he said, like a London stockbroker remembering after the lapse of many years the ivy-mantled home of his ancestors.
>
> .....Laughing, I looked toward the speaker. The lenses of his large spectacles gleamed, and his cigarette end glowed; I could more dimly see through the thin beard lines of laughter drawn about his painfully fastidious mouth. He was sitting

Siva as Nataraja

ca 1800, Southern.

> back, his legs crossed with the elegance only possible to the very thin; and his head was tilted in the cock of a connoisseur as he enjoyed the effect of his humor. In that moment I knew that whatever I thought about him I should like him.[86]

Dr. Schroeder also tells of Coomaraswamy's "philosophic dogmatism":

> His concern with Museum objects and their history, with dating and attribution was now slight, though his memory retained astonishingly much of his old great learning in this respect. Taste and expository ingenuity in the galleries he called "window dressing" and left to others who cared more than he. These others were, very properly in a Museum, a majority; and they tolerated Ananda's philosophic dogmatism unconvinced.[87]

Coomaraswamy felt that "it is not the function of a museum or of any educator to flatter and amuse the public."[88] He believed that a museum had as its purpose to collect "ancient or unique works of art which are no longer in their original place or no longer used as was originally intended, and are therefore in danger of destruction by neglect or otherwise."[89] This did not, in his opinion, extend to the works of living artists, "which are not in imminent danger of destruction."[90] He felt that a display of the works of living artists belonged not in a museum but in an art dealer's shop. Notwithstanding his opinions, in 1941 a wing of wholly contemporary art was opened at the Boston Museum.

Coomaraswamy was successful, however, in promoting the idea he shared with his predecessor Okakura: the art collected in the several sections from Asia was united in one Asiatic Department under the Curatorship of Mr. Tomita in 1931. The belief that "Asia is One," shared by Coomaraswamy and Okakura, lives on in the department.

That Coomaraswamy was "a mountain of inspiration and information about Indian thought and art"[91] is amply demonstrated by every account written by studenis who were just beginning their careers and were fortunate enough to come to know Coomaraswamy."[92] He was instrumental in the founding of an India Society in 1924. Many of the lectures he gave were for the promotion of understanding between American students and India as well as Asia as a whole. Riepe writes in 1970, "In many ways he was the most knowledgeable scholar in all phases of Indian culture to have lived and worked in the United States."[93]

Riepe continues,

> Few of his books and articles fail to contain some philosophical content or reference to the philosopical foundations of Indian thought.....
>
> No writer on art in the United States has insisted with the same passion that art is based on civilization and civilization is based upon philosophical ground.

A tribute from Benjamin Rowland[94] shows the role Coomaraswamy filled for students of Indian art and culture:

> Like every student of Indian art, I must be grateful to the late Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy for his interpretation of Indian art covering a lifetime of scholarship; especially for his *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, which provides at once an indispensable reference book and an unsurpassable model.

Ray Livingston has written a book about Ananda Coomaraswamy entitled *The Traditional Theory and Literature*,[95] and the success of the application of Coomaraswamy's ideas to literature demonstrates once again that the scholar was not a student of art but a student of life. His ideas, drawn from an intimate knowledge and wisdom of the traditional ways of life are applicable to all forms of the expression of life. Livingston writes, ".....we have attempted to compose a primer of Traditional literary theory largely from the works of A.K. Coomaraswamy..... to study what Coomaraswamy has said and to achieve some measure of understanding of the great Tradition he resumes with such exemplary rigor and learning....."[96] He notes that "only a hint of the depth and breadth of Coomarasawamy's scholarship, the power and precision of his method and the grandeur of his conceptions" can be demonstrated in such a book.

Gujari Ragini from a Ragamala Series.

Coomaraswamy took a great interest in the quality of life for the craftsman in America during his Museum years. He was associated with a crafts group up in Maine, and he produced several lectures and articles linking the quality of civilisation to the position in society of the craftsman. He took a dim view of modern society in this regard: "The bases of modern civilization are to such a degree rotten to the core that it has been forgotten even by the learned that man ever attempted to live otherwise than by bread alone."[97] He believed that a real civilisation, in the Platonic sense as well as in any sense compatible with Asian thought, was simply a civilisation in which everyone performed those tasks which were natural to their gifts and in which tasks were performed as vocations, not as "jobs."[98] "Let us make it clear that.....where production is really for *use*, and not only for profit, the workman is still naturally inclined to do his work faithfully."[99]

Coomaraswamy travelled quite a lot during his Museum years, often collecting for the Museum as he went along. In 1920, he took a trip around the world, including Japan, Cambodia, Java, India and Singapore. He went again to the Far East in 1923, and to India in 1925. He visited various parts of the United States on lectures, including Denver, Colorado, and Kenyon College. It was his plan to return to India and live, perhaps in the Himalayas, to find peace in the village life, and this of course he was unable to do before his death. He did have some village life in America, living in a small cottage in the country around Boston during his later Museum years. He also took a wild woods cabin in Maine. He wrote to Margaret Marcus, "This summer we did mostly gardening in Maine. We have a really marvellous rock garden on the slope below our camp there, with a good many Alpines and Himalayans doing well in it."[100] He also practised his fly-fishing in Maine.

Coomaraswamy at work was a sight to remember:

> My impression as I sat before him in his large studio at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, was that of a great worker.....his work table..... the vast library covering the walls..... his many books and articles were only the outer expression of a vast store of knowledge extending far beyond that part of it which had been made public..... His deliberate delivery, his use of precise and well chosen words..... Here was a master of thought and expression, looking at life from a 'high place,' aloof from the trivialities of ordinary pursuits and steeped in the familiarity with abstractions.....[101]

Ardelia Ripley Hall notes that, at his desk, "scholars came from all over the world and from American universities to see him." She continues,

> .....Dr. Coomaraswamy worked at his typewriter. There were times when he told me that he had been working at home since five in the morning. He did all his own typing..... His prodigious output was possible but only with an extrarodinary toll on his powerful physique and great natural strength.[102]

Robert Paine writes, "The intellectual productivity of Dr. Coomaraswamy was hard to realise for those of us who merely saw the quiet research of a man before a well piled desk or heard the busy clicking of his typewriter.....the quietness of his personality never suggested the eminence of his position."[103]

What follows are the official remembrances of Ananda Coomaraswamy found in the *Bulletin* of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston:

> The staff of the Museum suffered the loss through death of Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. Dr. Coomaraswamy had been a member of the staff for thirty years and he and Dr. Denman W. Ross were chiefly responsible for the extremely distinguished Indian collection which is one of the ornaments of the Museum. Dr. Coomaraswamy had also achieved great distinction for the Museum by his publications and his worldwide reputation as a scholar.
>
> — George Harold Edgell
> Director

"The Hour of Cowdust"
Kangri Pahari, Rajput, late 18th century.

The death of Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy on September 9 has removed from our midst a scholar of international repute. For the past thirty years he has been associated with the Department: first as Keeper of Indian Art, from 1917 to 1921, as Keeper of Indian and Muhammadan Art from 1922 to 1932, and as Fellow for Research in Indian, Persian and Muhammadan Art from 1933 to 1947. He was first invited to join the staff of the Museum for a period of three years to catalogue the Indian Collection, which was already in the Museum, and the Coomaraswamy Collection which the late Dr. Denman W. Ross purchased from him and presented to the Museum. His appointment, however, was renewed from year to year. During the earlier part of his long service, with constant encouragement from Dr. Ross, his efforts were expended in building the Indian Collection, the foundation of which had been laid some years prior to his coming by Denman W. Ross, Okakura-Kakuzo, and others. The fact that the Museum's Indian Collection holds an enviable position is in large measure due to his endeavours. In his later years as Fellow for Research he was engaged in writing essays on varied subjects, which appeared in print in many countries. By his numerous contributions to the world of learning Dr. Coomaraswamy has left a lasting monument to himself.

— Kojiro Tomita
Curator of Asiatic Art

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, held a special exhibition in August 1977 in honour of Ananda Coomaraswamy, 1877-1947.

There is another remembrance of Coomaraswamy which holds the key to understanding all he has done, and it is quoted below:[104]

On the 25th of April in 1935, Dr. Coomaraswamy and I were sitting in the afternoon sun on the stone steps of the Museum building at the University of Michigan. .....Dr. Coomaraswamy told me of his mother. He mentioned the change from England to Ceylon for her, how she had been delighted with the beautiful, tropical island, the palm-fringed, shores before the green-clad mountains that rose above the coast and tropic sea with myriads of sea birds. He said, "She was deeply interested in Ceylon and India, in their religion, in their culture, and particularly in the people. She was impressed by the charming and intelligent people of my father's family. She had been welcomed with gracious hospitality and met their gentle friendliness with gratutude. She found her marriage with my father was like a bridge of understanding and sympathy."

"When I was two," he went on, "she planned to take me for a visit to her family home in Kent. We sailed first from Colombo and my father was to follow. But he died on the day he was to have embarked. So we stayed in Kent and she never returned. And yet , she always wished to contribute in some way to the better understanding of India, to bring about a deeper appreciation of the religious faith which governed their daily lives, and to increase the mutual friendship of people throughout the world, and particularly for the Tamils of Ceylon, for whom she had such love and esteem."

He went on to say, "I have hoped that by my efforts and work, that I may have helped toward the realization of her deep desire and lost opportunity."

1Richard T. Arndt, "Coomaraswamy in America," pp. 198-199.

2Ardelia Ripley Hall, "The Keeper of the Indian Collection, An Appreciation of Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy." In S. Durai Raja Singam, Editor, *Remembering and Remembering Again and Again*, pp. 123-124 (Appendix II).

3Ibid, pp. 122-123.

4This was written later, of course: A.K.C. , "Indian Art in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts." In S. Durai Raja Singam, Editor, *Writings and Speeches of Dr. Ananda K. Coomara-*

Dipak Raga from a Ragamala Series.

swamy. . . . . the appreciation of art is not a question of taste or ethics, out of creative imagination. Without this the spectator, however well he knows what he likes or dislikes, may remain unmoved before the most beautiful work, with it he will understand the significance of the most awkward and primitive work, and the meaning of a great tradition will be recognised even in decadent examples.

5V.S. Agrawala, *Journal of the United Provinces Historical Society*, Lucknow, Vol. XXII (1949).

6There is a letter indicating some possibility of an Indian Museum accepting this collection although it never occurred:

Letter to Duggirala Gopalakristnayya, July 10, 1916.
My Dear Gopala,
. . . . . .
I had been on the point of going to India to take up some Museum work that was offered to me there but at the very last moment I received a cable that the building was temporarily required for other purposes and the scheme would be postponed till after the war.

7Several references:

*a*1917 Report of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

*b*S. Durai Raja Singam, "A Coomaraswamy Chronicle," p. 17.

*c*Ashton Sanborn, "*Memories of Colleagues.*" In S. Durai Raja Singam, Editor, *Remembering and Remembering Again and Again*, p. 159.

*d*Walter Muir Whitehill, "People Who Helped Make the Museum Great." *Boston Globe*. "A.K. Coomaraswamy—'Art For Love's Sake,' "February 17, 1970; "Denman Waldo Ross—A Rare Jar for His Ashes," February 18, 1970.

*e*F.W. Coburn, "Notable Brahmin Art at Boston Museum." *Boston Sunday Herald Magazine*, February 3, 1924.

*f*Walter Muir Whitehill, *Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, A Centennial History* pp. 632-363.

*g*Jan Fontein. In *Oriental Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, p. 16.

8Whitehill, *Centennial History*, p. 368.

9Ardelia Ripley Hall, "La Collection Indienne du Musee de Boston," Revised and translated section for S. Durai Raja Singam, Editor, *Remembering and Remembering Again and Again*, p.374.

10Robert Payne, "The Splendor of Asia." In *Encyclopedia Americana*, Vol. VII, p. 741.

11Jane and Theodore Norman, *Traveller's Guide to American Art*. New York: Meredith, year?, p. 27.

12Hall, "The Keeper of the Indian Collection," p. 112.

13H. Goetz, "Ananda K. Coomaraswmy—The Sole Discoverer of Rajput Art.' In K. Bharatha Iyer, Editor, *Art and Thought* (London: Luzac, 1947—A volume in honour of A.K.C.'s 70th Birthday), pp. 87 ff.

14G. Venkatachalam, "Studies of Rajput Painting." In *Mirror of Indian Art*, p. 105, 112.

15John Kenneth Galbraith. *New York Times* Book Review, January 20, 1974, p. 19.

16Quoted in William E. Ward, "Coomaraswamy in America," p. 197.

17Sanborn, "Memories of Colleagues," p. 160.

18Hall, "The Keeper of the Indian Collection," p. 106.

19Whitehill, *Centennial History*, p. 369.

20Hall, "The Keeper of the Indian Collection," p. 106.

21Ibid, pp. 121-122.

22Ibid, p. 121.

23Coburn, "Notable Brahmin Art at Boston Museum," p. ?

24A.K.C., "The Nature of Buddhist Art."

25A.K.C., "Illustrated Jaina MSS." Museum of Fine Arts *Bulletin*, Boston, Vol. XV, No. 90 (August, 1917), pp. 40-41.

26This list was titled Publications on Museum Topics in 1917; Topics Related to Fine Arts from 1918 to 1920; Publications by Officers of the Museum from 1921-1923; Publications by Officers and Assistants from 1924 on with the addition, Publications by Officers and Assistants and Other Contributors in 1947.

27See the graphs.

28Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1917, 52 pages, 15 plates.

29*Musical Quarterly*, Vol. III, No. 2, pp. 163-172.

30*Arts and Decoration*, New York, November and December.

31New York, 139 pages, 28 plates.

32See the *Bulletin* for a yearly complete listing of articles not otherwise listed in the footnotes.

Torso of A Yaksi

33*Asia*, April, 1919.

34Articles about individual art works are too numerous to list, but can be found in the *Bulletin*. Also see S. Durai Raja Singam, *A Chronological Bibliogaraphy*, which contains many listings the *Bulletin* did not give.

35*Rupam*, Calcutta, No. 10, April, 1922, pp. 57-58.

36*Asia*, Vol. XXIII, No. 3, March, 1923, pp. 203-206, 230, 4 illustrations.

37*The Asian Library*, Vol. IX, 1923, pp. xi, 141, 34 illustrations. (Madras: Theosophical Publishing House).

38Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, August, 1923. Pt. I, 54 pages; Pt. II, 145 pages, 86 illustrations.

39Same, 1924. Pt. IV, 74 pages, 39 plates reproducing 186 subjects.

40*Art Bulletin*, Vol. VI, 1923, pp. 61-64.

41Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1927. Pt. V, 276 pages, 132 plates.

422296 pages, 400 illustrations, 9 maps.

43*Art Bulletin*, Vol. IX, No. 4, 1927, pp. 287-317, 73 illustrations.

44Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1928, 43 pages, 23 illustrations.

45*Fishing Gazette*, London, No. 2688, p. 427.

46*Asia*, July , 1929, pp. 536-539, 6 illustrations.

47Vol. IV, pp. 249-250, 14 illustrations; Vol. VII, pp. 19-22, illustrations, Vol. XII, pp. 220-228, 64 illustrations; pp. 209-219, 104 illustrations; pp. 267-270. 21 illustrations; pp. 681-682; Vol. XXII, pp. 3-5, 7 illustrations, Vol. XXIII, p. 873-10 illustrations.

48*International Studio*, Vol. XCV, January, 1930, pp. 71-72.

49Same, Vol. XCVI, May , 1930, p. 76.

50*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, July, 1930, p. 627.

51*Rupam*, No. 42-44, 1930, pp. 31-32; also in *Roopa Lekha*, Vol. II, 1931.

52London, 1931, pp. ix-xiii.

531931, pp. 283-285.

54*Indian Art and Letters*, Vol. VII (New Series), No. 1, April, 1933, pp. 19-26.

55*Festschrift Morris Winternitz*. Leipzig, 1933, pp. 232-236.

56*Parnassus*, Vol. VI. No. 4, May, 1934, pp. 21-26, 30, 3 illustrations.' 'Corrigenda." No. 5, p. 31.

57*The New Orient*. Vol. I, 1933, pp. 121-152, 11 illustrations.

58Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1934, 235 pages.

59London: Luzac, 1933, 116 pages.

60*Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, Vol. VIII, Part I, 1935, pp. 91-99.

61*Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. LV, December, 1935, pp. 373-419.

62London: Luzac, 1935, 39 pages, 3 illustrations.

63*Dr. Krishnaswami Aiyangar Commemoration Volume*, Madras, 1936, pp. 18-25; also in (revised) *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. XV, 1936, pp. 84-92.

64*Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. I, 1936, pp. 44-64. Corrigenda, p. 281.

65*Indian Culture*, Vol. III, No. 4, April, 1937, pp. 559-569.

66Same, Vol. III, 1936, pp. 19-33.

67*Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, Vol. IX, 1938, p. 331.

68*New Indian Antiquary*, Vol. II, 1939, pp. 575-590.

69New York, 1943, 86 pages.

70*American Scholar*, Vol. VII, 1939, pp. 223-247.

71*Review of Religion*, Vol. VI, 1942, pp. 129-145.

72*New English Weekly*, Vol. XXI, December, 1942.

73*Motive*, May, 1944, pp. 29-32, 35.

74*Parnassus*, Vol. IV, No. 4, 1932, p. 26.

75*The American Review*, Vol. VIII, January, 1937, pp. 321-335; also John Stevens Pamphlet. No. 2, 1937.

76Same, Summer, 1937; also John Stevens Pamphlet. No. 4, 1937, 23 pages.

77Newport, 1939, 38 pages.

78London, 1943, 148 pages, 2 illustrations.

