



*Homage*  
to  
**Ananda Coomaraswamy**  
(A MEMORIAL VOLUME)  
*Edited by*  
**S. DURAI RAJA SINGAM**

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## Ananda Coomaraswamy

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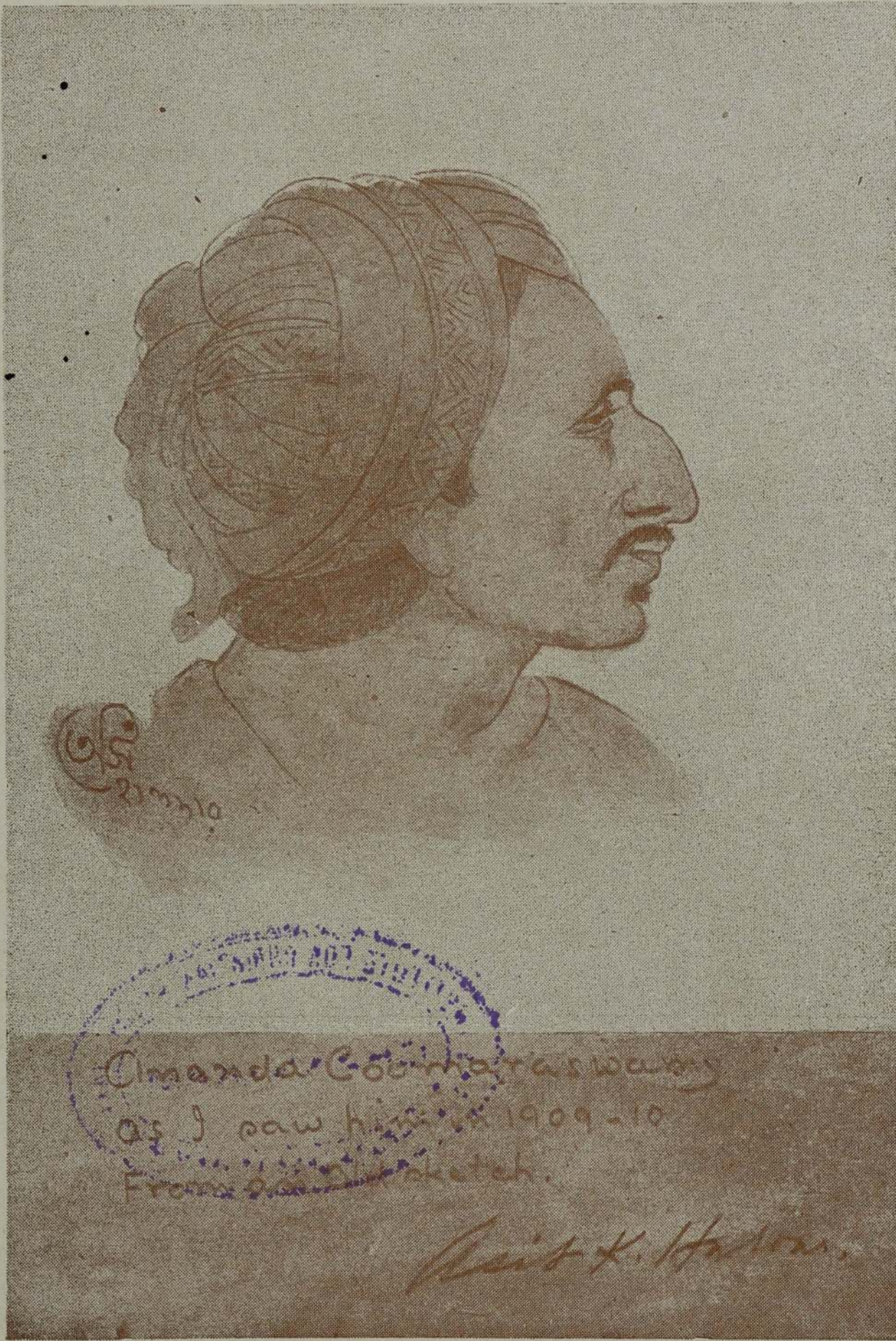
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Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy was one of the supreme minds and thinkers of modern times—a syncretist of inspired genius, gifted with a vast encyclopaedic and universal culture.

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2552





**DR. ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY (1909-1910)**  
**(A sketch by Sri Asit Kumar Haldar)**

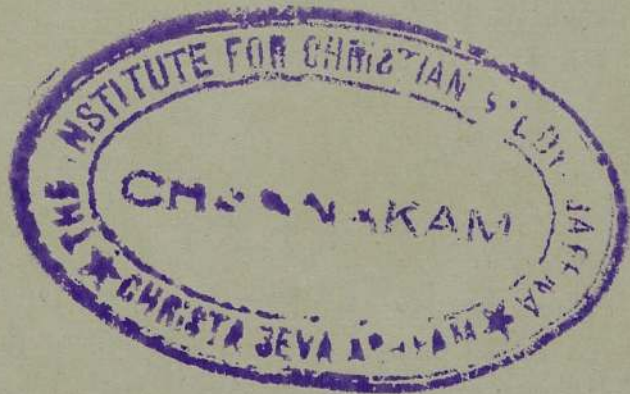


*Homage to*

# Ananda Coomaraswamy



*(Woodcut by Sri S. Sanmuganathan, from a photograph of  
Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy)*



*Jayeva patya usati visasre tanvam at manah*

*Yasmai kala Bharati tam KUMARASVAMINAM numah*

—Dr. V. Raghavan.

There was one person, to whom, I think William Rothenstein introduced me, whom I might not have met otherwise and to whose influence I am deeply grateful; I mean the philosopher and theologian, Ananda Coomaraswamy. Others have written the truth about life and religion and man's work. Others have written good clear English. Others have had the gift of witty exposition. Others have understood the metaphysics of Christianity and others have understood the metaphysics of Hinduism and Buddhism. Others have understood the true significance of erotic drawings and sculptures. Others have seen the relationships of the true and the good and the beautiful. Others have had apparently unlimited learning. Others have loved; others have been kind and generous. But I know of no one else in whom all these gifts and all these powers have been combined. I dare not confess myself his disciple; that would only embarrass him. I can only say that I believe that no other living writer has written the truth in matters of art and life and religion and piety with such wisdom and understanding.

Eric Gill.

\* \* \* \* \*

Today if India takes her due rank as a first class artistic power, it is in large measure owing to Coomaraswamy.

Sir William Rothenstein.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ananda Coomaraswamy is one of those greatest Hindus who nourished, like Tagore, on the culture of Europe and Asia and justifiably proud of the splendid civilization, have conceived the task of working for Eastern and Western thought for the good of humanity.

Romain Rolland.

*To*  
*The Memory of*  
*Gurudev Ananda Coomaraswamy*

\* \* \*

*“None knew thee but to love thee,  
None named thee but to praise.”*



HOMAGE TO  
ANANDA COOMARASWAMY

Part I—A 70th Birthday Volume—1947

Illustrated

(Price Rs. 15 or Malayan \$10/-)

(300 copies printed)

Part II—A Memorial Volume—1951

Illustrated

(Price Rs. 15 or Malayan \$10/-)

(800 copies printed)

*Edited by*  
S. DURAI RAJA SINGAM,  
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*Prime Minister*  
*Ceylon*

Colombo, 31st October, 1951.

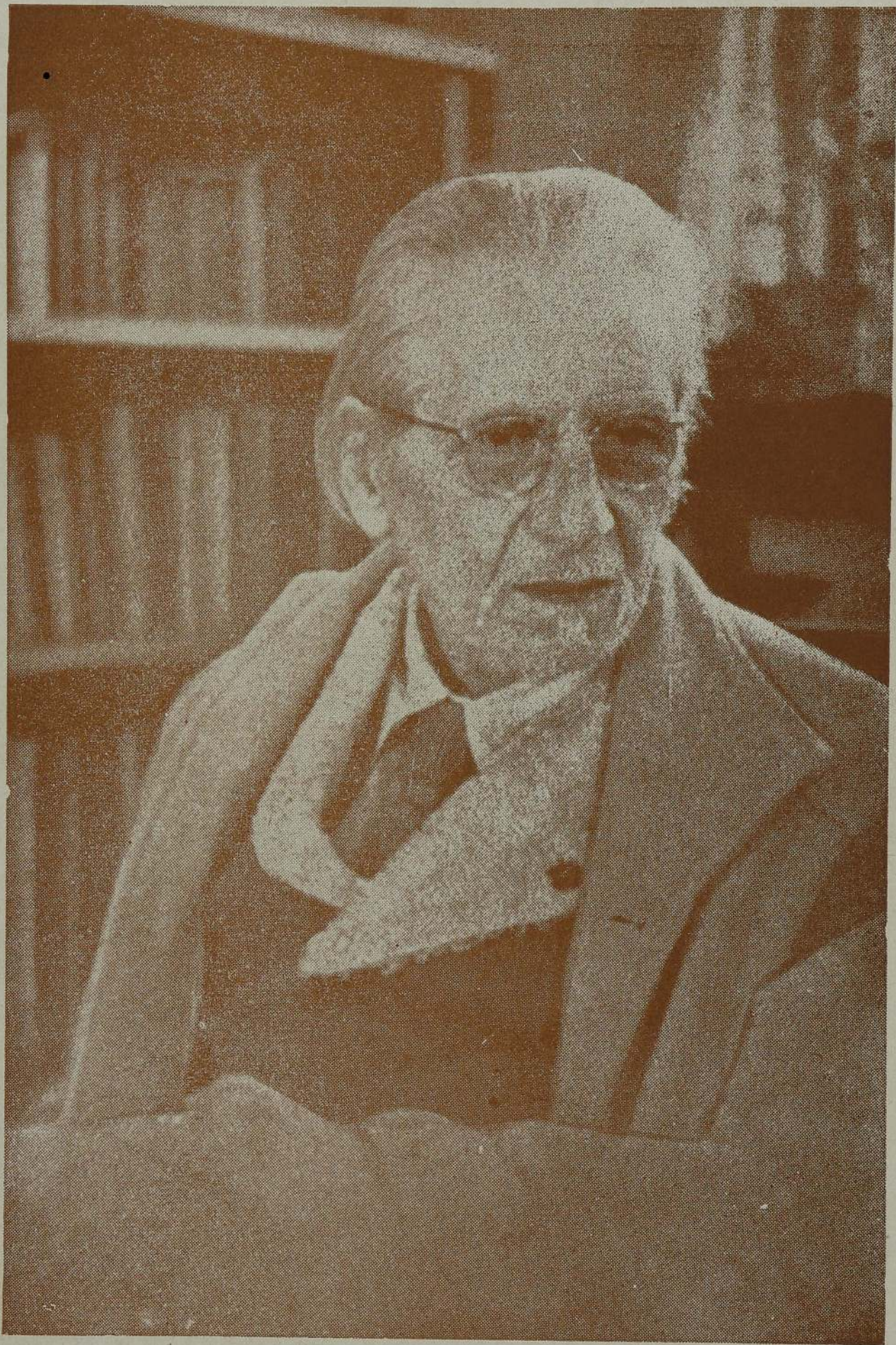
I congratulate Mr.S. Durai Raja Singam on his very useful collection of the tributes paid to the memory of one of the greatest sons of Sri Lanka, Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy.

We owe to Dr. Coomaraswamy, as to no other man, the stimulus for the revival in modern times of our cultural and spiritual heritage. Though not himself a creative artist, he possessed almost a divine understanding to be able to read, in the few surviving works in stone, metal and wood of our ancients, their thoughts and ideals, cultural accomplishments and source of inspiration. His breadth of vision and penetrating study of all cultures earned for him a leadership of worldwide recognition. He will, for ever, remain a real Guru to Ceylon aspirants in the field of study of our heritage.

*S. Senanayake*  
PRIME MINISTER,  
Ceylon.







**Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy**

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## I N T R O D U C T I O N

Early in 1947 when Durai Raja Singam wrote to Ananda Coomaraswamy for his 'blessings' and permission to undertake the task of compiling what came to be the first edition of *Garland of Tributes*, Coomaraswamy's response was a definite 'no.'

Not long before that Ananda Coomaraswamy had been approached about writing an autobiography and to this his reply was: "I have neither the disposition, interest or time, what's more, this would be entirely anti-traditional, altogether against the grain. There is but seldom the occasion for autobiography and these must remain rare. For me, from my point of view, this would be *aswargya* against heaven."

But when in September 1947, it was the Lord's will to take back his own, we who are still here, in exile, considered the matter with friends, from another angle, and it was decided that what was 'correctly' objectionable for Ananda Coomaraswamy was not equally so for us. To collect and make available impressions and memories of people who knew Coomaraswamy had a definite use. And all who contributed both partake and share with others something of their experience—that which could be put into words, of this 'pilgrim' who for a time, walked among us.

Indeed, the *Garland of Tributes* and now its second edition may one day serve as an introduction to a biography. A biography in which the emphasis is on the writings, and from the point of view of Coomaraswamy's own aphorism:

Contra Cartesium

That I think is proof *Thou* art  
The only In-dividual, from whose dividuality  
My postulated individuality depends

A work based on any other premise would be anomalous.

This understood there yet remains for us who still need signs to go by, and want to call to mind a person's accidents, of having been, in the sense of *ad-cadere*, the sequence of events as they chanced to fall, that were 'the way' for Coomaraswamy—that we too may recognize probability of things and happenings, as possible vehicles for us.

It is therefore good to have a source from which to draw first impressions, ideas and experiences about any illustrious being, regardless who, when or where.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of our times is that men like Coomaraswamy are so few—and even of these few we know so little. In our times, times of chaos, these are the individuals who *carry-over* for us the ancient knowledge, that we may not forget.....for our heritage consists not alone of the follies of mankind but also something of their ancient wisdom.

With this in mind Coomaraswamy explains that his task, and relatively speaking our's, is to consider that we are in a state of "amnesia," and mistaken identity. Let us recall that the "person" we are is primarily a mask and a disguise, that "all the world is a stage,".....it may be a childish illusion to have assumed that the *dramatis personae* were the "very persons" of the actors themselves. So that the Cartesian *Cogito ergo sum* is an absolute *non sequitur* in a circle. One cannot say, *Cogito*, but only *cogitatur*. That Spirit or Life is no more or less "mine" than "yours," but It never became Itself anyone. That Principle that informs us and enlivens one body after another, that is never born and never dies, though president at every birth and death.....*dove s'appunta*

*ogni ubi ed ogni quando*, place without dimensions without duration, of which empirical experience is impossible, and can only come to be known without intermediary. This is the Life or "Ghost" that we give up, when we pass on, that the Spirit return to its source and the dust whence it came.

"All traditions affirm that 'there are two in us'; the Egyptian, Chinese, Greek, Islam, Hebrew, Christian and Vedantic command of each of us, 'know thy Self,' and we have it explicitly, "That (self's Immortal Self) art Thou." The question then rises, in whom—when I go hence, shall I be going forth? In my self, or its Immortal Self? The answer depends on to whom the question is put—this man so-and-so, or this Man in every man? In the case of the former, there is only one answer; "What is there of him that could survive, other than some inheritance in his descendants?" Of the latter, one can ask, "What is there of him to die?"

"That Immortal Man in each of us may say with St. Paul, "I live, yet not I, but Christ in me." Whoever can say that, or its equivalent in any other tongue, *der einen Geistssprache*; is a *Jivan-mukta*, 'Free here and now,' or as the Muslims would say, a 'Man of the moment,' who is already 'a dead man walking,' indeed, what but the Atman, in these survives?

"It is toward this liberation that 'all Scripture cries aloud for freedom from self.' Toward this end Coomaraswamy spent a life-time, learning, finding the know to 'know-him Self'.....to assimilate—'Pilgrim, Pilgrimage, and Road was but Myself toward Myself' (Faridu'r Din 'Attar)." And for us—our deep concern with all of this is such because we are drawn, as "pieces of steel, and Thy love is the Magnet."

Dona Luisa Coomaraswamy and  
Rama P. Coomaraswamy.

Brookline, Mass.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

*Dr. Coomaraswamy has won distinction as an apostle of culture and art. His life should be an example and an inspiration to our youth.—Sir P. Arunachalam.*

It gives me a great deal of satisfaction to be able to publish a companion volume to my Homage to Kala Yogi Ananda Coomaraswamy (Part I) a 70th Birthday Volume, which was brought out in 1947.

The publication of this Memorial volume was only made possible through the innumerable contributions and pictures sent by his admirers all over the world.

My only regret is that it has not been possible to include in this volume all the contributions received by me.

The views expressed by the various contributors are their personal opinions and should not necessarily be taken as endorsed by me.

This is a labour of love in order to cherish the memory of *Gurudev*. The editing of this volume has been an act of devotion to my *Gurudev*.

I am thankful to the Rt. Hon'ble D. S. Senanayake, P.C., Prime Minister of Ceylon for the Foreword he has been kind enough to write.

My deep debt of gratitude is due to Mrs. D. L. Coomaraswamy and Shri Rama P. Coomaraswamy for the Introduction and their invaluable assistance.

My grateful thanks are due to all who have so kindly helped me with their contributions; for their friendliness, patience and courtesy which has been very encouraging.

Kuantan, Malaya,  
November 9th, 1951.

S. Durai Raja Singam.

# Messages

From

*His Excellency Sri C. Rajagopalachar,  
Last Governor-General of India.  
and at present Home Minister,  
Government of India.*

*Among the few who saw beauty and the form of God in such beauty, Ananda Coomaraswamy ranks high. He was a great man and saw many things which others did not see.*

\* \* \* \*

*His Excellency Sir Henry Monch-Mason Moore,  
G.C.M.G., First Governor-General of Ceylon.*

*For many years now Dr. Coomaraswamy has lived out of Ceylon, but his writings have kept before men's minds the cultural heritage of Ceylon, and, I am sure, have inspired Ceylonese to appreciate more deeply and intensely their own traditions. Dr. Coomaraswamy is a world figure in the realm of scholarship.*

*Coomaraswamy stands out among the sons of Ceylon. He has directed his great gifts to drawing humanity together by showing them the affinities of their culture, and has thus helped in promoting peace and understanding among the peoples of the world.*

\* \* \* \*

*Dr. J. Ph. Vogel, Oegstgeest, Holland.*

*Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, the champion of Indian Art, has earned the lasting gratitude of modern India.*

***His Excellency Dr. Rajendra Prasad,  
President of the Republic of India.***

*Dr. Coomaraswamy was indeed a Rishi who gave to the world a vision of the great beauty of Indian Art and revealed to us the supreme nobility of our cultural heritage. His place among the thinkers of the world and the nation builders of India shall always remain very high.*

\* \* \* \*

***H.E. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Ambassador for  
India in U.S.S.R.***

*I had been a student of Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy's writings for many years and had the great pleasure of meeting him at Boston in 1946. Among those who are responsible not only for the Indian Renaissance but for a new Renaissance in the world Dr. Coomaraswamy holds a pre-eminent position. It is my hope that students who are now led away by the passing fashions of our age will turn to his writings for a proper orientation.*

\* \* \* \*

***Dr. T. S. Eliot, London.***

*I am certainly an admirer of Dr. Coomaraswamy's work and I have found myself again and again in very close sympathy with his thought. I agree that his life work should be honoured and that anything possible should be done which would make his work and his philosophy more widely known.*

\* \* \* \*

***Dr. Alfred Salmony, New York.***

*To me, like to most, Ananda Coomaraswamy remains the unfailing transmitter of the eternal traditions.*

**Dr. Aldous Huxley, Los Angeles, U.S.A.**

Unfortunately I never met Dr. Coomaraswamy personally, though we exchanged several letters after the publication of my book "The Perennial Philosophy." It was only through his writings that I knew him and was able to profit by that extraordinary combination of vast learning and penetrating insight which gave to Coomaraswamy his unique importance as a mediator between East and West.

\* \* \* \*

**Dr. G. H. Edgell, Director, Museum of Fine Arts,  
Boston, U.S.A.**

The great scholar Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy who had been so long with us in the Museum was the most learned member of our staff, a great philosopher as well as a great connoisseur of the art of Asia. When we met at his 70th Birthday Dinner none of us dreamed that Dr. Coomaraswamy might not be with us for another quarter of a century.

