why name thy god

s. mahadeva



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இராகம்:- எதுகுல காம்போதி

பல்லவி

காலே தூக்கி நின் ருடும் தெய்வமே யென்னேக் கை தூக்கி யாள் தெய்வமே

அநுபல்**ல**வி

வேஃ தூக்கும் பிள்ளே தூனப்பெற்ற தெ<mark>ய்வ</mark>மே மின்னும் புகழ் சேர்திஸ்ஃலப் பொன்னம் பலத்திலொரு (காஃ)

சாணங்கள்

- (1) செங்கையின் மான் தூக்கிச் சிவந்த மழுவுந்தூக்கி அங்கத்திலொரு பெண்ணேயனுதினந்தூக்கி, கங்கையைத திங்களேக் கதிதசடையிற்தூக்கி, இங்குமங்குமாய்த் தேடி இருவர் கண்டறியாத (காலே)
- (2) நந்தி மத்தளந்தூக்க நாரதர் யாழ்தூக்கத் தொந்த மென்ற யன்றுளஞ் சதியோடு தூக்க, சிந்தை மகிழ்ந்து வாணேர் சென்னிமேல் காந்தூக்க முந்தும் வலியுடைய முயலகனுனே தூக்க (காவே)
- (3) கு**ம்ப மண்டத்தைதூ**க்க கொடுங்கை கும்பத்தை**தூக்**கப் பைம் பொற்சுவர் கொடுங்கைப் பாரத்தை தூக்க, எம்பி பாரத்தை விராட்டி தயதாமரை தூக்கச் செம் பொன்னம் பலத்திலே தெற்கு முக உரியாரு (காஃ நூக்கி)

விரித்த செஞ்சடையாட

விரித்த செஞ்சடையாட விரிகமல நயனமாட வெண்முறுதல் நில்வாட நண்ணுதமருகமாட வீசுமொரு செங்கையாடத் தரித்தபுலி யதலாட வபய செங்கரமாட யிருதங்கு தோசேலாடத் தாங்கு நூலாட மேலோங்கி நீராட வோளிர் தண்பவன மேனியாட, உரித்த கரியுரியாட வுரக்கங்கணமாட வுபயகரி புரமுமாக ஒரு பாதமெடுத்தாட வொரு பாதமிதித்தாட உள்ளே மகிழ்ந்து சற்றே சிரித்துமலே மங்கைகொண்டாட, நின்முடு முன்றிரு நடனமென்று காண்பேன் ஜெகம் பணிதிகம்பர சிதம்பர நடேசனே சிற்சொரு பானந்தானே.

editor's note

THE late Mr. S. Mahadeva, M. Inst. C.E., M. Inst. W.E., F. I. S. E. (Medalist), M. R. San. I., M.R.I.P.H., etc. the Director of Public Works of Ceylon has contributed to the journals of learned Societies and to the local press on religious, cultural and everyday scientific subjects. I now present, just one year after his death, a collection of twelve selected articles on mainly religious, partly cultural subjects in this the first volume.

In editing all that I have done is to delete repetitions as these were written by him from time to time, sometimes after a lapse of years.

I wish to acknowledge with grateful thanks to the Editors of the "Ceylon Daily News", the "Ceylon Observer" and the "Hindu Organ" their kind permission to reproduce the articles.

I am also indebted to the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, Ltd., for their kind co-operation as printers without which little could have been achieved.

Finally I am thankful to Mr. S. Natesan, M.S.C., for his Introduction.

s. sanmuganathan

" Skandhagiri ", 117, Kynsey Road, Colombo, Ceylon.

24th April, 1947

nataraja

parvati

ardhanarishvara

parameshvara

bhagavatgita

introduction

The career of the late Mr. S. Mahadeva in whose memory this book is published was remarkable in more ways than one. Starting from humble beginnings in the Public Works Department of Ceylon, he was the first Ceylonese Officer to rise to the highest position in that Department. He won the esteem of the public as well as of the Government of Ceylon as an Engineer with a profound technical knowledge and as an administrator who never spared himself in making his work thorough and efficient. It was a fitting finale of his career that his last administrative act was to fly to India in search of architects for building a University worthy of the cultural traditions of the people of Ceylon.

In the midst of his busy life, Mr. S. Mahadeva pursued his cultural aims steadfastly and was deeply interested in Art and Religion. He made a special study of Hindu Art and iconography, and was the proud possessor of some fine specimens of Hindu Bronze Images. He had a beautiful image of Nataraja—the Lord of the Cosmic Dance—cast in bronze by an Indian craftsman with meticulous attention to the canons of Hindu iconography. This image is now enshrined in the Temple at Parameshvara College, Jaffna, of which he was the architect—and the image is today the object of worship of hundreds of students in the College.

In the following pages the reader is presented with a sheaf of articles contributed by Mr. S. Mahadeva to the journals of Ceylon. These articles have been selected and edited by his brother Mr. S. Sanmuganathan, himself an artist of versatile talent, well-versed in Hindu and Buddhist lore.

Mr. Mahadeva had a keen insight into the inter-relation of Art and Religion. This inter-relation is, I may say so, more conspicuous in Hinduism than in other religions. The symbolism implicit in Hindu worship and art requires competent exposition. The people of Ceylon can be proud of Dr. Ananda Coomaraswami the distinguished savant, whose work in this direction has won international recognition.

It redounds to the credit of the late Mr. S. Mahadeva, that he found time, in the midst of his official preoccupation, not only to study but to expound with clarity the significance of Hindu Art and its mystic symbolism.

S. NATESAN

State Council, Colombo, 1947.



why name thy god

THE ORIGIN OF PLACE NAMES OR NAMES OF PERSONS IS generally associated with facts and circumstances, and knowledge of the latter enables us to arrive at an interpretation of such names. It is not possible for any one to examine into the meaning of all the names of the individuals of all the races in the world, nor is it possible to delve into the origin of all the place names of various countries of the earth. To some extent however, we can trace the names borne by people of different faiths. The names of the Old and New Testaments are familiar to the Christians of the whole world, but the world of Hinduism is almost confined to the land of its origin; and even in this land which covers a vast area the names of individuals give results varying with the climate, language, customs and occupations of the people.

If the Indians could be called one race, then probably India may be said to possess a vast storehouse of names whose elucidation would require a vast amount of reading before one could attempt it. If India be considered a land of two principal Faiths only, say for instance, the Mohammedan and the Hindu, then the task would be easier. The matter would be easier still if we examine the names of one Faith only, that of the Hindus.

Amongst Hindu names we may notice the circumstances that the majority of cognomens are combined with certain masculine attributes, such as firmness, strength, hardness, power, might, prominence, height, endurance, activity, fear, and the like; and the remainder are characteristic of feminine qualities such as grace, beauty, compassion, love, chastity,

obedience, etc. It is remarkable also that some of these names, inspired by the necessity for creating forms of worship or veneration in seeking favour or succour in times of distress fall into groups characteristic of rational powers and functions.

Resolving in our minds the various attributes assigned to the Almighty, Omniscience, love, mercy etc., we see that there is perhaps no other religion in India that has such a fund of names as the Hindu religion, where in whatever form the attribute may be, the unity of the source is not lost sight of; for it is said in the Gita, "They who serve even other Gods, with a firm belief in doing so, involuntarily worship ME, I am HE who partaketh of all worship, and I am their reward."

The human mind cannot comprehend the vastness of the universal Being. The one great God that is for all, creates and recreates in diverse shapes various forms of divinity, comprising the Hindu Pantheon—forms inspired, as stated before, by the necessity for creating forms of worship or veneration, for seeking favours or succour, or giving thanksgiving for benefits received.