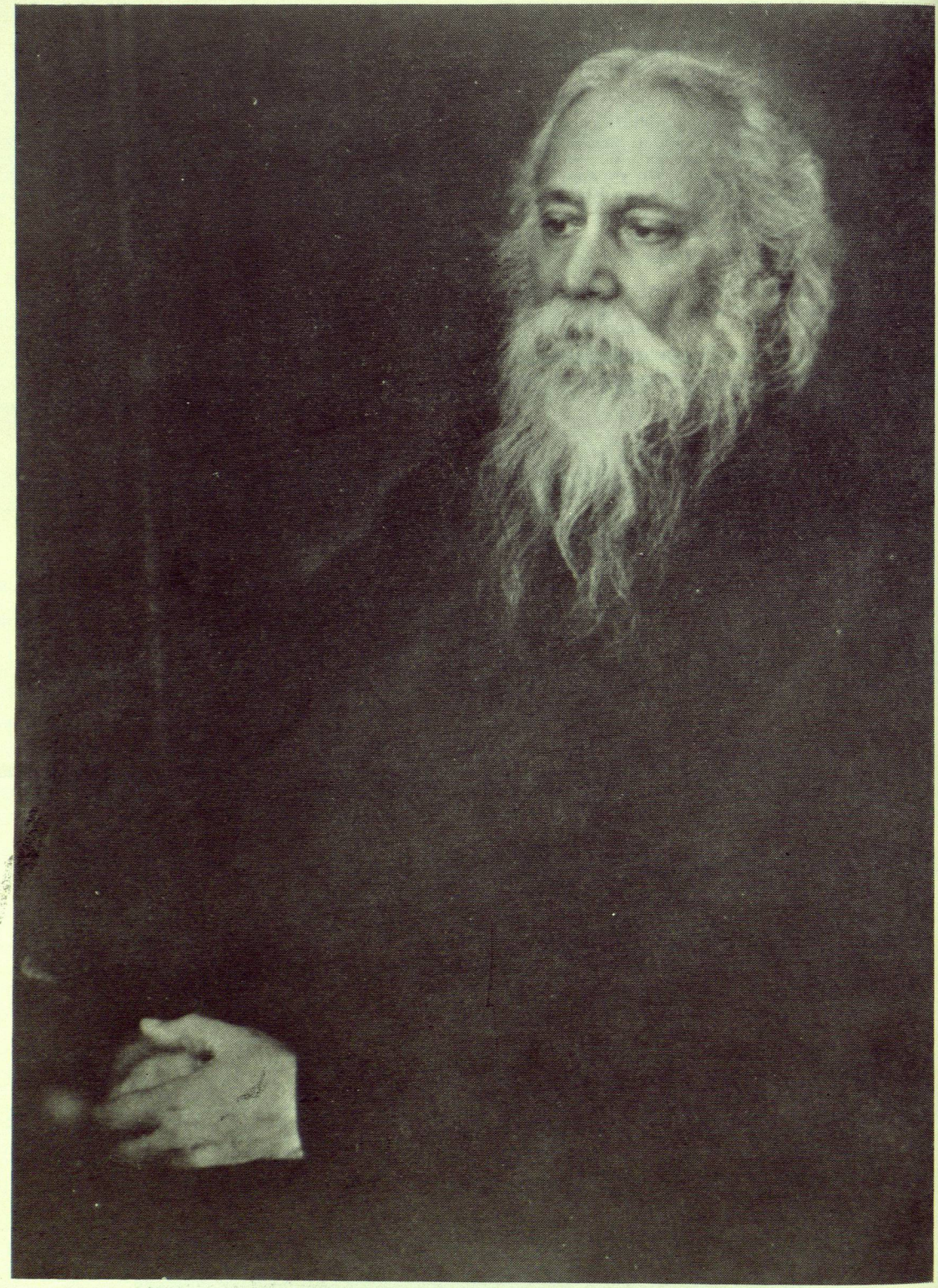
73*American Oriental Series*, No. XXII, p. 87, 1 illustration.

80*Asia and the Americas*, March, 1943, pp. 135-138; July, p. 389.

81*Isis*, Vol. XXIV, pp. 359-363.

82*Asia and the Americas*, February, 1944, pp. 53-57.

83See the Bibliography listings of S. Durai Raja Singam for a complete selection.

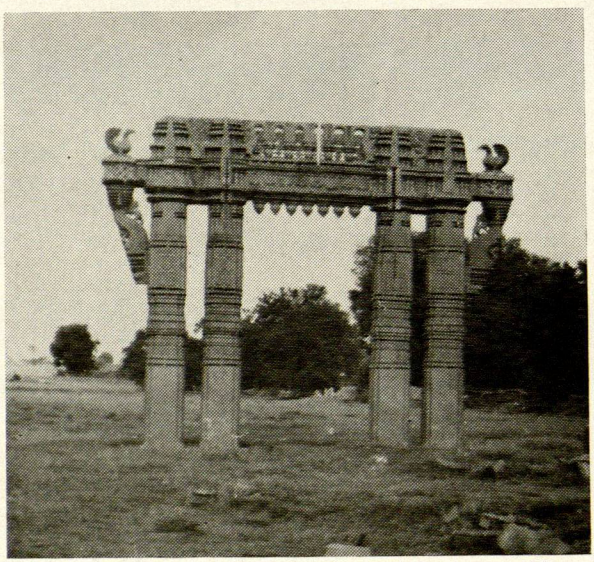


Portrait of Rabindranath Tagore
— Zlata Llamas.
Gift of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy

Given to the Museum of Fine Arts Boston
by Rabindranath Tagore

Study of Head
— Rabindranath Tagore
Gift of Rabindranath Tagore.

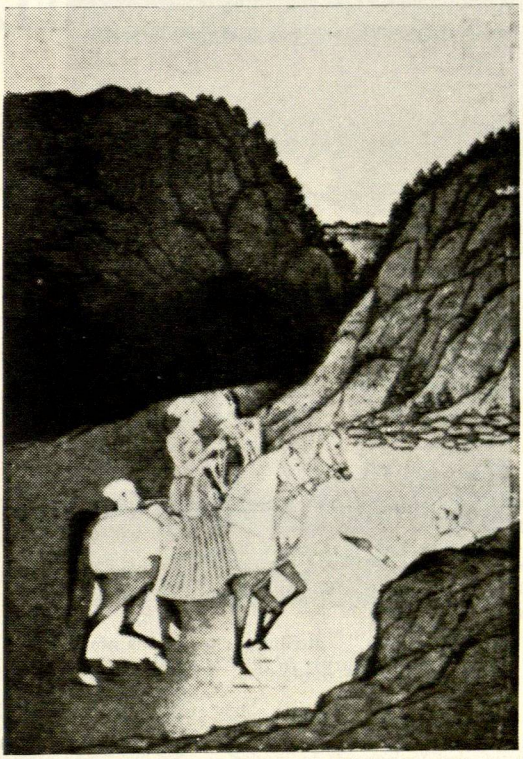
84The S. Durai Raja Singam Bibliography also contains topical listings on several topics.
85Hall, "The Keeper of the Indian Collection," p. 115.
86Whitehill, *Centennial History*, p. 371.
87Ibid, pp. 369-370.
88Ibid, p. 370.
89A.K.C., "Why Exhibit Works of Art?" p. ?
90Ibid.
91Ibid.
92Dale Riepe, *The Philosophy of India and its Impact on American Thought*. Springfield, Ill.: Charles Thomas, 1970, p. 122.
93See books of tributes edited by S. Durai Raja Singam.
94Riepe, *Philosophy of India*, p. 123.
95Benjamin Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India*, New York: Penguin,
96Ray Livingston, *The Traditional Theory of Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
97Ibid, p. 130.
98A.K.C., "Am I My Brother's Keeper?" p. 3.
99A.K.C., "What is Civilisation?" *Albert Schweitzer Jubilee Volume*. 1946, pp. 261-274.
100A.K.C., "Am I My Brother's Keeper?" p. 2
101A.K.C., letter Margaret Marcus, quoted by William Ward in "Coomaraswamy in America," p. 195.
102Jacques De Marquette, "An Appreciation." p. 14-17.
103Hall, "The Keeper of the Indian Collection, " p. 116.
104Paine, "Memories of Colleagues," p. 160.
105Hall, "The Keeper of the Indian Collection," pp. 107-108.



SOME ILLUSTRATIONS IN COOMARASWAMY'S WRITINGS

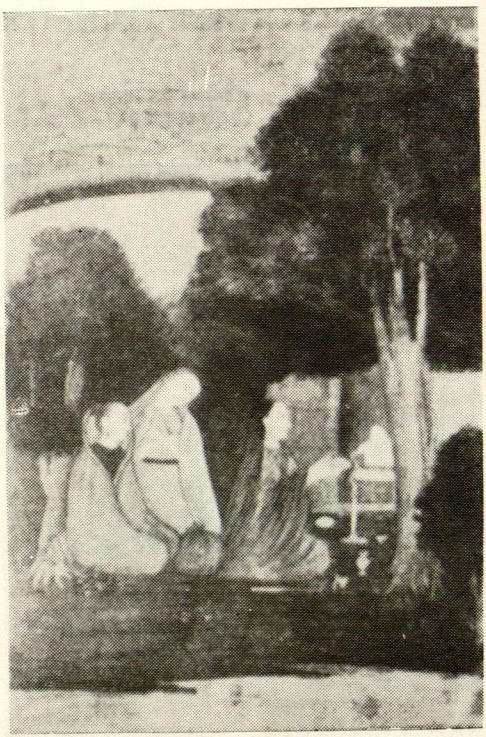
Night Effects In Indian Pictures

"The Bride," from an Indian Picture (Prob. 17th Century) *In the Collection of G.N. Tagore.*



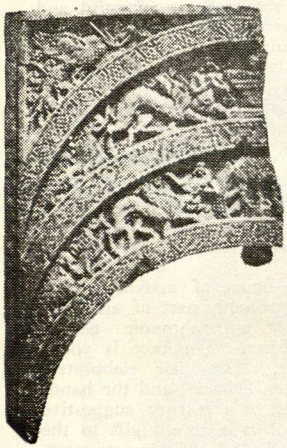
"Riding by Night," from an Indian Picture (Prob. 17th Century) *In the Collection of C.H. Read.*

"Golden Rain," attributed to Muhammad Afzal (17th Century) *In the Collection of C.H. Read.*

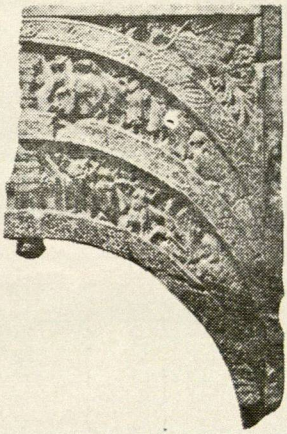


"Siva Puja" from an Indian Picture (Prob. 17th Century). *From the Calcutta School of Art Collection*

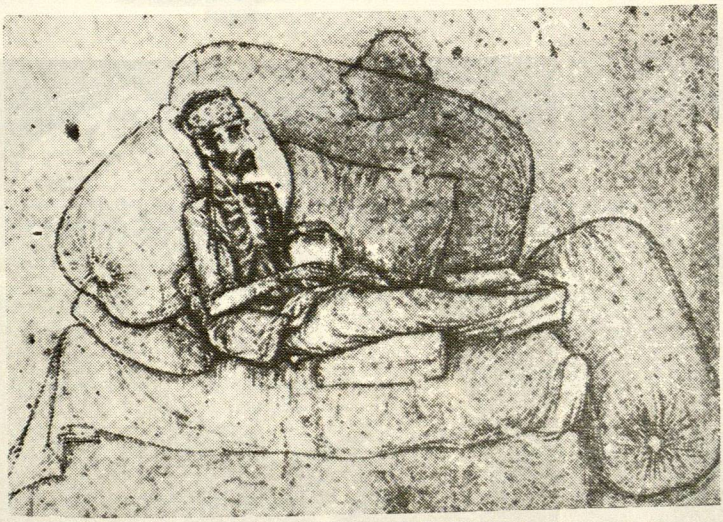
Courtesy: STUDIO, 1910. Vol. I pp. 305-307



An Elder Art

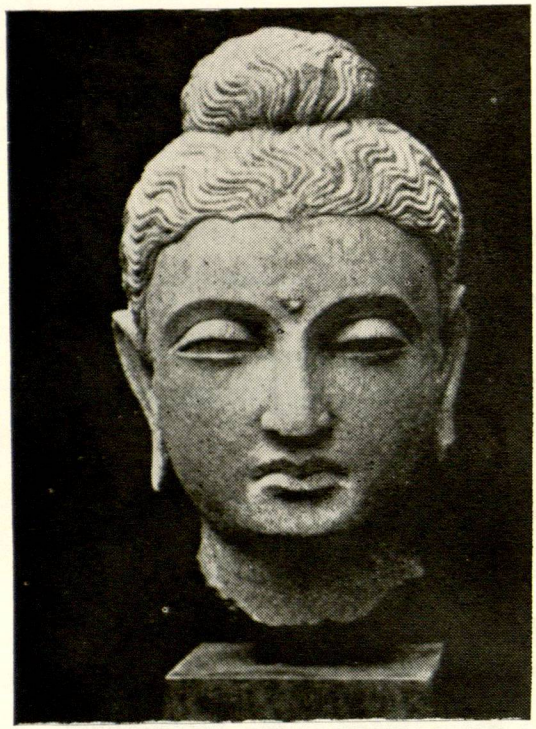


A Few Examples from One of the Finest Collections in the World



This rare seventeenth century drawing of the School of Jahangir, a colored version of which is in the Oxford Bodleian, represents Jahangir's courtier, Inayat Khan, in the last stages of emaciation. This is one of a number in the Boston Museum mentioned by Jahangir in his "Memoirs".

The finest relief in the Museum Collection from the Mathura School of the early Christian era-illustrates four scenes from the life of Buddha. Both sides of this pediment are reproduced at the top of the page.



A SECOND CENTURY BUDDHA

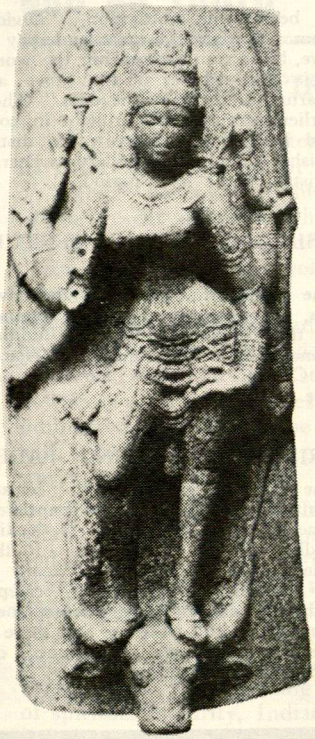
The Greaco-Buddhist School which developed in Gandhara in Northern India under the Indo-Scythian kings is due in part to Indian tradition and in part to the influence of craftsmen brought from Western Asia. The art was elegant and realistic rather than powerful and symbolic. It lacked the strength and massiveness seen in sculpture of purely Indian origin, and exerted only a transient influence on Indian art. The essentially Indian conception of this head of classical style suggests that the Gandhara phase was a branch of Hellenistic art adapted to the purposes of Buddhist theology.

AND A MEDIAEVAL NYMPH

This fragment of the figure of a nymph from Indra's heaven was a probably part of an architectural decoration of a Brahmanic temple rather than a cult object. The face is youthful, full, and serene. The hair elaborately dressed with interwoven flowers, and the hands clasped above the head in a gesture suggestive of amorous appeal. It is a recent gift to the museum from Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy.

CEYLON, EIGHTH CENTURY

This bronze from Ceylon showing a teacher in the attitude of exposition illustrates a period in Indian art when the use of traditional gesture to express inner motives was at its clearest and freest.



DURGA, IN STONE

The important sculptural relief shown above dates from the Pallava dynasty in Southern India, the seventh century, a brilliant period in the history of India and her colonies.

SIVA AS NATARAJA

In medieval Hinduism, Siva, at the upper right, was regarded in one prevaling cult as the supreme ruler and worshiped in a variety of forms. Here he is Lord of the Dance.

MALIK AMBAR

An example, at the right, from the Jahangir School of the descriptive, naturalistic art of India which owes its existence to the patronage of the "Great Moguls" who held court at Delhi and Agra from 1556 to 1748.

A RAJPUT PAINTING OF ABOUT 1600

It bears this incription, "Divided from her darling, most unhappy in love, like a nun renouncing the world. This Todi abides in the grove and charms the hearts of the does." These earlier examples are brilliant in color and have daring force quite distinguishable from the tenderness characteristic of the later period.

A SIXTH OR SEVENTH CENTURY FRESCO

The Buddhist fresco, at the lower left, is probably the only fragment of the original from the Buddhist monasteries and churches of Ajanta, in Central Asia, now surviving outside of India.

KRISHNA EXPECTING RADHA

The text of the sixteenth century painting below reads, freely translated: "one of her companions is leading Radha forward, the slender Radha, The branch of Love, and many of her friends are with her, creeper and vine side by side, before them is a garden full of trees and there is Krishna as though in a trance, expectant of her coming."

Courtesy: THE INDEPENDENT, 1928 Vol. CXX No. 4054. pp. 131-134.

GOD AS TRUTH..... FROM THE RIG-VEDA TO GANDHI[1]

THE SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF INDIA.

Nothing can be a better criterion for the assessment of the stature of a nation than its contribution to human welfare. Ananda Coomaraswamy, in his book *The Dance of Shiva*,[2] has adopted this scale of valuation in estimating the part that India, even in its present decadence, has played in civilisation. Apart from the material wealth that India has contributed to the West for over four centuries—more in the nature of an exploitation than a voluntary contribution—she has given much to the spiritual pool of man.

What is striking in Indian society is the fact that, in sharp contrast to the West, it has been throughout pervaded by a noble purpose of life and the realisation of the universal Self. Such a social structure can only be the outcome of a philosophical attitude nowhere vocal in the West today. Writing of Europe, Coomaraswamy says, "The problem of modern Europe is to discover her own aristocracy and to learn to obey its will..... It is just this problem which India long since solved for herself in her own way."

The marked contrast between Indian and Western society lies in their degree of idealism. On analysis it would appear that Western society has been founded on wealth and sensual and ethical restraint, and as such perforce has its material values attached to the purpose of life. On the other hand, Indian society lays emphasis on the spiritual life of man, and has been built on the rock of a religious philosophy created by its upper classes, the Brahmans. Unlike the West, where industrial competition has led to gross self-seeking, Indian society designates the wisest to rule the roost for the good of the community. While making allowances for individuals in their different phases, degrees of spiritual maturity, Indian society may in fact be likened to guild socialism. And it is in this application of religious philosophy to current social problems that India can be an object lesson to the West of what the ideal form of society should be, for the benefit of mankind.

Unfortunately, as Coomaraswamy sees it, the continuity of Indian society has been interrupted by foreign influence. Young India, though disintegrated by its encounter with the West, still presents a spectacle of stable and leisurely society. The home is still the foundation of social thought; but there have arisen two main types of political consciousness—the moderates and the idealists. The background of Young India today is the struggle between these two elements to retain its spiritual heritage.