\* \* \* \*

**Dr. George P. Conger, Ph.D., University of  
Minnesota, U.S.A.**

As a human bond and link between East and West, few men have been as effective as was Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. As long as he was with us, the immortal East could not be altogether strange to any one, and to those who had begun to know the East, he was a constant stimulus. We need more men like him, men whose words reach all the way around the earth.

\* \* \* \*

**Dr. M. Albert Gleizes.**

Like a fertilising spring rain which sets in motion the expectant subterranean germinations the radiant wisdom of Coomaraswamy stimulates a vital activity in those who, having looked on death, desire resurrection.

**Sir C. V. Raman, F.R.S., N.L.**

*I have much pleasure in associating myself with the tribute of homage being paid in this volume to Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy. The fame he attained as an art connoisseur was truly international. To honour his memory is both a duty and a pleasure to us all. May many others follow successfully in his footsteps!*

\* \* \* \*

**H.E. Shrimati Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Ambassador  
for India in the United States of America.**

*Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy spent a life-time interpreting the spirit of Asian Art to the West; yet he was not merely a teacher of art but a great humanist, a seeker after truth through visions of beauty. His austere and devoted life as well as his profound writings will inspire generations to come to seek human understanding through aesthetic delights.*

\* \* \* \*

**Dr. F. S. C. Northrop, New York.**

*What distinguished Ananda Coomaraswamy was his penetration beneath the fruits of art to their cultural roots and his recognition that these deeper sources are always profoundly and even technically philosophical in character.*

\* \* \* \*

**Dr. W. Stedè, London.**

*Dr. Coomaraswamy was one of the greatest and purest idealists of our times, of a most genuine and inspiring character.*



**Mr. H. S. L. Polak, London.**

No three representatives of Asia, each in his different way, have done more to reveal Eastern culture to America than Swami Vivekananda, Dr. Rabindranath Tagore and Dr. Coomaraswamy. The name of Coomaraswamy will long be associated in the United States. His illuminating writings and lectures have brought the East and West together far more closely than the more ephemeral contributions of the late comers to the American scene. It was a great satisfaction to be able to meet him in New York during my American tour.

\* \* \* \*

**The Hon. Shri Sri Prakasa, New Delhi.**

I deem it a privilege to associate myself with other friends in paying my tribute of respect and admiration to the memory of the late Shri A. K. Coomaraswamy. I was very young when he came, as far back back as 1909, and stayed with us at Banaras for long weeks. It was he who first discovered the beauty and the significance of many old paintings we had in the family; and it was he who first made not only me but innumerable others in the land—look at Indian art with another eye. His place will always be high among those who in very difficult and adverse circumstances, have helped to recover our past for ourselves and made us feel proud of the achievements of our ancestors so that we may be able to build our future on right lines.

\* \* \* \*

**Dr. W. G. Raffe, London.**

Dr. Coomaraswamy was one of the great minds of India; his real grasp and understanding of art was tremendous.

**Dr. Langdon Warner, U.S.A.**

*It is my firm belief that our true debt to Ananda Coomaraswamy will not be appreciated during his life-time and that a century may elapse before art critics and historians of religions and philosophers will turn to his writings for source material. For this reason I congratulate you on your plan to prove to him that his own generation is not entirely without gratitude.*

\* \* \* \*

**Dr. Andreas Nell, D.Litt., Colombo.**

*Ceylon owes to Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy gratitude and thanks for his enthusiasm, unwearied efforts and co-operative spirit in his participation in early efforts by a few Ceylonese fifty years ago great cultural, social and political advances which have now reached growth such as knowledge and appreciation of several arts and crafts, revival of Kandyan dancing, social reform, social services, responsible representative government and the Ceylon University.*

\* \* \* \*

**Shri K. P. Kesava Menon, High Commissioner  
for India in Ceylon, Colombo.**

*I have been a great admirer of Dr. Coomaraswamy. He saw beauty in everything and everywhere and has been a great force during his life time in bringing about understanding among the people of the world. His writings and teachings will continue to inspire the present and future generations in the promotion of peace and goodwill.*

*A Letter from**The Marquess of Zetland, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.*

16-1-50

*My Dear Sir,*

*You will have the gratitude of the large circle of the late Dr. Coomaraswamy's admirers for the tribute which you have paid to his genius in your "Homage to Ananda K. Coomaraswamy."*

*With his wide knowledge of the culture of India and his literary ability, he was particularly well qualified to interpret to the Western mind, the art forms, the religious concepts and the philosophical masterpieces which are characteristic of the many-sided civilisation of Hindu India.*

*I have myself profitted greatly from his writings and I have little doubt that I am but one of many who have done so. Indeed, the fact that you are engaged in preparing a second edition of your work is in itself sufficient evidence of the truth of this assumption. And you have, I need hardly say, my sincere congratulations on the successful accomplishment of the task which you have undertaken.*

*Yours sincerely,  
Zetland.*

*S. Durai Raja Singam Esq.,  
Kuantan.*

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*Portrait of Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy by Dr. Abanindranath Tagore (In Water Colour—1910)*





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### *A Request to the Reader*

I am engaged upon a study of the life, letters and works of the late Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. To augment my collection of material, I should be grateful if anyone who has letters, pamphlets, articles, tributes, reviews, books or information dealing with him would communicate with me. Letters and Mss. will be copied and returned by registered post; and a catalogue of all sources of information will be published. I shall be glad to hear of any photographs, paintings, drawings, or other material that should be recorded in the preparation of this work.

S. Durai Raja Singam,  
Abdullah School,  
Kuantan, Malaya.

# HOMAGE

TO

Ananda . K. Coomaraswamy (Vol. II)  
A Memorial Volume.

IN MEMORIAM—ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY.

(*Dr. Robert Ulich, Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A*)

Ex divina pulchritudine esse omnium derivatur.

Ananda Coomaraswamy's mind was nourished by two extremely distinct cultures, the cultures of India and of the Occident. We may doubt whether such a duality is always a blessing in terms of peace and happiness, because the abundance of impressions and the tension of contrasts may sometimes be too heavy a burden. But in the case of Ananda Coomaraswamy the tension—which certainly existed in this sensitive soul—was of a productive kind; it was a challenge under which his own personality developed into depths and heights generally unknown to weak mortals and from which we all have profited who are here assembled to pay homage to a great and dear friend. For through interpreting the East to his Western contemporaries he has helped them better to understand their own West, and through interpreting the West to his Indian compatriots, not only in its greatness but also in its menace, he has helped them better to understand their own oriental culture.

But merely as an analyst of cultures Ananda Coomaraswamy would not be sufficiently characterized. There are, though not many, nevertheless a few, who have done the same. Perhaps he could achieve his mastership in analysis only because he was one of the

last great polyhistor, or men of universal knowledge, as far as our time still allows such always relative achievement. We know that as a young man he was one of the most promising scientists trained by the University of London, and entrusted with the difficult task of exploring the geology of his native country Ceylon. During all his life Nature and its beauty were for him a source of unending inspiration and recreation. In the company of his wife who, as we all know, followed him not only along the paths of Nature, but also along the paths of the Spirit, he liked to show his friends the plants he cultivated at his home.

But he soon extended his search into Nature over into the search for the creative forces which work in the products of the mind, though he never separated the two, for there always was a grain of pantheism in Ananda Coomaraswamy as in all great mystics. In one of his addresses he calls himself an Orientalist who is "in fact almost as much a Platonist as a Mediaevalist." But what did it mean for him to be an Orientalist? It meant for him to become one of the greatest experts of Oriental art, not only Indian, but Arabic, Persian, Chinese, and Japanese as well. It meant being a philosophical, as well as philo-logical knower of the great sources of Indian religious insight, a philosopher not in the sense of a mere historian of ideas, but in the true sense of an Indian "Guru," a "destroyer of darkness" who understands how to keep the torch of light burning so that it can be carried unhurt from ancient to ever new generations, and a philologist not in the sense of an expert in words, or a literary critic, but of an expert in meanings, capable of following the significance of a term through the ancient languages of the East and the West up into our great modern

literatures. Thus the Platonist and Mediaevalist merged in him with the Orientalist, and in consequence of the greatness of the fusion it will be difficult to state in which field he excelled more.

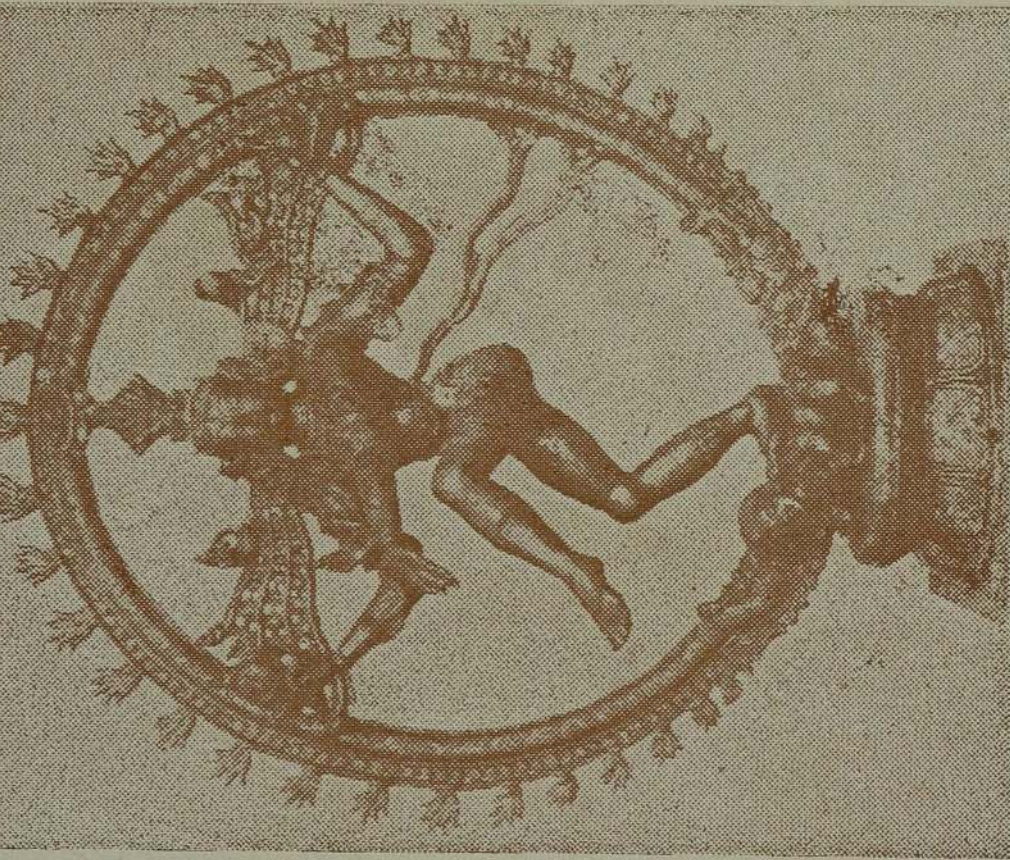
But even the wealth of comparative knowledge explains by no means the uniqueness of Ananda Coomaraswamy's mind and his influence on his friends. Here there may be other men, though only a very, very few, who possess a similarly vast knowledge. The miracle rather is how a man with a knowledge extending over so various fields of nature and culture could avoid becoming an encyclopaedist in the quantitative sense of the word. How could his pansophia, his familiarity with so many things and ideas, develop into such a profound synthesis and unity that every part in this wide expanse could become a symbol and representation of the Whole?

In asking this question we come, it seems to me, close to the center of Ananda's personality, so far, at least, as friends can understand each other. In going through an unusual wealth of experience and in leading his mind into the most distant fields of knowledge, he not only broadened, but also found himself. And he could do so only because he was given the grace—and he knew that it was grace—of uniting his ever-growing self with the Spiritual Center of the world for which we have only symbolical expressions such as the Brahma of the Indians, the Logos of the Platonists, and the Urquell of Meister Eckart. Thus, to use a phrase of Ananda Coomaraswamy's friend, the French philosopher Rene Guenon, *l'ordre cosmique et l'ordre humain* became one and the same in the thought and work of Ananda.

In consequence of this firmly established order of

values he threw overboard rigorously all that seemed to him unessential, becoming one of the sharpest critics of our modern quantitative civilization and its destructive influences on the souls of men, and an uncompromising defender of the cultures he considered still to be embedded in the deeper matrix of life, as against those he considered uprooted. At the same time the unity he felt in the order of the cosmos expressed itself more and more also in his own creations. There are few men whose style of writing is so cogently expressive of their style of thinking as his. Like in old pieces of rare craftsmanship there is not a part in his sentences that could be taken out of its context without destroying the whole meaning; there is not one of his hundreds of quotations from many ages and literatures which could appear as a mere display of scholarship. Nor is there any comparison in his writings which moves merely on the horizontal level—just adding one idea to the other because of some external similarity. All his comparisons point toward a common center in which the individual phenomena participate so that one can be explained with reference to the other. Finally, all the essays written by Ananda Coomaraswamy are linked together like the pillars and girders in a beautifully constructed edifice, though he never wrote a philosophical “system” in the usual sense of the word.

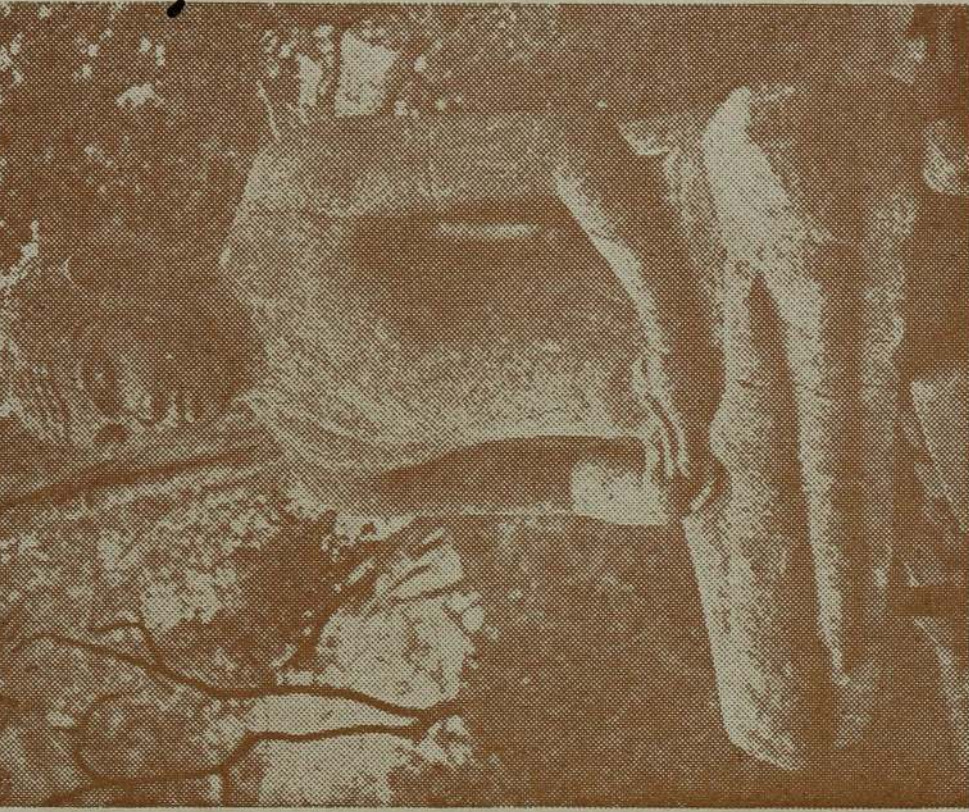
Needless to say, this unio mystica between Ananda’s individual mind and the Universal Mind would not help us to explain his thought and style unless it gave us also a clue to the understanding of his personality. Everyone who met him was impressed by the dignity and kindness which radiated from him like rays of warmth from a gentle fire. Yet, as with all great men



### **SIVA NATARAJA**

**(Copper casting, Ceylon, 8th century A.D.)**

**One of the best known books of Dr. Ananda. K. Coomraaswamy is his *Dance of Siva.***



**The Buddha in Samadhi  
(Colossal image at Anuradhapura,  
Ceylon, 2nd century A.D.)**

**Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy's best known books on Buddhism are *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, *Elements of Buddhist Iconography*, *Hinduism and Buddhism and Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists.***





who are really kind and not only polite, one also felt that this gentle fire could burst into flames of passion if the sanctuary of his beliefs was violated by people of bad will or ignorance. Therefore he dared tell any Western audience, however illustre, what he thought about Western imperialism, its cultural arrogance, and its false missionary zeal. But even in his hours of ire the great or the Universal Spirit, stood behind him as a force of reconciliation. He rarely attacked the sins of Western men without saying at the same time, "Why did you not listen to the better men in your own midst? Not to Lord Macaulay and Rudyard Kipling, but to the reverential wisdom of James Tod, Sir George Birdwood, and Sister Nivedita?"

No one can express himself in this continuous unity of devotion and objectivity, of attachment and detachment, no one can act so valiantly as Ananda Coomaraswamy, and at the same time retain the broad perspectives of rationality, unless he has achieved the unio mystica of which we spoke, and has opened the windows of his soul to the influx of the Divine. Few men, therefore, were so entitled as he was to explain to us the sacred writings of his home country, especially the Bhagavad-Gita.

Thus action is of Brahma, who is one,  
 The Only, All-pervading; at all times  
 Present in the sacrifice. He that abstains  
 To help the rolling wheels of this great world,  
 Glutting his idle sense, lives a lost life,  
 Shameful and vain.....  
 .....Therefore, the task prescribed  
 With spirit unattached gladly perform,  
 Since in performance of plain duty man  
 Mounts to his highest bliss.

It was not a humble resignation on the part of Ananda Coomaraswamy, but rather the deepest fulfillment of his proud belief in the ultimate superiority of the Spirit that he said to us at his seventieth birthday, "I wish to tell you that I have added nothing new." Through achieving in his own life the inner unity which exists essentially between Being and Becoming, Mind and Nature, Art and Craftsmanship, Attachment and Detachment, Action and Contemplation, Ananda Coomaraswamy has become for us the living symbol of the *Philosophia Perennis*, in which he believed, an oasis in the deserts of modernity, a living truth of the words which he used as the motto for his essay on *The Mediaeval Theory of Beauty* and which we quoted at the beginning:

Ex divina pulchritudine esse omnium derivatur.

[*Address at the Funeral Service on September 9th, 1947, Needham, Massachusetts.*]

## THE FIRST PHILOSOPHER TEACHING IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE.

(*The Earl of Portsmouth, London.*)

I have always felt very humble in reading Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's work before a mind not only capable of such vast erudition, but which possessed the spirit to distil wisdom from it and independence to question the very basis of our false assumptions. And he did this without arrogance and without fear or favour.

The reason why I wrote of him as "*the first philosopher teaching in the Western Hemisphere*" was because of that capacity of his to distil wisdom out of knowledge, combining it with such nobility of spirit;



**Dr. Ananda. Coomaraswamy (right) photographed  
with Dr. Murray Fowler.**



and because these two qualities are more needed than almost any other quality, if anything of worth is to survive the materialist disasters of to-day.

May I end on a personal note. That I should have had the privilege of corresponding with him, and to have been quoted by him on more than one occasion, has reinforced me in the work that lies nearest to my heart more than any approval I might have received from anyone else of whom I knew.

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### IN MEMORIAM—ANANDA KENTISH COOMARASWAMY.

(*Dr. Murray Fowler, New York.*)

“A man without a vocation is an idler”—A. K. Coomaraswamy, *The Christian and Oriental, or True, Philosophy of Art.*

Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy died suddenly at his home in Needham, Massachusetts, United States of America, on September 9, 1947, a little more than two weeks after his seventieth birthday. He was born on August 22, 1877, in Colombo, Ceylon, the son of Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy and an English mother. He was educated in England, where, with characteristic diligence and despatch, he developed an early interest in the taxonomic method of the natural sciences into a thorough and exact knowledge of geology (in particular, of mineralogy) which led to his appointment, at the young age of 25, to the directorship of the Mineralogical Survey of Ceylon and, thus, to his return to his native country. This residence in Ceylon not only enabled him to produce the work for which the University of London awarded him the doctorate in science, but also turned the keen mind of the already

mature young man toward the arts and culture of India, thus determining the later course of his life. In 1916 he became a member of the staff of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and he remained there until his death.