The Puranas and religious works of many centuries are full of mythology and interesting meanings of names of the one deity with various attributes. Of these the birth of KARTHIKEYA or SUBRAHMANYA is given in the BALAKANDA of the Ramayana, the VANAPAWAN of the Mahabharatha, in later works such as the KUMARA-SAMBHAVA, KUMARATANTRA and, doubtless, other works. SUBRAHMANYA is known by several names, the chief among them popular in the South of India and Cevlon are KARTHIKEYA, SHANMUKHA, SKANDA and SVAMINATHAN, KUMARA BALASWAMI, SUNDRA-MURTI. Most of his epithets carry inferences from the aspects in which he was born. Of other names mentioned in works but not known to be popular are SAKTIDHARA, SENAPATI, SARAVANABHAVA, SENANI, GUHA, BRAHMATHAIE and DESIKA. The Ramayana is known

to all Hindus from the North to the South of India but the worship of SUBRAHMANYA and the names of his attributes are little known in Northern India.

In the South there is hardly a village without a shrine for his worship. He is essentially a South Indian mountain deity worshipped by the millions of the Madras Presidency and Ceylon. He was worshipped by the Saint KAN-APPAN who offered strong drink, cock and pea-fowl, accompanied with wild dances and feasts. A god of the jungle tribesmen, he is sculptured with the bow and arrow—a hunter of hunters who hunts the evil in mankind to destruction.

As son of SHIVA and PARVATHI he is the Celestial General Slayer of demons. He is also regarded as the son of AGNI and the Ganges. •

Owing to the myth of the birth of AGNI and VAYU and the failure of PARVATHI to take a part in his generation, the consort of SHIVA is said to have cursed the Gods whose prayers effected the union of AGNI, that their wives should remain barren because she was denied the pleasure of becoming a mother.

The potency of the curse is probably feared by the women of North India for it is stated that in the Bombay Presidency no SUMANGALI would visit the temple of SUBRAH-MANYA. In Bengal it is stated that the temple of SUBRAHMANYA is favoured by disreputable women on certain occasions for favours peculiar to their interest. Whether in the North or the South the attributes associated with him are always masculine, attributes of firmness, strength, power, might and fear. He is worshipped by thousands in the temples of South India specially dedicated to him, or in the shrine allotted to his worship almost without exception in any South Indian Temple.

In Jaffna his worship is more popular than that of any other Deity. Perhaps there are more temples to his greatness in the North of Ceylon than anywhere else. Of the Southern temples the sylvan Shrine of Kathirkamam is associated with the greatest of mystic simplicity and the greatest of mystic wonders. Here in one place many faiths unite in one veneration of the sylvan God, who skilled in bow and arrow lived with the sylvan people where he secured a consort and is said ever to live to succour mankind. The arrow or dart of the Divine Sakthi centred in the bow of manhood is directed towards evil. The arrow, the symbol of veneration, the symbol of the slayer is also worshipped in its singular form. Shrines exist created with the arrow only at the altar, for the symbol is rationally believed to be a sign of protection and courage to those that have to fight the battle of life—where man-made laws operate at times to the detriment of mankind.

ganapathi for success significant of the elephant headed deity

By common consent the modern world has become resigned to the adoption of terms such as East and West; to the adoption of the former term to that part of our globe lying East of Suez and up to the Pacific and the latter to the remainder. This division of a spherical surface is unintelligible although the meridians of longitude in the nautical almanacs are based on Greenwhich. The criterion of division seems to be racial and it has so befallen that the central regions of the East according to this division saw the beginnings of civilisation and formed the centre from which the races spread towards all points of the compass.

With the spread of civilization the concept of God formed and took rational form and even unto today the subject of God is being discussed with all earnestness by all races.

Some still believe in the dead as possessing power over the living, and ancestral worship, dominates a considerable section of men.

In this matter of the God-concept, science has intervened and the reasoning mind is ever alive to discoveries—indeed, adventures—in the Theodicy of God, doubting old established beliefs, creating new versions and revised editions of thought.

In revolutionary thought the Western minds lead the way. The East is ever satisfied with its ideals. The manifestation of the God-concept as the speculative reason, that God is not a being but an ideal, is the fundamental basis of thought.

In looking forwards and backwards to vision or experience the same fundamentals appear in the arts and sciences of the East and particularly in India. To understand Indian art a knowledge of the religions of India is essential. To understand Hindu art, a knowledge of Hinduism and Hindu mythology are necessary.

The Hindus expressed their religion in art and art in religion. This is generally the Eastern view of art and is well expressed by an old Chinese saying that "painters of old painted the idea and not merely the share."

Of all the deities in Hindu worship Ganesha, or Ganapati, is given priority of worship. The uninitiated in the fundamentals of religion who do not believe that God is Beauty and Love, consider Ganesha as a deity presiding over obstacles in their way and removing them.

These mischievous notices of certain phases of Brahmanical thought intended to create terror in the uninitiated mind have fortunately survived the centuries and are believed in some quarters even today.

Ganapati as is known is also called Vig-nes-vara. Apart from the Puranic tendencies to explain the myth the origin of the elephant humanised into a god-head, there would appear to be a rational derivation of the elephant-like form of the God, who commands so much worship in priority and seems to have as his pet an insignificant rodent such as a rat.

A rat as is known is shunned by modern science as a destroyer of cereals and a carrier of plague. How came it therefore that this learned race of Hindu Aryans adopted the rat as a pet or vehicle of a God?

An examination of the myths of far-off countries shows that Apollo was associated with the rat. Then his title was SMINTHEUS? Supposed to mean mouse-killer. It was an appellation of the attribute born of necessity for destruction, as the mouse was a pirate animal. Apollo would therefore be an affiliate of Ganesha in the attribute that the rat had

to be destroyed and verily the rat was indicated with Ganesha as the God himself did signify in idealism the destructor of the rat. The rat therefore is no sacred animal as ignorant peasants have been led to believe.

Ancient Phoenicians considered Hercules the humanised lion. The Egyptians had Horus and their myriad humanised animal gods. The Egyptians too in their temple, near Girzeh carved figures exactly resembling the Indian deities. Ganesha and Vishnu. The Alexandrian followers represented Minerva with the elephant's skin upon her head instead of the helmet, as seen on the coins of Alexander II, King of Epirus. The skin of an elephant represented wisdom rather similarly to the Hindu concept of Ganapati as the God of Wisdom. In what better form of animate being could the Indian artist and sculptor symbolise wisdom than that of an elephant? The traditional longevity of an Elephant represents experience, and wisdom follows experience, so the great pandits of art acclaimed Ganesha as a humanised elephant. But why a rat with an elephant you may ask; why the multitudinous arms, why his special modaka for his relish?

These are rational enquiries and rationally they have been devised by the great thinkers who did want symbolism to function as their ideals. Investigation in a wide field of ethnology would lead the origin of Ganesha to the fields, the fields that man first ploughed and was forced to maintain for his livelihood. The deity that represents the field therefore must attain priority over others.

The deity of the field is a Harvest God and originated in the Harvest Season thanks-giving.

Ganesha is also called Mu-hika Vahan, rider on a rat, but the word Mushika comes from a Sanskrit root, which means a thief. The title therefore implies that he is riding over the thief of the field—(Field-rat).