Most people think of Hinduism and Buddhism as entirely two separate religions, originating in India and differing hazily either in rituals or essentials or both. This imagined chasm, Dr. Coomaraswamy almost definitively proves in his two-pronged essay *Hindusism and Buddhism*,[3] is the outcome of a superficial acquaintance with the subject. Here, in the sphere of religion as elsewhere in matters of human culture, he

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[1]The title is taken from a letter of Coomaraswamy to Prof. John Clark Archer, dated May 21, 1947.
"Thought it worthwhile to call attention to a remarakable continuity of the Indian tradition in thinking of God as truth; a tendency extending from the RV to Gandhi."

[2]New York: Noonday Press, 1957.

[3]New York: Philosophical Library, 1943.

by

S. DURAI RAJA SINGAM

deprecates the tendency to diversify rather than to unify through a profounder appreciation. Coomaraswamy sets out to correlate Hinduism not only with Buddism but with Christianity; but the success of this undertaking will depend on the outlook of the reader.

> The more superficially one studies Buddhism, the more it seems to differ from Brahmanism in which it originated; the more profound our study, the more difficult it becomes to distinguish Buddhism from Brahmanism, or to say in what respect, if any, Buddhism is really unorthodox.

The difference, as Coomaraswamy sees it, lies in the fact that Buddihst doctrine was propounded by a historical founder, believed to have lived and taught in the Sixth Century B.C. Buddhism, in short, is no new religion, apart from Brahmanism or Hinduism of which it is but a revivified restatement.

In support of this view he cites the attitude of Buddha in disowning the originality of his philosophy and in praise of Brahmans of old who remembered the Ancient Way that leads to Brahma. By emphasis on Buddha as a spiritual state of Awakening and insistence on its plurality in usage, the author shatters the anthropomorphic Buddha, and reveals Buddha as the spiritual vista to Immortality through realisation of the universal Self.

The book, like the story of Aladdin and the wonderful lamp, offers new lamps for old. Its pervading theme, paradoxical as it may seem, is a categorical denial of most of what European and Indian scholars have attributed to Hindusim. The pantheistic nature of the Vedantic doctrine, *karma* in the sense of fate, *maya* as an illusion, reincarnation in the sense of individual transmigrants—all these come under the author's critical attack. *Hinduism and Buddhism* is an enlightening book, not only to the initiate but to inquisitive minds. It sheds light from fresh angles. In writing about Hinduism, he says (italics mine),

> Although the ancient and modern scriptures and practices of Hinduism have been examined by European scholars for more than a century, it would be hardly an exaggeration to say that a faithful account of Hinduism might well be given in the form of a categorical denial of most of the statements that have been made about it, alike by European scholars and *by Indians trained in our modern sceptical and evolutionary modes of thought.*[4]

Reviewing the book in *Philosophic Abstracts*, Dr. Wing-tsit Chan states that it is "a short, concise, comprehensive, and scholarly book by an Indian who stands firmly on Indian grounds." He continues,

> It categorically denies most statements made in the West about Hinduism and Pali Buddhism..... Dr. Coomaraswamy is emphatic in pointing out that there are no sharp distinctions between Brahmanism and Buddhism ..... Indian doctrines must be understood as they are understood in India, whether we like it or not. Dr. Coomaraswamy's contribution is to give us Hinduism and Pali Buddhism as they really are.

In his Introduction to his French translation of this book (*Hinduoisme et Bouddhisme* Paris: Gallimard) Mons. Arbre Renverse writes: Indeed, eastern art cannot be approached without inquiring into the meaning of the forms it assumes, and the answers can only be found through studying the "myths" and the scriptures. A direct interpretation of Vedic and Buddhist texts became one of Coomaraswamy's main interests and apart from his "New Approach to the Vedas" (1933) assumed increasing importance in his output. He had read Rene Guenon's books and accepted the idea of a single traditional Truth all the more readily since his own studies confirmed this more and more.

Although he covered a very large number of subjects, his memory may come to be more especially linked with the theme of the Gods and the Titans, that of the "Inverted Tree" to which he devoted a magnificent study, and finally that of the "Self" and reincarnation. As is well-known, the latter subject provided him with an opportunity

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[4] *Hinduism and Buddhism* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1943), p. 3.

to restore the true meaning of the original Buddhist teachings which had been distorted by oriental scholars. The main conclusions of his researches were assembled in "Hinduism and Buddhism" (1943) which will stand as his intellectual testament.

Of the oneness of Hinduism and Christianity, Coomaraswamy has written, in *The Indian Doctrine of Man's Last End*,[5] so revealingly and succinctly that I quote him sparingly:

> The religion of India is known as Hinduism or Brahmanism. Of this religion Buddhism was a variant, related to Hinduism in the same way that Protestantism was related to Catholicism.
>
> When the religion of India was first examined by Europeans, and mainly by Christian missionaries, nothing but a difference between Christianity and Hindusim could be seen; because no one wished to recognise anything but difference. We know now that the parallels between Christianity and Hinduism are so many, so close, and often so verbally exact, that we can only consider that both are dialects of one and the same spiritual language: only this distinction remaining, that in Christianity the major emphasis is devotional and ethical, in Hinduism metaphysical and intellectual. If we consider only mediaeval Christianity, or Catholic doctrine, even this distinction partly disappears.
>
> Very many misconceptions of Indian religion still persist, even in scholarly circles. Hinduism, for example, is described as a polytheism, but is no more polytheistic than Christianity, in which connexion you may be surprised to learn than no less an authority than St. Thomas Aquinas affirms that 'We cannot say *The Only God*, for deity is common to several' (STh. 1.31.2) And just as the Muhammadans have mistakenly regarded Christianity as a polytheism, so Christians have been mistaken in calling Hinduism a polytheism, the fact being that neither Christianity nor Hinduism are polytheistic, though both are polynomial: an infinity of designation of the First Principle being in fact inevitable, precisely because of Its infinite variety and omnimodality when regarded from our point of view, however perfectly simple and one and the same it may be in itself.
>
> In the same way Hinduism has often been called a pantheistic faith, pantheism being the doctrine that everything is God, and God identical with all things and *not* at the same time infinitely more than all things. In fact, however, this doctrine is constantly and emphatically repudiated in Hinduism by repeated affirmations both of immanence and of transcendence, and by a repeated distinction of the finite and intelligible from the infinite and unintelligible aspects of Deity. The Hindu and Christian traditions, indeed, both alike employ the complementary ways 'of affiirmation' and 'of negation' side by side: on the one hand describing the Deity according to His powers or acts, or manifestations of omnipresence, and on the other declaring that 'Nothing true can be said of God.' that whatever can be said is inadequate, or even a distortion, and hence the famous phrase of the Upanishads, 'No! No!'
>
> At the same time we meet with repeated assertions of the identity, not indeed of the empirical ego, but of the real and innermost self of man with the Divine Essence, in equally famous *logoi* such as 'That are thou,' and 'It is only by becoming God that one can truly worship Him.' That brings us directly face to face with the problem to be discussed today, of what is really meant by the Hindu doctrine of deification, and the question, whether or not the Indian 'deification' differs from the Christian "deification" as understood for example by St. Bernard or by Meister Eckhart.

Coomaraswamy tells the story of Hinduism in a brief article, "Medieval and Modern Hinduism,"[6] calling it "a multifarious theism, overlying on the one hand the primitive

[5] *Asia*, New York, Vol. XXXVIII (1937), pp. 380-381.
[6] *Asia*, Vol. XXIII, No. 3 (1923).

beliefs of aboriginal tribes and connected on the other hand with a pure and profound philosophy." He notes that "philosophy and worship are not divided" in Hinduism; and he points out that the purpose of the many images of Deity is that the divinity "is worshiped....in the form best suited" to the spiritual needs and understanding of the worshiper, "for the whole *raison d'etre* of religion is to express ideas in comprehensible and easily apprehended forms." Describing some of the innumerable forms of Hindu divinity, Coomaraswamy discusses Rama and Krishna as forms of Vishnu and the feminine forms of the goddess Devi. Finally he explains the caste system, saying that "all castes and vocations are regarded equally, one as important as another to the architecture of the state." He describes the purpose of caste, wherein before birth a man's duty awaits him, as providing a society in which the individual is "welcomed into a world prepared for all his needs." He cites the *Bhagavadgita* admonition, "Better one's own duty, though devoid of merit, than the duty of another well discharged."

So vital and full of wisdom are his views on the *Bhagavadgita* that I submit a number of quotations which are taken from his writings:

> We must....especially mention the *Bhagavadgita*, as probably the most important single work ever produced in India; this book of eighteen chapters is not, as it has been sometimes called, a 'sectarian' work, but one universally studied and often repeated daily from memory by millions of Indians of all persuasions; it may be described as a compendium of the whole Vedic doctrine to be found in the earlier Vedas, Brahmanas and Upanishads, and being therefore the basis of all the latest developments, it can be regarded as the focus of all Indian religion. To this we must add that the pseudo-historical Krishna and Arjuna are to be identified with mythical Agni and Indra.[7]
>
> A very large number of Hindus, very many millions certainly, daily repeat from memory a part, or in some cases even the whole, of the *Bhagavadgita*. This recitation is a chanting; and no one who has heard Sanskrit poetry thus recited, as well as understanding it, can really judge of it as poetry. The style is quite simple and without ornament, like that of the rest of the Epic, and the Upanishads; it is not yet the ornamented classical style of the Dramas. On the whole I think the judgments of professional scholars are to be discounted, for many reasons personally, I should think a good comparison, poetically, would be with the best of mediaeval Latin hymns.[8]
>
> The *Bhagavadgita* says, 'Better one's own duty, though devoid of merit, than the duty of another well discharged.' And this is the underlying theme of the whole Hindu social and religious structure. To the prince the duties of princehood are the one path of life; to the warrior the duties of his caste and vocation. The activities not ordained by caste and vocation are, however excellently performed, the gravest of sins and severely punishable by the state.[9]
>
> The universal acceptance of the *Bhagavadgita*, in which the Upanishad doctrines, combined with the path of devotion to a personal deity and of spiritual progress through selfless fulfillment of vocation are first and fully set forth (is part of) the whole body of inherited tradition constituting the higher culture (of India.)[10]
>
> In the matter of direction towards the Kingdom of Heaven 'within you' the modern world is far more lacking in the will to seek, than likely to be led astray by false direction. From the Satanic point of view there could hardly be imagined a better activity than to be engaged in the 'conversion of the heathen' from one to another body of dogmas: that surely was not what was meant by the injunction, 'Go thou and preach the Kingdom

[7] *Hinduism and Buddhism.*
[8] From a letter to Walter Shewring.
[9] "Medieval and Modern Hinduism."
[10] "Medieval and Modern Hinduism."

> of God,'—or was He mistaken, when He said 'The Kingdom of God is within you?'[11]
>
> For there are many of these Hindus and Buddhists whose knowledge of Christianity and of the greatest Christian writers is virtually nil, as there are Christians, equally learned whose real knowledge of any other religion but their own is virtually nil, because they have never imagined what it might be to live these other faiths. Just as there can be no real knowledge of a language if we have never even imaginatively participated in the activities to which the language refers so there can be no real knowledge of any 'life' that one has not in some measure lived.[12]
>
> In conclusion: I conceive the proper end of 'Comparative Religion,' regarded as a discipline, to be the demonstration of the identity of the common metaphysical tradition underlying all religious extensions: which when established (which can only be done: intellectually, and not with any immediate view to edification, intellect being defined as the 'habit of first principles') will permit religions in the plural to exist side by side as variations necessitated by the infinity of the theme and the variety of human character, the thing being always in the knower according to the mode of the knower. What Europe has understood by 'religious tolerance' is a merely negative conception, reached by way of scepticism and political convenicence.[13]

The word "tolerance" is so often used in English in a loose and uncomplimentary sense that, in order to understand Coomaraswamy's fundamental attitude to religion, it would be necessary to define at the outset, what it is not and what it should not be. Tolerance, when it implies enduring things against one's superior knowledge or simply indifference or lack of interest, is the expression of a maladjusted mind, and as such it connotes both positive hostility and apathy; it is just the paragon of virtue it should never be. But when a mind, untramelled by subconscious prejudice, is actively receptive of knowledge with no attempt at passing judgment, when it seeks no justification of preconceived ideas, through comparison, then we have tolerance in the best sense of the word.

Dr. Coomaraswamy's religious tolerance is of the latter calibre. Unlike Sri Ramakrishna, he did not successively live the life of a Hindu, a Muslim and a Christian to realise the ultimate goal of God through many venues. Nevertheless, what Sri Ramakrishna gained through a life of experience, Coomaraswamy gained through a great intellect invested with a vision to see through superficialities, to grasp the underlying fundamentals and the unity amidst.

In his tribute to Sri Ramakrishna, prophet of the harmony of religions, Coomaraswamy quotes Blake:

> The religion of all nations is derived from each nation's different reception of the poetic encius, which is everywhere called the spirit of prophecy. . . . . As all men are alike (though infinitely various) so all religions, and as all similars have one source.

Literally hundreds of texts, he maintains, could also be "cited from Christian and Islamic, Vedic, Taoist and other scriptures and their patristic expositions, in close and sometimes literally verbal agreement."

The world of today, as Coomaraswamy sees it, is a hotch-potch of economic and political strife, to readjust which towards unity a sincere understanding of its faiths has never before been more urgently needed. No religion, he maintains, should be made

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11 Ananda Coomaraswamy, "Sri Ramakrishna and World Tolerance," a lecture delivered at the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Sri Ramakrishnan, New York, March 8, 1936. *Prabudda Bharata*, June, 1936.

12 Ananda Coomaraswamy, "Paths That Lead to the Same Summit—Some Observations on Comparative Religion." *Motive*, May, pp. 29-32, 35.

13 Ananda Coomaraswamy, "On Translation: Maya, Deva, Tapas." *Isis*, Vol. XIX, No. 55 (1933), pp. ix, 116.

to subserve economic and political ends; for as long as this state of affairs exists, so long will the world remain arrested in its growth in the consciousness of mankind. Much of the superior attitude of the West, patent in its condescension towards the East, he attributes to its ignorance of religions other than Christianity, through the fault, not of any outsider but its insincerity of approach.

One has only to look round to realise the truth of Coomaraswamy's assertions. Not only has man failed to outgrow his time-honoured ethnocentricism, despite the rapid progress made in world communication; but ethnocentricism has pervaded his religious life, limiting his vision, stunting universal sympathy and obstructing world citizenry. It is a regrettable outlook on life, reorientation of which alone can pave the way for a better understanding of human relationships and lasting peace.

Coomaraswamy's religious tolerance is actuated by the desire to see the realisation of cosmopolitanism through a profounder appreciation of all faiths. His plea is part of The Open Conspiracy, as propounded by H.G. Wells, the only difference being his emphasis on the religious instead of the latter's humanist approach. To achieve this end, he advocates a comprehensive training in comparative religion, not along the present day biased lines adopted by seminaries for would-be missionaries, but in the nature of "exchange-professors" in universities. In fact he pleaded not so much for Comparative Religion as for the Transcendent Unity of Religions. He envisages a world unified by a religion of religions, underlined and defined by first principles, which must accrue from such a harmonious study. In place of missionary work, which he warns in his essay, "Paths That Lead to the Same Summit," must be completely abandoned, he would propose an inter-religious conference to provide the basis for world co-operation. Needless to say, the catholic theologian, the rationalist and the scientific humanist have no place in his scheme; for these, by their professed outlook, are already out of tune with the great task of trans-social synthesis.

It is still too early, however, to predict whether faith, reason or science will ultimately be the motive force to bind humanity and liberate it from an impending catastrophe of ever-increasing dimensions. As in religion, so in matters pertaining to world unity there are men of diverse convictions as to the final outcome of their aspirations and the right course to pursue. The theologian sees hope in a God who is the Father of mankind; the rationalist, in nihilism and a standardised atheism; and the scientist, in ethical philosophy. But who knows that these attitudes of mind may not be merging forces, of which Ananda Coomaraswamy's tolerance for the sake of religious quintesence is a forerunner?

APPENDIX I

Heard's 'The Philosophia Perennis' deals with Coomaraswamy's contribution to a synthesis between Eastern wisdom and Western thought.

Like Huxley and Radhakrishnan, Coomaraswamy is equally at home in both oriental and occidental culture; in science as well as art; in not only one but several religions. The width of his culture and learning can be estimated from his published work: *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art, Rajput Painting, The Dance of Shiva, History of Indian and Indonesian Art, A New Approach to the Vedas,* and *The Transformation of Nature in Art.* But it is chiefly as a philosopher that Coomaraswamy interest us, and his contribution is the pertinence of philosophy to the problem of immortality. Now as material things cannot be immortal in *esse per se,* wisdom is primarily concerned with immaterial things. The conclusion that he comes to is that metaphysics can in no way be thought of as a doctrine offering consolations to a suffering humanity. Although the metaphyisical concept of perfection may be regarded as *non*-human, it certainly is not *in*human. For 'it is maintained that such a state is always and everywhere accessible to whoever will press towards the central point of consciousness and being on any ground or plane of being.....' What is required from any one to actualize his inherent immortality is 'a total and uncompromising denial of himself and final mortification'. It is here, the religious point of view, that one's realization of immortality lies. For as St. Thomas Aquinas said,: 'the duration of eternity is infinite'. What is required in order to conquer contingent death (*punar mrtyu*) is 'to be dead and buried in the Godhead'; in the *Real Self.* It is a state of which St. Thomas Aquinas says: 'Certain men even in this state of life are greater than certain angels, not actually, but virtually'. And again St. Augustine: 'Even we ourselves as mentally tasting something eternal, are not in this world'. The Godhead being a noumenal principle is to be differentiated from the subtle and gross bodies. This explains the remark of St. Thomas Aquinas: 'things belonging to the state of glory are not under the sun'. Because in that state, as St. Gregory, explains,: 'Some men are taken up into the highest angelic orders.'

Coomaraswamy's masterpiece is, however, a small book called *Hinduism and Buddhism*. In it he tries to show that the Northern (esoteric) and Southern (exoteric) schools of Buddhism should not be treated as if in opposition to each other. But what is more important is his second point, that Buddhist and Hindu philosophy are not in conflict. The former has grown out of the massive and fertile field provided by the latter. 'Still further, Dr. Coomaraswamy wishes to show — and certainly his scholarship would seem to sustain it — that the essentials of *Christianity*, of Buddhism in its two forms, and of Hinduism are one. Here is the philosophia perennis, here the eternal gospel." Gerald Heard in *Vedanta for the Western World*, page 295.