Although in his later years he regarded all scientific training as merely inadequate, Coomaraswamy never turned his back upon his own early education or denied the value of exact, carefully acquired, and properly assimilated knowledge of detail. His evident joy in gardening (although he claimed only to have inherited a green thumb from his mother) was clearly heightened by the fullness of his botanical information and lore. The careful labeling of his plants, his provision of an always astonishing seasonal variety of flowers, and his willingness to answer a visitor's question about anything in his garden—whether with classification by genus and species, or by the recital of *Agni's* connection with the blue lotus (a specimen of which he had in his small lily pond): these things were to many of us quite as characteristic of the man as his printed words. He was a rarely gentle soul (yet a caustic critic of the insincere), a most delightful companion, a wit, a kind and understanding friend. Coomaraswamy's fame rests firmly upon his reputation as the greatest authority of his time on Indian art. With advancing years he became an insistent, impelling force in the development of a strong and vigorous æsthetic theory; and in the last two decades he moved on from æsthetics to philosophy and religion, revealing himself finally as a theologian of wide learning and profound and sympathetic understanding. His early life was spent in learning to read symbols, his middle years in understanding them, the closing of his life in

transcending them.

To many people he must have appeared to be a man of two personalities, if not, indeed, two persons, for he did, during the time of his life, the work of two men. The daily routine which he for years followed enabled him to produce a really phenomenal amount. From five-thirty in the morning until nine, when he left for the Museum in Boston, he studied and wrote at home; at the Museum he continued his work until four-thirty in the afternoon; in the evening (after, in the proper season, a spell of gardening) he returned to his books and typewriter again, staying at his desk until ten o'clock. His rate of publication was astonishing.

The results of this regular program may be divided into two parts: the contributions to knowledge in many provinces of the arts; and the exegetical writing of later years. The earlier period begins in 1908 with *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*; it continues until 1938, and it extends even beyond that time, if such volumes as *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought?*, published in 1946, may be counted as belonging to this period. It was, that is to say, Coomaraswamy the art-historian and critic who produced *Notes on Jaina Art* (1914), itself the second publication of any kind on Jain painting, which placed the date of the earliest known paintings on paper a good century and a half earlier than the one previously accepted; *Visvakarma, One Hundred Examples of Indian Sculpture* (1914); the exquisitely sensitive *Rajput Painting* (1916), which brought this all but unknown school to the notice of the West; *The History of Indian and Indonesian Art* (1927), a model of objective, historical scholarship; the Catalogues of Indian Art in the

Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (1922, 1924, 1927, 1930), which record that remarkable collection in part gathered by himself; *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (1934), which applied to æsthetics the sound criticism of disciplined traditional techniques and traditional knowledge; the *Elements of Buddhist Iconography* (1935); and hundreds of articles written for journals of art throughout the world. But it was the philosopher who wrote *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists* (1914) and *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism* (1916), books which look forward to the now famous *A New Approach to the Vedas* (1933), a volume which precisely fulfills the promise of its title, opening up those marvellous scriptures which for a century had been known, but not understood, in the West. And it was the theologian, finally, who wrote *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power* (1942), *Hinduism and Buddhism* (1945), *Am I My Brother's Keeper?* (1947), and the latest publication before his death, *Time and Eternity* (1947).

Of especial interest today, moreover, is the volume called *Essays in National Idealism*, for in it, at the early date of 1909, Coomaraswamy evinced the same intense sympathy with the national aspirations of India which characterizes many of his later writings; yet he tempered, even then, his own enthusiasm, and cautioned others, with the equally characteristic reflection that "we should endeavour more to be great than to possess great things".

But if it be convenient to divide Coomaraswamy's work into two parts, it should be kept in mind that there are in reality not two periods, but one straight line of development without a break. The rigid scholarly disciplines of science and history were but ancillary to



the fine native philosophical mind of the man, which, in the end, was able so profoundly to understand the ideal world of the Vedas, Plato, and Christianity. Coomaraswamy's earnest search for principles of art led directly to his own re-discovery and definite re-affirmation of one Principle as essential to all criticism of life; and the man of learning, the Orientalist, the critic, the scholar, became finally the theologian which his whole life had premised.

The teleologist is naif who looks for completeness under the sun, when he cannot see beyond it—the teleios is for the eye of faith alone; yet it is with a joyous sense of wonder that one now and then seems to catch a glimpse of purpose in a human life. Coomaraswamy's enunciation of principles was never unconscious: it was the utterance of a belief; yet even his clear adherence to the *Philosophia Perennis* (in the words of Shankara. "There is no transmigrator other than the Lord") but gave the approval of mature judgment to what he seemed to have known, in other terms, from the beginning of his thoughtful days. "There cannot", he said in *The Dance of Shiva* (in an essay first published in 1915), "be anything absolutely unique in the experience of any one race"; and again, "When I say that works of art are reminders, ..... I suggest that the vision of even the original artist may be rather a discovery than a creation." Thirty years later he reiterated these ideas in a sharper idiom: "We cannot pretend really to have understood such arts as these [Mediaeval Christian and Asiatic] merely from the provincial standpoint of our own humanism. The Mediaeval Christian and Asiatic artists did not observe; they were required to be what they would represent, whether in motion or at rest"; and once again, in the

same volume, *Why Exhibit Works of Art?*, "What do we mean by 'invention'? The entertainment of ideas; the intuition of things as they are on higher than empirical levels of reference."

To interpret the thoughts of another is inevitably to court error. Happily, what Coomaraswamy said needs no mediator, for his was not a personal utterance or one of mere ephemeral importance: he was in the great exegetical tradition: he was himself "entertaining ideas", and transmitting traditional wisdom which he believed to be truth. And what he was saying to us is this: We are all One under the sun; creation is timeless, instantaneous and eternal; man is a vessel of the spirit. Our highest duty is to know the will of the Creator and to be joyful in following it: to escape, thus, by earnest effort, the limitations of the vehicle, the accidents of the spirit, the provincialisms of the mind, the distinctions and differences fathered by an undisciplined will upon an uncontrolled imagination. To recollect, and to progress, is not to rest among the products of time and place, but to search for the universal in all; to remember, if we can, what was before we were, the better to know ourselves as we now are. For to know ourselves is to recognize the infinite within us; within us all, both in our neighbor and in the ultimate dweller at the ends of the earth. And to know it, in the Indian manner, as one's self, is to love it, in the Christian manner, as one's self; for there is nothing that is, or can be, dearer than the self. The soul, as Plato said, is immortal, and able to sustain all good and all evil; and as we strive to become always that which we know ourselves potentially to be, so do we reach and produce that part of perfection which we are permitted

to attain and to utter. That is what Coomaraswamy taught us.

And what does all this mean for India, the land of his birth, the land to which he had hoped to return for the last years of his life? It means that those in the West who have listened to his voice can learn to look upon the foreign without wishing to change it into something like themselves; for they will see in Eastern symbols the same living spirit that is in the round earth and the blue sky and in the mind of man; and it means that those who have listened in the East can know the foreign without scorning it, for they, likewise, will have learned that the external can be transcended, and they will understand that the West, too, in its own strange ways, is struggling upward to that one same summit where all contraries are resolved. It is consistent with this universal doctrine which he taught, that Coomaraswamy never wished to be praised for distinction of any worldly sort, except in that he may have been distinguished from many modern historians and critics of art as being consistently opposed, on reasoned, traditional grounds, to any doctrine of "art for art's sake," and to any merely sensitive appreciation of art which does not consider the intention of the artist and the inspiration which is implicit in him and explicit in his work; and except in that he was distinguished from most critics of life in making constant reference to eternal principles which he had made his own, not, of course, by inventing them, but by subscribing to them. His personality was submerged in his work: just as, in his writing on art, he always maintained that art should clearly and unmistakably be a manifestation of some form of the eternal, and, by definition, therefore, be something infinitely greater

than the mere personality of the artist. His work was, and is, the man.

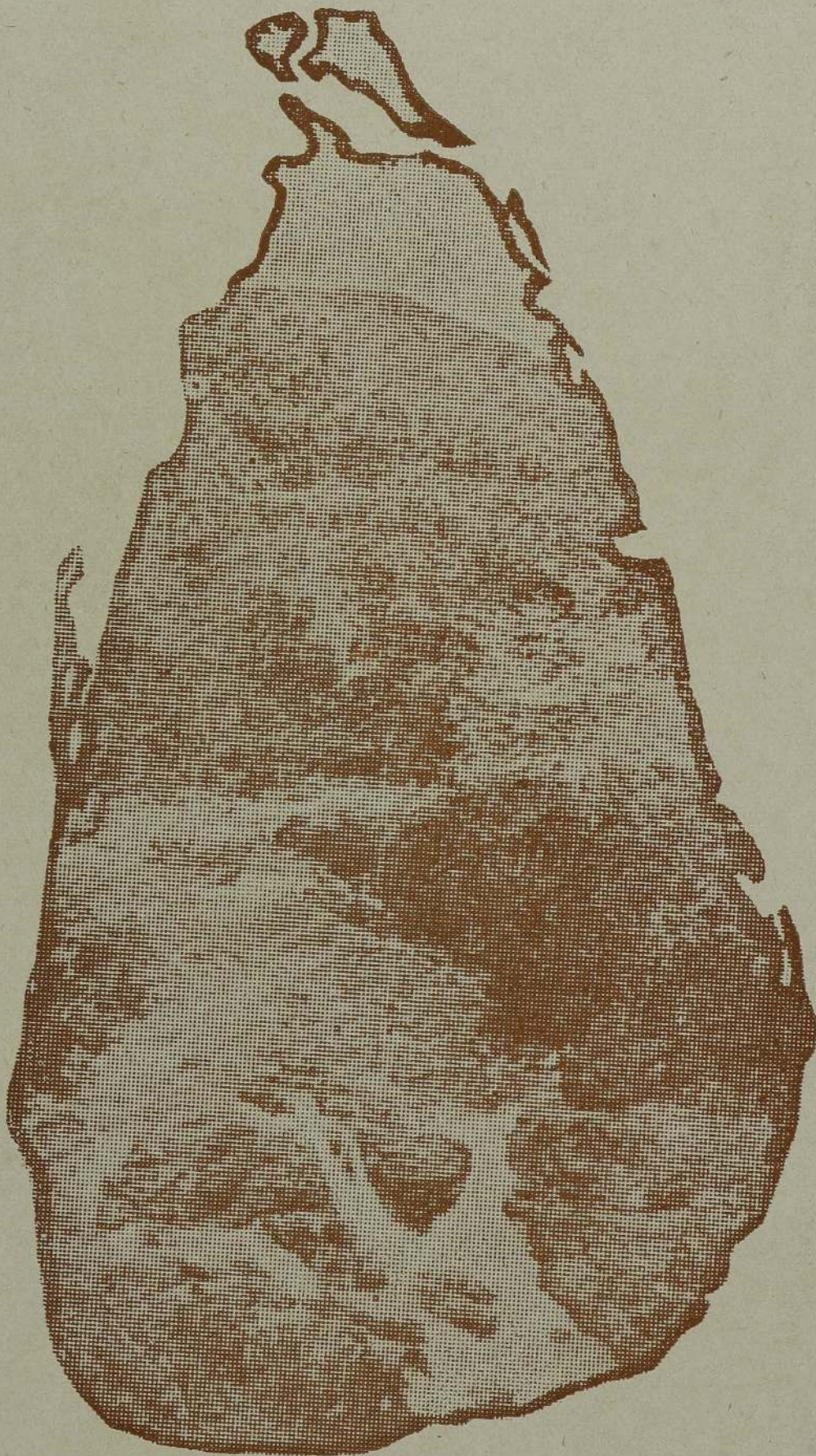
For some in the West, it is not too much to say that he restored to life the meaning which in the blind confusion of a wholly externalized existence, whether in the aimless excitement of the market-place, or in the barren passivity of the college cloister, or in the random activity of the laboratory, had been disregardingly passed by, or despairingly abandoned, or, in the finality of nihilism, denied. He restored that meaning by raising in men, as the poet Blake said, a vision of the infinite. To those of us who have read a little in the Indian scriptures, it seems particularly fitting that light should have come to us once again out of the East; and we are grateful that these rays should have been so clearly transmitted through the fine mind, the transfigured wisdom, and the gentle sympathy of Ananda Coomaraswamy.

*suryam caksur gachatu vatam atma dyam ca  
gacha prthivim ca dharmana  
apo va gacha yadi tatra te hitam osadhisu prati  
tistha sariraih.*

## ONE OF THE GREATEST MINDS OF THE AGE.

*(Dr. G. P. Malalasekera of the University of Ceylon,  
Colombo, in a Broadcast Talk.)*

Exactly three weeks ago, on Friday, August 22, in this very room, I was attempting to give some idea of the greatness of Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy and his work and trying to express in words my own deep sense of homage to a man who had been described as one of the greatest minds of the age. On that very day, in various parts of the world, celebrations were being held in his honour and messages were being



**Ceylon — the beautiful homeland of  
Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy.**



despatched, felicitating him on the attainment of his 70th birthday and wishing him long life and happiness. Little did we dream then that less than a month later we should be mourning his death and the world deprived of a man of outstanding genius who had laboured hard and long to draw humanity together by bonds of sympathy and understanding.

Coomaraswamy was born in Ceylon but except for a period of three years when he lived here and except for two brief visits he paid to the Island after that, the rest of his life he spent abroad, more than 30 years of it in the U.S.A. Yet he was deeply attached to Lanka and her people and, on occasion, proudly spoke of Ceylon as his Motherland. In recent letters, he had expressed the hope that he would be able to end his days near the Himalayas, at the foot of Mount Kailasa, the abode of the Lord Shiva whose dance was to Coomaraswamy the allegorical representation of the never-ending creative activity of the Universe.

When it was suggested to him that he should not fail to visit Ceylon before he retired to the Abode of Snows, he had replied half seriously, half banteringly, "Well, may be, if Ceylon really wants me."

He wasn't sure when he wrote that, of what kind of feelings the people of Ceylon had for him. It must have been a great pleasure to him, therefore, to have had a few days before his death unmistakable evidence of the genuine affection in which his own countrymen held him and of the pride they felt in his achievements in the field of international scholarships. He had the rare distinction of having been a prophet who was not without honour in his native land. It is a great consolation to think that he lived long enough to have had full details of the celebrations held in the University

of Ceylon on the eve of his 70th birthday at which men and women of all walks of life gathered together in many hundreds to pay him spontaneous tribute.

In honouring him we were honouring ourselves. Coomaraswamy was cast in too great a mould to belong exclusively to any particular country or race; he was truly a citizen of the world. He was aptly described as possessing a myriad-minded intellect, comparable, perhaps, to that of Leonardo de Vinci, in its universal interests. His researches were world-wide and all-embracing, ranging from the philology of at least a dozen languages to music and archaeology, from the ancient metaphysics of Greece and India to the most modern problems of politics and sociology. He was an artist who made the whole world his canvas and presented to his fellow-men the picture of mankind struggling to find itself. As an admirer recently put it, he devoted his energies consistently and tirelessly to the rediscovery of truth and to an exposition of the principles by which cultures rise and fall. Unlike the politician and reformer, who win or lose their little fight and at most achieve a page in a history-book, Coomaraswamy gave his whole life to the one abiding cause in the world, the one increasing purpose, the purpose of knowledge and truth. It is an endless quest and with no material rewards, save perhaps the consciousness of having toiled honestly.

To this quest he brought to bear one of the greatest intellects of the time. For, in him were combined many remarkable qualities in a very remarkable degree—a power of industry that was unsurpassed, a gift for balanced judgment that was at once acute and penetrating, and an honesty and a sincerity that could never be questioned. To these was added an eloquence



that entitles his writings to be placed among the great achievements of English prose. There is no meretricious adornment in his writing, hardly an excessive word. His argument is close-reasoned and compact as though fashioned in the brain of a master. Coupled with these qualities was a modesty that prevented him from presenting personal ideas and putting forward novel theories.

The mere bulk of his work which he has produced would compel respect by its very voluminousness. A bibliography published five years ago listed over 500 works, some of them books containing several hundreds of pages each. Others were articles, reviews and critical essays, all marked by deep learning. This number was greatly added to during the last five years of his life. The marvel grows when one analyses a single page of his writings, with its closely packed materials often drawn from a dozen sources in five or six languages, with numerous references. One is forced to ask by what miracle he managed to fit twenty-four months into his year. Other scholars may have equalled this amount of toil but Coomaraswamy possessed the kind of genius, which in spite of Carlyle goes so rarely with the infinite capacity for taking pains, the desire for meticulous accuracy. In the statement of his views he displayed a boldness and a grasp which put him among the great pioneers, yet his vision was so far-reaching that one wonders at the power of his eye to adjust itself to the microscopic focus which so much of his work demanded.

Coomaraswamy was deeply steeped in the lore of his own people, the Hindus, and he firmly believed in the teaching of the Bhagavad-Gita that man reaches perfection by his loving devotion to his own work.

“More resplendent,” says the Gita, “is one’s own duty (*sva-dharma*) however imperfectly fulfilled than that of another however well done. One’s natural task should never be forsaken, whatever its defects; every business is involved in defects, as fire is involved in smoke” Coomaraswamy’s motto was that of Jacob Boeheme.

“Whoe’er thou art, that to this work art born,  
A chosen task thou hast, howe’er the world  
may scorn.”

He regarded as his task his *dharma*, the rediscovery for his fellowmen the old truths that enabled men to live in peace and happiness. He sought to bring about an integration of mankind and a unity amongst men not through politics and economics but through wisdom and philosophy. He held that if we left out the so-called modernistic and individual philosophies of today, and considered only the traditions of the great philosophers down the ages, we should find in them a commonly accepted body of first principles, a common universe of discourse, providing us with the necessary basis for communication, understanding and agreement and so, for effective co-operation in the application of commonly accepted spiritual values to the solution of contingent problems of organisation and conduct. “As for myself” he says in one of these rare passages where he indulges in the use of the first person, “*I will only say that no day passes in which I do not read the Scriptures and the works of the great philosophers of all ages so far as they are accessible to me in modern languages and in Latin, Greek and Sanskrit.* I am wholly convinced that there is one truth that shines through them all in many shapes, a truth greater in glory by far than can be circumscribed

by any creed or confined by the walls of any church or temple.”

Most of Coomaraswamy's writings were devoted to the interpretation of what he called the traditional philosophy of life in terms of the function of art in human society. It was his view that if civilisation is to be saved the value of all human activity must be determined by a true union of beauty and utility, of significance and aptitude. That, according to him, would be possible only in a co-operative society of free and responsible “craftsmen”—using the term to include all those engaged in any kind of work whatsoever—a vocational society in which men are free to be concerned with the good of the work to be done and are individually responsible for its quality.....

If there was any single quality in Coomaraswamy's character that stood out, it was the stupendous courage with which he stated his views and his refusal to compromise with his convictions. He was a doughty fighter but now he has laid aside his sword, which was the pen that he wielded with such facility and such mastery. The greatest Ceylonese of his generation is dead; he has gone into the shadows and into silence. But his work remains to inspire coming generations and to illumine their paths. The bodies of men decay, says the Buddha, but their name lives on. Ananda Coomaraswamy has left behind him a noble example, a fragrant memory, a light to guide the steps of those that come after.

“Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail  
Or knock the breast.....

Nothing but well and fair,

And what may quiet us in a death so noble.”

To famous men the whole world is their sepulchre.

## IN MEMORIAM

## ANANDA KENTISH COOMARASWAMY

(*Mrs. Gretchen Warren, Boston, Mass., U.S.A.*)

It is difficult adequately to describe a man who, obedient to rarest talents, and with a profound religious attitude in their use, spent a life-time in arduous study. His days were proliferations of search into almost every human culture from humble to august. He loved nature and understood the often deep significance to those cultures of the mysterious operations of natural law which surround mankind. His early botanical and geological learning was never satisfied by mere science, but reverently sought the essential relation of the visible world to the Invisible. This universality, this growing sense of unity, illumined and enriched his religious belief. In the words of his loved Plotinus, the Cosmos, "set him thinking, overtaken with awe, 'If this be the image, what must be the Original?'"