The symbol of the elephant is not far to seek. Elephants in the wild are destroyers themselves of the fields. So the

timid and helpless farmer deified the aggressor and begged supplication by the gift of Modakas, so beloved by Ganesha. As a piece offering of the harvest Modaka is representative of the agricultural produce as it consists of rice, flour, raw sugar, kernel of coconut and certain sweet cereals cooked in ball form that is succulent and readily partaken by an elephant.

The titles of Ganesh, Surpakama and Ekaduta one-toothed, offer explanations of their own. Surpa is the winnowing basket so essential at Harvest-time and one-tooth may well represent the plough-share. So Ganesh, the Elephant God who rides a rat is the deified symbol of the persecutor of evil to the Harvester.

By worship and supplication to him success in the Harvest is believed to be assured. For faith and prayer are powerful factors in life and the simple conception of an universal form of worship developed into principal proportions when Ganesha, the Vignesvara, became Siddhidata the power of success, an ideal in the production of a good crop.

A good crop is an essential to the well being of an agricultural race such as the Hindus and with the success of supplication to him in agriculture, the approach to success in every undertaking began with the invocation to Ganesha; and thus Ganesha obtained priority of worship in any undertaking.

On Hindu New Year's day a form of Harvest Thanksgiving is celebrated in the Hindu world. They offer fruits, milk and sweet rice to Ganesha and the Sun. This rice offering is cooked mostly in the fields and where Ganesha temples exist. The Maruthadi Temple at Manipay is a good example.



NATARAJA now in the temple of Parameshvara College, Jaffna

In the professional Indian art forms, sculptural portraits were not pleasing to the eye; line and curve were emphasised; garments were profuse and ornamented; the pose sometimes too severe; and the face appeared as a mask. In a gallery of sculptures there would be little variation in the mask-like features although in every detail the sculptural elements would bring out the essential features distinguishing one person from the other.

A symbolic art was evolved and the artist crowded in as many features as possible into a single subject to convey the ideas behind the symbols. The term God was used in a very general manner to express anything God-like—anything Divine. Thus arose the numerous names for the one God—each conveying the peculiar attribute or function of the self-same God in some parable of creation.

Sankara, the Beneficent, Hara, the Destroyer, the Rudra, the Terrible, were all one and the only God source. The Sculptor, however, attempted to portray the multitudinous in one form—presenting fire, lightning, and the sun, the destructive forces, alongside with the merciful water and the seductive moon. Mercy was placed high in the altar and Evil far below.

A vision of the great principle had to be born—something that would completely express in a single concept the universe itself—as understood by science and thought. No human being had seen God, therefore no one could picture the figure of God; but many have had visions of him in their mind.

The vision of a man-like God, the super-man was the natural conception; and the artist created in his mind's eye therefore a figure that he might constantly keep before him as a symbol expressive of divine universality—a symbol that would express a God of human form, knowing no sex or other human distinctions, manifesting a vision of the universe in space and time.

"Things are not what they seem". We are imprisoned on this globular surface and are being whirled in space around a central ball of fire—the planet off which the earth we are in was born. We are with our backs to the light, day in day out—we can watch the shadows on other surfaces that gleam in space.

About it all there is order, there is rhythmic time as in the movements of music, there is scintillation in space—boundless space occupied here and there by numbers of worlds, greater or smaller, but equally infinitesimal in an infinity of utter desolation.

Out of a chaos of conflicting ideas, the master-mind of the Indian Sculptor has evolved the one form that does signify in terms of science and thought the universal conception of God—the vision of Nataraj, the Lord of the Dance; the Lord of Desolation like that of a burial ground—the vast space where everything must die as even the sun will die and more suns be born; depicting life in countless births and deaths that speed through space and time, where the Yugas of man is but the twinkling of an eye in the tune of the rhythm of the universe.

In the motion of the dance he expresses the wave mechanics of science. Rhythm is implied by the constant and regular note of the Natha drum held in one hand in beautiful poise of perpetual motion.

The pedestal under his feet is the lotus, a circular form and an arc of a rainbow springing from the lotus stem towers overhead encircling the entire vision. Round the orbit are flames—little flames representing the balls of fire that we see gleaming in countless numbers in the blackness of the night—so great in number in so vast a space that, it is said, these balls of fire and dead matter that gleam in light and shadow outnumber the grains of sand that are to be found in all seashores of the terrestrial globe.

To symbolise fire, that boon to mankind that generates life and also destroys it, the fire that Prometheus brought from Olympus as a gift to mankind, he carries in the open palm of one hand—open for dissemination to the mass and sundry—a flame upheld and unwatched granting warmth liberally to those that need it in this cold and desolate universe.

This same fire is again that of the sun in whirling mass of tongued flames casting out in their distentions other balls of fire, creating and destroying worlds off the worlds that file past in the rhythmic dance round the central planet.

The continuity of the race in countless births and rebirths is exemplified in the crematorium where a garland of skulls is found to express re-incarnation; decorative in its sense as a garland and dear to HIM that is master of all, and worn next to his skin.

The trunk is that of the human body in broad outline of athletic grace, differing but little in its moulded hips, lion-like waist and swelling breasts from the female form; but to emphasize that woman is not forgotten, the left ear wears a woman's ear ornament while the right has the ascetic lobe, symbolic of the devotion of man to woman where each is both and all humanity one.

The locks of hair, the embodiment of the saintly creed that creates the universe as the fleeting billows of fleecy clouds that speed past in the daily passage of time, warring, forming and reforming to the motion of the wind swept off the great dancer's floor-hold within them the symbol of grace and love—the moon and mother, Ganga; grace in forgiving with gentleness, as mild as the light of the crescent moon in the

matted locks of the clouds; and born to succour mankind with the rich and splendid waters of the mother Ganga—born of the loftiest of all the peaks, amidst the sacred snows that link the heavens to the earth in continuous flow, the lofty areas undefiled by the touch of man, defiled by millions and supplying unfailingly the great element that man must have to succour himself and mother earth.

From this fountain head source eternally pours the limpid streams down to the plains below, trapped here and there, and diverted by contraptions to cool the heat of the noonday and bathe the tired limbs of the million below with those sweet and cool waters of the universe, God himself.

The sign of suffering for the faults of man born of selfishness or ignorance, the sign of the throat that was stained in swallowing the poison produced of foulness—the blue throat, for ever signifies that but for his magnificence in forgiveness enduring himself all the faults of those that are weak but come unto Him for forgiveness, destruction would have overtaken the weak, and annihilation the world.

All that is vile and wicked in this world is controlled by His universal power. The symbol of the serpent that all abhor is ever round His waist to show that those that appeal to Him by prayer will not go unheard.

The hissing serpent is always within sight warning one of the pitfalls in the race of life. Although the eyes are closed for impartiality, He is not blind. His third eye of wisdom—the eye of the mind—penetrates into space and into the hearts of beast, man and all living matter, seeking out the will to act for good or evil.

The control of passion, the source of many a crime, is exemplified by the tiger skin, the coat of that fierce master of the wilds, captured to adorn his waist.

In all the phases of life, man garners the fruit of actions born of his own free will. That gift of freedom sometimes runs the course of wickedness; but sins are forgiven by



now in the temple of Parameshvara College. Jaffna

repentance and prayer, so salvation is at his foot—that uplifted foot, the symbol of extremity where all deeds are valued: when age ripens and the life that has run its course takes heed of its actions in years, when the soul that is to be freed into another span of life is rich with experience and desires solace, then salvation is at His feet to those who desire it. The left hand across the body points to His feet, summoning all to His feet for He shall give them rest.

Wickedness in the world must be crushed, wickedness that is born of mankind on this earth, and the symbol of the demon of wickedness is the malignant dwarf. Evil and corruption are to be trampled out of existence, crushed out of life. Nature is determined in her endeavour to maintain the balance of life, for even in the law of the jungle evil is stamped out by combined endeavour.