What then is the *essential* underlying idea of Western Vedanta? It is summed up in a single statement of Meister Eckhart: 'The kingdom of God belongs only to those who are thoroughly dead while still alive in this world'. It is the death of the ego, *prior* to that of the body, which leads to the *life everlasting*. As Coomaraswamy says: 'For the Supreme Identity is no less a Death and a Darkness than a Life and a Light. . . . . And this is what we understand to be the final purport of the First Philosophy'. The First is also the *Perennial* Philosophy. — Reproduced from *EASTERN WISDOM AND WESTERN THOUGHT* by P.J. Saher, 1969. (George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London), pages 146, 147 & 149.

APPENDIX TO COOMARASWAMY'S LETTER TO F.S.C. NORTHROP OF JULY 4TH, 1946

The difficulties which stand in the way of E-W- "man to manness" are largely occasioned by those who as Schopenhauer pointed out, always try to prove that even when the same statements are made they mean different things.

Some day I may bring out a book of "parallel passages" in opposite columns, the vertical dividing line representing "Suez." Samples enclosed.

A few examples would be:

Omne compositum est
potentia disolubile
St. Th. *Summa c. Gentiles* I. 18

"These are the marks of the composite: origination, growth, alteration. These of the incomposite: that there is neither origination, growth, nor alteration"
Angullara Nikaya I. 152

written in
(Greek words)
Nich. Ethics VI. 3.2

"Birth is the occasion of and death"
Digha Nikaya 11.57

"The tongue is a fire. . . ." Vinaya 1.34

"The tongue is a fire and setteth afire the wheel of becoming"
James III. 6

"What springs from the tongue is like fire. . . . . words set the whole world ablaze"
Mathnaur 1. 1893-

Quesli nei mortale e permolore
Paradiso 1. 116

"From within the head, the Mover"
Maitri Up. 11.6

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto these, ye have done it unto me. . . . . "
Math. 25.40

"Whoever would nurse me, let him nurse the sick"
Vinaya 1. 3

"Bodiless and having many bodies, or rather, present in all bodies"
Hermes Tr., *Lib.* v. 10A

"The embodied one in everyone's body . . . one and the same and in all beings"
Bhagavad Gita 11.30 IX.29

Such would extend to hundreds of examples: and such massive agreements can only rest on a common ground.

Very sincerely,
A.K. Coomaraswamy

Copied from a handwritten letter. Courtesy: Prof: F. S. C., Northrop.

APPENDIX II

CHRISTIANITY AND HINDUISM

(The exchange of letters below is interesting in connection with Dr. Coomaraswamy's article *The Indian Doctrine of Man's Last End, Asia*, New Yorк, XXXVII (1937), 186-213, on page 380 of *Asia*, New York. May 1937.

Dear Dr. Coomaraswamy,

I have read with much pleasure your paper on the Indian Doctrine of Man's Last End.

It was very brilliant and attests as usual your remarkable familiarity both with Christian and Indian thought. My only objection is your conclusion in the form in which you have framed it. You have certainly established the fundamental identity of the views of eertain profound aspects of Christainity and Hinduism, but these aspects, make up but a very little part of what we understand as Hinduism and as Christianity and your conclusions would seem to be very far from reality to many Hindus, and Christians alike.

After all these systems are not what they mean to the deeper minds concerned with them, but to the averge believer. It is no doubt well to present essential similarities, but I fear that an American or a British audience would form a very inaccurate idea both of Hinduism and of Christianity if they accepted them as permeated in the mind of the ordinary believer of the profound conception of which you are so ardent and accomplished an exponent.

With kindest regards,

Edinburgh. A. BERRIEDALE KEITH.

Dear Professor Keith,

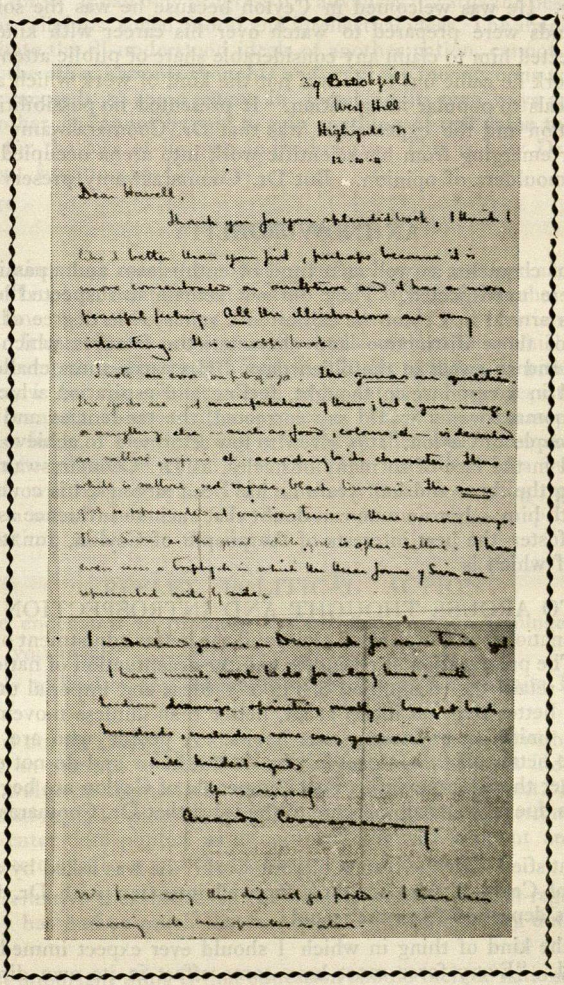
I am always appreciative of your tolerant attitude towards my "idealistic" approach. I am of course ready to agree that in an article like "Man's Last End" (which, by the way, will be printed in *Asia*,) I am considering both systems in their highest or deepest —*paramarthika*—significance. However, it is at least as necessary and proper that this should be done by some and for some as it is to study relegions also in their lower aspects, See my reply to your criticism would take this form (using your own words with very slight change). "After all these systems *are* that they mean to the deeper minds concerned with them, no less truly they are what they mean to the average believer."

Just as in medieval exegesis the possibitity of an interpretation on at least four levels of reference (literal, moral, allegorical, anagogic) is always recognized, so I think one can approach the Indian texts from different points of view each of which is legitimate, so long as one is perfectly conscious of what one is doing at the time.

With kind regards.

Boston. ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY.

Coomaraswamy: From A Home Archives



An unpublished letter of Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877 - 1947) to E.B. Havell. (1861 - 1934) — Courtesy Havell-file at the Kalabhavan, Santiniketan, India. I have been informed by a close relative of the late E. B. Havell, that most of the correspondence between the two were burnt by mistake — S. D. R. S.

by

S. Durai Raja Singam

1.

FAREWELL INTERVIEW WITH DR. COOMARASWAMY

Social, Educational and Domestic.

It is only two and half years since Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy arrived in Ceylon after a youth spent in a Western environment amid Western influences and under Western training. He was welcomed in Ceylon because he was the son of his father. His father's friends were prepared to watch over his career with kindly interest but few of them expected him to claim any considerable share of public attention or national respect. The work he came out to do was not the kind of work which arouses popular attention or appeals to popular imagination. It presented no possibilities for securing general appreciation and the expectation was that Dr. Coomaraswamy would find no opportunities for emerging from his scientific work into arena occupied by the leaders of thought and moulders of opinion. But Dr. Coomaraswamy preserved

AN INDIVIDUALITY

and a strength of character as well as a fund of enthusiasm and a passion for national ideals which were unsuspected. They did not remain unsuspected long. Within a few weeks of his arrival in Ceylon he exhibited a remarkable degree of earnestness for the cultivation of those distinctive and characteristic features which made Eastern life so beautiful and so sweet in the olden days. His earnestness challenged attention and has resulted in a response in thought, feeling and aspiration which have already changed, Dr. Coomaraswamy would say corrected, the tendencies and the ideals of a section of the people of Ceylon. It is given to few reformers to achieve so much in so short a time and in the face of so many obstacles, as Dr. Coomaraswamy has achieved in Ceylon during the three and half years he has been amongst his countrymen. Men may disagree with him — but no man can doubt that such an influence as he has exerted is calculated to foster the best interests of the people of Ceylon, for it is an influence the first effect of which is

TO AROUSE THOUGHT AND INTROSPECTION

the definition of national and individual aims, and the better adjustment of life's activities to those aims. The preservation of prejudice and the accentuation of national differences may or may not retard the recognition of imperial ideas and imperial unity. But even these things are better than no ideals at all, better than aimless movement and abject and thoughtless imitation of incongruous habits. A people who are galvanised into introspection are better off than a people who do not know and do not care where they stand and whether they are moving. That the people of Ceylon are beginning to think of these things is due in no small measure to the work that Dr. Coomaraswamy has done in Ceylon.

"Are you satisfied with the results of your work?" he was asked by a representative of the "Times of Ceylon", who sought a farewell interview with Dr. Coomaraswamy on the eve of his departure from the island.

"It is not the kind of thing in which I should ever expect immediate or obvious results," he said. "Every force must have some effect in its own direction. The tendency of the work, I have no doubt, has been useful. You do what you think is necessary, without regard to the immediate results. Whatever one does is bound to have a certain effect sooner or later. I believed what I regard as

A NATIONAL REACTION

is an absolutely inevitable thing. I do not say it will come tomorrow. It may require fifty or hundred years, but a move of feeling corresponding to the Celtic revival in Europe is bound to come sooner or later".

"What is the idea at the back of it?"

"Well, that is difficult to say off-hand. But a turn to national ideals is certainly calculated to make life more worthy. Eastern nations are beginning to realise that it can do them no real good to bury their own talents, that it is their duty to make use of their own talents instead of trying to take up other people's".

Dr. Coomaraswamy shares the view that a nation's progress can only go along the lines which

ITS OWN NATIONAL EVOLUTION

has marked out for it. It can only progress if it advances towards the best developments of its own peculiar religious, social, moral and intellectual ideas. The abandonment of these, in order to imitate the ill-understood ideals of another nation, cannot but be disastrous, specially when the other nation's thoughts and ways are incongruous with its own. Even when a nation succeeds to some extent in forsaking its own ways and adapting itself to those of another, it cannot be said to gain anything of real value to itself, which can compensate it for the loss of its own individuality. This is how Dr. Coomaraswamy puts the present situation in Ceylon:-

"There are

THREE WAYS

in which one nation may meet the powerful influence of another nation. The first is simply to cast off its own heritage and imitate every aspect of the other nation's culture. When this is done the result is that the smaller nation's contribution to cosmopolitan culture is lost. It contributes nothing to the intellectual world in which the larger nation lives, and at the same time it parts with its own culture; so that it is neither here nor there. The second way is for the smaller nation to be intensively conservative, to rest upon its own prejudices and to refuse to alter or to learn. That is more manly and more admirable but it is also futile. The third way is for the smaller nation to make its own definite contribution to cosmopolitan culture, to hold the individual idea in the world idea. That is the only worthy position. This is what I mean by saying that there will be a national reaction sooner or later. The Eastern nations will give up both the first and the second position, to assume the third."

REFLEX POLITICAL ACTION

"Does the endeavour to promote the national reaction impinge upon politics?"

"How do you mean?"

"Is it likely to lead to any relaxation of the bonds which unite India and Ceylon with England?"

"No. It is not an attempt to alienate the Ceylonese from British rule in any way. Primarily, it is an attempt to enable them to maintain their own individuality and so preserve their value to themselves and to the world. Our object, like those of the National Association, is to place the real situation before the Government. To do that we may so far enter into politics as to approach the Government and lay before the rulers the real state of affairs and the best interests of the people."

Our representative then broached the subject of education in regard to which Dr. Coomaraswamy has had so much that is new and valuable to say during the past two years.

"The most important thing is that education should include national culture. Every person claiming to be educated should have knowledge of one or other of

THE VERNACULAR LANGUAGES

corresponding to the English boy's knowledge of English, as Sir Alexander Ashmore said at Kandy. It would be a very good thing if more attention were given to those words of his than to his other statements. In regard to other matters, it would be better if the original features of education in the East were more sympathetically studied and combined with Western methods rather than totally rejected in favour of the latter. The Oriental methods are often condemned by Western people. For example, they are said to be purely

A SYSTEM OF MEMORY

which does not encourage the learner to think for himself. But the examination system as is carried on in Ceylon is also, in practice, a memory system and as such inferior to the Eastern, because the subjects learned are forgotten as soon as the examination is over whereas the literature learnt by heart under the old system remained with man till the day of his death. In Ceylon, the process of imparting information which goes by the name of education cannot in the majority of cases, be regarded as any serious improvement on the system of education which preceded it. It remains to be seen what the future will disclose. I regard the Cambridge local examinations, for example, as in themselves a hindrance to education, and they will certainly remain so, at least as long as the vernacular languages are excluded from them. Probably the establishment of

A LOCAL UNIVERSITY

would have the best effect on education as it would study local needs. The two languages which everybody should learn are his own language and English. Under the present system English itself is insufficiently and inadequately taught from the lowest stages to the highest. In the elementary classes in Ceylon schools small children may be found making use of reading books which speak of objects of the nature of which they have not the remotest conception and even in the classes preparing for the Cambridge examination the boys make use of words and phrases they do not understand.

Dr. Coomaraswamy is a believer in the

VALUE OF HOME INFLUENCE

and agrees that the atmosphere of his home enters largely into the foundation of a child's character.

"The majority of Ceylonese homes," he said, "are furnished with an attempt to imitate European style and are almost totally devoid of an element of taste. There is no judgment shown in the selection of miscellaneous objects which are considered necessary for the furnishing of a room. The majority of Ceylonese are totally incapable of furnishing their houses in a style at all acceptable to a cultured European. It is not a question of expenditure of money. With half the cost far better results could be obtained, but so long as people are determined to purchase cheap articles which they don't understand or make use of, in large quantities, nothing better can be expected. The furnishing of Indian homes was criticised not long ago by Lord Curzon in the bitterest terms, and his words are equally applicable to Ceylon."

"What is the remedy?"

THE CHIEF REMEDY

would be to reject fully three-quarters of the existing furniture. At present the homes of the Ceylonese are crowded with objects, the majority of which are superfluous and which might very well be removed; then there might be room to walk about. If one wants more things, one should consider why one wants them and decide exactly what he wants and whether the desired objects would fulfil any purpose. But as long as the leading families continue to decorate their homes with artifical flowers and tinsel bottles it is evident that they have no capacity nor the inclination to choose the objects for their homes. A greater simplicity and a willingness to have a few good rather than many worthless articles is what is chiefly needed."

HIS MESSAGE

Dr. Coomaraswamy's last words to his countrymen for the present are:-

"The Ceylonese will neither respect themselves nor be respected by others so long, as their own attitude towards the West remains one of abject imitation."

The Times of Ceylon, Morning Edition
28*th December*, 1906.

[I am indebted to my friend and classmate, Sri C. Carthigesan of Colombo for sending me this rare material — S. D. R. S.]

2.

THE MESSAGE OF THE EAST

By: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, D.Sc., Ganesh & Co.

(A Review in *The Modern Review* Calcutta for Jan. 1910, Vol 7. No 1. pp 89-90 by Sister Nivedita)

If the value of a book is to be judged by its bulk, this small volume of 50 pages would deserve scant mention. In reality however it deserves a place of honour in our book-shelves, for in these pages the author handles a subject — Art — little known and less studied by us, with all the authority of a great art-critic that he is. The author begins by referring to the "Indianisation of the West" which is a marked feature of the times in philosophy, psychology, religion and art and quotes a recent English writer who says: "When a new inspiration comes into European art, it will come from the East." It is of this message of the East that Dr. Coomaraswamy speaks. The art of the West is realistic, that of the East idealistic. It is a fatal view to hold that the significance of art lies "solely or primarily in the perfection of its own technique, the subject-matter becoming indifferent, until at last many realists depict equally willingly the hideous and the beautiful, sometimes apparently by definite choice preferring the former, so that the term 'realistic' in art and literature has come to mean the detailed presentation of the unpleasant. But even apart from this obvious evil, satisfaction in the development and exercise of the imitative faculty, carried to excess, precludes the evolution of the creative. The essential limitation of this realistic presentation of natural beauty lies in the restriction to a definite point in space and time and in the mingling of desire with emotion. The impression of the beautiful fades away in proportion as any relation of the beautiful object to the desires of the subject enters his consciousness. This is particularly obvious, for example, in the treatment of the nude." Talent with capacity for labour is required to acquire technical perfection but genius sees into the inner soul of the object sought to be represented and this it does not by the development of the imitative faculty but by virtue of its imaginative grasp, and by 'yoga' or contemplation, as Sukracharya puts it, till the self-identification with the imagined forms becomes complete. When art has attained this superior stage it is not necessary to paint a study in still life from a living model posing before the painter's eyes, for the artist's imagination has visualised the image in an unchangeable, imperishable form which is for all time. "It is the message of Eastern art psychology to emphasise the possibility and manner of developing this power of subjective visual imagination." The message of the East in art therefore is, that there exists a greater beauty and truth than that of this phenomenal world; and the artist must imitate the beauty which is in Heaven rather than its imperfect imitation in individual physical forms. "For why," as Deussen says, "should the artist wish to imitate laboriously and inadequately what nature offers everywhere in unattainable perfection?" To transmute the momentary into the universal, to supplant the diversity, analysis and the separate self of the West by the unity of life and rhythm and discipline, the synthesis and the universal self of the East, is again the message of the East. The standard of criticism which judges by mere anatomical correctness is false and quite modern, for it would accept the work of any academy student and reject the Early Italian painting and the Gothic wood-cut. "The love of nature in all her moods has increased by a natural compensatory tendency, in proportion as human life has been divorced from nature. It is in the absence of nature in the artificial life of towns, that we need pictures of nature's outward form to call up within us the memory of far off peace and beauty. No one in the constant presence of his mistress needs at the same time her picture. It is only in absence that a picture is desired, and even so, perhaps, he is the better lover who needs no picture in concrete form, having a more perfect memory picture in his heart. The modern habit of dolling the walls of a house with framed pictures of beautiful things was known in the days when all accessories of life itself were beautiful."