His immense scholarship was always accessible; and his extraordinary memory so organized that almost any question put to him was at once met by relevant learning generously shared. Added to this was his human side; his home life harmonized and his labors made easier not only by his noble and highly gifted life-companion but by the devotion of his son, and the secure sense that above all else both desired to walk beside him on the austere path to spiritual truth. He felt profound compassion for today's world of spiritual bewilderment and educational hunger, because he knew so well the true remedy and the true nourishment. He knew that "the turning of the eye

of the soul to the Light” with faith in the Presence of God, expressed in their different forms by every religious creed, is the only creative solution for human problems, the only food, the only way to the good life. It is that constant reference to the Eternal, that inner “participation” which, in the wild confusions of materialism and ignorance, alone kindle and strengthen the soul.

In our chaotic days his fervent and dedicated life, his hopes, his worship, flowed together in his writings with a power which seemed an offering to all humanity; as if in setting down each history of a culture, each comment upon a broken or sanctified life, his own longing and veneration were revealed, his plea to the world to find its true chart, its true spiritual compass. Again the sublime words of Plotinus might have been his own: “Whatsoever is yet prisoned in darkness labor to release it, until that day when the glory of virtue as of a God shall flame upon thee. Is not all thy soul gathered into vision? For to this eye and none but this, the Great Beauty is made visible.”

His human presence is gone, but still left to us are his writings with their recorded ages of man’s struggle upward: his ceaseless longing for revelation, and the love of God. These living histories wait for all who turn from the sickness of a superficial life to seek its cure in the inner world: seek for what is indestructible—namely that sacred Wisdom which, to the long centuries of human questioning, gives its divine and unvarying reply.

### ANANDA K. COMMARASWAMY.

(*H.E. Mr. Asaf Ali, Governor of Orissa, Cuttack, India.*)

I came to know of Dr. Coomaraswamy in 1913 in England first through his books and then personally. Even in those far away days he was an acknowledged and highly respected authority on Indian Art. His writings reflected a deeply contemplative mind and his exposition of Indian Art was inspired by a devotional spirit, and a delicate and sensitive assessment of aesthetic values. His was a mind opulent with fine perceptions of Beauty in all its divine aspects. In his last days in America he was a centre of calm radiation of the philosophy of art.

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### ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

(*Prof. H. H. Rowley, The University, Manchester.*)

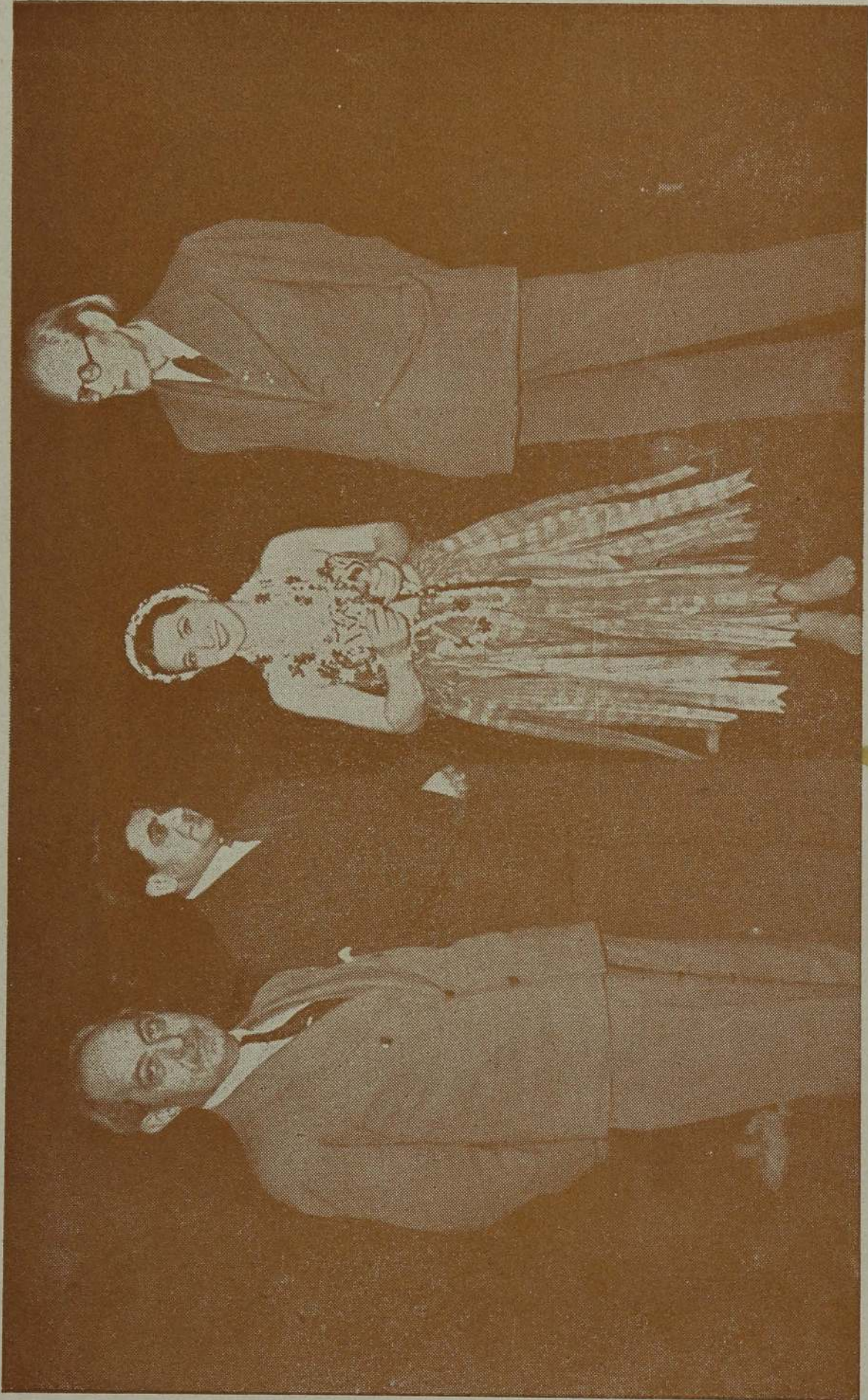
For the wide range of Dr. Coomaraswamy's learning and the nobility of his spirit I had a very high regard. Few can have been more ready to learn from whatever source knowledge came, and everything he wrote was marked by the catholicity of his understanding and sympathy. His death was a sore blow to scholarship in the wide field he had made his own. It was never my privilege to meet him, but he kindly sent me a number of his publications, which I always read with immense profit as well as with real pleasure.

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### LET ME FOLD MY HANDS IN THE ANJALI HE TAUGHT ME.

(*Miss La Meri, New York*)

What can I say of him—the great man whose knowledge was so wide and so deep, whose influence



**Mr. Sarkis Katchadourian, Dr. Krishnalal Shridharani, Miss La Meri  
and Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy.**





was so catholic and so telling? I can only write of his invaluable contribution to the dance of India and to contemporary dancers.

I doubt if he was fully aware of his position in the dance-world. Certainly he had no such thing in mind when he published his *Mirror of Gesture and Dance of Shiva*. The latter work I bought before ever I left the States the first time, reading with a mind as innocent of Eastern philosophy as any other typical American schoolgirl. But the book stayed with me and I turned to it again and again seeking to understand its meaning.

In Paris in 1931 I met Uday Shankar; and in him saw for the first time the living dance of India. I begged him to teach me, but, although we became good friends, he refused me, saying he did not teach. But he gave to me his own copy of the *Mirror of Gesture*.

"Here is my teacher," he said, "Let him be yours."

And so it was. I studied long the two books, and at last I created my first Indian dance. I showed it to Shankar to approve or reject. This dance I took to India with me, performing it in Madras, in Bombay, in Calcutta, in many smaller cities between these capitals. And everywhere it was enthusiastically accepted. The *Evening News of India* wrote: "The ubiquitous sari of the South Indian dancing girl, with bells on her feet and golden waist band to match and hair plaited to a finish in pucca *devadasi* style are scenes to conjure with.

No wonder this number drew repeated encores from the audience, and the artist was forced to repeat it. "Lasyanatana" is a popular nautch theme and the rendering of the gavili by the orchestra with *mridanga*

effect was good. The orchestration and synchronization were complete when the artiste completed the number to the 'tha-thi-nga-na-thom' finish."

Is not this strange and wonderful? That this great man with the strength and clarity of his work should create a dance in a dancer he had never seen?

Returning from studies in India, I wrote a small book on the gesture language of the dance. I should not have dared to approach *gurudev* Coomaraswamy; but the one who made the photos for my book journeyed to Boston with the manuscript.....and the great one agreed to write an Introduction! This brought about a correspondence between us, his end of it conducted entirely by means of cryptic postcards—everyone of which I have cherished. He looked over (and corrected) my entire manuscript. He would not have linked his name with any work he did not thoroughly know; he respected too much the land and the art he represented.

I shall never forget my fear the first time he saw me perform dances of India! There is no one whose opinion I value so highly, since I knew him to be a completely objective critic. His approval of my work has given me strength and courage to go on when I have met with the bitter criticism and indifference of lesser minds.

2552  
On one occasion Pearl Buck, founder and leader of the East and West Association, invited Dr. Coomaraswamy to spend one day for India in New York. It was my great good fortune to be selected to share the day with him. In the morning we spoke to a large gathering of teachers; in the late afternoon we broadcast over a coast-to-coast net work. Records were

run off of that broadcast; my copies are among my great treasures.

What, indeed, can I say of the great man? I can only speak for the dancers and lovers of India's dance in all its manifestations. He was our leader, however unaware his studies may have kept him of that strange, unmasked leadership. His inspiration and knowledge have gone out to all America; nay, to all the world. For even I have lectured on Indian dance in some twenty-odd countries; and in all my lectures I quote him continually. If I am, in some small way, responsible for understanding audiences for Indian dance in my own country; the glory is his, and I am only a mirror to reflect the light of his erudition.

I am, indeed, too humble a one to offer tribute to his memory. Let me, then, my heart full overflowing, fold my hands in the *Anjali* he taught me, and lay one fragrant flower among the many radiant garlands at his feet.

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### COOMARASWAMY, THE HUSBANDMAN

(*Mr. Joseph Epes Brown, S. W. Harbor, Maine, U.S.A.*)

It is not easy to write on the "personal aspect" of Dr. Coomaraswamy, the greatest thing that those who were close to him learned is the unimportance of the individual (the accident), in relation to the Supreme Person (the Essence) Who is everything.

Ananda Coomaraswamy was one who had before "death" died to the individual, and was living constantly and intensely in the Spirit. Indeed he was fond of quoting often the magnificent words from Shams-i-Tabriz: "Know that I am harsh for good, not

from rancour or spite. Whoever enters saying “‘Its I,’ smite him in the face.” Or “his own” less well known but very precise “Contra-Cartesium”:

“That I can think is proof Thou art,  
The only In-dividual, from dividuality  
My feigned individuality depends.”

This reminds one of John (VIII, 28). “I do nothing of myself”; to which Ananda Coomaraswamy has added: “‘I’ do, or ‘I’ think, is an in-fatuation.”

For so long as the soul is in the body it is not destroyed, but it is to be purified, expanded, and transformed by the Divine Presence. Thus it is that “our” being and its actions reflect the inner condition of the soul, and the important relationship between metaphysics and manufacture (*manu-factura*, hand-making) which Ananda Coomaraswamy constantly pointed out to us. Whose soul is pure creates beautiful things, while the soul that is dark makes things that are ugly (hence the gloomy character of the “modern world.”) From this point of view we may be justified in making a few remarks on form that has been transformed through participation in the Truth. Indeed this man’s life was dedicated to the interpretation of the significance of forms not excluding those of pots and pans. He taught us to know that a vessel is made to hold water, but both the vessel and the water have their meanings and the container ought to be both *pulcher et aptus*.

Those who had the privilege of visiting Ananda Coomaraswamy at his home quickly realized another of his many facets, he was a botanist and husbandman of the first order. The grounds about his home were covered with magnificent plants, many of which came from remote parts of the world. At all times of the

year his house was full of blooming plants. There is a small green house off his living room where he would often be found tending his plants and seedlings with the greatest care and concentration. His knowledge of them and their Latin names was as thorough as are the foot-notes to his writings. One wondered how with so much of his time devoted to his work, researches—prolific writings of such profundity and generous correspondence, he was yet able to give so much of his time to flowers. It would seem as if the raising and tending of beautiful things was a necessary part of his nature. Caring for these things was his way of participating in the Great Spirit, and this activity was for him a “support.” He was not a mere gardener but a husbandman. This became clear to me one day when we were walking in his garden.....he would inspect the smallest plant with great interest, as if rejoicing without words over the sublimity of the Creator’s art.

We discussed Philo’s work *On Husbandry*, this helped me to realize what significance the world of plants had for him (n.b. Neophyte, Gr. New Plant) he was helping the Creator to raise his crop. That is how I learned that any garden is a veritable Universe, and that all the growing things are the sum totality of all possible manifested forms. Indeed the Universe and the enactment of all the Eternal Truths may be seen in a single flower as one observes its form and considers its complete life cycle. I further learned that one who tends growing things is himself an image of the Gardener who cares for and sustains the whole Universe. Further, Gardener and garden represent Adam, or the condition of the Primordial Man in the *Krita Yuga*, the Hindu Golden Age.

Partly by Ananda Coomaraswamy's example and partly by explanation I came to know that for this man the garden, or even a handful of earth is the image of the soul of man. Where there is neglect weeds grow and the soil is unfruitful. One cultivates the earth (one's self) to pull up weeds of ignorance that even the smallest seed may grow.

Ananda Coomaraswamy's writings have sown many seeds the world over, seeds that are bound to take root grow and bear fruit, by the grace of God.

When I think of Ananda Coomaraswamy, I see neither the great art curator, the scholar, the author and lecturer, I see him in the garden and think of him as a Noah, the husbandman *par excellence*, who during his life tended his garden well, and planted good seed, the growth of which cannot be hindered because he is "with-drawn."

It is perhaps not mere chance that he came away from his study and into the garden to see his flowers and plants and the work done there before taking leave from us.

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### A SIDELONG GLANCE

(*Mr. Max R. Grossman, Boston, U.S.A.*)

It could very well be, a century from now, that all the world will be reading and marvelling at the concepts of Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy. There will be, at that time—as there is now in certain circles—a feeling of surprise that the world of the first half of the Twentieth Century should have been unaware of the titan of the intellect who lived and worked in Boston for the benefit of all the world.



**Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy at work in his garden  
at Needham, Massachusetts, U.S.A. (1934)**  
*—Photo by Dona Luisa Coomaraswamy.*





As nearly as I can make out, there is still great wonderment that Shakespeare's genius was largely unrecognized by his contemporaries. This is regarded as odd because his plays were successful at the box office—and were then forgotten. The disinterest in Shakespeare was so complete that the basic facts of his life and career have been obliterated. The thousands of volumes written about him have been based largely on conjecture and surmise.

Why was Shakespeare ignored by his contemporaries? Why were the two billion persons who shared a moment in time with Coomaraswamy largely unaware of his achievements? These two questions are not identical but, judging from the tributes recorded in a previous volume\* about the Boston scholar, they have much in common. I cannot answer the questions. I can only take the word of some of his contemporaries that Dr. Coomaraswamy was a giant. I can, however, ask the questions. And perhaps, in telling what I know of Dr. Coomaraswamy, I can provide a footnote for a future biographer who will write a book entitled, "The Neglected Genius of the Twentieth Century—A. K. Coomaraswamy."

Among those who neglected the scholar, you can certainly list me. And among those who neglected me, you can certainly list the scholar. The arrangement was mutually happy. Dr. Coomaraswamy never aroused the Boswell in me. I am quite positive that he never gave any but the most passing thought to me.

Our first meeting was accidental.....The editor of the paper for which I was working (the Boston Post,

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\*Homage to Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: a 70th Birthday Volume edited by S. Durai Raja Singam (1947).

circa 1935) handed me some photographic prints and said, "Here are some interesting pictures. The photographer is asking \$50 for each print—which is an outrage—but perhaps there is a story in a lady who thinks she is good enough to command \$50 for a print."

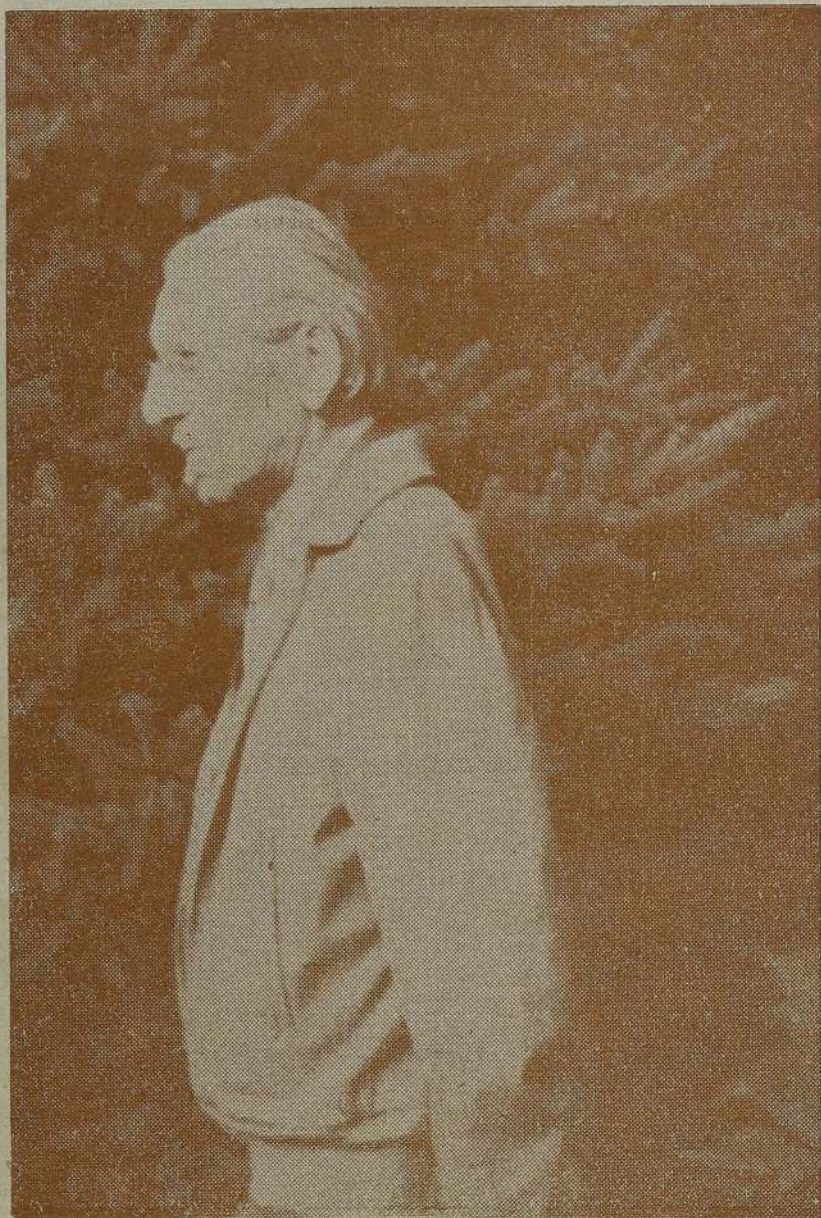
I looked at the pictures—and thought they were wonderful. I was quite convinced, however, that they were not worth \$50 because that was very nearly what I received for a week's pay. (An odd standard of evaluation, what?) I telephoned to the photographer, Zlata Llamas, (Luisa Coomaraswamy) and asked to see her.

She made an appointment for several days later and I appeared at her Beacon Street house on a mid-afternoon. Miss Llamas gave me a cup of tea, showed me some of her prints (which I admired) and invited me to her dark room in the basement. We entered the tiny cubicle. She turned on the red anti-exposure light and began printing negatives, chatting cheerily all the while. Miss Llamas was—and is—an enthusiast and even if her pictures had not been remarkable I would have thought so, for such is contagion.