The entire symbolism is supported by a lotus in full blossom with petals flowing down towards the source of its stem. The lotus rising from its origin deep in slime, and reaching out through the liquid of lessening turbidity to the level of the clear water surface and free air above blossoms to the full grace and dignity designed by the creator coloured by the cosmic rays of the sun, the dispenser of warmth to all living things on earth.

Thus is signified the origin of all plant life that has played its part in sustaining the world from the age of water, swamps and carbonaceous forests from which living matter began in jelly-like formation culminating in the masterpiece—Man.

Countless ages have passed in the evolution of creation—countless ages are still to pass. Births and re-births must continue to the tinkling bells of time that encircle the great dancer's feet, keeping time and music for ages beyond until the dying sun must spend his heat and in doing so, who knows, may create other worlds yet to be made—that would still continue the great panorama of the universe.

Thus the vision of universal creation was beholden to man, arising from fear, love, veneration and other emotions of mankind—the vision of vastness that is so vast that human imagination cannot comprehend, it creates in little hearts living on this earth a sense of fear, a sense born of the knowledge that man is so infinitesimally small in comparison with the universe beyond. That sense teaches us intimately that the creation of all this panorama is great and unto Him we have to pledge ourselves for conduct and guidance in the scheme of life however short.

The Sculptors of India have wrought in human form, using even a multitude of hands that symbolise functions the true conception of a universal being that transcends space and time and fulfils the conditions of science in the light of modern observations—a conception that all life is motion, that what appears static is not static, and that nothing lasts indefinitely.

As the moving finger writes things move on from one goal to another in the scheme of the universe. In this symbol of the Dance of universal vision, created in bronze, the artist has attained the highest ideal of conception in figuration.



ARDHANARISHVARA at Siva Ganga, Hendala

ardhanarishvara

THE STUDY OF INDIAN BRONZES, particularly South Indian Bronzes, affords an unlimited field of joy in research. Practically every temple in South India has bronze images belonging to various periods. Some are unique in their conception, form and beauty. No two are alike, thanks to the code of the artists in which individuality remains supreme. They may be alike in form in the sense that they depict the particular saint or deity they represent; but in detail, to the eye of the connoisseur there would appear much that is not common in the two.

In this age of freedom of worship many valuable examples have been lost by vandalism and prospectors out for gain. Images that were worshipped once in temples have gone to museums all over the world. This subject is rare, specially in Bronze. Examples in stone exist in certain South Indian Temples but in Bronze there is hardly anything as beautiful as the original of the illustration.

To the devout Hindu, Ardhanarishvara is a great symbol of faith symbolising that there is no difference in the virtues of man and woman and that both are indivisible in the procreation of mankind. This symbol of unity exemplified in the creation of a single object of veneration is one of the highest and most difficult works of art in the Hindu Pantheon. The origin of the figure is covered in the mists of history and legend, but the necessity for the creation of such a symbol is not far to seek.

Brahma, the Creator, created many in his own form but was at a loss to promote self creation in humanity. He went

into meditation and prayed for inspiration. There appeared before him Maheswara or Siva in the composite form of man and woman. Brahma realised that mankind could be one and yet possess two distinct forms—man and woman—and thus brought about the creation of woman.

There is yet another explanation for the Ardhanarishvara form. On an occasion when Siva and Parvati held their court at Mount Kailas Devas and Rishis went there to pay homage. All Devas and Rishis bowed to both Siva and Parvati and circumambulated them but Rishi Bringhi paid homage only to Siva for in his code of worship he owed allegiance to the one god and did not recognise Parvati. Enraged at this apparent insult Parvati with her divine power punished Bringhi by willing that the Rishi while retaining his human form should lose all flesh and be reduced to a skeleton clothed in skin. Bringhi in this form could not support his frame. Siva observing the great discomfort gave him a third leg so as to enable him to attain a steady posture. Pleased at this boon from Siva, Bringhi danced with joy. This further enraged Parvati who did penance to Siva to obtain a boon. At the end of the penance Siva granted the wish of Parvati to be united with his own body. Thus sprang half Siva and half Parvati forming Ardhanarishvara. The right half is male and the left female.

The male half should completely symbolise Siva and his principal aspects. He should have a patamukta or the ratted hair of saintly creed on his head adorned with the crescent moon and mother Ganga. The right ear has a Nakra Kundala, an ascetic's lobe an ornament and the right half of the forehead one half of the third eye of wisdom. One half of his throat is coloured blue, Neelakandha, signifying the mark left by swallowing the poison produced by the churning of the ocean signifying the sacrifice of himself in absorbing the sins of mankind and forgiveness to all. Of the two hands on the right, one arm is bent and the hand bent downwards resting on Siva's bull. This does not appear in the bronze sculpture, but is found in

examples in stone as in the stone figure at Kumbakonan. The other hand is held erect holding an ordinary Kundale.

The ornaments on the right half are peculiar to Siva. The garment of tiger skin and silk cover the loin up to the knee all held together by the girdle of the snake. The emblem of control of evil and the symbol of rebirth signified by the casting off and renewal of the skin of a cobra.

The left side of Parvati is equally symbolic of all the Hindu emblems signifying the goddess. The hair is braided and coiled into a fine knot. Over the forehead is the tilaka much enjoined to the third eye of Siva. The ear is ornamented by a Kundale called Valiha. The neck and shoulders are those of a graceful feminine form with well moulded breast and neck and chest adorned with delicate ornaments including the Thali, the symbol of marriage. One hand carries a lotus flower and the other hangs to the side in lovely curve form.

The dress extends beyond the knee and is of fine silk and held in position by ornamented girdles. The hand has bracelets and the foot anklets, the leg is slightly less in length than the right and portrays the attitude of a forward inclined pose. The face too has its distinctive form in that the moulded cheek is more full than the right.

bhakti in sculpture

To understand something that is not readily intelligible it is necessary to approach the subject, with an unbiassed mind eager to seek, learn and find the meaning thereof, however difficult and remote the meaning may appear.

To understand art in general is not easy. To understand the art of all races is difficult, for to do so would be to know all humanity. The diversity of races, customs and manners produces a variety of ideals. But in common to all arts one function would appear supreme, the function of Devotion which is Bhakti.

In this function, early Christian art, Italian art and the art of the Middle Ages have the underlying religious ideal common to them. They are contained in the doctrine of the three paths—the paths to salvation—the way of Action; the way of Faith; and the way of Knowledge—known in Hindu teachings as Karma-Marga, Bhakti-Marga, and Gnana-Marga.

Understanding of the three single doctrines would afford the key to the appreciation of Indian Art. In the manner of expression of Sculpture, exposition of finesse in the paintings and the embodiment of the spiritual understanding expressing the ideals referred to above, Indian Architecture is supreme. The origin of this form of expressive architecture is concerned with the Vedas for the origin was at its source the Tirumurti as applied to human conduct.

The architect who would conceive such form and proportions as to ennoble in his creations the ideals of human knowledge had therefore to be lofty himself in his attainments. Such an architect was considered Divine.

The four faces of Siva sculptured in the Bayons of Angkor depict the four cardinal points of the compass expressing the universal vision of Brahma. To represent the four corners of the Earth four heavenly architects were created —Visvakarma, Maya, Ivasthan and Manu. The terrestrial artists we know of to-day were born of the four Divine architects. The terrestrial artists were the master builders and scientists, the draughtsmen, the painters and the expert craftsmen such as sculptors and carpenters.