The penultimate chapter is on the decline of art in modern India and its vulgarity, the disappearance of all that went to make the dignity, the grace and the mystery of Indian life, and the last chapter deals with art as affected by the revival of industrialism known as

the Swadeshi movement. On this latter point the writer's conclusion is stated in the following brief paragraph: "The fact is that without artistic understanding, Indian manufacturers cannot be effectively restored. It is suicidal to compete with Europe on a basis of cheapness, let the competition be on a basis of quality." Dr. Coomaraswamy is careful to point out that the ideal held up by him is the practical *par excellence*. "The loss of artistic understanding more than anything else has ruined Indian industries and prevents the possibility of their revival. The neglect of Indian music has taken away the livelihood of the maker of musical instruments, with their hereditary and exquisite skill; has likewise destroyed the livelihood of Indian musicians; and fifteen lakhs worth of foreign instruments are annually imported from abroad." "Therefore I say to the well-to-do, that it is better to spend two hundred and fifty rupees on a Benares *sari* dyed with the country dyes, though two hundred would pay for it dyed in aniline, than to subscribe ten times that amount to some Swadeshi factory for making nibs or cloth and from which you expect a handsome dividend." Here our author is no doubt betrayed into an exaggeration by his enthusiasm for art; for it is obvious that the earning of dividends is necessary for the very purpose of acquiring means sufficient for the purchase of Benares *saris* worth Rs. 250 a piece. In other words, art can flourish only in an atmosphere of material prosperity. On the whole, Dr. Coomaraswamy is one of the few Indian writers who can teach us something new or original and the small volume the purport of which has been summarised above teems with thoughtful suggestions.

The book is handsomely printed on art paper, and is illustrated with a beautiful portrait of the author in national costume. We would advise everyone who wants to make a critical study of Indian art to read, mark and inwardly digest the gifted writer's exposition of the subject.

— N*

3.

A MESSAGE

I look forward with pleasure to the appearance of *Voice of India*, to be published in the cause of India's Freedom. We hear nowadays, almost exclusively of India's right to a political and economic freedom and (with the exception of an infinitesimal number of Indian traitors whose vested interests are bound up with the status quo) we affirm this right unanimously and unconditionally.

There are, nevertheless, other and perhaps even more important freedoms to be considered, which may be called collectively a cultural freedom, bearing in mind that in a country such as India, with its millennial and living traditions, and where it has never been attempted to live by "bread alone," no dividing line can be drawn between culture and religion. There are cultural and religious as well as political Imperialisms; and if we are to be free in any more real sense than that in which the "economically determined" Western man of today is free, then our whole system of education must be liberated not only from direct or indirect control by any foreign government, and from the text-book racket.

This means that the Western friends of Indian freedom must recognize that ours, if it is to be real, will include a freedom to differ from them in very many important issues.

The voice of a free India will not be an echo of any other, however confident, but her own.

ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

— *Voice of India* (*Washington*)
No. 1, 1944, p. 12.
Published *by* National Committee for India's Freedom, Washington, DC.

*'N' is Sister Nivedita of Ramakrishna — Vivekanada.

4.

COOMARASWAMY REGRETS DEGRADATION OF INDIA

We shall be much interested to see what reception will be given to the eloquent and forcible little volume which the distinguished Indian art critic, Dr. A.K. Coomaraswamy, has just published under the title of "The Message of the East". This scholarly thinker and lover of art finds little to please him in the present condition of India. He sees the politicians in the ascendancy and most of them afflicted with the delusion, as he holds it, that if India is to be regenerated she must work out her salvation by competing with Manchester in the manufacture of cheap cotton goods or by the indigenous production of matches, soap and fountain pens. And while the advocates of Swadeshi are engaged in this misguided effort all that is most characteristic of India, including the arts which made her the wonder and envy of the world, is perishing from neglect.

From his point of view the whole Swadeshi movement as at present directed, makes not for the elevation, but for the degradation of India, not for restoring national life but for destroying all that gives any ground for hoping that India will one day proclaim her message to the West. "Go into a swadeshi shop". he writes, "you will not find the evidences of Indian invention, the wealth of beauty which the Indian craftsman used to lavish on the simplest articles of daily use.... You will not find these things, but you will find every kind of imitation of the productions of European commerce, differing only from their unlovely prototypes in their slightly higher price and slightly inferior quality". The idea of realising national self-consciousness—to use a phrase much loved by ardent politicians—by the manufacture and sale of dingy grey shirtings, or materials coloured with loud aniline dyes or travelling trunks painted with every colour of the rainbow, seems to Dr. Coomaraswamy, a wild absurdity over which he hardly knows whether to smile or to weep. Such a grotesque ideal could not, he asserts have been conceived by men who understood and loved India.

It will doubtless amaze the Congressmen, the political organisers, and the orators of mass meetings who claim to feel the pulse of the Indian people and to be promoting their best interests to be told that they have no real and intelligent affection for their country. But the eloquent art critic has no hesitation in the matter. "This loss of beauty in our lives", he says, "is a proof that we do not love India, for India, above all nations, was beautiful not long ago. It is the weakness of our national movement that we do not love India, we love suburban England, we love the comfortable bourgeois prosperity that is to be some day established when we have learned enough science and forgotten enough art to successfully compete with Europe in a commercial war conducted on its present lines. It is not thus that nations are made". This is plain speaking. Those who have thought most on the question will be disposed to admit that the doctrine contains a large measure of truth....

Extract from an editorial, *Statesman*, Calcutta, September 22, 1909 and reproduced in *The Statesman Annual* 1874-1974, p 105

5.

THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

by Sri Aurobindo Ghose

Our contemporary, the *Statesman*, notices in an unusually self-restrained article the recent brochure republished by Dr. A.K. Coomaraswamy from the *Modern Review* under the title, "The Message of the East". We have not the work before us but, from our memory of the articles and our knowledge of our distinguished countryman's views, we do not think the *Statesman* has quite caught the spirit of the writer. Dr. Coomaraswamy is above all a lover of art and beauty and the ancient thought and greatness of India, but he is also, and as a result of this deep love and appreciation, an ardent Nationalist. Writing as an artist, he calls attention to the debased aesthetic ideas and tastes which the ugly and sordid commercialism of the West has introduced into the mind of a nation once distinguished for its superior beauty and grandeur of conception and for the extent to which it suffused the whole of life with the forces of the intellect and the spirit, He laments the persistence of a servile imitation of English ideas, English methods, English machinery and production even in the new Nationalism. And he reminds his readers that nations cannot be made by politics and economics alone, but that art also has a great and still unrecognised claim. The main drift of his writing is to censure the low imitative un-Indian and bourgeois ideals of our national activity in the nineteenth century and to recall our minds to the cardinal fact that, if India is to arise and be great as a nation, it is not by imitating the methods and institutions of English politics and commerce, but by carrying her own civilisation, purified of the

weaknesses that have overtaken it, to a much higher and mightier fulfilment than any that it has reached in the past. Our mission is to outdistance, lead and instruct Europe, not merely to imitate and learn from her. Dr. Coomaraswamy speaks of art, but it is certain that a man of his wide culture would not exclude, and we know he does not exclude, thought, literature and religion from the forces that must uplift our nation and are necessary to its future. To recover Indian thought, Indian character, Indian perceptions, Indian energy, Indian greatness, and to solve the problems that perplex the world in an Indian spirit and from the Indian standpoint, this, in our view, is the mission of Nationalism. We agree with Dr. Coomaraswamy that an exclusive preoccupation with politics and economics is likely to dwarf our growth and prevent the flowering of originality and energy. We have to return to the fountainheads of our ancient religion, philosophy, art and literature and pour the revivifying influences of our immemorial Aryan spirit and ideals into our political and economic development. This is the ideal the *Karmayogin* holds before it, and our outlook and Dr. Coomaraswamy's do not substantially differ. But in judging our present activities we cannot look, as he does, from a purely artistic and idealistic standpoint, but must act and write in the spirit of a practical idealism.

The debasement of our mind, character and tastes by a grossly commercial, materialistic and insufficient European education is a fact on which the young Nationalism has always insisted. The practical destruction of our artistic perceptions and the plastic skill and fineness of eye and hand which once gave our productions pre-eminence, distinction and mastery of the European markets, is also a thing accomplished, Most vital of all, the spiritual and intellectual divorce from the past which the present schools and universities have effected, has beggared the nation of the originality, high aspiration and forceful energy which can alone make a nation free and great. To reverse the process and recover what we have lost, is undoubtedly the first object to which we ought to devote ourselves. And as the loss of originality, aspiration and energy was the most vital of all these losses, so their recovery should be our first and most important objective. The primary aim of the prophets of Nationalism was to rid the nation of the idea that the future was limited by the circumstances of the present, that because temporary causes had brought us low and made us weak, low therefore must be our aims and weak our methods. They pointed the mind of the people to a great and splendid destiny, not in some distant millennium but in the comparatively near future, and fired the hearts of the young men with a burning desire to realise the apocalyptic vision. As a justification of what might otherwise have seemed a dream and as an inexhaustible source of energy and inspiration, they pointed persistently to the great achievements and gradiose civilisation of our forefathers and called on the rising generation to recover their lost spiritual and intellectual heritage. It cannot be denied that this double effort to realise the past and the future has been the distinguishing temperament and the chief uplifting force in the movement, and it cannot be denied that it is bringing back to our young men originality, aspiration and energy. By this force the character, temper and action of the Bengali has been altered beyond recognition in a few years. To raise the mind, character and tastes of the people, to recover the ancient nobility of temper, the strong Aryan character and the high Aryan outlook, the perceptions which made earthly life beautiful and wonderful, and the magnificent spiritual experiences, realisations and aspirations which made us the deepest-hearted, deepest-thoughted and most delicately profound in life of all the peoples of the earth, is the task next in importance and urgency. We had hoped by means of National Education to effect this great object as well as to restore to our youth the intellectual heritage of the nation and build up on that basis a yet greater culture in the future. We must admit that the instrument which we cherished and for which such sacrifices were made, has proved insufficient and threatens, in unfit hands, to lose its promise of fulfilment and be diverted to lower ends. But the movement is greater than its instruments. We must strive to prevent the destruction of that which we have created and, in the meanwhile, build up a centre of culture, freer and more perfect, which will either permeate the other with itself or replace it if destroyed. Finally, the artistic awakening has been commenced by that young, living and energetic school which has gathered round the Master and originator, Sj. Abanindranath Tagore. The impulse

which this school is giving, its inspired artistic recovery of the past, its intuitive anticipations of the future, have to be popularised and made a national possession.

Dr. Coomaraswamy complains of the survivals of the past in the preparations for the future. But no movement, however vigorous, can throw off in a few years the effects of a whole century. We must remember also why the degradation and denationalisation, "the mighty evil in our souls" of which the writer complains, came into being. A painful but necessary work had to be done, and because the English nation were the fittest instrument for his purpose, God led them all over those thousands of miles of alien Ocean, gave strength to their hearts and subtlety to their brains, and set them up in India to do His work, which they have been doing faithfully, if blindly, ever since and are doing at the present moment. The spirit and ideals of India had come to be confined in a mould which, however beautiful, was too narrow and slender to bear the mighty burden of our future. When that happens, the mould has to be broken and even the ideal lost for a while, in order to be recovered free of constraint and limitation. We have to recover the Aryan spirit and ideal and keep it intact but enshrined in new forms and more expansive institutions. We have to treasure jealously everything in our social structure, manners, institutions, which is of permanent value, essential to our spirit or helpful to the future; but we must not cabin the expanding and aggressive spirit of India in temporary forms which are the creation of the last few hundred years. That would be a vain and disastrous endeavour. The mould is broken; we must remould in larger outlines and with a richer content. For the work of destruction England was best fitted by her stubborn individuality and by that every commercialism and materialism which made her the anti-type in temper and culture of the race she governed. She was chosen too for the unrivalled efficiency and skill with which she has organised an individualistic and materialistic democracy. We had to come to close quarters with that democratic organisation, draw it into ourselves and absorb the democratic spirit and methods so that we might rise beyond them. Our half-aristocratic, half-theocratic feudalism had to be broken, in order that the democratic spirit of the Vedanta might be released and, by absorbing all that is needed of the aristocratic and theocratic culture, create for the Indian race a new and powerful political and social organisation. We have to learn and use the democratic principle and methods of Europe, in order that hereafter we may build up something more suited to our past and to the future of humanity. We have to throw away the individualism and materialism and keep the democracy. We have to solve for the human race the problem of harmonising and spiritualising its impulses towards liberty, equality and fraternity. In order that we may fulfil our mission we must be masters in our own home. It is out of no hostility to the English people, no race hatred that we seek absolute autonomy, but because it is the first condition of our developing our national self and realising our destiny. It is for this reason that the engrossing political preoccupation came upon us; and we cannot give up or tone down our political movement until the lesson of democratic self-government is learned and the first condition of national self-fulfilment realised. For another reason also England was chosen, because she had organised the competitive system of commerce, with its bitter and murderous struggle for existence, in the most skilful, discrete and successful fashion. We had to feel the full weight of that system and learn the literal meaning of this industrial realisation of Darwinism. It has been written large for us in ghastly letters of famine, chronic starvation and misery and a decreasing population. We have risen at last, entered into the battle and with the boycott for a weapon, are striking at the throat of British commerce, even as it struck at ours, first by protection and then by free trade. Again it is not out of hatred that we strike, but out of self-preservation. We must conquer in that battle if we are to live. We cannot arrest our development of industry and commerce while waiting for a new commercial system to develop or for beauty and art to reconquer the world. As in politics so in commerce, we must learn and master the European methods in order that we may eventually rise above them. The crude commercial Swadeshi, which Dr. Coomaraswamy finds so distasteful and disappointing, is as integral a part of the national awakening as the movement towards Swaraj or as the new School of Art. If this crude Swadeshi were to collapse and the national movement towards autonomy come to nothing, the artistic renascence he has praised so

highly, would wither and sink with the drying up of the soil in which it was planted. A nation need not be luxuriously wealthy in order to be profoundly artistic, but it must have a certain amount of well-being, a national culture and, above all, hope and ardour, if it is to maintain a national art based on a widespread development of artistic perception and faculty. Moreover, aesthetic arts and crafts cannot live against the onrush of cheap and vulgar manufactures under the conditions of the modern social structure. Industry can only become again beautiful if poverty and the struggle for life are eliminated from society and the co-operative State and commune organised as the fruit of a great moral and spiritual uplifting of humanity. We hold such an uplifting and reorganisation as part of India's mission. But to do her work she must live. Therefore the commercial preoccupation has been added to the political. We perceive the salvation of the country not in parting with either of these, but in adding to them a religious and moral pre-occupation. On the basis of that religious and moral awakening the preoccupation of art and fine culture will be added and firmly based. There are many who perceive the necessity of the religious and moral regeneration, who are inclined to turn from the prosaic details of politics and commerce and regret that any guide and teacher of the nation should stoop to mingle in them. That is a grievous error. The men who would lead India must be catholic and many-sided. When the Avatar comes, we like to believe that he will be not only the religious guide, but the political leader, the great educationist, the regenerator of society, the captain of co-operative industry, with the soul of the poet, scholar and artist. He will be in short the summary and grand type of the future Indian nation which is rising to reshape and lead the world.

Karmayogin, Calcutta, No. 14, September, 25, 1909. Also in *The Ideal Karmayogin*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, pp. 109-116, 1974.

6.

ON THE STUDY OF INDIAN ART

(SPECIAL FOR THE "HINDU")

The following is an account of the lecture, delivered by Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy at the Royal Asiatic Society in London, on 8th March 1910 (after Sir George Birdwood's indictment of Indian Art at the Royal Society of Arts on 13th February 1910 and by Vincent A. Smith on Indian art. Coomaraswamy combated the views held by both Sir George Birdwood and Vincent A. Smith.

I

ART AS EXPRESSION

The cultured Oriental art critic, brought face to face with records of European art preserved in the museums, regards them in a different way from that in which we are accustomed to consider them. He understands the drawing of Anglo-Saxon and mediaeval manuscripts and the painting of the early Italians or the Flemish primitives: he understands the Gothic woodcut and the portraits of Holbein—the sculptures of Chartres and the mediaeval ivory Madonnas. But, when he comes to examine modern works, he is at a loss. He does not understand them—he knows, of course, what they represent, but they convey no meaning to his mind, they have no burden which touches his heart. We, on the contrary, usually understand or think we understand, only the modern works, which we admire in proportion to their fidelity in imitating the originals. If by chance we meet with any idealist or imaginative work, if we are transported magically to some wonder world of love or terror undescribed in history,

unknown to the geographer, we are able without difficulty to preserve our souls from enthusiasm, by labelling all such art as 'decorative', and reserving the other name of 'fine art' for representations of things that we have already seen for ourselves. Fettered by such academic conventions we approach light-heartedly the study of Indian art. It is not to be greatly wondered at that we often do not like it, and proceed from saying that it is not beautiful, to a further statement that it has no meaning.

But the fact that modern European art is mainly imitative, and so has no definite meaning of its own, ought not to blind us to the truth, that taken as a whole, it is as much a means of expression, as much a LANGUAGE, as is behaviour in general; both, when sincere, express the character of the individual or race to which they belong. We are now accustomed to express thoughts and feelings mainly by means of spoken or written symbols. But a race of beings is quite equally conceivable, whose principal or only language should be another art, such as music, gesture, or painting and there is no reason whatever why such language should not be at least as complex and full of resource for the expression of both concrete and abstract ideas as speech itself. There are some always amongst us for whom this is true; "to the true musician, music is more intelligible than speech": "it is the art of thinking in sounds". Mendelsohn said that "a piece of music that he loved expressed thoughts not too indefinite to be put into words but too definite." Mozart declared that he could not express his feelings and thoughts in poetry or painting but that he could in music, for, "I am a musician."

In exactly the same way, for the plastic artist, painting or sculpture are languages by which he expresses and understands thoughts which are not in any sense vague, but which cannot be equally well, at least by him, expressed by means of words. "To give a clothing, a perfect form to one's thoughts, is to be an artist."

But just as the majority of persons do not understand more than the very elements of the language of music, so the majority do not understand more than the very elements of the language of form and colour. Further, it is possible to understand a familiar dialect of such a language, and not to understand a dialect that is unfamiliar.

This last is the position of even well qualified European writers on Indian art, those who are artists at heart, but with essentially modern and western point of view. How should the unfamiliar dialect be approached by one who proposes to interpret it to others? One method would be to examine the interpretation put upon its phrases by living, or departed members of the same race whose whole mental atmosphere and traditional culture are identical with or similar to those of the artists whose work is to be studied. The character of modern English education in India, has, however, been to de-Indianise the minds of those who might otherwise have been able to comment in English, upon Indian art as envisaged by a really Indian mind; and, so far as I am aware, some extraordinary oversight has prevented any European writer from seeking assistance in Sanskrit writings on the theory of aesthetics or in a study of the Silpa Sastras. One would have supposed that these would have been made at least the foundation of a study of the theory and development of Indian Art.

Failing these direct aids to the understanding of Indian Art, which, be it remembered, is, so far as painting and sculpture are concerned, almost entirely religious, it would seem most natural to so study the life and thought of India, especially in its religious aspects, as to make it possible to see the world to some extent through Indian eyes, and so to gradually understand the expression of the Indian genius, in Indian Art.