I don't know how long we were in the dark room but, of a sudden, all the sensitized paper was put away, and she turned on a white, daylight, electric light.

She opened the door to the now glaring darkroom and motioned for me to leave the tiny chamber. I stumbled into the cellar—and found myself confronted by an enormous figure whose outlines I could barely make out. I was, to put it meekly, astonished.

"Oh," said Miss Llamas, "my husband. Dr. Coomaraswamy, may I present Mr. Grossman of the Boston Post."



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**Dr. and Mrs. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy in 1947.**



".....do," said the doctor, "Dinner."

He turned and went upstairs.

"When the doctor wants dinner," said Mrs. Coomaraswamy, "he wants dinner. It has been so very pleasant. Do call again."

After I had written an article about her photographic genius—a full page, I believe, illustrated with her photographs (for which we paid nothing!)—Miss Llamas invited me to tea again. I think she may have wanted to be certain she got her pictures back.

We had tea again. Miss Llamas talked about her husband.

"He gets along beautifully with simple people," she said. "Unlearned people, I mean. Those whose minds have been unclouded by the folklore of our so-called Western culture. They understand him perfectly. The handyman around the house, I mean. Or the cobbler. Or almost anyone.

"Really learned people understand him, of course. And he understands them. But with what you might call middle-brows, there is no point of contact. It would be interesting to see where he places you."

She laughed merrily.

At that moment, Dr. Coomaraswamy walked in.

"Ananda," cried his wife, startled. "Home so early?"

"I made up my mind that I had had enough of that museum (the Boston Museum of Fine Arts) for today. How do you do?" he said to me. "You wrote that article about my wife."

There was no indication whether he thought the piece to have been either good or bad.

"Are you all right, dear?" Miss Llamas asked. Then, as an aside to me, "It is usually so hard to get

him to leave the museum that I am concerned about his health.”

“There are times when a person dislikes that which he likes most,” said the doctor. “I have had enough museum for today. Is there no tea for me?”

The doctor turned to me.

“Do you like fishing?” he asked.

Mrs. Coomaraswamy looked up from the tea urn and grinned at me.

“Not a bit,” I replied.

“I find fishing to be the most wonderful of all—of all mental exercises,” the doctor said. “I like to catch the fish, too.”

Then followed an hour’s chat about the joys of fishing, the conversation being carried largely by the good doctor and his wife.

Of a sudden, he was gone. No farewell. No excuses. No apologies. Just—exit.

“The doctor has an idea,” Mrs. Coomaraswamy said. “He is always like that. Always and everywhere.”

She thought, apparently, that I might have been hurt. I wasn’t, of course. I was, if anything, envious, for here was a man who, having lost interest in the proceedings, left to undertake something which did interest him.

We sat for a few minutes longer.

“How did he classify me?” I asked.

“The doctor never classifies people,” Mrs. Coomaraswamy said. “Never. Never! He likes people. You are still concerned because he left. I tell you, if you had been the president of Harvard College he still would have left. He does that all the time.”

“The doctor,” I replied, “seems to be able to live his own life—completely and fully. I think that is

wonderful. I think also that it is you who make that possible. That is even more wonderful. I tell you I didn't mind in the least his walking out. I envy him. I wish I had the courage to do what I please when I wish to do it. No, I am curious to know where he has placed me. It wasn't, I am certain, among the high-brows. It would be fun to be included among the low-brows."

"I think," said Mrs. Coomaraswamy, "that he has listed you as a personal friend of mine. He has assigned you to me, exclusively."

"A wonderful idea," I said.

We both laughed.

Mrs. Coomaraswamy was right, of course. My wife and I became close friends of Miss Llamas. I saw the doctor many times, of course. (When they moved to Needham, I saw him much less frequently.)

And these are the solemn facts: The doctor never said anything to me which I regarded as vital. I am quite certain that I never said anything to the doctor which interested him. It was a mutually pleasant relationship.

Once I heard him lecture in Boston. His talk was straight - forward, non - technical, enjoyable. The scholars in the audience and the fairly large (for Boston) gathering of Indians hung on his every word. I heard him speak again at the centennial of the founding of Wheaton College in Norton, Mass. He was most impressive and his comments were most interesting. One day I read in a magazine that he was listed among the 10 great living American essayists.

He had told me once that it was impossible to understand India without having been in that country.

I found the few articles which he had written and which I had attempted to read—to be baffling. This, perhaps I should add, was at a time when somebody had said that there were only a dozen persons in the world who understood Einstein. Somehow I grouped Coomaraswamy with Einstein and concluded, wisely enough, that since I was one who would never understand Einstein, why therefore.....Q.E.D.

My work demanded contemporaneity. I once attempted to discuss American politics with him. He was disinterested. Hitler. No memorable response. The doctor looked at everything from the perspective of history. It was not, however, a backward glimpse for, to him, surely, everything was prologue. He lived, I am certain, in the future—and what had happened and what was happening was shaping the future. But was the future to be worth while? Was it worth fighting for? I think, despite his seemingly perpetual introspection, that the doctor was an optimist. But here again, I speak without knowledge. Let the scholars determine that.

Only one person really knew the doctor—or as much of the doctor as he ever permitted anyone to know. (I don't mean by that that he was secretive. I do mean that no great person is fully revealed, either to himself or to anyone else.)

This much I do understand: Luisa Coomaraswamy is a great and noble lady. If the doctor will emerge, as many are saying, as one of the great figures of world philosophy, then the world will owe a great deal to his wife. It was she who made it possible for him to work. It was she who absorbed the problems, for him, of every day life.



She knew he detested publicity. She knew he was totally disinterested in establishing an "identity" for himself. She balanced his accounts, for matters arithmetic were beyond him. She did research for him. She read his proofs. She read his mind, too.

In so doing, she became a scholar herself.

.....I have contributed little to the picture of Dr. Coomaraswamy but it is possible that, a century from now, this fragmentary glimpse of the scholar's home life will be interesting. What would we give for a similar picture of Shakespeare's life?

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### A TRIBUTE.

(*Sri K. Chandrasekharan, M.A., B.L., Madras.*)

A *rasika* is born and not made, even as a poet is. Maybe, in the case of the *rasika*, his genius differs from that of a creative artist. But that difference must, if at all, exist in degree alone and not in kind.

An observation like the above one holds good with an art critic of the calibre of the late Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. For, judging by adventitious circumstances alone, a person of the renowned Doctor's birth and up-bringing, could not have easily possessed the capacity, which he showed in such abundant measure all his life, for appreciation of Indian Art. His father was a Ceylonese and his mother of British origin. His education was begun and completed in England. The rest of his years were practically spent in Europe and America, the latter being his adopted country during the last thirty years, till his death in September 1947. A savant to the core of his being, his astonishing interest in the study of Oriental arts like Indian

sculpture, architecture, painting, music, dance and handicrafts, has earned for him an imperishable name, which is perhaps second to none in the sphere of interpretation and exposition of all that is best and noblest in the culture of the East, and particularly of India.

Still one feels a wonder how this scholar spending the best part of his life away from India could have divined the glory of Ind, that is her great art and culture. Well, let us listen to himself before trying to find out for ourselves what lay behind the wealth of scholarship he brought to bear upon his numerous writings. He writes: "Hindu writers say that the capacity to feel beauty (to taste *rasa*) cannot be acquired by study, but is the reward of merit gained in a past life; for many good men and would-be historians of art have never perceived it."<sup>1</sup> Those that are familiar with the stuff of which he was made, will unhesitatingly agree that his amazing penetration into the nuances of Indian Art must be the result of the *vasanas* of a previous birth and nothing else.

Moreover, it is not in one field of knowledge alone that his capacious intellect perceived clearly things for itself or mastered the intricacies of a subject. Indeed, studies pertaining to a dozen subjects and countries, ranging from ancient to modern times, attracted him, and the outcome was his remarkable output in the shape of high-class books on the history and tendencies of the art of many countries, with beautiful plates to illustrate his points, as well as pamphlets and monographs on special occasions that demanded his

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1. *The Dance of Shiva*, p. 43.

considered views upon human problems facing the worn-out world of today. And yet, what amount of precision marks all that he wrote! One can judge of the level of his performances from what we get from him by way of quotations from Sanskrit texts that achieve a rare illumination at his hands. His deep knowledge of Greek and Latin too aid him in the special task he chose for himself. Still, nowhere in his style do we perceive any desire for conscious effects or display of erudition. Rather, his expositions gain considerably by the apt footnotes and adequate extracts he was able to gather with accuracy. And in case there is any difficulty felt by the reader in reading him, it must be due to the reader's own defective approach to the subject or the absence of a clear understanding needed to voyage forth with the author in a wonder-world that is Indian Art.

Years back when pseudo-critics and uninformed pedants like Vincent Smith, Maskell, Birdwood and Archer condemned the very features of vitality, infinity and repose as exemplified in the many-armed or many-headed images we have in our hieratic art, there was only a dumb acquiescence in all that they said on the part of our so-called educated men. Western education spoilt so much the first few generations of university-educated men and women in India that they hardly thought of our heritage in the arts as anything but the vestiges of an unrefined or unformed sense of art in our ancients. Everything pertaining to our culture and philosophy stood at a disadvantage by the side of the amazing discoveries of the West in science. But things were not allowed to remain thus for long. Soon there arose, from the ranks of Westerners, art critics of the type of E. B. Havell, who had the vision

to perceive and proclaim to Indians themselves what phenomenal folly it was to neglect such great traditions as had once infused *Bhakti* in artists and inspired them to capture through imagination the undying glories of Ajanta and Ellora. Among Indians also champions appeared like Sri Aurobindo who carried on a crusade against the traducers of our ancient culture. But a regular school was needed to revive our arts and to teach what was gradually vanishing from our midst. The Tagores, Rabindranath and his cousins Abanindranath and Gaganendranath, inaugurated the Bengal School and ere long there was a stir in our hearts to understand what goes by the name of Indian Art. Still nothing could be so effective as a deep study of the basic rules of Indian Art and the rare philosophy behind all creative efforts in the land of the incomparable temples and *stupas*. Therefore it is that a tribute to Ananda Coomaraswamy for the inestimable services he rendered in fostering an appreciation of our relics becomes all the more essential in order to retain the spirit of such a revival, especially during times when India has become a free nation and no longer needs others to help her in the reconstruction of her future.

His writings abound in first-hand information and correct sources of historical data regarding the phases through which art has passed in our long history. To him we owe the first portfolio of *Selected Examples of Indian Art*—a collection of forty-two plates comprising representative types of painting and sculpture of more than one school, recognised and classified as such by savants working in the field. In addition, his wide travels in all parts of the world, as well as his intensive study of Indian handicrafts, urged him to specify

in one of his early books, *Art and Swadeshi*, the need for a new orientation in our outlook and the preservation of what still remains with us after all the ravages of our contact with the West. Apart from that, he has given in that brochure the underlying ideas of Indian painting and sculpture with an exhortation to us to return to the past, at any rate in the sphere of fine arts.

His numerous other books require perhaps a special attempt at a careful classification and analysis according to both chronological data and subject matter. But we cannot in a brief compass do better than stress some of the salient ideas born of his great mind in the interpretation of our culture. *The Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, published so early as 1913 and containing two-hundred and twenty-five illustrations, is a comprehensive treatise treating adequately of our sculpture, painting, architecture and handicrafts. To prove its merit as a handbook for the earnest student of Indian Art, we can only quote one or two passages from it. In understanding the history and character of Indian Art he would wish us first to know that, "The Hindus do not regard the religious, aesthetic and scientific stand-points as necessarily conflicting, and in all their finest work, whether musical, literary or plastic, those points of view, now-a-days so sharply distinguished, are inseparably united."<sup>2</sup> A more healthy plea for an all-embracing concept of Art we do not find anywhere else, except perhaps in some of Tagore's essays on our culture. Again, let us listen to his elevating explanation for the absence of artists' names on all the great historic

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2. *The Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, p. 17.

relics we still have left us: "The absence of names in the history of Indian Art is a great advantage to the historian of Art, for he is forced to concentrate all his attention upon their work, and its relation to life and thought as a whole, while all temptation to anecdotal criticism is removed."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, we pause to admire the tradition and belief which was never concerned to leave to posterity the vestiges of a personal vanity!

The collection of essays under the title of *The Dance of Shiva* bears out his critical appreciation of the great themes that have inspired our artists in sculpture, image-making, music, etc. The birthright of uniqueness which we possess in our arts, he would not like us to surrender for the sake of anything in the world. In his words, "The essential contribution of India, then, is simply her Indianness; her great humiliation would be to substitute or to have substituted for this our character (*Svabhava*) a cosmopolitan veneer, for, then indeed she must come before the world empty-handed."<sup>4</sup> It is not too late in the day if we, who are on the threshold of a new era of glory for our Motherland, should try to imbibe the spirit behind his utterances and try, in a remote way at least, to follow his timely admonition.

Let us turn to what he says of Indian music. Everybody today is fond of music, and, judging by the numbers that visit music performances in our country, we cannot but view with pride the enormous interest ordinary people show in such an intricate and delicate science as Carnatic music. But the fact cannot be screened from our view that so many that listen to

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3. *The Arts and Crafts of India*. p. 22.

4. *The Dance of Shiva*. p. 1.

such a type of music are not reflective enough to know what exactly accounts for the unflagging interest that generations have evinced in this art. Now let us hear Ananda Coomaraswamy upon the fundamental quality of our music that is responsible for this phenomenon. "The Indian music is essentially impersonal; it reflects an emotion and an experience which are deeper and wider and older than the emotion or wisdom of a single individual. Its sorrow is without tears, its joy without exultation, and it is passionate without any loss of serenity.<sup>5</sup> How many, we ask, could have revealed the essence, as this great Doctor does, of what we term as musical experience, which alone produced such outpourings in a Saint like Thyagayya, whose music as regards its notes may be even limited but as an expression of truth is infinite? We know our music has an elaborate theory and a technique difficult to master; still we say, in its totality of appeal, it is not an art but life itself.

Of his *Transformation of Nature in Art* one cannot easily attempt to describe the merits or defects. For, before one can essay upon that task, one should search one's own mind in order to acquire self-integration of a high order. Some of the most subtle aspects of Hindu theories of art, imagination and sense of beauty are detailed here with a full consciousness of their imperishable underlying truths. Ananda Coomaraswamy feels himself secure in these regions, as the number of Sanskrit texts, upon art and aesthetics in general, have invariably aided him in formulating them and made him an object of marvel even to those

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5. *The Dance of Shiva*. p. 79.

that have spent their whole lives in studies of Sanskrit literature and Oriental arts. To quote one example of his deep penetration into the subject he has chosen, let us turn to him for a while. The word *Sadrśya* in Sanskrit is interpreted by him as follows in relation to art: "What the representation imitates is the idea or species of the thing by which it is known intellectually, rather than the substance of the thing as it is perceived by the senses."<sup>6</sup> Another passage from this valuable work will show us what earnestness he evinced in making us all art-minded as well as sympathetic to Indian Art. "In Western Art, the picture is generally conceived as seen in a frame or through a window, and so brought toward the spectator; but the Oriental image really exists only in our own mind and heart and is thence projected or reflected on to space. The Western presentation is designed as if seen from a fixed point of view, and must be optically possible; Chinese landscape is typically represented as seen from more than one point of view, or in any case, from a conventional, not a real point of view, and here it is not plausibility but intelligibility that is essential."<sup>7</sup> No doubt, to a novice much of what is here may be unintelligible. But that cannot be helped, as in the very nature of things art as conceived by our ancients should never wish to *imitate* nature. Rather, according to them, art should, if at all, imitate nature in copying nothing.

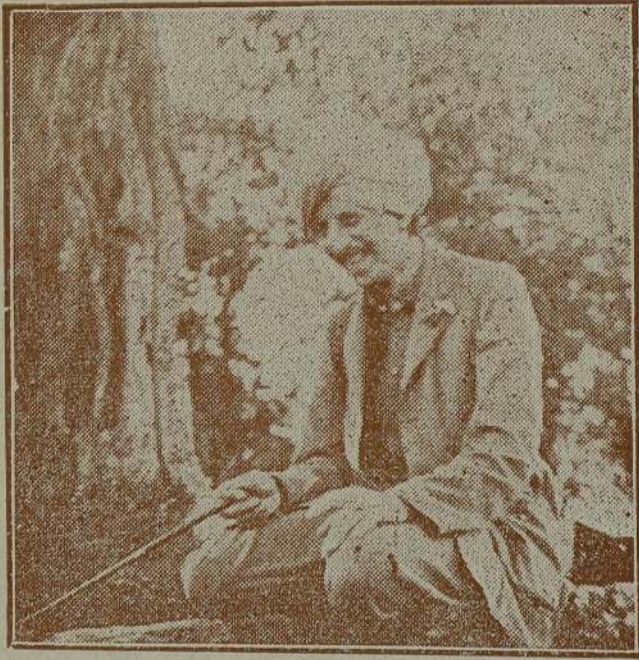
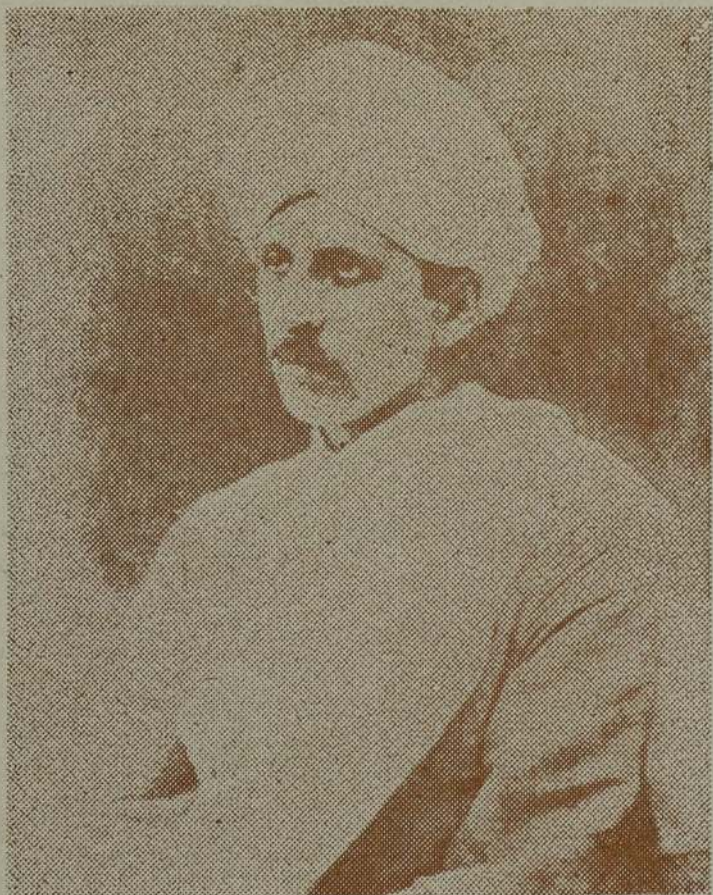
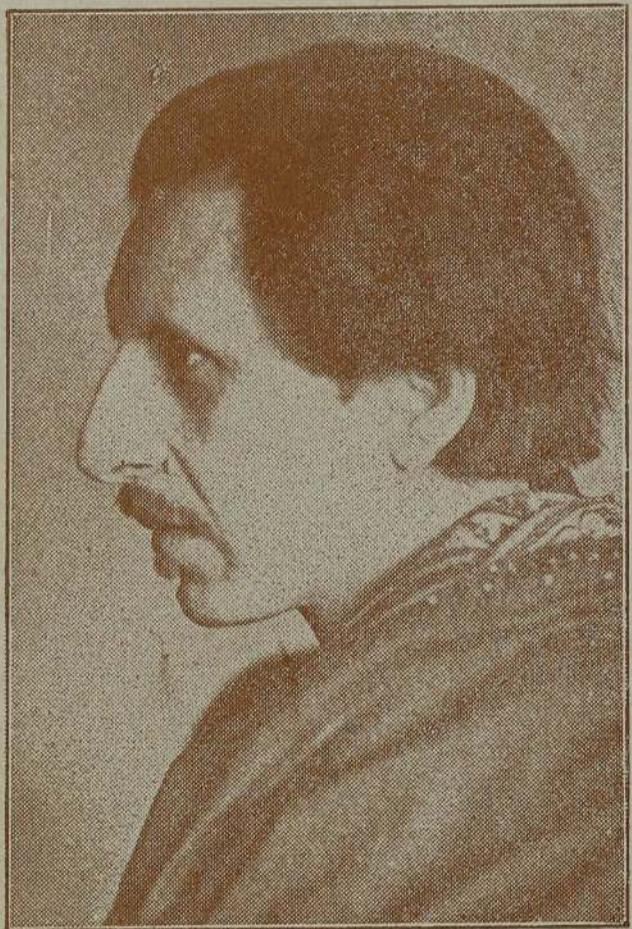
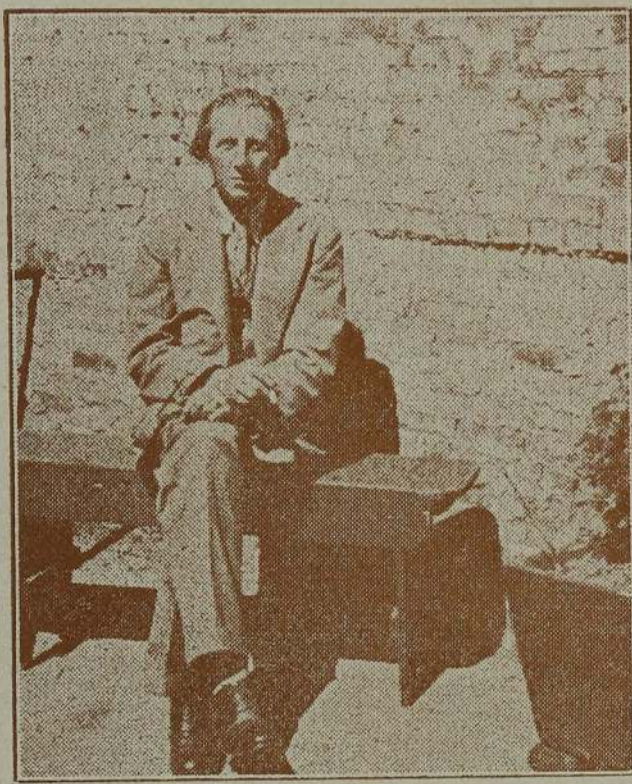
Ananda Coomaraswamy's book *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought?* is a work of rare value and defies analysis by any reader with a superficial outlook. There is no denying the fact that

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6. *Transformation of Nature in Art*, p. 13.