The ideals of Art and architecture were codified into laws of shapes and forms by the Divine Architects.

Of them Visvakarma's code of Silpa Shastram is popular in its sculptural aspects. To understand the multitude of arms and heads of Indian sculptors it is necessary to follow the motive for their creation. The suggestion of Bhakti comprehends the desirable virtues as understood in the doctrine of today; Faith, Hope and Charity together denote Bhakti.

Possession of the virtues is not visibly demonstrable. They are the qualities of a devoted person. They are the personal aspects of the individual that contribute towards the ennoblement of the soul.

The function of Visvakarma's art was to symbolise in form the motives that would kindle in a person that innate source of feeling that promotes Bhakti. Once that meaning is understood then all Indian sculpture would be living sermons of Faith, Hope and Charity; living down the ages—ever to be observed in filling one's heart with the love of God. In the backwoods of Africa and on the almost inaccessible mountain tops, among a people believed to be savages, there exists a conception of the one great God.

They express their symbol of God not in a human form but in clay cones or Lingams just as the Hindu Yogis made their emblems of Shiva. The wild African called his cone The Great Amma "The One Universal God" as Amma himself. He argued that none of them dared to say that he looked upon the face of God and therefore cannot sculpture God in stone or form or "Who can tell whether God has a face or not" such was the African Eogoun's argument.

India has a myriad Gods sculptured in stone. They have been denounced by the mere observer as grotesque and in some cases even obscene.

Epstein stirred a world dormant in sculptural conceptions of art with his "Rima", "Night" and "Dawn". He exhibited at the Leicester Galleries his sculptures in stone and bronze. Here his "Primeval Gods" has evoked comment. From the personality that observes in the Indian sculptures nothing but grotesque forms, Epstein's creation should evoke furious contempt.

The Hindu sculptures on the Great Pagodas are massed in detail but conform in outline to ennobling curves of such mathematical precision that the wonder of them all is the master mind behind them that can conceive and execute such gigantic works of endurance and beauty with so much detail and so great a significance; yet both in high-lights and shadows they are masses of beautiful outlines.

Our eyes that are used to so much variation from a coal dump to a fine diamond cannot discern the essential carbon content of the two minerals.

In the same manner the ordinary eyes which are trained to see natural forms cannot penetrate the realm of spiritual understanding. Forms and emblems convey more than what curves and lines can portray from direct nature.

Blind faith has led the African to follow the religion of his forefathers. All his mystic symbols and Taboo are handed down from generation to generation, even as blind faith has led some of us to worship the symbols and idols our forefathers did.

To the Hindu the esoteric symbolism of ten attributed to the Lingam is not apparent. There is no coarseness and profanity in the symbol of The Shiva Lingam.

The union of Shiva and Parvathi is sublime. Shiva will have none of passion. He is the destroyer of passion. Khama, for does he not wear the leopard skin as an emblem of control of passion? Khama and all the things that stand for passion cannot touch Shiva.

In Hindu mythology Shiva is the destroyer of Evil and not the creator of life. So how can he be associated with any genital symbol! Shiva is according to the Vedas the "Light of Lights", austerity of austerities; first of all Holy things; the self controller of the self controlled; Yogi of Yogis: yet the imperfect instrument—the mind of man—endows the God he worships with his own quality. So does Epstein lead the generation of today into realms unknown.

The Western mind is prone to be led by precept and enthusiasm. Observation is the result of individual experience and many a pitfall awaits the individual that has no sympathy or application to understand the origin and nature of the race that inhabits this world, and whose vagaries he tries to understand.

There is a book recently published by a Military Officer who transcends his field into religious views. He commits the same blunders that are often repeated. If simplicity is the peak of civilization then nothing could be more simple than a clay-cone or stone or staff as a symbol of a universal being. Nevertheless some sculptures have given expression to form—they have sculptured a human God on the Lingam itself—as seen in the illustration. The Lingam therefore cannot be misunderstood to be a Phallic sign of the Nomad Hindus.



PARAMESHVARA

the lingam as a symbol of worship

THE NECESSITY FOR EMPLOYING AN OBJECT to assist mental concentration at the awakening of religious thought can be appreciated, for history shows that in their early days of worship men had resorted to form of line and curve before evolving material forms. Earlier still, in the veneration of natural phenomena, mountains and hills took significance and the worship of the terrestrial earth as the great mother became popular, an outlook which prevails even at the present day.

The utilisation of an object to aid meditation was practised very early in India as shown by the finds of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa. The images portrayed in the seals of Harappa presented anthropomorphic forms of deities, showing an apprehension in the popular imagination of the existence of a God in human shape and the existence of an idol cult.

Worship of trees formed part of object worship. There were tree goddesses, trees of wisdom and life and personifications of tree goddesses. The worship of the tree in its natural form, in which the tree is personified and endowed with human attributes, was known in the pre-Aryan period when the tree was believed to have a personality and soul of its own. Although this belief was not favoured by the Aryans the sanctity of trees lives up to the present day either in their association with great personages or situation, for there is general aversion to felling trees of particular kinds. The non-Aryan GONDS of India even today will not shake a tree or pluck a fruit after dark for fear of disturbing the spirit in the tree. Many wood-cutters and hill tribesmen ask the pardon of the indwelling spirit before cutting a tree.

The Burmese believe in the indwelling spirits in trees and many ceremonies and observations are practised by them.

The worship of stones extends to all corners of India from ancient times. Stones were easier to venerate as objects for concentration, for there was such a variety of stones and even in the aniconic forms they were worshipped for their weird and uncanny features. They had unfamiliar forms and shapes and were unlike other objects. Their crystalline formation, colouring and variety of hues suggested animistic qualities and the habitation of spirits. Many examples of aniconic stones of worship exist in the fields, cross-roads and functions of almost every village of India. They exist outside too where the Vedic religions are practised. There are stones venerated as watchman of the cross-roads and open fields even in Ceylon and also in the Island of Bali where Brahmanic religion is observed.

Not satisfied with aniconic stones, the spur to further aid in concentration took anthropomorphic form and the stone that was hewn or found gained iconic value. They were chiselled into shape, into rude human shapes that were suggestive of the human image, and gradually extended to sculptural proportions with accentuated lines and definition of forms rather than copies of the human forms as visaged in life. The idea of the Indian sculptor was never to form the image of God in true likeness; to the human form, for that would be sacrilege. The nearest approach to the image of human shape was sufficient.

Iconic worship brought in its wake a variety of conception that developed into the Hindu pantheon; but the symbol of a great faith, a great religion in such diverse forms did not even appeal to the Pre-Aryans of the age of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa.

An object that represented the great Almighty in all His attributes was necessary for worship, and such an object in an iconic form was not altogether in keeping with cultural ideals, for human images fell into the categories of sex, and it was not easy to envisage in a single object the human image to represent in all its form the complete ideal that would satisfy the great Almighty, the one and the only Almighty that knows no sex, no creed, no status of life, where all creation is one and all mankind members of one great family.

The development of the universal ideal befitting the principle of the religious ideal was symbolised in the Lingam. As an object of meditation, for concentration in meditation, and for simplicity in expression the yogi principle and universality of the Almighty no better form could be conceived.

The Lingam existed in the pre-Aryan period in Mohenjo-Daro and is similar to the Lingams in the Siva temples today.

There are movable and fixed Lingams. The movable are made of earth, metals, stones, wood, baked or unbaked clay and of other materials such as rice, cow-dung, butter paste, flour, &c. The worship of the Linga has different effects. For instance the worship of the Linga has gold, wealth; of cooked rice, abundant food; of the Rudraksha seed, knowledge; of flour, strength; of sandal paste, happiness, &c.