This is, to a large extent, the method which has been adopted by Mr. Havell and myself; I now expressly defend it.

In studying the art of any country, it is surely no more reasonable to ignore its meaning, which for creator and contemporary spectator was perhaps its most important quality, than it would be to consider the sound only, and not the meaning in studying the work of any poet writing in an unknown language. Yet, it has recently been suggested that no qualification of knowledge of and sympathy for Indian mysticism and ideals of life and character is needed for the study of Indian art: that it is sufficient for the student, lacking these qualifications, to know only whether he 'likes' or 'dislikes' a given example of Brahmanical or Buddhist art: that such art has no connection with

Indian idealistic thought, and that those who trace such a connection are themselves reading the Upanishads into the paintings and scultpures.

In contradistinction to this view, I maintain that the understanding of Indian art can only be attained through a realisation of the mental atmosphere in which it grew. One might illustrate from many European and Indian parallels. Take for instance the case of Gothic—an art closely related in spirit to Indian, and equally foreign to the modern temper; "To account for Gothic", writes Professor Lethaby in his book on mediaeval art, "we have to account for its historic basis and for the whole atmosphere of mysticism, chivalry and work enthusiams with all the institutions, monastic, romantic and social, which formed its environment." A hundred years ago, Gothic art was almost universally condemned as barbaric, in words very similarly to those often applied to Indian art at the present day; it is possible now for authorities like the late Professor Middleton to write that in the thirteenth century, "it reached a higher pitch of perfection, aesthetic and technical than has been obtained by any other country in the world." This may or may not be true; it may or may not come to pass that Indian art of the seventh and eighth, eleventh and twelfth and sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (the great periods of expression) will be recognised as of supreme value; but it is certain that a new understanding of Indian art has somehow or other to be gained; and equally certain I think that this understanding can only come through an understanding of the consciousness that lay behind the expression. The late Professor G.U. Pope, in discussing his translation of the Tiruvachagam, says that his experience had taught him "that to get even a glimpse of the thought of a real poet, the student must often go down into the depths, must use every means to put himself in sympathy with his author, must learn to think and feel with him, and so—it may be—at last come to understand him." It is the same with painting and sculpture, which are only other kinds of poetry; we must learn to think and feel as the artist thought and felt, if we would understand his art. If what he thought and felt repels or even does not interest us, it follows that the interpretation of his art is not our real METIER.

The only really universal standard of art criticism is to be found in Leonardo di Vinci's illuminating phrase; "That drawing is best, which by its action best expresses the passion that animates the figure". This is perfectly general and applicable to any art, and any kind of art, if we understand "drawing" in Blake's sense as referring to any kind of work whether in painting, sculpture, poetry, or music which shows the quality of organised perception (see Basil de Selincourt, 'William Blake', p. 128).

But, what if you not only cannot feel, but openly regard it as superfluous to investigate, the passion that animates a work of art which you propose to study? One might well be tempted to prefer the opposite extreme and to say, with Blake, that "Enthusiastic admiration is the first principal of knowledge, and its last."

The sculptures are just as truly an expression of the Indian mind, as the Upanishads, or the Saivaite hymns, and we should therefore, a priori, expect their passion and pre-occupation to be similar to the passion and pre-occupations of Indian written religious art. It is only the modern western separation of art, life and religion which make it possible to be imagined otherwise.

So far then from apologising for 'reading the Upanishads' into Indian sculpture, I contend that the religious books afford a very valuable, if not the best available means of understanding the religious art. It is true that those who cannot sympathise with the one, are likely to only very partially appreciate the other: but when the true universality of Indian religious philosophy is better realised, and its fundamental identity with the religious philosophy familiar to the West in the teachings of Christ recognised, even this barrier will be removed. However that may be it must at least be certain that to account for Indian, no less than for Gothic or any other art, we must understand every element and especially the religious element, in the mental atmosphere in which it slowly grew, blossomed, and at last declined.

What should be the aims of the historian of art? By way of introduction to this question I propose to take the much debated question of the many - armed and many - headed images and to compare two different methods of approach.

Mr. Vincent Smith, writes as follows: "After 300 A.D. Indian sculpture properly so-called hardly deserves to be reckoned as art. The figures, both men and animals, become stiff and formal, perception of the facts of nature almost disappears, and the idea of power is clumsily expressed by the multiplication of members. The many-headed, many-armed gods and goddesses whose images crowd the walls and roof of mediaeval temples have no pretensions to beauty, and are frequently hideous and grotesque."

Mr. Maskell, in his book on Ivories writes, in the same vein:

"We feel that the artist has ever been bound and enslaved by the traditions of Hindu mythology. We are met at every turn by the interminable processions of monstrous gods and goddesses, these hideous deities with expresssionless faces and strange garments... In his figures the Hindoo artist seems absolutely incapable — it may be reluctant — to reproduce the human form: he ignores anatomy, he appears to have no idea of giving any expression to the features. There is no distinction between the work of one man and another. Is the name of a single artist familiar? The reproduction of a type is literal: one divinity resembles another, and we can only distinguish them by their attributes or by the more or less hideous occupations in which they may be supposed to be engaged."

For a different treatment of this matter, we may take the following from the writings of Lafcadio Hearn, speaking of Mahayana Buddhist images in Japan. "Perhaps to uninitiated eyes these many-headed many nine handed gods at first may seem—as they seem always in the sight of Christian bigotry—only monstrous. But when the knowledge of their meaning comes to one who feels the divine in all religions, then they will be found to make appeal to the higher aestheticism, to the sense of moral beauty, with a force never to be divined by minds knowing nothing of the Orient and its thought.... as they multiply before research, they vary and change: less multiform, less complex, less elusive, the moving of waters, than the visions of this Oriental faith.... the stranger, peering into its deeps, finds himself, as in the tale of Undine, contemplating a flood in whose every surge rises and vanishes a face, weird or beautiful or terrible, — a most ancient shoreless sea of forms incomprehensibly interchanging and intermingling, but symbolising the protean magic of that infinite, unknown that shapes and reshapes for ever all cosmic being."

The contrast between these two methods of approach then suggests the enquiry. What should be the real aim of the writer of a history of the art of a given country or a given period? The prevailing idea appears to be that the proper thing to do is to enquire how far it, at any time, approximates to the art of some other country or period which the writer understands and approves of; to seek for and enlarge upon any traces of the influence of this approved style upon the style of the country or period investigated; and to condemn the remainder as barbaric. We are, in fact, reminded of the saying, "Only works which are done in Italy can be called true painting, and therefore we call good painting Italian."

I cannot but think that the man who elects to describe and record the history of any art should set other and less banal aims than these before him. He must so put the matter before the reader that he is helped over initial difficulties of comprehension, and finally appreciates the unknown art better than he did before; otherwise, what end is served either by the writing or the reading of the work? I think that there is no one quite great enough to say that this or that art is the highest or best, and another second or third; nor is the art critic called upon to deliver any judgement of this kind. But every real student of any art knows well that art as a whole has certain characteristics, expresses certain pre-occupations, has a particular genius of its own. If his work is to be of value he must so understand this genius as to be able to trace the evolution of its expression, to define the period of its noblest development, to point to the examples in which it is most perfectly expressed, and to correlate its expression with those movements of the human spirit that are reflected in it.

Such work I conceive to have been done in recent times by Mr. Prior and by Mr. Lethaby in the domain of Gothic art, and by Mr. Okakura and Mr. Binyon for Chinese and Japanese painting. Nothing so clear or so comprehensive as this could be

expected yet in the region of Indian art; but Mr. Havell's book, whatever its errors of omission or over-enthusiasm must be regarded as a foundation for the future and more reasonable study of Indian art. The work of Professor Grunwedel is of a different character, filled with an accumulation of valuable facts, there is no attempt even at a constructive account of the 'Nature of Indian', nor any sign of an endeavour to explain the ideals and development of art that is distinctively Buddhist. The preoccupation of writers such as Grunwedel and Foucher with the details of European influence, at a period when Europe had little to bestow in the way of artistic inspiration would be comprehensible enough if the limited importance of the results were realised; but when work of this type is put forward as the history of INDIAN art, it can only be described as unscientific.

SOME MISCONCEPTIONS

I shall now refer to a few definite prejudices or misconceptions which have obscured the character of Indian art for many Western students. As regards originality: the true meaning of originality has been completely misunderstood, and at the same time, only that part of Indian art which shows least true originality has yet been adequately studied.

Judged as Indian art has been, there would be found to be very little originality in any part of European culture: yet we do not complain of unoriginality in Shakespeare because he did not make his own plots, or in European music because 'the greater number of our musical instruments had their origin in the East nor in great sculpture because the Greeks' borrowed the alphabet of art from the East.'

What then does originality mean? "That virtue of originality", says Ruskin, "that men so strain after is not newness (as they vainly think), it is only genuiness". It is quite a different thing from mere novelty wihch depends upon dates and is a thing external and accidental. It is intensity of imagination, not novelty of subject, that makes work 'real'. It is indeed a far greater test of originality, to treat a subject that is fundamentally familiar, or in a long practised convention, so as to make it live again. This is the task to which all followers of a traditional art have to set themselves.

Closely related to the subject of originality in relation to FOREIGN influence, is the question of conventionality within the art itself. The meaning of the work is so misunderstood that it is applied quite vaguely new in praise, and now in condemnation. I take it to mean essentially an agreement between artist and spectator, for the purpose of facilitating expression through a given medium. As soon as the convention ceases to be a sincere expression through the given medium it becomes a fetter: but so long as it remains the right thing in the right place, the mere fact of repetition does not make it wrong. All real art including Greek and modern, has conventions of its own, and we must understand both the aims and the conventions of any art very well before we can judge whether the conventions assist in the achievement of the aim or not.

It is, of course, quite possible that the writers who apply the terms 'conventional' 'monotonous,' 'uninteresting' etc., in the way I have referred to, have based their judgment upon the wares of inferior work by which Indian art is generally known to the European public; but if so, it is only a proof of inefficiency. For it is to be expected of the art historian that he should know what and where are the masterpieces of the art he treats of.

As a matter of fact, the conviction is sometimes forced upon the students, that European writers on Indian art have generally been of Mr. Vincent Smith's opinion that the inhabitants of Hindustan have always been, singularly indifferent to aesthetic merit, and little qualified to distinguish between good and bad art. The proof of this is to be found in the illustrations, varying in degree of inadequacy, which disgrace the pages of English, French and German handbooks to Indian art. The matter is well put by Gustave de Bon, quoted by Maindron, who is himself one of the worst offenders:—

"It is not from the arts or bad lithographs which appear in certain works on Hindu Mythology that one can form any idea of the sculpture. It really seems as if the authors of these works had made a point of selecting the most wretched examples. It is owing

to their unfortunate reproductions that there has been formed the opinion now prevalent in Europe, that Hindu sculpture is a quite inferior art."

We should know what to think of an oriental art critic who judges all European art on the basis of a collection of tradesmen's orthographs and modern Roman Catholic plaster saints, or from the standpoint of religious prejudice. This is, however, practically what European writers have done with Indian art. As the French writer already mentioned remarks, Hindu art 'has been judged by most writers with an injustice, for which the only excuse appears to be its extra-ordinary NAIVETE, when it is not the result of a pious bigotry as exaggerated as that of the conquering Mussalmans'.

The Indian collections to be seen in European museums especially in London, are open to similar criticism. Their miscellaneous contents never seem to be determined by expert selection.

It is perfectly useless to approach an art like the Indian, armed with conventional ideas about idolatry, superstition, polytheism, priestcraft, and the like. All these things flourished exceedingly in the noblest centuries of Christian art. Every time and place has its own illusions and superstitions. The modern superstition is the superstition of facts, which is a very much more dangerous thing than any superstition of the imagination. The extremely materialistic character of most European religious thought since the Reformation has made it almost impossible for European writers to interpret the art of a people who regard a belief in the reality of phenomena as in itself the worst sort of superstition. Since the Renaissance, moreover, all ideas of 'gods' have been coloured by the patriarchal types of the Greeek Olympus; it is only just beginning to be realised that these 'beautiful humanities' were not in a real sense religious conceptions; the true Greek religion (gradually overwhelmed by materialistic thought) was something quite different, more passionate mystic, remote, and very much more like the religions of the East. The Indian gods have so far been studied by missionaries and anthropologists, instead of by philosophers and artists. But it is only when students of Indian art understand exactly what the idea of a god or any particular god really stands for in the Indian mind and heart, that a sane criticism of Indian art can be made. The mythologies so far written are absolutely useless from this point of view. Perhaps the greatest obstacle to the scientific study of Indian art lies in the modern Western conception of art as essentially imitative and the general confusion of the aims of science and art, exemplified in photographic criticism. Oriental art as a whole does not aim at the reproduction of the facts of the nature, objectively considered; its aim is suggestion—the representation not of objective, but of subjective fact. It is therefore, perfectly futile to complain that Indian art does not represent the (so called) facts of nature: its very purpose is to represent the realities of the imagination and to mould the facts of nature nearer to the heart's desire. The greatest art is creative and not imitative; and it is with faithfulness to this ideal, that there lies the significance of oriental art for Western students. "The greatest practical value of Eastern art for us," as Mr. Roger Fry recently wrote, "lies in the fact that those essential principles, which in our thirst for versimilitude, we have overlaid, have been upheld with far greater constancy by the artists of the East."

Yet archaeological writers on Indian art spend much of their time in discussing the presence or absence of perspective and the relative anatomy displayed, thus confusing science with art and assuming that progress in the one is necessarily progress in the other. This is a very serious error—for science is only of value to art if it aids in the realisation of an imaginative idea. It is quite possible for too much science to have quite an opposite result. It is a question of a ratio expression: science, art is only great when expression is more valued than science. When science over balances expression, spirit is killed by matter.

What we want to know about the work of any artist, is not whether it records historic or scientific facts, but if it stirs our imagination. This is the best of greatness in any art. Always, of course, supposing an imagination able to be stirred—some there are:

Not prejudiced by feelings great or small:

Amiable state: they cannot feel at all.

Without some possibility of fundamental sympathy between spectator and artist, there can be no possible appreciation of art. It is often this lack of A PRIORI sympathy

in respect of aims, that has prevented Western writers from appreciating the achievements of Eastern art The aim of oriental art is, then not imitation, but suggestion, and we must accept this attitude, as we accept it in any other idealistic work. Above all we must avoid the prejudice of thinking that it is given to us above to know what is truth. We must realise that other men beside ourselves have sought for images of truth and beauty: and sought them, not as we now seek them, outside our consciousness, but within. These men lived in a world which we know less than we know the Antartic or the frozen north: a world perhaps more real, more wonderful than ours certainly quite different. Because we do not know it, we have called it unreal; but until we know it as we know our own, how may we say whether or not they painted images of truth? At least, we should give thanks to them for showing to us that our world is no absolute DING AN SICH, and that the shadows of reality are of many varied outlines, and move across our vision with mysterious exclusiveness. Perhaps the greatest end of any art is to show to us that no one shadow is eternal or self-existent, only Light is that.

AN EXAMPLE OF INTERPRETATION: FACIAL EXPRESSION IN INDIAN SCULPTURE:

Absence of facial expression and literal reproduction of type are supposed to be characteristic of Indian sculpture. The common attitude is exemplified in the remarks by Messrs. Maskell and Vincent Smith already quoted. I shall here endeavour to show that the misapprehension has arisen from two causes, failure to comprehend the ideal of expression desired, and a general confusion of classic and decadent examples of Indian art as materials for study.

To understand the ideal of expression aimed, at, we need to understand the Indian ideal, of character. In Buddhism, the 'Ten Feters' which bind the traveller on the Path, to be overcome before Nirvana is attainable, are the illusion of self-consciousness, doubt, trust in rites and ceremonies, sensuality, hatred, love of life, longing after heavenly life, self-righteousness, and ignorance. The similar Hindu ideal is to be found, to select one of many instances, in the Bhagavad Gita, XII, 12-19. "Hateless towards all born beings, void of the thought of an I and a My, bearing indifferently pain and pleasure before whom the world is not dismayed and who is not dismayed before the world, who is void of joy, impatience, fear, dismay, desireless, pure, skilful, impartial, who rejoices not, hates not, grieves not, desires not, who renounces alike fair and foul, indifferent alike to foe and friend, in honour and dishonour, in heat and in cold, in joy and in pain, free of attachment."

Such is the character predicated of him who is fit for Nirvana, the Jivan Mukta, he who is "dear to Me". Perfection in the same sense must be of course the character of one who is already a Buddha, or an Isvara (it is by self-conquest that the status of a god is attained).

The whole ideal might be resumed in the words of Eckhardt:— "Real sanctification consists in this that the spirit remains as immovable and unaffected by all impact of love or hate, joy or sorrow, honour or shame, as a huge mountain is unstirred by a gentle breeze. This unmovable sanctification causes man to attain the NEAREST LIKENESS TO GOD that he is capable of". The images of Buddha, of Avalokiteswara, of Vishnu or Shiva, in their sattvic aspects were intended to represent the nearest likeness to God that art could reach. Now expression, says Herbert Spencer, is feature in the making. All those variations of feature constituting what we call expression represent departures from a perfect type. The more human in expression, the less does Hindu sculpture approach its own perfection; a religious art which aims at representing a superhuman perfection of character, equanimity, in the sense above indicated can have nothing to do with facial expression in the ordinary sense. Such qualities as nobility, peace, graciousness, which involve a perfect BALANCE of intellectual and emotional faculties, can alone be desired to be expressed in a sattvic image of the Divine Life. It is in fact those qualities which find expression in the faces of such sculptures as those of the Amoga Siddha Dhyani Buddha at Borobodur, my own Sinhalese Avalokitesvara or the Tanjore Gangadhara.

And just as the 'Divine Ideal' in other respects, became the human, so in this matter also, the ideal of expression affected all representations of the human form, so that we find for example, in statues of the saints, such as the strangely lovely Sundra Murti Swami from Ceylon a certain strange and beautiful impersonality that makes them like the Gods, whose servants, and as some would say, whose incarnate self they partly were. Yet, we shall find a difference in these human faces; the boy saint's transfiguration, is the transfiguration of a human being in a passion of devotion; it is the face of a boy, but of a boy-devotee. If we contrast this with the strange un-humanness of expression, the remoteness and the repose of the contemporary figures of Shiva himself, we shall realise that it was not because the Indian sculptor could not represent character, but because we have not understood the kind of character that he wished to represent that we have called his work monotonous and expressionless.