7. *Ibid.* p. 29.





**Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy at an early age.**



whatever he writes is informed by a religious feeling that his readers, whether few or many, should not be taken into a mere maze of ideas, but taken by the hand along the path trodden by more erudite and ancient writers upon the subject. Yet we find him fresh and genuine in his theories, without losing the thought of the present.

To the end of his days he was found writing periodically upon art and allied subjects that were near his heart. It is true he is not quite so widely known for his services to our country, as some of our great politicians. But that does not detract from the merit of the great impetus he gave to the revival that we are witnessing in the appreciation of our arts. All the same, the past was never an obsession with him. He moved with the times and cautioned his readers against a complete return to our past. What he wants of us Indians is "to understand, to endorse with passionate conviction, and to love what we have left behind," as the only possible foundation for power that we aim at among the nations of the world.

Let us then pay our dutiful homage to the greatest of art-critics that our age has produced. Though separated by the distance of the seas and the oceans, he always thought of India and even felt a longing, towards the close of his life, for peace and rest in a secluded spot on the Tibetan Himalayas. He was a great path-finder and dreamed of many of our present aspirations for the reconstruction of India's future. We cannot think of any analogy for characterising his wonderful work of interpreting Indian Art than the great exploration of the unscalable heights of the Himalayas, whose peaks are not more imposing than they who discovered them first to us.

## HE MADE MANIFEST THE GLORY OF INDIA

*(Rev. John Haynes Holmes, New York.)*

India has much to contribute to mankind in these great days of freedom. In nothing is she richer, and therefore better able to enrich the world, than in the field of art. Here she rivals Greece—shining in the East as Greece shone in the West with the resplendent beauties of her creation.

It was this fact which was discovered and proclaimed by the late lamented Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy. More than any other student and teacher of this modern age, he rescued the art work of his country from the blight of mere antiquity as relics of the past, and made it a part of the living influence of the race. He made manifest the glory of India in the higher achievements of her people, and proved that in art, as in philosophy and religion, and now in political statesmanship, this blessed land is among the supreme leaders of humanity.

Doctor Coomaraswamy himself did much to open up a period of renaissance for India. For he was not merely an artist in his own right, but also a philosopher as well. His thought exposed the deeper mysteries of truth, and led straight and sure to religion in its manifest aspects of the divine. Seldom has one man done so much, in so many different ways, for his own people and for mankind. By his labors and utter devotion, and by the unique activities of his own genius, he demonstrated anew the teaching of the immortal poet,

“Beauty is truth, truth beauty”—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.”

When surveying the work of such a man as Doctor Coomaraswamy, one is reminded of how superficial are the differences that separate mankind, and how fundamental the likenesses, or rather identities, that make us one. It is in this sense that this great Indian was more than an Indian. He belonged to us all, East and West alike. Therefore, are we all rightly challenged to acclaim his fame, and to do reverence before the shrine of his eternal memory.

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### ANANDA KENTISH COOMARASWAMY.

(Dr. Benjamin Rowland, Jr., Harvard University U.S.A.)

Dr. Coomaraswamy's life was almost a series of *avatars*. As Goethe once remarked in speaking of a creative personality, he became in the different stages of his life a different being: first a geologist, then a political reformer, later an art historian, and finally an interpreter of the *philosophia perennis* in art.

It would be impossible to enumerate here his many distinguished and definitive contributions to the study of Indian art, music, and the dance. As a model of archaeological accuracy and accuracy of stylistic interpretation, his *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* (1927) will probably never be surpassed. Dr. Coomaraswamy's publication in 1934 of *The Transformation of Nature in Art* was the first revelation of a final change in his mode of thinking. Here was presented the complete statement of his conception of traditional art and the relationship of Oriental art and the art of the pre-Renaissance West. This work with its definition of the work of art as an expression of the same first principles that govern traditional society won him a host of followers.

Dr. Coomaraswamy was not an iconologist with an interest in merely tracing the survival of motifs but was entirely concerned with establishing the origin and endurance of concepts that transcend what is generally designated as style. The last decade of his life was devoted to the publication of articles on subjects ranging from Vedic exegesis to condemnation of the American and British systems of colonial exploitation. He never specifically dismissed all art of the post-mediaeval periods: he only condemned and deplored a society in those periods when the concern for man and the material present had replaced reliance on eternal principles and man's last end. Dr. Coomaraswamy never recommended anything remotely resembling a return to outworn tradition in either art or social structure. In one of his last public utterances at the celebration of Indian independence he made it very plain that only a change of heart with an end to understanding the real meaning of the great traditions could make for any change in the evils of our present system: only by such an understanding could we hope to substitute real freedom for frivolity in art, and order for chaos in human society.

Dr. Coomaraswamy will be remembered by his many friends the world over for his unfailing kindness and interest in their researches. Although a forbidding figure to the vulgar, Dr. Coomaraswamy was an exceedingly normal man who had both easily and gracefully established himself in the society that he found in 20th century America. One of the most endearing traits of his character was his devotion to gardening and the art of fishing. Those who attended his services in his beloved garden at Needham will

remember the bird-feeding station that swung in the wind as a kind of symbol that he had food for man and God's little ones as well.

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## A STUDENT'S VIEW OF DR. COOMARASWAMY.

*(Dr. Schuyler Cammann, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.)*

The great truths about art and religion taught by Dr. Coomaraswamy first reached me at second hand, through the brilliant lectures of Professor Benjamin Rowland at Harvard University. They gave me new insights, and I only regretted that I had not heard them before my first years of travel in Asia, rather than after my return.

On several occasions Prof. Rowland urged me to go to Dr. Coomaraswamy with problems of research in Oriental iconography, but I was somewhat diffident about it. After all he was a famous man and a busy one, while I was merely a student. When I finally went to see him at the Boston Museum, I found him very cordial and unassuming, and very willing to take the time to study my problems as presented in a manuscript, before offering some very valuable suggestions. On later visits I found him equally willing to help and advise.

He had little patience with those who came to see him merely to meet him and hear him talk, thus taking him needlessly from his work; but he was always willing to set aside his writing or research for a student who had a serious question, however small.

His later lectures and articles were sometimes very difficult to digest, as he admitted that he was speaking only for those who could understand him; yet I found

him perfectly willing to explain these ideas at greater detail to a student, presenting them in a form more easy to assimilate. And he was always careful to point out, in true humility, that the truths he taught were not his own but part of the great Tradition. He would never take credit for them; even though great credit was due to him for rediscovering them and passing them on to us, for showing their interrelationship in the teachings of prophets and sages of many civilizations, and for demonstrating their applicability in our own day, when we of the modern world have largely forgotten them—to our own great loss.

His memory remains fresh in the minds of all who have known him or have heard him speak; and for posterity it will live on among those who receive his teachings passed on by men like Prof. Rowland, as well as in his own books and articles, which should serve as an inspiration for years to come.

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## ANANDA COOMARASWAMY A TRIBUTE.

*(Dr. Arthur Upham Pope, New York).*

Ananda Coomaraswamy was by every count one of the great men of our age. His life-work coincides with one of the critical moments in the history of civilization, when the politically and economically chaotic world was destroying itself with conflicting ambitions, short-sighted parochialism, destructive animosities. He came at a time when communication and transport were developing techniques that shrank the world to a single crowded community, thereby multiplying the dangers of dissension and conflict, also at a time when there was a profoundly felt, and increas-



ing need for more comprehensive sympathies, for an enlarged and deepened spiritual life. Appearances and reality were confused and at odds, and this confusion was reflected in the inner life of individuals as well as the world of action and events. Coomaraswamy's interests, equipment and experience in various ways bridged some of these scattered and antagonistic fragments of what desperately needed to be really One World.

Racially he was both Eastern and Western, by loyalty and affection Eastern. He was trained in Western science, with its rigorous discipline, its objectivity and sense of responsibility to fact and logic, its demand for precision and lucidity of statement. He was at the same time an artist, seeing with penetrating and sympathetic eye the inner quality of the arts of India, of which he was not only the most learned, but likewise the most effective exponent to the West. Furthermore, he was a philosopher, with technical competence, with a capacity for sustained thinking on the profound problems. Finally, he was deeply religious, consciously identified with transcendent values and realities which he understood and revered.

Thus both an Easterner and a Westerner, scientist, artist, philosopher and holy man, he had qualifications and equipment for service of an extraordinary kind in diagnosing cultural maladies and their cures. He was in his later days a merciless analyst of our superficialities and obsessions, our complacent occupation with the trivial and unessential in the world of art and religion. Positively he helped design the spiritual fabric of the needed and destined concord and

cooperation of Mankind in its search for its own appropriate and inherent ends.

The genius of Coomaraswamy lay in his vision of the primary, eternal and universal truths to which all serious and dedicated men could repair for guidance and inspiration; clarifying confusions, providing common goals and substituting needed permanence for the transient and deceptive values.

This vision, more than a revelation, more than a hope, had substance, clarity, and universality. Initiated perhaps by his absorption in the Buddhist doctrine of Compassion, intensified by the breadth of his own experience which made him appreciate more than most the tribulations of his own people, the frustrations of Indian life, the diversion from its own ideals, its relative impotence. But he saw India's problems as world problems. He identified and denounced with calm passion the crude and self-defeating ambitions, the ignorant and selfish standards of a mechanized and acquisitive age, that was even defeating the arrogant and confident West as well as the depressed and suffering East.

He was, thus, all the more sensitive to the neglect of other cultures and individuals which acknowledged same principles that had marked India's ancient greatness, and which he believed universally valid.

Yet his was not the vision of an enthusiast, but also the conclusions of a scholar of magnificent talent, of striking versatility, and of incredible industry. The last time I saw him at work there were eight volumes open on his desk and he was comparing an enormous range of material with the most painstaking thoroughness. He sensed spiritual comradeship throughout the history of all lands and religions, tested their

faiths and his own convictions by rigorous logic. He used an adequate command of a half-dozen languages to demonstrate the universality of Man's dependence on eternal principles. He insisted that there was an age-old, worldwide conviction that mission of art was to reveal the real nature of things, a reality beyond appearance which would help to bring him peace, happiness and well-being.

He put the philosophy of all periods under tribute. Relatively late in life he made heroic efforts to master the philosophy of such difficult thinkers as Plato and Kant—each in itself a life-work. His scientific spirit demanded a systematic and comprehensive mobilization of the deepest thinking on the basic philosophic problems. All this he correlated and reviewed in the light of the Vedas and the Upanishads. He saw in them a confirmation of the characteristic elements in Indian life and thought. For this purpose he was hard at work on the formidable task of a new translation of the Vedas.

He was not content to express opinions, but sought for massive and cogent proof, in such a variety of sources that complete success was impossible for him or any other mortal. Nevertheless, he did come near to fulfilling his impossible ideal, and it gave him the momentum to assail some of the spiritually and artistically demoralizing tendencies in our age. He proposed a drastic revolution in contemporary values and practices. He was the Prophet, appealing once more for disregarded first principles in the light of which our current theories of art seem provincial, superficial, ensnared in dangerous and contagious fallacies. That art could be created for either fame or money seemed to him blasphemous; and he found

equally ignoble the plea for "art for art's sake," which concealed the serious purpose of art to which the greatest artists were uncompromisingly dedicated.

These views brought him into conflict with a highly individualistic age whose immaturities had made a fetish of egotism and self-expression, which he regarded as trivial impertinences. He was just as scornful of art as entertainment. Art was for him a sacrament, a means of disclosing and conveying intrinsic values.

Because he did thus stand out against the trends of the moment, and because he was dealing with difficult and neglected ideas that demanded hard and open minded thinking, his deepest efforts evoked opposition and were victimized by misinterpretation or indifference. Reviewers called him a Mediaevalist who wanted to set back the clock. Such estimates drew from him devastating replies in potent, simple language, slightly condescending rebukes to the childish and wayward.

His sympathy with Indian thought and art, led him to underestimate at times, or misinterpret contributions of other cultures. Indeed, he himself realized that some arts were closed to him. Thus the art of the Islamic Near East seemed to him an art only of entertainment, of pleasant fancy, of ingenuity. Could he have but seen further and deeper, he would have found that in its origins it is a dedicatory and invocational art, and in early forms it had even been, like the art of India, a sacrament. But such limitations of sympathy, natural and almost inevitable though they were, for one so deeply absorbed in a central conviction, brought down on him the wrath of scholars in other fields, who even accused him of

nationalistic bias or of using scholarship for political propaganda.

Within his special field of Indian art, professional art historians had to rely on his knowledge and judgment; but while they accepted his factual information and his aesthetic appraisals, some of them were scornful of his deeper convictions and insights, yet these were the man. These they never understood. More than one scholar in related fields, incompetent or unwilling to make the real effort to understand him, regarded his greatest contributions as nonsense. It was common for such opponents to say that they wanted "facts," not speculation, though none of them showed the faintest comprehension of what a fact is—one of the difficult problems of philosophy—let alone the nature of first principles.

Coomaraswamy was not always happy in his friends. The spiritually starved sensed the depth and beauty of his insight, and sometimes embarrassed him with lush sentimentality; but he was always patient and maintained a noble tranquility, and unfailing sympathy for the sincere searcher.

He spoke in a low tone of voice so that one had sometimes to listen intently to catch all that he was saying. He worked so hard that, in his later years, he was always weary; indeed the contrast between the Coomaraswamy of these last years and the Coomaraswamy whom I first knew was striking. Nearly forty years ago I saw him stride into a drawing-room in smart riding-clothes, on his way to a canter along the San Francisco beaches—tall, lithe, with that perfect poise which never left him; charming, humorous, gentle, but with a flash of power and surety. He had already found his "occupation" in the Shakespearean

sense: he knew pretty much what he wanted to do and be, and he was, though unassumingly, aware of his potentialities. At the end, his white hair, his growing physical weakness, his rather gaunt face and straggly beard hardly recalled the young cavalier. But there was that same quiet assurance, and a deeper conviction of values.

He knew that time was short; he knew that his program was all but impossible; he wanted only two years more to have accomplished what he felt was in him. Should he have undertaken less? Could he have left for others some of his projects? Could he have foregone the exacting labor to disclose some relatively small point in some recondite philosophy which only enriched an established point of view?

It is too soon to assess finally the value of his contribution or the validity of his method. He was out of joint with his time; but his time was fatally out of joint with eternity; and there is no assurance whether in this finite world the cause of the eternal values will prosper or will be extinguished by Man's reckless ignorance and his undisciplined and irresponsible passions.

Coomaraswamy was a beacon, and like the great Prophets, a "Warner." He renewed the faith of other lonely intellectuals who had by other paths attained to similar conclusions. He conferred on artists, as an accolade, a sense of the dignity and glory of their professions, and those who read and understood him and transmitted his message to others, felt that he had been a healing and inspiring force.

He was again a demonstration of how essential for a dangerously over-specialized and hence fragmented world, is the whole man; the man who unites

knowledge, with insight devotion with discrimination, who can cull the best of the past and relate it to the needs of the present, and point out in timeless terms the path of happiness and fulfillment.

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## RECOLLECTIONS OF ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

*(Dr. Robert von Heine-Geldern, New York, U.S.A.)*

It always is a strange experience to meet for the first time a man with whose ideas, as expressed in his literary work, one has been familiar for many years. My first impression, when I met Coomaraswamy in the early months of 1938, was one of stiffness, almost of coldness. There we sat, in his office in the Boston Museum, knowing that we had so many interests in common and yet unable to start a conversation.

I was not the only one who had that experience. The late Professor Lucian Scherman, himself an outstanding scholar in the fields of Indian culture, religion and archaeology, told me after his first interviews with Coomaraswamy that he found it difficult to establish a real personal contact. Yet, a few years later all that had completely changed and Scherman, who by nature was a rationalist, had become deeply interested in Coomaraswamy's metaphysical ideas and told me that they had opened up to him new aspects of life and thought which he had previously neglected.

Coomaraswamy's initial shyness and reticence may have been due in part to the British side of his heritage. In the main, however, they must have been due to the understandable wish of a man who was

willing and eager to reveal his innermost thoughts, first to probe his counterpart, before he was ready to touch upon those subjects which were nearest to his heart.

I shall never forget those weeks in the summer of 1938 which it was my good fortune to spend as Dr. and Mrs. Coomaraswamy's guest in their camp in the woods of Maine. It was a unique experience, after roaming through the immense forests, to sit in that lonely and rustic home, high up on a hill, listening to my hosts' tales of their life in India and discussing with them questions of mythology and of traditional metaphysical lore. Somehow, the situation reminded me a little of the atmosphere in which the Upanishads must have been born. Although by no means voluble and by nature and principle inclined to silence and restraint, Coomaraswamy, like the religious teachers of ancient times, felt the urge to communicate his ideas. "Nobody will ever stop me from talking metaphysics," he once told a mutual friend of ours.

Among most scholars there exists a more or less distinct division between their scientific interests and their actual life. Not so with Coomaraswamy. Life and knowledge to him were one. "I am a traditionalist," he used to say. To him, the myths and cosmological conceptions, not only of India, but of the whole world, were not mere objects of folkloristic curiosity. He regarded them as the symbolic expressions of a primeval and universal wisdom, of an innate and mystic knowledge, rooted in palaeolithic times and transmitted and growing through the ages. In this respect, his ideas might be compared to those of another great scholar of our times, Father Wilhelm Schmidt, who considers all religions, and particularly



those of the most primitive tribes, as emanating from an "Uroffenbarung," an original divine revelation.