There are many shapes, forms and proportions of the Linga. The rules and dimensions are set out in the Agamas and vary according to the material used in making them. They vary in different parts of India but in the basic principle they remain the same.

The Linga represents Siva—the universal Being. Siva is presumably the maha Yogi—the typical ascetic and self mortifier. The shape and form of the Linga has been interpreted by many authors chiefly non-Hindus as representing phallic worship, sex worship, and they state that the Linga represents the male genital organ and is a symbol of creation. To the Hindu no esoteric symbolism is conveyed. There is no coarseness or profanity in the symbol of the Siva Lingam. Siva will have none of passion as a Yogi.

He is the embodiment of self-control and the negator of all creation. How the mind of man can endow the attribute of generation to the symbol of yogi meditation is not apparent from the forms that exist of the Linga.

Even in the earliest form of the Linga of the Mohenjo-Daro period, the movable Linga had its Pitha or pedestal Crystal pebble Linga were used mounted independently on a pedestal.

When it is known that the shapes of the Linga are many, such as cylindrical end on an octagonal base, cylindrical end with an octagonal shaft on a square base, fluted cylindrical shaft with numerous lines,—twenty-seven in the case of the Pujabaya Linga—it will be readily conceded that interpretation of the symbol should not be based on merely one of its numerous features. Of the varieties there are said to be 108 forms.

The clearest expression of their representing a divine form and not a phallic symbol is perhaps evinced in the Mukha Linga where one or more human faces are sculptured on it. The number of faces correspond to the aspects of Siva such as Vamadeva. Tatpurusha, Aghora, Sadyojata, Isana. To those Hindus who have been initiated into the mysteries of Diksha these aspects of Siva should be familiar.

The number of faces also correspond to the entrances to the Temple, to the cardinal points as on the four faces of Siva on the Bayons of Angkor in Cambodia. The universal knowledge of the principle of the Linga—is an object of worship and as an aid to the meditation following the Maha yogi in his meditation on life has been known to the Hindus even outside India as expressed in the Siva Temple of Angkor. The Mukha Linga therefore would dispel the idea that the Linga represents creation and the emblem is a phallic symbol or a genital organ. Closely associated with it in the same school of thought is the anticipation that the Pitha on which the Linga is fixed is that of a female organ and the union of the two is a form of symbol in Sakti worship. The Pitha

however has function. The ablution on worship of the Linga is an important ritual, and it is essential that the Pitha should allow of free flow of the water outside it. The nala or watercourse was therefore formed round the Linga ending in a spout. The Pitha may be of simple form or ornamental, with mouldings. The proportion is also given in the Agamas. Generally the length of the side is equal to 3 times the diameter of the Linga or equal to the periphery. They may be square, oblong, octagonal, elongated, hexagon, or 2 16-sided or semi-circular in plan.

The manasara lays down the forms and proportions according to the form of the Linga.

In the syllable AUM, the symbol of the supreme spirit, the three letters are personified by Brahman, Vishnu, and Siva, the Hindu Trinity. A for Brahma, the creator; U, Vishnu, the preserver; M Siva, the destroyer. In the various aspects of Siva there has been no significance of Siva being a creator or anything of the Siva Lingam pointing towards its manifestation as a genetic principle. Essentially Siva is a benignant yogi and viewed as a mystic yogi.

In his worship therefore no esoteric meaning is applicable; and the presence of the various sculptural forms on the Lingam and the Mukha Lingam should be strong grounds for belief that their worship is not based on the phallic sense, or sex worship, but attributable to their symbolic aid to meditation and concentration in the great Divine, that God-head to which all humanity prays for spiritual power.

the nava graha

SHAW HAS SAID "Prayer is not a waste of time except when it is mere begging. Even then it may be a comfort. If you pray that the horse you have backed may win, you will not increase his chances of winning, and to that extent you are wasting your time; but if it makes you more hopeful until the race is over, it may be worth your while." emotion of fear and the greed for gain or supremacy also evoke prayer. Prayer to an unknown force more dominant and more formidable than human, has been practised during the historic age of human life and probably even in prehistoric times. Everybody knows the prayer of the beggarthe endless monologue of the blind beseeching pity, the heartrending appeal of the deformed and the incurable. We hear of the lazy student who anchors his hopes to the stars and looks to them for his examination results. We know of many indecisions based on the stars and prayer. The practice of belief in such supernatural powers is not inhuman-man has not attained supremacy of nature.

Greater attention is being paid by the new world to the study of astrology and the belief in it. There are many regular weeklies devoted entirely to such subjects. Western Governments too are accredited with such astrologers—no less than 5 in the Reich.

The art or science of divining the fate and future was known and practised amongst the Hindus. The Babylonians, Greeks and Egyptians practised it and observed the tenets of astrology.

The Babylonians recognised only 5 planets—Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Mercury and Mars. They were identified with their gods. The movement of the planets together with the sun and moon represented the activity on earth and all life was subject to their influence. The worship of the planets in India is very ancient. The Vedas mentioned and praised their worship. They were all classed as Adityas or sons of Adit—perhaps a signification of the planets born of a unitary principle of nebular activity.

Worship of the Sun and solar activity has been practised by many races. Surya worship or Surya Namaskaram has become a Hindu ritual by custom.

The practice and observations of Hindu astrology classified the influences and recognises nine planets or the Nava Graha. They are Surya, Chandra, Bhauma, Budha, Suka, Brihaspati, Sani, Rahu and Ketu. The Western followers too accept the above planets in the planetary Pantheon.

Hindus however believe more. They believe in the power of prayer and the faculty of forgiveness of the Gods. They believe in the pleading for mercy and mitigation of sentence. They have therefore evolved in their Pantheon the temples of the Nava Graha.

These temples are generally isolated in a separate mandapa with its own area and appurtenances of worship.

The figures are said to be symbolic of the planets and are generally arranged in chess-board fashion with the Sun in the centre. The Silpa Sastri takes full rein in his sculptural art and introduces fine points of his imagination in symbolising the planets. There are many examples of the Sun god, but Saturn is associated with a crow as his vehicle and Rahu is in the form of a snake. The positions of the deities are interesting or they are said to signify the astronomical and cardinal positions of the planets at the time of consecration of the temple according to zodiacal interpretation. The above statement remains to be proved by observation, for Silpa Sastras are not quite certain of their explanation. Their correct positions would appear to be Soma in the East,

Bhauma in the South East, Brihaspati in the South, Rahu in the South-West, Ketu in the North-West, Budha in the North and Sani, North-East.

Astrologers divining good and bad periods according to the planetary positions have in their system a prescription for the prayers to be offered and penances to be done in asking for appeasement in their malefactory influences.

Indian sculptural art is so unique that no two pieces of statuary of the same deity are absolutely alike. They however are alike in their symbolism. In this matter the art of North India differs from that of the South. It is said that the South is geologically older than the North and evidence of the existence of more refined art affords the probable cause of advanced sculpture. The South Indian figure of Surva or the Sun-god may be distinguished from the Northern examples by observing the arm lengths-the symbol of lotus carried in each arm. The South Indian examples have an unopened or partially opened flower, and hands held high but not above the shoulder. Whereas in the northern examples the hands are at the level of the hips and the lotus with a long stalk is held with the open blossom at the level of the shoulders.