Another example will suffice to show that the Indian sculptor could do what he wished to do in this respect. The little figure of Jambhala from Ceylon; one far below the status of an Iswara, a god of wealth and material success, could not technically in any way be finer in its expression of character both as regards the face, and in the treatment of the figure.

There is one respect, moreover in which Indian sculpture seems to me to far exceed most European sculpture in expressive power. This is in respect of gesture. "A good painter", says Leonardo, "has two chief objects to paint namely man and the intention of his soul. The first is easy, and the second difficult, because he has to represent it through the attitudes and movements of the limbs". I think that if anyone regrets the lack of humanism in the Indian idea of facial expression, he may find compensation in the Indian imager's mastery in representing nervous gesture and so expressing the intention of the soul. It is the attitudes and movemets of the limbs which give the sense of rapturous surprise that is so wonderful in the figure of Sundara Murti Swamy already referred to: not less intense is the passion of repose that informs the body of the Dhyani Buddha or the sense of whirlwind movement in the Javanese Dharmapala.

There is still one point further to be realised in connection with the ideal of facial expression, and the expression of intention through the movements of the limbs. Here, again, we shall see how closely Indian art reflects the ideals of Indian life and thought.

The ideal which informs the most universally accepted Indian Gospel, the Bhagavad Gita, is that of action without attachment. That is a certain view of life, universally accepted as an ideal, and here, expressed in words. Is it not equally clearly expressed in a sculpture or painting representing a human or divine being engaged in strenuous work (dharma) having at the same time upon the face an expression of unshaken peace? The Indian imager shows us various types of heroic and divine activity; but in all his work there is expressed the idea that it is not the "individual which acts, but this body" while the Self, serene, unshaken and unattached, is but the spectator of the drama. So dear is this ideal to the Indian mind that it would be strange indeed if it did not find expression in Indian art.

This is true, not only of violent physical action, but also as regards the expression given to meditative or teaching figures. It is not in paroxyms of facial expression that the heroic soul shows its strength, nor in declamation of its assurance of knowledge. In the very gentle smile and perfect equanimity of so many Buddha types there is the visible expression of the spirit that informs the saying attributed to Buddha.

"I do not strive with the world, but the world strives with me. A teacher of the truth does not strive with anyone whatsoever in the world."

It is thus only when we understand and perhaps only if we sympathise with the Indian, Hindu or Buddhist, ideal of character, that we shall understand the facial expression in Indian sculpture, and be able to correlate its significance with that of the suppression of realisation of anatomical detail, and the expression of intention through gesture. The complaint of lack of expression in Indian work can only be due to a failure to comprehend the kind of expression aimed at, or to a lack of acquaintance with the finest work.

That the position held by art in Indian culture sank at last from a high intellectual and aesthetic faculty to that of a mere trade, much as the thirteenth century imager of Europe is now represented by the vendor of plaster casts of Catholic saints, should not blind us to the intention of the great tradition.

This brief discussion of the significance of facial expression in Indian sculpture will serve to illustrate the necessity of correlating the ideals of Indian religion with their expression in the religious art and the impossibility of fully understanding one without the other .

THE HINDU, Madras dated March 26, 1910, Page 6, Columns a to c. and March 28th 1910, Page 6, Columns a to c. This same lecture appears in a revised and slightly condensed form in "Art and Swadeshi" pp 71-93.

7.

FOREWORD*

Things made by art answer to human needs, or else are luxuries. Human needs are the needs of the whole man, who does not not live by bread alone. That means that to tolerate insignificant, i.e. meaningless conveniences, however convenient they may be, is beneath our natural dignity, the whole man needs things well made to serve at one and the same time needs of the active and contemplative life. On the other hand, pleasure taken in things well and truly made is not a need in us, independent of our need for the things themselves, but a part of our very nature; pleasure perfects the operation, but is not its end; the purposes of art are wholly utilitarian, in the full sense of the word as applies to the whole man. We cannot give the name of art to anything irrational.

A.K. COOMARASWAMY.

January 30, 1942.

8.

NEWCASTLE SCHOOL OF ART.†

ANNUAL PRIZE DISTRIBUTION.

DR. COOMARASWAMY'S VALUABLE ADVICE TO STUDENTS

Relation of Art to Life

The annual prize distribution to the students of the Newcastle School of Science and Art, took place in the Council Chamber at the Municipal Hall, Newcastle on Tuesday night, when the prizes were distributed and an address delivered by Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, D.Sc., M.R.A.S., of London, the well-known art critic and expert on Oriental art. Mr. Weston Poole, J.P. (chairman of the Higher Education Committee) presided over a good attendance, and was supported by Dr. Coomaraswamy, Mr. F. Harrison (headmaster of the High School), Dr. Rutter (headmaster of the Middle School), Mr. J.R. Pope, Mr. G. T. Bagguley, Mr. J.T. Coulam, Mr. H. Monger, Mr. J. Poole, Mr. J.W. Wadsworth, Mr. F.A. Edwards, Mr. J.T. Jordan (headmaster of the School of Science and Art), Mr. C.E.E. Connor (art director in the elementary schools and first assistant master at the School of Science and Art), and Mr. W.P. Bentley (Secretary to the Higher Education Committee).

*FOREWORD *Prospectus of the College of Notre Workshop, Baltimore, U.S.A.* 1942. p 331. Courtesy: Sister M. John de Matha SSND.

† *The Staffordshire*, January 15, 1913.

HEADMASTER'S REPORT

The Headmaster submitted his report as follows:—

As it is two years since we had a prize-giving, I should like to give a few statistics dealing with the sessions 1910-11 and 1911-12. During the first of these years 128 individual students attended the school: 47 presented themselves at the Board of Education examinations in one or more of 15 subjects, and gained 20 first-class and 28 second-class certificates. Two works were accepted for the art master's certificate, and two for the art class teacher's. During the session 1911-12, 131 students were in attendance; 41 sat for examinations in 15 subjects, and were awarded 12 first class and 37 second class certificates. Four works were accepted for the art class teacher's certificate. About the middle of the session with which I am now dealing, we received the first definite intimation of the great changes which the Board of Education had decided to introduce, and, although we had for some time felt these changes coming, for a while the work of the school was disorganised—several certificate works which had been commenced by some of the more advanced students were abandoned—but shortly the new conditions were boldly faced, with the result that a really good year's work was done. In the National Competition we received five awards. A national book prize was awarded to Mr. John Mifflin for a design for tiles; Miss Mabel Forester had a sheet of designs for industrial purposes commended. Mr. Frank Connor received a similar award for a design for a side-table with carved panel, carried out in material, while a vase, designed and painted by Mr. J. Mifflin, and a design for a bathroom by the same student, were also commended.

The special classes for teachers in elementary schools were again well attended, and I take this opportunity of congratulating Mr. C. E.E. Connor upon the good work accomplished. In conclusion, I would thank Dr. Coomaraswamy and the committee for the valuable prizes which are about to be distributed. I also wish to record my appreciation of the great help so willingly given by some of the students at the extra busy times of the year, and of the earnest and untiring efforts of my assistants.

MR. WESTON POOLE.

The Chairman said the very satisfactory report which Mr. Jordan had read left very little for him to say. They would notice that the number of students at the school was kept up, and the awards gained, both in the National Competition and in other ways, were quite up to the average. All that, of course, meant hard work, and they were very fortunate in having a very capable headmaster, and a very good staff—(hear, hear) —and the thanks of the committees were due to them for the very enthusiastic and hard work they put in year after year, and he was very pleased to take that public opportunity of thanking them. (Applause.) Whilst they congratulated the headmaster on the success of the school, they also congratulated the students, because, however, excellent a staff they had they could readily understand that to complete the good work they must have hard working students, and the awards and prizes obtained, showed, he thought, they were hard workers. (Hear, hear.) He had to especially congratulate those who had been mentioned in the report as having obtained honours and distinctions, and he trusted those honours and distinctions would act as a stimulus to further effort, and that they would not rest content with what they had already achieved. (Hear, hear, and applause.) With regard to the students who had not been successful, he was sure they desired to congratulate them as well—(hear, hear)—because it was due to their hard work that the general efficiency of the school had been so well maintained. If they had not succeeded in securing prizes he trusted they would continue their hard work next year, and perhaps be able to take prizes then. (Hear, hear.) In conclusion, he desired to wish the staff and students a very happy and successful year of work. (Hear, hear and applause.) The Chairman in asking Dr. Coomaraswamy to distribute the prizes, referred to the fact that he was an expert in Oriental art, and they were glad to welcome him to Newcastle. (Applause.) He trusted that Dr. Coomaraswamy would be able to take away most pleasant recollections of his visit there. (Applause.)

THE PRIZE-WINNERS.

Dr. Coomaraswamy then distributed the prizes as follows:—

Miss Isabel Aidney, prizes for examination successes, studies of plant form; Miss Alice Audley, for set of works, elementary section, designs for pottery; Fred Baldwin, for set of works, elementary section; George Beresford, shaded drawing of a group of common objects, elementary section; Miss Mabel Berks, set of works, elementary section; Miss Edith Billington, best set of works in teachers' class; Charles Cheney, set of designs, elementary section, design for painted tiles; Frank Connor, design for side table with carved panel, commended in National Competition; Miss Mabel Conlam, studies of heads from life; Fred Cox, for set of works and studies of plant form, elementary section: Miss Elsie Daniel, for examination successes, shaded drawing of ornament from cast, shaded drawing of a group of models; Miss Dorothy Dimmock for examination successes, water-colour study of a group of still life, painted studies of heads from life; Miss Hannah Dunn, water-colour study of a group of still life, elementary section; Albert Edge, painted signboard, house decoration class; Miss Majorie Edwards, best set of memory drawing; Frank Farrington for examination successses, set of designs, elementary section, design for engraved pottery decoration; Miss Mabel Fowler, set of works, water-colour study of a group of still life, elementary section; Miss Mabel Forester, sheet of designs for industrial purposes, commended in National Competition, group of still life in monochrome, embroidered cushion cover: William Grocott, designs for engraved pottery decoration; John Hughes, for examination successes, for homework; Donald Ibbs, set of works, elementary section: Colin Jones, studies of details from the antique; Miss Mariel Lockyer, for works in teachers' class; John Mifflin, national book prize for design for painted titles, work commended in National Competition, design for painted vase and design for bathroom; Miss Hilda Peake, for set of works, set of designs, elementary section, drawing of a group of common objects, designs for painted pottery; Peter Penson, painted signboards, house decorators' class; Enoch Phillips, for homework: Frank Shaw, for examination successes; Albert Taylor, for set of works, set of designs, studies of plant form, elementary sections; Walter Thompson, for set of works, set of designs, elementary sections.

Dr. Coomaraswamy also asked to be allowed to present one of his own books, entitled "Mediaeval Sinhalese Art," for the best example of jewellery work. He found, he said, that there was only one exhibit of that class, but the work was so good that he had decided to award the prize to the student, Miss Winifred Earles. (Applause).

DR. COOMARASWAMY

Dr. Coomaraswamy, who was very cordially received, expressed his sense of the honour Mr. Jordan had done him in asking him to distribute the prizes. It was from Mr. Jordan, he said, that he learnt nearly everything he knew about drawing until many years after he left school. After that, for some ten years he studied nothing but science. Now he had become an art critic and historian of art. He ventured to hope that critics were of some use in the present age, in so far as they acted as the true servants of artists; but they ought to be entirely unnecessary, and certainly they did not exist and were not needed in the great periods of art, when everyone took as much interest in painting and masonry and handicraft as they did now in politics. Those were great moments in the world's history, which we now recognised as the supreme attainment of each great cycle of art: for example, in early Egypt, in sixth century Greece, eighth century India and China, and thirteenth century Europe and Persia.

GREATEST ART NEVER ONE-MAN-DEEP.

It has been the special privilege of this age to learn to recognise one great motive in these diverse expressions of man's will, and thereby, at least in theory, to disentangle the essential from the merely fashionable and academic. This process would have been most familiar to them in connection with Gothic, for, though none of them could

actually remember the time, it was less than a hundred years since the term Gothic was held to mean barbarous. They had learnt since then that the first requisite of art was deep conviction, that whatever was truly felt had also great power to move others. But he sometimes wondered whether they who were going to be artists, had always the courage of their convictions, and believed, as they all ought to, that the greatest art meant the greatest life; believed, for example, that the thirteenth century represented the zenith of European culture, in respect of nearly all that concerned our most serious welfare. We had not been, since then, nor were we now, without great artists and craftsmen, amongst us, perhaps as great as any that had been. But their work had come more and more to depend entirely on their individual greatness; whilst it was surely true, as Professor Lethaby, told them in his inspiring booklet on architecture, that the greatest art was never one-man deep, but a thousand men deep. It was the creation of a race, unified by one pronounced impulse; a race, moreover, so far uncivilised as to regard the expression of its passion in works of art in architecture, song, or handicraft — as a sufficient end in itself, not merely as means to something else.

HUMAN EXPRESSION.

In becoming artists, therefore, they had something much more to do than to aim at originality, or the expression of their own personality. They had a harder task than that, the most difficult but also the most inspiring that a man might undertake. It was the task of all artists in creative periods—to apprehend, not the past only, or even the present, but the far distant intentions of humanity, and to give this will expression in their design. They might not know quite all that they were expressing, or why; but they would know that something was growing in the world, and that a little part of it was growing in themselves. Perhaps then, in centuries to come, when artists once more come into power, men would look back on the surviving fragments of their work, with due knowledge of the difficulty of their environment, and with the same loving recognition of their sincerity, that we now give to those impassioned artists of all ages whom they named the Primitives.

THE SOLIDARITY OF ART.

Perhaps they would think that in saying this he was speaking only of painters and sculptors and architects and great musicians; they would think that these might bring to birth a new art, expressive of the future, but that such a claim for the craftsman must be extravagant. But he desired to represent to them the solidarity of art; the fact that whenever art had been truly great, this greatness had been just as clearly written in the contour of an earthen pot, the carving of an illiterate mason, or the form of a sword, as in any painting or image. It was worth while to repeat that the greatest art was a thousand men deep. The cure for industrialism, whose greatest sin was to consider art as a means to something else, generally money, and not as an end in itself, had to be found by the people who made things, and would not make them stupidly. When they began to make things to sell they would find that it was very difficult to make them wisely—that was, sincerely and purposefully, if they were to depend upon their work for a living; while it was not at all difficult to combine great prosperity with very stupid and dishonest workmanship. In making art their calling, they were therefore bound to become revolutionists, unless they also agreed to regard art as a means to something else.

EDUCATION OF THE SENSES.

It was only by means of art that a permanent revolution could be achieved. For any deep and lasting revolution could only be founded upon a re-education of the sensitiveness of the whole race, which in this respect, was now probably at its lowest level. Certainly never before had our daily environment, unavoidable even by the wealthiest, included so many hideous noises, so many glaring colours, or so many lifeless forms. It was their task as craftsman to undertake this long neglected education of the senses, nowadays so much despised, and everywhere sacrificed to the purposes of trade

Empire, and priesthoods. They might consider themselves civilised in the true sense of the word, when the streets of a city became again what they once were, even more attractive to artists than fields and mountains and forests. It was a bad sign that townsmen should need to escape from their normal environment for the recreation of their senses. The importance of this sense education had been nowhere more clearly stated than by Plato. He, indeed, said that the being able to distinguish quickly without a process of reasoning, between good and bad workmanship, was in itself to be well educated. Probably they would all agree; but they must remember that that was now the accepted view of only a very small and uninfluential class, the artists of to-day, It rested with them to secure its universal acceptance by the seriousness of their intention, and the devotion with which they expressed it. Plato explained further that the importance of this sense education, the value of workmanship, was just this, that man absorbed into himself the harmony of whatever in his environment was beautiful, and was nourished by it. He insisted, as carefully as Morris, on the fact that the qualities of which they spoke appeared as much in the hard work of the craftsman as in that of the painter or sculptor. Expression, harmony, rhythm, he said, belonged not only to painting and poetry, but "weaving is full of these, and carving and architecture and all workmanship of every kind of vessels, in all these there is propriety and impropriety" And he said that we should require nobility in art, not only of poets, but of all craftsmen "lest our guardians, being educated in the midst of ill representations, as in an ill pasture, whereby every day plucking and eating a deal of different things, by little and little they contract imperceptibly some mighty evil in their souls." That was already the case with us, and the remedy lay with them, for, as Plato continued, "we must seek out such workmen as are able by the help of a good natural genius to trace the nature of the beautiful and the decent, that our youth dwelling as it were in a healthful place may be benefited at all hands; whence from the beautiful works something will be conveyed to the sight and hearing, as a breeze bringing health from salutary places, imperceptibly leading them on directly from childhood to resemblance, friendship and harmony with right reason."

IMITATION IN ART

Let them now follow Plato in respect of a more special matter, that of imitation in art. He said of imitative painting just what it had taken us in Europe so many centuries to rediscover, though in Asia it was never forgotten. He referred to the passage where it said of painting—and the same, of course, applied to sculpture—that "imitation is a sort of amusement, and not a serious affair." The discoveries of modern science, if they had seemed to draw our attention away from more important matters, had at any rate rendered this service to art, that we had learnt from photography that it was no essential part of art to show us what things were like; they were more and more able to hand over the business of pure illustration to the photographer, with great gain for art. It even became possible for them to understand the exclamation of the old Indian cyclopaedist, who said so fiercely that the portraiture of men was an unhallowed thing, and required of the artist that he should represent none but the gods. At any rate the discoveries of science had set the designer free to re-create a purely expressive art, concerned entirely with feeling and hardly at all with description. This also brought the painter once more nearer to the craftsman who had never departed so far as himself from the true basis of art, the creation of significant form. Perhaps, however, one word of warning was here required; it must not be supposed that this emancipation from the requirements of illustration (originating in the vanity or curiosity of patrons) could absolve the artist from the need for loving intimacy with nature, or excuse him if his work became perverse, or fanciful. However, abstract or conventional his work, it was laid upon the artist that his creations must be infused with the same life as that which he saw in nature, the same life, but even more clearly revealed. Was there not more intense vitality in the most strange and silent Egyptian goddess than in the most talkative individual?

IMAGINATION IN WORK

Whatever existed in their innermost self would, if they were sincere, find expression fully and inevitably in their work. In conclusion, therefore, he wished to invite them to avoid the error of confining their studies to the mere technique of their own art, and to

keep themselves in touch with the visions of all great men: in other words, to make their education, not merely technical, but also imaginative. Far more often an artist failed for lack of anything to say than because of inability to speak. They must not think that these other matters did not concern them; it concerned them intimately how Sigurd lived and died, how Helen drew the Greeks to Troy; they were concerned with their own folk-song and dance, with the poetry of Blake and Walt Whitman, the fulminations of Nietzsche, the theatre of Gordon Craig, with the discovery of Asia.