Coomaraswamy's knowledge in the field of religious thought was stupendous. He was as familiar with Greek and Latin literature and with the works of the German mystics of the middle ages as with the Vedas and the Buddhist *sutras*. All religions to him were essentially one, not in the sense of a shallow and superficial syncretism, but as various aspects and expressions of the same fundamental truth. As he wrote in a paper published posthumously in "India Antiqua," an anniversary volume honoring a great fellow scholar, Jean Philippe Vogel:

"There are scarcely any, if any, of the fundamental doctrines of any orthodox tradition that cannot as well be supported by the authority of many or all of the other orthodox traditions, or, in other words, by the unanimous tradition of the *Philosophia Perennis et Universalis*."

As a traditionalist, Coomaraswamy had a strong feeling for the meaningfulness and importance of liturgy. "If I were a Catholic," he once told me, "I would participate in all church festivals and sacred rituals the whole year round."

Religion, to Coomaraswamy, was a matter of deadly earnest, an arduous and thorny path which admitted no easy shortcut. In order to exemplify its uncompromising inexorability he once quoted, in our conversations, Jesus' words in Luke:

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, his mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

He himself had, to my genuine regret, completely forsaken that field in which he had achieved such brilliant success and acquired world-wide fame, the history and interpretation of Indian art. He considered it no longer as essential to his inner life. In another age and under another climate he might well have left the world long ago and entered the third *asrama*, living in the forests as an anchorite, devoted solely to meditation and to the achievement of ultimate enlightenment. At seventy, he actually decided to do so and was just preparing his voyage to India for this purpose, when death overtook him.

It was perhaps in his views of society that Coomaraswamy's Indian background found its strongest expression. During those weeks in Maine the Czechoslovakian crisis was rapidly coming to a head and it looked as if we would have war in the very near future. When I once casually observed that it was my ardent wish to be allowed, despite my age, to fight for the liberation of my native country, Austria, Coomaraswamy earnestly rebuked me for the impropriety of wishing, as a scholar, to transgress into the sphere of *kshatriya* activities. He deeply disapproved of modern trends among women and considered it as a sign of degeneration and as a cruel injustice that women were allowed or forced by circumstances to work in offices and factories and thus be deprived of what he considered their true place in life. He also distrusted all politicians and the whole system of parliamentary democracy. "I want a king," he used to say.

It would be wrong to attribute this attitude to reactionary tendencies. Coomaraswamy loved liberty and hated tyranny as strongly as any one. What he

wanted was an organic society, based on nature, tradition and justice, a society headed by a *dharma raja* and governed by ethic conceptions, in which each person would find his proper place and function according to the laws of *dharma*.

The depth and austerity of Coomaraswamy's metaphysical views did not affect his everyday countenance. On the contrary, he was rich in that most attractive quality of character, genuine humour. He enjoyed fun and was ever ready to laugh about an amusing story, and sometimes he would tell one himself. His passion for gardening added a charming human touch to his complex and amiable personality. Thoroughly kind-hearted and full of sympathy and understanding, he would go to extremes in helping his friends and fellow scholars. In him, all that is best in eastern and western culture had been welded together in a unique and harmonious combination.

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## GENIUS IS WISDOM, AND YOUTH.

(*Dr. Joseph T. Shipley, New York.*)

The first feeling that came to me, every time I saw Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, was of his youthfulness. He used to drop me a note of his impending trip from Boston, or call me over the 'phone when he reached New York; then I would hear him taking the stairs as lightly as an adolescent, and in a moment would feel the firm and genial clasp of his outstretched hand.

We would walk to the restaurant together; that is, for all my fifteen years less toll of life, I had to quicken my step a bit to keep pace with him. There

was in his lively gait, please note, no slightest hint of haste. Ananda Coomaraswamy was impelled by a buoyancy as natural as the lift of the winds across the dunes of his Massachusetts. I think not of the city, but of bush-tufted sand-dunes by the white-crested sea, when I think of Ananda Coomaraswamy.

While I mention first this physical aspect of the man, an immediate and abounding quality, I do so because the same youthfulness pervaded his inner spirit. The mind that Coomaraswamy turned upon life was insatiate, roving like a bee to suck the essence of every blossom of thought or fancy, but unerringly making a bee-line to bear back honey to his wisdom's hive. His was a wisdom engendered of the world's best. The East and the West were conjoined in him; so that he achieved a detachment born of their conflict, and an understanding born of their fusion. He could examine each without passion, and love both without blindness.

There is no doubt that materialism was to Ananda Coomaraswamy a grievous blemish on our times; that he saw the arch evil in a relativism that destroyed all ultimate values, swept away all standards, devitalized all goals. In these respects, the West is more fully and disastrously burdened than the less hurried and harried East. Indeed, many of the problems now heavily troubling the East are dubious gifts of the Western countries.

There, indeed, is the crux of the problem—and the explanation of Coomaraswamy's life work. For he knew that, increasingly, the ills of the world must be cured together; increasingly, the world is one. The East must awaken to modern science, must accept the modern speed. But the West must recapture the

*"Down a steep place into the sea"*

MATTHEW VIII: 3;

"As the tyrant delights when he can torment men, and spend their sweat in show and luxury, in foolish strange attire and behaviour, and ape the fool; so do also the devils in hell . . . He who sees a proud man, sees . . . the devil's servant in this world; the devil does his work through him. He thinks himself thereby fine and important, — and is thereby in the sight of God only as a fool, who puts on strange clothing and takes to himself animal forms"

JACOB BEHMEN, *Six Theosophic Points*,  
vi: 36-8

"The idea of Progress arose in the eighteenth century from the belief that man had waited long enough and that it was impossible to expect God to do anything to alleviate his sufferings or bring about the triumph of good . . .

"In material things there has been 'progress': there has been progress in investigation, in the amount of knowledge available, in the speed at which we can move, in the rate of production of goods, in centralization, in the factorification of education, in the power and speed of destruction, in the power of Mammon, in the loss of individual freedom, in the number of deaths on the road, in the decline of wisdom before the increase of knowledge, in the decline of true learning before the mere accumulation of facts and the multiplication of philosophies, in the chaos of our industrial, economic, social and political order . . .

"If there has ever emerged an anti-Christ in history, it is 'the idea of Progress'"

F. W. BUCKLER

"Theology surrendered to ethics, ethics to economics, and man followed suit from a spiritual being to an economic animal"

H. J. MASSINGHAM

"Whenever the timber trade is good, permanent famine reigns in the Ogowe region"

ALBERT SCHWEITZER



PROGRESS: by Denis Tegetmeier, in Eric Gill, *Unholy Trinity*, London, Dent, 1942.

**Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy's favourite Greetings Card.**



Eastern patience, must relearn what the East has not wholly forgotten: that the spirit is the essential aspect in man, that the spirit is more valuable, and must be kept mightier, than the sword.

It is as the preserver, interpreter, and stalwart champion of this essential wisdom that Ananda K. Coomaraswamy lived in the West, and was loved, and made his influence felt, throughout the world.

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OM!

### THE YOGI ARTIST.

*(Sri Swami Sivananda, Rishikesh, India.)*

Salutations to that Supreme Architect who shaped the entire Universe out of Himself and created in it multitudes of creatures delightful to look at, apparently different externally, but essentially the same—Himself—in their soul, all the work of His Cosmic Play!

Even the Almighty Lord, the abode of Eternal Bliss, is fond of art; look at His marvellous creation, especially MAN! Out of His Breath the Music of the Pranava, He created all this; and even when He withdraws Creation into Himself, He would do so through His Tandava Nritya! God is the greatest artist. He is the basis, embodiment, soul, root and Master of Art. Lord Krishna, the fullest manifestation of the Unmanifested, was a Master-dancer; His Music was entrancing; every act of His, every movement of His limbs, the very look of His eyes bespoke of the fullness of Art that He represented. True art is an expression of Satchidananda.

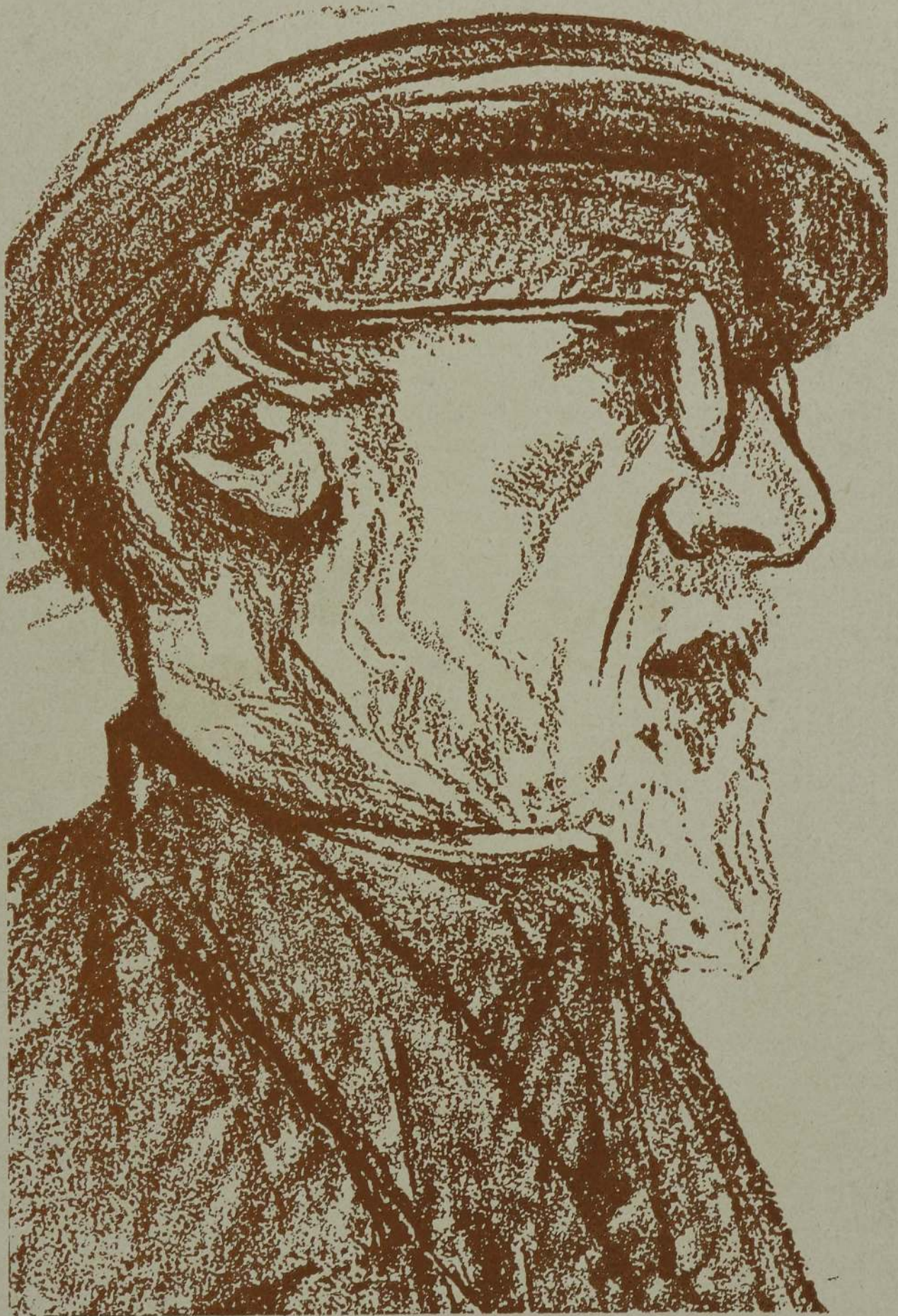
A true artist is a Yogi of very high order, who has drunk deep the nectar of realisation of the Lord.

He dives into the soul of creation, into That Immortal Essence, Unfading Beauty—the Atman—negating externals. His powers of concentration are supernormal, his intellect is pure, sharp and subtle; his heart pure and vision clear. He communes with the Atman and creates marvellous pieces of art.

Sri Ananda K. Coomaraswamy is such an artist. His life is a complete dedication to the revival of true art and to freeing it from the thralldom of base, “modern” mushrooms which have threatened to stunt its growth. He is one of the pioneers in the field of art and has been responsible in a large measure to bringing about a complete reorientation of the general outlook on art, divorcing art from the forces of materialism to whose influence art had fallen a prey and re-unite it with its lawful Lord—the Soul. Sri Coomaraswamy has wonderfully combined in himself a true artist and a great philosophical thinker. Naturally so, as one goes with the other! His achievements in the field of art are great; equally great are his spiritual attainments. What Sri Rabin-dranath Tagore did from his abode in Santiniketan, Sri Coomaraswamy has done from Boston; in fact, it would be true to call Sri Coomaraswamy, Tagore-abroad! Between themselves they have conquered the West.

Free India's first task should be the reclamation of her past glory in the field of Art and Yoga. Hers is the richest heritage. When the rest of the world was sunk in barbarism, it was she who held the pawn for art, and spirituality. The candle of human civilisation was lit from the eternal fire of culture that was blazing in India. That process is being repeated now; many a savant of art and Yoga has spread throughout





**DR. ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY.**  
**(Drawing by Sri H. V. Ram Gopal)**



the world the lofty message of the East—a message of Beauty, a message of Peace, Bliss and Knowledge Absolute, a message which alone could console the weary heart of the war-worn peoples of the world and bring within their easy reach love, peace, amity, brotherhood and prosperity. Sri Coomaraswamy, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Rama Tirtha and Sir S. Radhakrishnan are the pioneers in this field. Sri Coomaraswamy is a true Indian and a real patriot. Thanks to him, the fair name of India has once again come to be hailed all over the world as a country where the light of Art and Yoga, Culture and Civilization, is still burning, illumining the path of humanity to a saner living of mutual love, service and harmony.

A true patriot of India, Sri Coomaraswamy has not contented himself with emancipating Indian art from the bondage of overwhelming materialistic influences of the scientific West, but has striven with every fibre of his being to raise India to the status of a World Teacher. Truly, patriotism should take the form of bringing infinite glory to one's own land, not merely freeing it from foreign domination; in this respect, Sri Coomaraswamy has rendered yeoman service to the country.

Genius is not necessarily hereditary. But in Sri Coomaraswamy's case we find that he has had a noble parentage, he has lived as a member of a family of geniuses, and has, by his own ceaseless endeavour, enriched himself, ennobled his soul and brought out all his faculties, nourished them: he now occupies a position from where he is able freely to distribute the fruits of his labours for the benefit of humanity at large.

The family tradition and his own upbringing have left such deep religious influences on Sri Coomaraswamy that though he has continuously lived in the West for a number of years, he has guarded himself against the influx of materialistic influences. He is a man of sound principles; no extraneous forces dare break into the strong fortress which he has built around himself! Such should be the spirit of Indians who go abroad.

The simplicity of the Doctor's soul has found expression in his writings, too. His approach to the subject he handles is straight; his exposition clear, precise and unambiguous. Sri Coomaraswamy does not believe in confusing word-formations which, though high-sounding, do not carry much meaning behind them! The reader is able to enjoy the landscape in its entirety, without getting lost in the woods! Sri Coomaraswamy is a journalist of a very high order, too. He has rescued journalism from cheap vulgarity which well-nigh threatened to devour it; and raised the standard of literature from the low depths into which the uncultured taste of the vast majority of the reading public has dragged it into. Journalism, thus, owes a great deal to the untiring labours of Sri Coomaraswamy.

Sri Coomaraswamy is a versatile genius. His writings cover a wide range of subjects. Each book of his is a masterpiece in itself, an authority on the subject—the product of years of close and intense research; careful, keen and high thinking. The masterly way in which he deals with the topics clearly proves his great meditative powers and his penetrating intellect. He deals with high problems of metaphysics with the same facility with which he deals with art.

Lastly, I greatly admire his tenacious adherence to the cause to which he first dedicated himself and his unflinching devotion to it. These are characteristics peculiar to great Yogis. We find developed in him to a very high degree, the sterling virtues of *Sraddha* and *Bhakthi* (Sanskrit expressions which do not have corresponding English terms to cover the exact sense). From a quiet corner in the Boston Museum in the West, he has, unostentatiously and without aiming at spectacular “head-line” newspaper-blazing, spread his lofty message throughout the world! I call that a super-human achievement.

Glory to Sri Coomaraswamy! Glory to the Lord!  
OM SHANTIH!

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## MEMORIES OF THE PERSON.

(*Dr. Eric Schroeder, Boston, U.S.A.*)

*I sat upon the shore*

*Fishing, with the arid plain behind me*

*Shall I at least set my lands in order?*

*London Bridge is falling down falling down*

*falling down.....*

*Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.*

*Shantih shantih shantih*

*(The Waste Land*

*—T. S. Eliot)*

I had occasionally seen the figure of Coomaraswamy in the years between 1931 and 1936 walking swiftly through one of the Museum galleries on his way to the Library, or taking his seat at some lecture hall

in Boston, noticeable as he was, lofty, already rather haggard, with a head like a tomahawk. When I was told; "That's Coomaraswamy," I recalled a book of essays—*The Dance of Shiva*—which I had read and which had not struck me, the writer being very much of an advocate and the reader in this case not ready to be convinced, as being entirely honest. To a stranger's eye the first impression was of great theatrical distinction, and of an outer manner guarded and secretive. What secret was guarded there I was too callow to wonder much; and the half-formed suspicion of a possibly untrustworthy person was, I think, my only prepossession when I went to work as a volunteer in the Boston Museum.

Certain cautious gestures of hospitality when I was introduced, the finding of a place for my table, the offering of cigarettes, and the willingness of a man who was obviously and really busy to talk and help, began to dissipate this predilection simply by making me at home with him. 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.

What irony! It was not only the sublime detachment from what other people expected of him which delighted me, but rather the incongruity of this efflorescence, this perfectly aimed quotation from Edwardian conventionality, from the surface of a personality so unconventional and so unsentimental. 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 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.

Thus began a ten years' friendship which was both an intimacy and a running fight, in which he was finally the victor. Our days at the Museum were strenuously spent, for he was pouring out articles in the full spate of his matured metaphysical understanding. He read on at night, and worked in the early morning, so that his Museum hours were only a part of his day. Behind a long table drifted deep with journals, books, and papers his labor proceeded. From the window at his back a light which was generally cold fell upon the figure which became infinitely familiar: the long iron-gray hair, the characteristic brooding pose, and the movements of his very beauti-

ful fingers as he pushed or turned his books. When he wanted a reference, he would rise, and stand for a moment with sunken head, then comb back his gray locks with his hands and go prowling off along the bookshelves with a loose hound-like walk peculiarly his own. The most vivid impression of his physique can be had of an anecdote: he was once walking, he told me, along Commonwealth Avenue with his dog, of some slender long-haired breed, an Afghan, I think, or a Saluki, when he heard the voice of one of the many to whom unconventionality is offensive, demanding sarcastically at his back: "Which is which?"

Another vivid image is of an intolerably hot muggy afternoon in summer. We were trying to work, but our brains were steamed. Suddenly he stood up and muttered: "This is no good;" then, slinking into the Asiatic Department safe, he lay down, drew up his knees, and fell asleep. I looked in on him after a while; lying gaunt on his inhospitable couch, with the dusty gilt paraphernalia of Asiatic religions calm above him, he presented in a pathos not easy to define the physical appearance of an anchorite at rest. But this was exceptional. His only normal breaks from work were conversations with his visitors, or the the sharing of some good incident. I would hear his voice interrupt me with "Listen to this....."; and he would regale me with some precise correspondence of formulation, or some incandescent sentence—"O Eloquence the more mighty that it is unadorned! O Axe cleaving the Rock!" Such things continued to shape his mind, I think, or to temper it. I remember well the piety with which he communicated Bede's great saying about Heaven: "Nullum ibi honoris desiderium pulsat"; and the fastening of it in him was a



stage, I suppose, in his mental pilgrimage.