Step by step, the belief in the power of the heavenly bodies over the mortals on earth is gaining ground. The local press has provided regular features in spite of disagreement in the versions sometimes. Time marches on and whether we heed the Tamil, Sinhalese or English, the fact remains that man though endowed with power of office is not supreme when a whole nation is concerned. The power of prayer is neglected. Prayers are only given for thanksgiving when the crisis is over, or the battle is won, but little prayer is offered against prevention. As Shaw says although prayer will not increase one's chances of winning, it will certainly make him more hopeful until the race is over in the knowledge that God was on his side.

Prayer to the Nava Graha irrespective of the race would place you in esteem and should therefore be a ritual of self-discipline.



BHAGAVATGITA

where man is creator

In the training of the human mind perhaps the faculty to understand the meaning of words and what they stand for is unique. A Chinese baby brought up in an English household from the hour of birth, nursed and reared by English speaking folks develops in its mind a word sense wholly English. It begins to understand sounds and words and what they stand for in the etymology of the English tongue.

A word may have a single letter or many but of the many words that are in the English Dictionary the three-letter word GOD is said to be the most ambiguous. It is either ambiguous in its sense or in the understanding it conveys to the many races that have different languages, but utter the English word GOD. Similarly another word of three letters appears to cover a varied range of expression, thought or belief in its use. The word ART could be said to be ambiguous in use.

When the everyday world sings songs of praise in one year of a great Artist's work and denounce the creation of the self same artist in another year, then we are likely to be confirmed in the belief that art as defined by that notable person is ambiguous indeed. Epstein is an enigma in this respect in the field of art and his works demonstrate the ambiguity of the term.

In Science personal opinion is not accepted but it is not so in art. Despite the cliche "Canons of Art" there are no established codes of law upon which art can be judged, although in a certain sense another little understood word "Technique" is employed. Even in technique there is no



code. The followers are divided into schools which have unbounded faith in their own opinion, and appeal to the public to view their work in some particular way, in some particular angle or light.

That is as far as we have gathered in art. But in any age from the cave dwellers who painted scenes of their chase and environment down to the present day, common sense has been the mental faculty employed in the popular judgment of objects of natural or artificial creation.

In one sense the word art creates: artificial actions appear discernible. Hence the opposites "Nature and Art"—where natural objects and artificial objects are expressions quite familiar to us all; where both imply creation, the one by the spirit of nature and the other by the spirit that is animate creation.

Art may be considered as synonymous with expression through the medium of suitable vehicles. Be it canvas and paint, paste board and chalk, or the vast field of music, poetry and phonetics.

In all the vehicles used for expression, man endeavours to project his thoughts to gain expression. He becomes myriad-minded as his innermost feeling becomes capable of variety of expression, in all the functions of the vehicles. This expansion and evolution of expression is characteristic of art; and led to the birth of the arts, which are known as the fine arts.

From the birth of ideas therefore springs art but the special significance exists in the knowledge how exactly the idea is finally expressed in matter when it assumes a physical form.

Physical expression varies in the different vehicles of art. It has technique born of principles of working experienced in the run of ages. It has elements of beauty or aesthetics, characteristic quality in expression of phonetics, but in all of them finally the element of beauty is transcendent.

But beauty again is a word that may be treated as ambiguous. Centuries of philosophy have not succeeded in giving it a universally acceptable definition. But in one thing it is agreed—that Beauty is perfection. Beyond that the language becomes synonymous but not exact. Beauty is fitness, appropriateness.

Beauty is Beauty—it is indefinable. Perhaps it means that beauty and its opposite, ugliness, are intellectual perceptions of the fitness and appropriateness or otherwise of things, which react on one's emotions and produce pleasure or pain.

Now we are nearer the truth of the function of art. Where in more senses than one the word art conveys expression of emotion, generally of a pleasurable feeling, it is conveyed by the sensory vehicles of the human mind. Art in the life of mankind therefore is an evolution of refinement of this sensory equipment which reacts according to the emotions created by perception or feeling. In that aspect of refined creation of pleasurable emotions that elevate the mind to a sense of beauty the man who creates is considered an artist. He becomes a creator to the extent that he is God-like. For he takes and he fashions jewels from pebbles, edifices from clay and stone, pictures from blank canvas for background, noble sculpture from rock or marble, music from the reed, string or wire, expressing himself in everything brought into existence from his innermost feelings of human desire and emotion.

art of the indian dance

CIVILIZATION IS THE HISTORY OF THE play of emotions upon the mind of man. "The Creator who, out of clay, first tempered and made us up, put into the composition of our humanity more than a pound of passion to an ounce of brain." Art deals with human emotions and of all the arts dancing is the most fluent medium of associating the emotional ideas with the outward forms which they assume.

Art deals with ideas. Accuracy and refinement in the transition of such ideas into expression form the basis of beauty in art. The pleasurable emotions caused by the expression of beauty of ideas are developed in dancing; thus culture of the senses is advanced. The dance sees, hears and feels the movement of life; and motion attains the ideal of self-expression. Such are the fundamental principles on which Indian dancing is based.

Conventions of right and wrong, good and bad, that satisfy the taste of one nation in a certain part of the globe cannot form a criterion for judgment of the beauty of dancing of another nation.

The saying, "I know when I like a thing and what I like suits my taste" is a limited ideal to follow for the taste depends upon the experience of the individual which may be confined to the four walls of his room.

In dancing the state of consciousness which is pleasurable or painful is translated into power and action. A proper balance of the three phases of the mind—feeling, thought and will—is therefore necessary to produce the harmony and rhythm that is experienced in Indian dancing.

An expression of national gaiety, form and movement, unrestrained by a code of steps but accentuated by grace and coquetry mark the difference between the generally understood popular dancing of the West and the impressionist dancing of the East.

Indian dancing is not a mere form of exercise but a form of mental expression in which the body is the medium.

To emphasize the rhythm of action music is an accompaniment. Music helps the order and measure of the ideas but the emotional mind is supreme in controlling discipline of action in which rhythmic action and rhythmic movement are made one harmonious whole.

Indian dancing is not far from the Platonic Ideal, where "through the physical body Eurhythmy, the expression of the Symmetry hidden within the soul, is awakened into being; by the dance gymnastic reciprocal harmony of soul and body is attained. All life forms need rhythm and orderly adaptation; by bringing our whole organism under the educative influence of harmony we become ourselves finished products of harmony."

Dancing is the oldest of all arts. The savages danced on every occasion. They danced for joy, in sorrow, in war and in victory. They had their tribal dances and their dances to the deities, chiefly the sun, for did they not perceive the sun dancing to them quivering through the clouds?

In India dancing is considered too ennobling an art to be defiled by the uninitiated. It enjoined ceremonials as part of the ritual. It is dedicated to the gods at the inception of the initiation and is, therefore, looked upon as sacred and akin to the functions of gods.

The necessity for preservation of the ideal had created a class or sect which has evolved into a caste in the dancing girls of India. Humanity errs in matters social as well as religious and it is one of the unpardonable sins of mankind to debase the order of the ritualistic religious dancers known as the "devadasi"—women who dedicate their lives to the service of the gods, living in the joy of their art of conveying by gesture their emotional high born feeling of the soul expressing their love for the Creator.

As the name implies they are called "Servants of Gods". Every temple of importance has its band of dancing girls, paid in gifts and maintained by the temple for the duties they perform. In most cases they are married in the traditional manner to the idol of the temple. The ceremony is purely a "Spiritual obligation", and does not fetter the individual to the duties of a real married woman.