TOO MUCH CONCERN FOR TECHNIQUE.

If he might venture at all to criticise the methods of teaching art customary in Europes it was to find its limitations in a too exclusive concern with technique. In happier days, the art student learnt his craft in a workshop which formed part of the world; now he grew up amongst a smaller circle of his own kind, very much isolated from the world, and ultimately became one of a class who were only respected by the world in so far as they ministered to the world's convenience, or supported its prejudices. It was, therefore, more than ever necessary to restore balance to the art student's life, by excluding its scope. One further word about old masters. Much as they might love the masterpieces of ancient art, Egyptian or Greek, or Indian or Gothic, they must not think of them as models for themselves; they must use them with literature and music, and life itself, for their education. The essential thing in that education was that they should become even more and more sensitive to what the Chinese spoke of as the "Rhythm of the spirit in the movement of living things," sensitive, in a word, to life, Thus only would it be possible to create a new art, of such a sort as to rank with the ancient masterpieces; that was, such as to reveal life with perfect clearness and simplicity, as it appeared to the keenest vision of our own time and place. (Loud applause.)

MR. F. HARRISON.

Mr. F. Harrison proposed a hearty vote of thanks to Dr. Coomaraswamy for his excellent and valuable address. He regretted that a larger number of people were not present to listen to that remarkable address, because it had taken an extremely high view of the relation of art to human life. He was sure that it would make every student feel that in the study of art he had to do far more than practice with his pen or pencil and the various tools with which he worked, and he believed it had become to be more and more realised that a true artist must also be highly educated. Dr. Coomaraswamy told them something of his own life and he (Mr. Harrison) felt quite sure that much of the value of his (Dr. Coomaraswamy's) own work was due to those ten years of scientific study which he gave in order to learn more of the things of this world. He thought that the lesson of that part of his life was worth taking to heart by every art student, because it was only by intense study and hard work that one could really begin to understand something of all the harmony there was in the world in which we lived. He thought it was extraordinary that we in this district, which devoted itself to a craft which depended on art, could not find more people coming to hear something of what art, meant from such a great art critic. They could get crowds and crowds for all sorts of light entertainments, but when it came to a prize gathering in connection with real work which lead to happiness in real life they found it was only the salt of the earth who would come and hear. There were students present who, as could be seen from their work on the walls of that room, had great gifts, and were setting to work in the right way, and he did hope that they would go on and give their lives to that work, because, from the address which they had just heard, they would see how that work was intended to uplift the whole of the people amongst whom they lived. It was only by cultivating these things and by making them spread and have their influence on the general civic life of the community and by making their surroundings beautiful and in keeping with all they did, that they could really impress themselves on the district in which they lived, and by that means they learnt to be true and good citizens. (Applause).

Mr. J.R. Pope seconded the proposition, which was unanimously carried.

Dr. Coomaraswamy suitably replied, and congratulated Mr. Jordan and the students on the exhibition and the sincere and careful workmanship which the students had put before them. (Applause).

The proceedings then terminated.

STUDENTS' EXHIBITION.

An exhibition of the students' works, executed during the past session, were hung on the walls of the room. The exhibition comprised samples of every branch of work carried on in the school, from the elementary efforts of drawing from common objects and plant form and elementary design to the more advanced work in applied art which included a good display of excellently-executed pottery, metal work, jewellery, and wood carving. There were some very good specimens of painting from still life, from the antique, and quick-time studies of life. There was also a display of work done in the classes for teachers attending primary schools, showing large demonstration drawings, work in crayon, pencil, and water colour, a fine stencil panel, and two letter panels from the house decorators' class, which were both marked for awards in the National Competition. Some good examples of modelling from nature were also exhibited.

ART STUDENTS' EXHIBITION AT NEWCASTLE.

25th January, 1913.

In connection with the distribution of prizes to the successful students of the Newcastle School of Science and Art, which took place last week, a highly interesting exhibition of students' work was held in the Council Chamber, Municipal Buildings. The display was unquestionably the best the school has made. The work of the school is comprehensive. One feature is the instruction of school teachers, who are taken through a course specially designed to help them in their work in the schools. A number of head teachers are amongst those who take advantage of this provision. Rapid work in nature studies and the drawing of common objects is taught, and this year for the first time the committee has decided to give a diploma to teachers who have been through the course and reached a certain standard of work in theory and practice. There is also the general section, and another very important feature is the teaching of art as applicable to the potting industry. This may be described as the principal part of the school, and it is composed mainly of students who are actually engaged in the industry. In this section, Mr. John Mifflin showed a design for a tile dado for greengrocer's shop, in which vegetables of different kinds gave the motive to the design; design for a tile-panel for bathroom, with a drawing of the complete decoration; a vase painted under glaze of Oriental design, which was highly commended by the examiners; and a dish decorated with a conventional treatment of a harvest field, with inscribed rim, this piece of work having been exceedingly well carried out in pottery by the student. Miss Dorothy Dimmock had some good work, including a plaque carried out in pottery, decorated with a strong design of love-in-a-mist (Nigella), with Cupid emerging in the centre.

* * * *

(It was my good fortune to obtain the newspaper cutting of the above. When I bought my second copy of the first edition of Dr. Coomaraswamy's *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*— the prize book given by Dr. Coomaraswamy—I found this cutting neatly pinned to the book by the prizewinner Miss Winifred Earles — S. D. R. S.)

9.

ORIENT

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HOMAGE TO SIVA†

By Romain Rolland

THERE are a certain number of us in Europe for whom the civilization of Europe does not suffice. We are dissatisfied sons of the West, who find ourselves cramped in the old house, and who, though not failing to recognize the fineness, the brilliancy and the heroic energy of an idea which conquered and dominated the world for more than two thousand years, have been obliged, in spite of ourselves, to confess its insufficiencies and its narrow pride. We are the few who look towards Asia.

Asia, the great continent, of which Europe is only a peninsula, the vanguard of the army, the prow of the heavy ship, loaded with the wisdom of thousands of years. From her have always come our gods and our ideas. But in losing contact with the native East, in the wild marches of our peoples always following the sun, we have deformed the universality of these vast thoughts for our own ends of limited and violent action.

And now the races of the Occident find themselves cornered in a blind alley, and they crush each other ferociously. Let us wrench our spirit from this mob of bloody chaos. Let us try to regain the great cross road of the highways, from which the streams of human genius have spread to the four points of the horizon. In order to find air let us mount again to the high plateaux of Asia.

Europe has certainly never forgotten the way to Asia when it was a matter of pillaging, levying tribute, or exploiting the material riches of those lands under the banner of Christ or of civilization. But what advantage has she taken of these spiritual treasures? They have lain buried in collections and in archaeological museums. A few brilliant tourists from the Academies have nibbled the crumbs, but the spiritual life of Europe has not profited therefrom.

Who, amid the confusion in which the chaotic consciousness of the Occident is struggling, has looked to see if the civilization, forty centuries old, of India and China had no answer to offer our anguish, no models for our aspirations?

The Germans, with their vitality, more exigent, more self-questioning, were the first to seek in Asia that food which their famished spirit could no longer find in Europe, and the catastrophes of the last years have precipitated this moral evolution, made up of disillusion with political action and exaltation of inner life. Noble initiators, like Count Kayserling, have popularized the wisdom of Asia. And some of the purest poets of Germany, like Hermann Hesse, have felt the magic of Oriental thought to the point of transforming themselves so as to put their souls in accord with the artist-sages of the Celestial Empire.

France, although similar currents are beginning to make themselves felt, and certain little known French individualities may be counted among the initiators of the Awakening of Asia has remained behind in this movement of curiosity and profound sympathies. In no part of Europe has the recent visit of Tagore and his appeal for a common work of European-Asiatic culture awakened so little interest. A wall of self-satisfied indifference separates this country from the rest of the world life. The choleric Bjorson used justifiable language to reproach us with this fact. But he was unjust in not recognizing the ceaseless efforts of a small number of Frenchmen to effect a breach in the wall. And this very band, led by our friend Bazalgette—the brotherly friend in the Whitmanesque

† Translation from the French through courtesy of the *Broom*.

sense of all that is human—is a noble witness to it. Let us widen the breach! And through the opening may the message of India be heard in France.

Ananda Coomaraswamy is one of those great Hindus who, nourished like Tagore on the cultures of Europe and Asia, have conceived in the legitimate pride of their splendid civilization the duty of working towards the union of ideas, Oriental and Occidental, for the benefit of humanity. The spectacle of the recent war, which has made evident the signs of the approaching ruin of the European edifice, has shown them the urgency of their mission. At the same time that the harmonious voice of Tagore invites us to collaborate in his International University of Santiniketan, Coomaraswamy raises his cry of alarm. He says to us: "Save Asia. Her idealism is in danger. If you do not save her, beware lest the great Nemesis turns against you by Asia's hands, the Imperialism of lucre and violence with which you have armed her. Asia's degradation will cause your ruin. Her uplifting will be your salvation".....

But proud Europe will not willingly admit that she can have need of Asia, whom she has trampled under foot for centuries without a suspicion passing through her mind that she was playing the role of Alaric on the ruins of Rome. Yet Rome conquered the victorious Barbarians, as Greece had conquered Rome. As India and China will finally conquer Europe—by the spirit.

The aim of Coomaraswamy's book is to show the power of this spirit and all it holds in reserve for the grandeur and well-being of mankind.

In a collection of essays, seemingly separate, but which all proceed from the same central idea and coverage toward the same conclusion, we have an exposition of India's calm and ample metaphysic, her conception of the universe, her social organization, perfect in its own time and still capable of adapting itself to the rhythm of the new time; the solution that she has given to the problems of women, the family, love, marriage; and the magnificent revelation of her art. Over all the cathedral, ornate and proportioned, of Asia's mighty soul, reigns the same spirit of sovereign synthesis. No negation. Everything is harmonized. All the forces of life group themselves like a forest with a thousand waving arms, directed by Nataraja, the master of the dance. Each thing in its place, each being fulfilling its function, and all associated in the divine concert, making with their various voices and even dissonances, according to the saying of Heraclitus, the most exquisite harmony. While in the Occident, a strong, cold logic separates the dissimilar and shuts it up sorted in distinct and definite compartments of the spirit, India, taking account of the natural differences of beings and of things, seeks to combine them so as to re-establish in its plenitude the total unity. The marriage of contraries forms the rhythm of Existence. Spiritual purity does not fear to ally itself with sensual delight, the freest sexuality with the loftiest wisdom. (The amazing Sahaja is the extreme type of this—a paradoxical challenge of opposing forces united.) The masterpieces of art marry beatuty to science and religion. Everywhere intense life springs up in multiform but compact growth. Everywhere the look of the One in millions of eyes. As Tagore has sung in these immortal verses:—

I shall find thy infinite joy abiding:
In each glory of sound and sight and scent
My passion shall burn as the flame of salvation.
The flower of my love shall become the ripe fruit of devotion.

Without a doubt, the edifice of India's life rests entirely on one faith, therefore, like every creed, on a fragile and passionate hypothesis. But of all the creeds of Europe and Asia, that of Brahmanistic India seems to me the one which embraces the most of the Universe.

I do not speak against the others. The ecstatic intellectualism of primitive Buddhism, or the smiling serenity of the abyss which one breathes in Lao-Tse are infinitely dear to me, but I see in them moments of exceptional sublimity, giddy heights of spiritual life. And what makes me love the Brahmin concept above all those of Asia is that it seems to me to contain them all. Better than the faiths of Europe it could harmonize itself with the vast hypoteheses of modern science. Our Christian religions have adapted themselves to the progress of science (when there was nothing else for them to do) but

one would say that they have difficulty in freeing themselves from the heaven of Hipparchus and Ptolomeus, which they knew in their cradle.

But when, after having let myself be carried away on the curve of lives by the movement, now ascendant and now descendant, of the Brahministic thought, I come back to my century, and I find there the prodigious efforts of the new cosmogony, sprung from the genius of Einstein, or freely inspired by his discoveries, I do not feel myself expatriated. In the voyage of the spirit across the stellar spaces, right to the bottom of the starry abyss, among the island universes, the nebulous spirals, the innumerable Milky Ways, the millions of worlds spinning in time-space, curved, infinite, limited, whose star rays eternally circle and illuminate phantoms, "doubles," on opposing points, I still hear resounding the cosmic symphony of the worlds which follow each other extinguishing and relighting with their living souls, their humanities and their gods, according to the law of the Eternal Becoming, the Brahministic *Samsara*. I hear Siva dancing in the world, in my heart.....

I do not propose that Europeans should adopt an Asiatic Creed. I advise them only to enjoy the benefit of this magnificant rhythm, this breath large and slow. They will learn there what the souls of Europe and America[1] most stand in need of today: calm, patience, virile hope, serene joy, "like a lamp in a windless spot, which does not flicker."[2]

The West, which furiously strives to attain individual and social happiness, falsifies and spoils its life. It kills in the embryo the happiness it pursues by its frantic haste. Like a spent horse that sees nothing between its blinkers but the dazzling road before it, the vision of the European goes scarcely beyond the limits of his individual life or the life of his group, of his country or his party. Within these narrow limits his will encloses the realization of the human ideal. He must at any price prove that he will see it with his own eyes or—supreme concession that he will make to the slowness of human progress—that his children will pluck the fruits. Hence these perpetual aspirations inevitably lost, these dreams of Picrocholes, these social paradises realized on Earth by machine-gun volleys or by trenchant decrees, this haste and this short-sighted violence. And since of necessity disillusion follows, all is imagined to be lost, and the brief period of feverish exaltation is followed by a long period of morbid depression.

The great Brahmin thought does not know these oscillations of the pendulum. It does not expect from a war or a revolution, or sudden coup, a brusque and miraculous transformation of the world. It embraces immense periods, cycles of human ages, whose successive lives gravitate and slowly move towards the center (in concentric circles), the place of Deliverance already realized in the souls of a few Forerunners. It is never discouraged. It has time. Accidents by the way cannot cast down or anger it. For it, error is not a sin; it is only youth. The whole cycle of time must be accomplished. It watches the wheel turn and it waits. And its vision which passes beyond the changing horizon of good and evil, judges, lucid and serene, the flood of souls that goes by, indulgent to the frailties of the weak, and severe only with the strong. For this lofty thought demands much of those who are capable of much: and its entire conception of the hierarchy of castes, which at first sight seems so contemptuously aristocratic, is based on this principle (diametrically opposed to that of the egotistical democracies of the West) that the more elevated the man, the fewer are his rights and the more numerous his duties!.... And in any case, lowly as a man may be, every man can raise himself, everyone knows that he can, sooner or later, by reason of the normal evolution of existence arrive at the culminating point of the curve, from whence by way of the return the soul will escape from Time and its vicissitudes.

Thus the infinite diversity of beings and desire becomes reconciled with the eternity of the rhythm which binds them together in the one stream moving towards unity.

* * *

But the question is not that this grandiose teaching of the spirit spread over Europe the golden shade of its cupola. No, Europe must not be Asia. But she must not wish

[1] It goes without saying that everything I say about Europe applies equally to the European races who have peopled the New world.

[2] Bhagavada Gita.

that Asia be Europe. She must learn to respect the gigantic personality of which her own is complimentary, without wishing (vain dream) to give a fictitious life to the forms of the past, so that these two human worlds, by allying their genius, should in their union hew the path towards the future. This aim Ananda Coomaraswamy expresses with noble daring at the end of his book, opposing the lofty idealism of Asia to the nationalism of young India.

"Nationalism is not enough for the great Idealists of Young India. Patriotism is a parochial interest..... Superior souls have finer roles to fill.... Life, not only India's life demands our loyalty..... the flowering of humanity is worth more for us than the victory of a party..... the chosen people of the future can not be a nation or a race, but an aristocracy of the Earth uniting the energy of European action with the serenity of Asiatic thought....."

We press in our own, this hand offered us by India. Our cause is the same: to save the unity of mankind and its full harmony. Europe, Asia: our strengths are different. Let us unite them to accomplish the common task: the greatest civilization, the sum total of human genius.

Teach us to understand all, Asia, teach us thy wise way of living. And from us learn how to act.

[*"The Essential Significance of Shiva's Dance is threefold: it is the image of his Rhythmic Play as the Source of all Movement within the Cosmos, which is Represented by the Arch: Secondly, the Purpose of his Dance is to Release the Countless souls of men from the Snare of Illusion: Thirdly, the Place of the Dance, Chidambaram, the Centre of the Universe, is within the Heart."*

A French edition of Ananda Coomaraswamy's "The Dance of Shiva, Fourteen Indian Essays" was published in Paris by Monsier F. Rieder, as one of the series of books known as "Foreign Modern Prose Authors". It was edited by Leon Bazalgette. The translation into French had been effected by Madeleine Rolland, sister of Romain Rolland; and Romain Rolland himself had written, by way of presenting the work to the Parisian public, the Introduction to the book, which appeared in *The Modern Review* for August, 1922 under the title *Homage to Shiva* and in the *Orient*, New York, Vol. I No. 1, February 1923 pp 3-8. The rendering published in the *Orient* is slightly different from other published versions.—S.D.R.S.]

10.

UNDERSTANDING AND REUNION

The oriental culture and way of life are traditional, the modern antitraditional: the one values stability, other change or "progress"; one demands from art an adequate expression of truth, the other self-expression: for the one, art is a necessity without which nothing can be well or truly made or adapted to good use; while for the other, art is a luxury to be enjoyed apart from activity and without bearing on conduct. The oriental dance, for example, is an intellectual discipline and always responsible to traditional themes; ours a gymnastic exercise and physical display or, like other modern arts, the self-expression of the artist's private emotional storms. The oriental artist, even at a court, is really maintained by the unanimous patronage of an unanimous society; the modern artist depends on the precarious support of a clique that is only a tiny fraction of the whole community. As art dealt with themes which are and have been familiar to everyone, literate or illiterate, and whether rich or poor, for millennia, there had been no necessity to include in cultural curricula courses on "the appreciation of art". When every professional had his disciples or apprentices, there was little need for "schools of art" in our sense, but only for masters and pupils. In the East, the necessity for museums was not felt until the traditional arts had been almost destroyed by the contagion of "modern civilization"; just as when folksongs could be heard everywhere, no one "collected" them.

— ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY
Asia and Americas, Vol. XLXIII, No. 5
p 270, May 1943.

ANANDA COOMARASWAMY

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