They live their lives as they will, unrestrained by any code. This privilege is sometimes abused because man is vile, and the flower of the temple is sometimes dragged down from her pedestal and debased to the detriment of her sisters. That is how in some mis-informed quarters the dancing girls are not held in repute. Generalisation on such a vast subject to cover such a vast continent as India is fatal when broadcast into the modern world of fiction and propaganda.

There are various schools of dancing. The dancing of a professional courtesan is distinct from the purely religious and artistic branches of the art. There are, however, two main characteristic divisions of either—The schools of the North and the South.

The nearest seat of the Southern art is at Tanjore. It has its counterpart in the West in the Russian ballet.

The Southern school is the central representation of Tamil art and is dependant upon impressions by gesture and movement where the art of gesticulation by hand, fingers, face and body plays a very important part.

The dancers of Tanjore are popularly known as Nautch girls. To the stranger who has not seen Indian dancing, religious or otherwise, the word "Nautch" conveys no impression of the art. To the ordinary Indian observer the dance is pleasing—the gestures do convey some form of purpose. For thorough appreciation, however, of the Nautch Indian dancing in general a knowledge of Indian music, rhythm and folklore is necessary. It is as difficult of appreciation as the classical operas of the Western stage are to the uninitiated.

the origin of the nautch dance

ACCORDING TO THE HINDU CALENDAR we are in the Kali Yuga. It was in Treta Yuga the aeon previous, that dancing came into Indian drama and life. The origin is ascribed to the gods where Brahma is creator of the rituals of dancing.

Dancing and drama were twin sisters in art. Their functions were codified in verse and rhyme, and Brahma compiled the laws governing both in the form of a Veda and called it "Natya Veda"—dramatic knowledge.

As art is governed by emotion of the mind and the activities of man, Brahma sought all the four Vedas in creating the fifth. From Rig Veda, the words; from Sama Veda, singing; from Yagu Veda, gesture and from Atharva, the flavour. Dancing therefore is a serious act to the Hindu who is versed in the art. It is this religious aspect and reverence to the Vedas that has in great measure preserved the traditional forms of dancing down the ages.

Theory and practice of the Natya dances demand intensive study and continued practice, not only of the dance itself but also the allied branches of gesture and music all of which are admirably treated in the Natya Sastra.

The reason why a foreigner cannot readily grasp the movements nor understand the gestures of the Indian dances is not far to seek, for how many professionals could afford the time and scholarships in a distant land for the acquisition of such knowledge. Indian art cannot be commercialised to the degree that is possible with modern Western art.

The study and practice demand conscious sacrifice and great discipline. "The amateur does not exist in Oriental Art."

Understanding and appreciation of the dances are equally difficult to the unsophisticated—sympathy, patience and cultivated understanding are necessary to enjoy the beauty and charm of dancing. The beauty of the dancer would appeal to every mortal but to a cultured Indian audience it is the dance alone that matters for it can understand and follow the theme of the dance in spirit appreciating every detail. The aesthetic sense is satisfied. The heart is gladdened and the intellect made bright by following the conception and the gestures that portray so cunningly and in so artistic a manner the imagery that words cannot convey.

Dancing is a medium of expression also in Hindu Iconography for the gods with innumerable hands are sculptured not as human forms with such unrestrained anatomy but with the purpose of symbolising the aspect of the deity by gesture. The show of hands depicts words and each hand portrays a gesture of significant expression. In expression all deities are endowed with two hands in recognised forms of gesture. They are "Abhaya" or protection to the devotees; one hand of the image raised with the palm turned outwards; while the "Varada" offers Vara-boon to the devotees; one hand hanging down with the palm turned outwards. Interpretations of protection and boon are possible in Grecian and Christian sculptures but the Western masters refrained from modifying the human form to express several symbols in one form. They sculptured each one as a distinct entity and thus obtained a form that satisfied the onlooker as human and not "grotesque" as some critics remark of Indian sculptures.

It is vain to search for Indian dancing on the Indian stage. The stages in great Indian cities cater today for a cosmopolitan audience, an audience who seek relaxation after a day's hard work. Languorous and easily pleased after a satisfying dinner. Such audiences cannot appreciate the authentically pure dancing of the Natya Sastras.

The audience is satisfied with music set to some popular rhythm or fancy of the composer to serve as an accompaniment and the dancer herself makes no pretence to knowledge of the sastras but employs with skill her costume and form coupled with a hybrid mixture of gesticulation and coquetry. She is heavily supported by tawdry and in appropriate backgrounds that remind one more of "pantomime" creatures than the ennobling dance of the East.

The survivors of the dance beautiful are few and earn a precarious existence often in far off towns in little known communities. They are happy to be so, for they love their art and will not debase themselves in appearing before appreciative audiences, and that on a public stage, sandwiched between scenes and acts that bear no relation to the dance itself.

The only authentic remnant of the sastras that could still be viewed in its purity is the "Nautch." The Nautch of South Indian temples—to view such dances one should be in the dancer's paradise; the halls of the Holy Altars. For there she is in her setting—no tawdry costumes, no scenery, only the background of the pillared halls and their teeming devotees with shoulders bare and devotional hearts being entertained by the gods' own dancers. These devadasis have a daily office, for they play a not unimportant part in the rituals of the temple.

pursuit of happiness

OF ALL CONSCIOUS BEHAVIOUR, feeling is the determining factor. When we are happy we understand that the function of feeling is disposed towards contentment and pleasurable emotions. In such a frame of mind we are disposed towards instinctive behaviour which varies among the fifteen hundred odd millions of people now living in the diverse parts of this earth.

Unlike that of other animals, man's behaviour does not conform to conditional types. The mental endowment of man provides complex characteristics of feeling disposition dependent on situations, climate and environment. The science of happiness therefore must connote a vast variety of detailed information.

A journey in quest of happiness would probably lead to disaster, for true happiness is but a measure of feeling and does not wholly exist in itself. Like milk with its invariable constituent of water, it is intermingled with sorrow.

If pleasurable feeling of the emotions is thought to be happiness the words of Plato make it clear "How singular is the thing called pleasure, and how curiously related to pain, which might be thought to be the opposite of it; for they never come to a man together, and yet he who pursues either of them is generally compelled to take the other. They are two; and yet they grow together out of head and stem."

Thus life is never one continuous stream of pleasure or pain. The occurrence of one brings its half sister in its trail. The balance of nature therefore should more properly be the goal of all attainment in the quest of happiness.

In the world today it is necessary to invite happiness into our homes.

We are just emerging from a cloud of darkness and sorrow under which the whole of the fifteen hundred millions have stood together. Some have met the difficulties with bold face and helped themselves over momentary obstacles.

The lesson does not end there unless they have prepared themselves to banish like difficulties in the future. A cheerful disposition and a sympathetic spirit are necessary attributes of mind to create pleasurable emotions in ourselves as well as in others around us. It is necessary to "Know Thyself" comparatively with those about you before you begin to cultivate the deficient qualities for restoring the balance that tends towards happiness.

To the unsophisticated gold is a necessity in procuring happiness. Gold is only a symbol—a medium of exchange. It is essential under the economic machinery of today in the exchange of one's labour for the necessities and comforts of life.

But with gold alone you will never come nearer to living your life fully—a full life is a happy life—for there is joy in the achievement of being occupied.

To lead a full life it is necessary to have ideals—more than innate interest inside the sphere of your vocation; ideals, besides, that beckon you during hours of relaxation. If time and circumstances do not permit much choice in this matter—well, seek the companionship of good books. They cost very little to acquire and maintain, and remain good friends unto the last. To live a fuller life which amounts to happiness it is necessary to create an avocation however simple.

The gospel of happiness is next to the gospel of relaxation and is within the reach of all.

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