In those days we were constantly engaged in argument; for I was trying to revive the art-historian who had become extinct in the philosopher, and he was determined to evoke the philosopher in an immature art-historian. Time was on his side, perhaps; it was certainly not on mine. Though he was perfectly generous and communicative on historical questions, he was not interested in them any more. He felt interest in present history, the industrialist rape of Asia and the prostitution of Western intellect to the contingent, but his *delight* was in metaphysics. All the waves of historical argument beat upon him in vain; persistently, persistently he diverted history into the eternal categories which alone he was willing to admit. Why he was not exasperating is a nice question, but he was not; and I began to regard as things personally valuable the high sloped forehead, the hawk-like and magisterial nose, the eye, often veiled and cold, which suddenly became affectionate as he invited one to a joke, or gleamed with command as he stated meaning.

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. One day at lunch we were going at it hammer and tongs, Ananda maintaining the essentially metaphysical character of artistic production and I asserting the frequent and signifi-

cant predominance of moral and natural motive, he citing texts and I adducing works and circumstances, he pointing out the continuity in all traditional cultures of metaphysical reference in symbols, I challenging him to explain on any such grounds so characteristic a form as for instance the panegyric in Mediaeval Persia. Our table-companions at last found a spokesman in the Director of the Museum. "I don't want to hurry you," he said politely, "but when you two have *quite* finished splitting that *particular* hair, will you take time out to pass me the salt?"

As I came to know him more intimately, at home as well as at work, his individuality gave me increasing pleasure. He had a specially *English* cosiness, which was rather surprising in so relentless a critic of English national motives, but which was quite unmistakable, a certain appropriateness to old tweeds, a handsome relaxation and tact in the enjoyment of a fireside armchair, a slight but aristocratic taste in personalities, and an English literary wit. He rested in the pleasantness of good things, liked good and disliked bad food, discussed quite earnestly the problem of getting good clothes in America, and gave me the name of an excellent hatter. The difference between a "gentleman" and another was surprisingly real to him. And indeed I began to notice inconsistencies in him as a character which for a while interrupted the growth of trust, though it never affected liking. It was odd, I thought, that one who extolled as normal the anonymity of the right craftsman should be concerned with his own reputation. Yet he still took unashamed pleasure in what he called his fan-mail; and he had done, I found, working over Museum material, even stranger things in the past, defending,

for instance, his early dating of the great Ragmala paintings against Goetz's criticism by arguments which when examined appeared, to say the least, disingenuous. His marital career was inappropriate to a man who wrote of marriage as a sacrament, and some of his financial dealings seemed no less incongruous with the views of right livelihood which he expounded. And yet he had spent practically all his substance for what I could see to be a consecrated end, the publication of his work. And he had had, by worldly standards, great possessions. I was puzzled.

One day we had gone out to lunch at a restaurant near the Museum. Ananda produced a letter from his pocketbook. "I would like you to read this," he said; "in a way it's a very personal letter; but I'd like you to read it." And he passed over a sheet covered with the strong and delicate handwriting of Eric Gill. I read the message, an expression of the English craftsman's love and gratitude, a testimony of kindred. Whether it was intended as an indirect rebuke to me I hardly know; but I felt the embarrassment of rebuke. My betters thought better of my friend than I did. It began to appear that I had been wrong in paying attention to my instructor's inconsistencies when I should have been attending to his consistency. For the consistency mattered, and to me; the inconsistencies were his own concern, and it was not certain that they really mattered.

Not long after this he said "If I had known always what I know now, I think I would have tried to make my practice more like what I have preached." This really should have clarified everything, although I did not immediately understand at the time how very much he meant by what he said. His belief in salva-

tion by knowledge was entire. In much the same way as by bodily habit he disposed his standing weight utterly on one leg and stood in *contrapposto*, or as a monopode, propped on his lecture-desk or against a wall with one leg hooked up, or as, when his shoelace came loose, he dropped swiftly on to one knee, feeling apparently more at home concentrated upon half his natural support, he lived habitually in his intellect in a much greater degree of concentration than other men. As that was perfected, other things fell away. This made the personality exciting and memorable, and *edifying* in a sense in which the character, the whole psychic complex, was not. In the environment of Boston, where the character is regarded as the man and the personality as a mask, it was impossible that he should be esteemed. He was too famous and too odd to be ignored; but a superstitious or vulgar respect for him as a "distinguished" figure was the usual way of regarding him. It was generally realized that he had something important to say, and that it would be wise to give him a hearing; but very few thought it was wise to take him seriously.

Yet he was an exemplar, or in the radical sense a martyr. By the time that I came to know him the deliberate was predominant in him, and the personality was actually inspiring as being consciously directed by the intellectual will. Passionate desire for a better social order had almost yielded to a contemplative recognition of the working of cause and effect, and to a purer benevolence. The aesthetic and erotic to which he was once addicted had been discarded. The Charioteer now held the reins, and all the perceptions of a fierce and learned mind were turned, easily now, to the service of conviction. What

relation his earlier writings bore to earlier circumstance I do not know. But in the last ten years of his life he saw with surpassing clearness how much thought has been muddied by the pervading materialism of our time, and foresaw the chaos into which "progress" is plunging. And something masterful, for in him then one should not call it ambitious, dedicated his life to an attempt to dominate this materialism by exposing it as what it was, and by stating opposite truth. The purpose was noble. The will that served it was noble, and the intellect which fulfilled the will was noble.

In earlier essays his genius for emphasis had tempted him into assertions not always just in my opinion; and his attack on ephemeral particulars, though serious and generally very effective, partook of the limitations of its opposite. But in later years his adversary was world-wide and perennial—Man's ignorance of What he is. His weapons were the Scriptures, the words of the holiest thinkers; and in these years it may be said that his work sanctified him. Our last conversations made me aware of a partial approach to sanctity in Ananda. He still dramatized his conviction: he was still, I think, conscious of me as audience when once, leaning back and looking askance at the granite facade of the Museum visible, with heavy clouds rolling above it, through his window, he said "You know, all this is to me as if it wasn't there." But I had now the feeling that although conscious of his interlocutor he was perfectly serious, and that his attention to myself was a cool but perfectly serious concern not for my agreement but for my well-being. When, in our early acquaintance, he asked me what of his work I had

read, and I mentioned *The Dance of Shiva*, he said "I have come a long way since that, you know." He had.

At the end of one summer my wife and I went up to stay with the Sage, as we called him, in his forest house near the Canadian border of Maine. Evening was just darkening into night when we left our car at the foot of the steep ascent and walked up a rough road through trees to the knoll on which it stood, humped and black, with faint yellow light in the windows. Our knocking roused footsteps, and Ananda opened the door, a wilder silhouette than we expected, very rough in the jacket, very baggy in the knickerbockers, his long shanks ending in boots like boats. Behind him in the room half-lit appeared the timbers of an open roof, with an old pair of trousers hung up in the gloom like a regimental banner in the nave of a church. A table near the door with tools and fishing tackle; a battered axe by the fireplace; and in the far corner the curtains of a great bed partly drawn.

Our arrival had something of a new meeting; again I felt a flattering *cortesia* in the deliberateness of his cautious hospitality. His handshake was always accompanied by a curious raising and shrinking of the shoulders, as if he expected one's grip to be too firm; but the ordeal over was generally followed by some gesture of complete relaxation. My prowling round the room had revealed much in the way of implements for dealing with rocks and wood, with flowers and fishes, little in the way of art beyond a gramophone, and an admonitory poverty of books. The last he proceeded, when questioned, mumblingly to explain, with some little apparent distaste; and then he led

the way to the kitchen, where he set about making supper.

This kitchen was the scene of high old times. Ananda used to throw fuel into the stove in the attitude of one who, only too conscious that he was playing with fire, expected it to spit back at him; but he was expert in what cookery we did. The staple of our diet was pancakes—"Aunt Jemima." This was mainly because we liked Aunt Jemima, but partly also because the only bread in the house was very good bread, too good to be thrown away, but very tough bread, too tough to be conveniently cut—a huge old loaf with a crust as obdurate as tortoiseshell. On occasion, when somebody felt the absolute necessity of bread, Ananda would approach this loaf, where it lay upon the counter, with a large hunting-knife, and rising on to the toes of his boots would rock forward with all his weight upon the enemy. The blade entered the crust with an agonizing squeak, but a few minutes' hard work produced the fragment called for, which he bore solemnly back to the table.

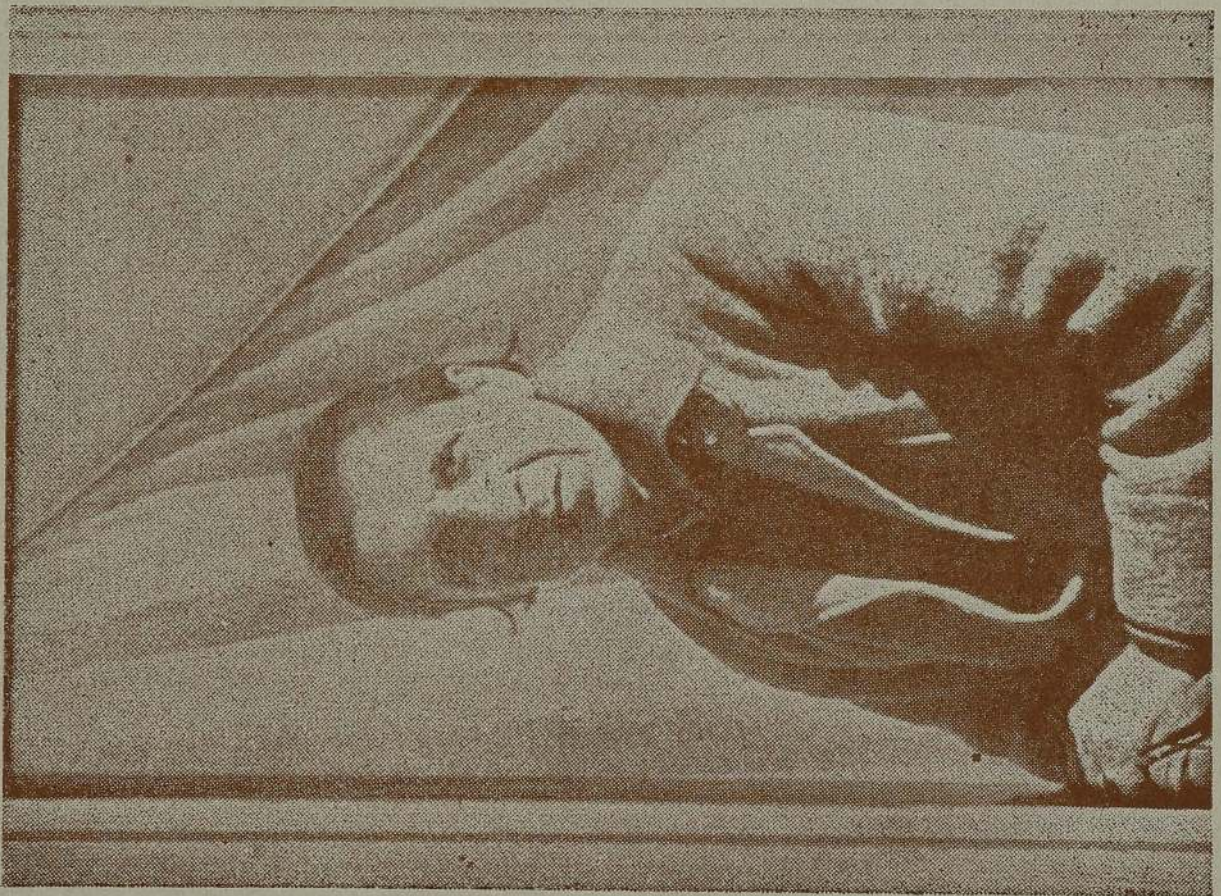
There was in the cupboard the remains of a bottle of Apricot Brandy, laid in some time before, and probably for medicinal use: our host did not care for alcohol, which gave him a headache. But on the last night of our visit we were clearing things up, since Ananda was going to drive back to Boston with us. It was felt that the hilarious festivities of the kitchen should have a climax, and the bottle be finished. After supper, accordingly, it was uncorked and poured; we raised our glasses and drank. I could hardly believe my palate. All alcohol had long been evaporated, and what remained was a simple syrup, precisely the juice of canned apricots. I looked at the others. My

wife evidently tasted what was wrong—she looked amused and disappointed. But not so the Sage: catching but misinterpreting my astonished gaze, he raised his eyebrows in grave appreciation and murmured in a voice of awe “Very smooth!”

Innocent indeed he was in many matters. He was not what is called a man of the world, and would have made a poor rogue. He was pure in many loves. The visionary sunlight of William Morris’s romances delighted him; and his affection for plants was apparently a simple appreciation of loveliness or character, without a tinge of sentimentality or egoism. He had made a large rock-garden in Maine with his own hands, and had a quite elaborate garden at his Needham house in which he toiled with his wife. These places were not settings for himself (though all who saw him there would remember him there), but simply homes for his plants. He did not pose in them, but worked doggedly, or if he had visitors led them swiftly about, standing to point out inconspicuous beauties, or dropping on one knee to pull a new-grown weed or make some rough place smooth with his likable fingers.

The arrangements in Maine were comfortable but very simple. There was, for instance, no bath. “When it becomes unbearable,” he explained, “we go down to the lake.” Profoundly unlike his American neighbors, who devote immense moral energy to being practical, he was yet startlingly practical in his own way. At lectures, for instance, he would sometimes with the same simplicity compose himself for sleep, confident that if the lecture were to prove worth listening to it would keep him awake. He had, of course, a sufficient sense of decorum, and would tell me to wake





**Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy in  
Maine about 1928.**



**His Scholarly Pursuit—Sketch by  
Sri S. N. Alandkar.**



him up if he should begin to snore.

Of all personal images perhaps the most significant is the figure of the fisherman. He was expert in this rather un-Buddhist pastime. "If you want to learn to fish," his Maine neighbors agreed, "you couldn't have a better teacher; he's the top." He used the best English tackle, from Hardy's, and possessed a great variety of flies, though he regarded the gaudier confections with some contempt. The wily and patient process of his fishing really began in the neighbourhood of the proposed pond, with a questioning of the innkeeper or some other fisherman upon recent "takes," conducted in a tone of hypocritical indifference. And then he would sit hour after hour in his boat, or stand upon the shore, quiet as the incarnate destiny of all fishes; hour after hour his line would whistle forth and drop on the water, as he waited, the breeze stirring the long hair beneath a weatherbeaten hat speckled with spare flies, his fell profile enjoining silence as he lifted his face in a fresh cast, or watched through lowered lids the drag of the fly.

On the last afternoon of the fishing season we went down to fish in the river. It was too bright for much luck; but with his usual patience Ananda cast on and on, the late sun gilding his thin brown cheek as it gilded the faded woods behind him. At last he got a bite, and landed his fish—it was a young and foolish trout too small to keep. The fisherman wet his hand, took him off the hook, and looked at him, with a face in which the formidable expression of his fishing had altered to gentleness. For a moment or two he seemed to enjoy the little creature's all-seeing stare and golden side, then tossed him back to his

element, and watched the bright ripples of his track as he made for deep water. "Well," he said, "that's the end of the year."

The figure of the fisherman is lasting in my mind because he was a fisher of men. However uncompromising his rhetoric, he wanted to persuade. What response meant to him appeared from his pleasure in the festschrift which was being prepared for his birthday; and he was profoundly moved to catch an echo in a notable mind, like Gill's or Guenon's. Even in small matters he used a fisherman's patient reiterative insistence. Once he and Mrs. Coomaraswamy took my wife to a flower-show. He was at this time greatly interested in cacti; cacti live in waste lands where other plants cannot, and exemplify organic life where the inorganic seems to prevail. He had a winter garden in his conservatory of those armored plants which put forth the most surprising of all flowers. My wife told me how he kept leading her back as if by accident to the stall where cacti were sold until at last she succumbed and bought one. She knew what he was at, but only resisted up to a certain point. On me he plied the same cunning of reiterated temptation, persistently diverting my interest in the beauty or history of human works to what was scriptural in them. After I had left the Boston Museum, and saw him less often, he kept a pull on me by periodic postcards in his neat back-sloping hand, calling my attention to some book or article.

Probably his own intellectual achievement had taken its original spring from *emotion*: a *feeling* for the disorder of our times, our art and politics, was, I guess, the birth of his life purpose, and his technique of emphasis was still at its most effective long after-

wards in a piece like *Am I My Brother's Keeper?*, written, as he told me, "at white heat." But though he passed from one emphasis to another, even to infidelities he was indifferent; for *he was moving on*. His being was directed not to a blending of the elements of personality, but Platonically and hierarchically to the domination of one right-chosen element, intellect. However he fell short in external action, his life, seen from this point of view, was a triumph.

In our personal relationship the fisherman was quietly determined that I should move away from emotion in the same direction, and he was artful in preventing other motions. Once, when I was pleased with a couple of articles I had written for a journal emphasising with material from Persian sources the consciously aesthetic approach of Persian artists to their problem, he said "I saw your articles in "Parnassus"—they were very *smart*; I should call them *smart*", using an adjective well calculated to rouse my own disgust for something which he knew I probably fancied as sound and well-written. On another occasion he could coax no less obliquely. He saw at my house a painting I had just finished, the symbolism of which was more in line with the traditional symbolism he cared for than that of any previous work of mine. When I saw him a week or two later in the Museum, he reverted to the picture: "I keep thinking of that painting of your's— the horse's skull: it was very well painted. I'd hardly expected you to paint so well." I have a strong suspicion that he was flattering my technical prowess with the indirect object of having me continue to paint symbols which he recognized as serious.

Our long tug-of-war ended in my being pulled across the mark. The unruly fish came in. He won. The heron figure will always stand there, the wizard and awakener, the teacher of my adult life. He himself disclaimed any role beyond that of Transmitter, and rightly: though I loved the person, gratitude for what he taught is in a way even more personal than affection. He more than any other taught me to read the eternal content in human works: he taught me to read Scripture, and his gift seems to me the greatest gift one person can give another in our days.

Now that he has lived his life, and his gifts have become bequests, the metaphysic which he drew from the deepest human wells and poured abroad, meaning after meaning, will, I expect, water what is to come. As the disasters which he anticipated overtake the generation he addressed, it is at any rate sure that an antithetical wisdom like his own will here and there be purified to the semblance of what he was accustomed to summon from times and regions remote, the human witness of Asia and of the age of Western piety. That he should become his printed words will certainly accord with his living desire. But we do not wrong him in recalling the loved personality now extinct, in which the Artificer assembled materials both precious and ironical, but from which a rising will of great purity constructed at the last a material Image to all who saw it unmistakable, the Image of a master theologian, the bodily shape of the Comprehensor, in which intellectual positiveness had become visibly one with knowledge, leaving as if printed by the foot of God Absconded the absolute authority of his face in death.

**DR. ANANDA COOMARASWAMY**

(*Mr. Christmas Humphreys, President, The Buddhist Society, London.*)

It was Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's book *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism* which brought me into the Buddhist Movement when I first read it at the age of 17 in 1918, and I have read it many times since. I, therefore, have a particular regard for his memory. I regard this book as the finest single volume on Buddhism yet published.

**ANANDA KENTISH COOMARASWAMY.**

(*Miss Rose Standish Nichols, Boston, Mass., U.S.A.*)

As I remember Ananda Coomaraswamy, when he and his lively wife first came to my house on Beacon Hill many years ago, he towered above the other guests physically, intellectually and spiritually. As he joined us around the tea-table even before he uttered a word his mere presence uplifted the conversation and clarified our ideas as ozone vivifies the atmosphere. An inner serenity gave him poise and freedom from self-consciousness whether he remained silent and aloof or entered with dignified deliberation into a lively discussion. When he spoke, usually in reply to a question, he never failed to arrest our attention and to say something worth while.

Once he explained his silence by remarking that in the East it was not customary to talk except to further a definite interchange of opinions.

At first sight this tall stranger, with brown eyes and a dark beard, from an unknown country, was awe-inspiring to a superficial observer. Upon further acquaintance however it became apparent that he spoke our language to perfection and often under-

stood us better than we understand ourselves. No matter how humble or ignorant his interlocutor he never talked down to anyone. He loved simple people. Children approached him fearlessly and soon became his friends because he treated them seriously and on a footing of equality.

His philosophy and his love of humanity might have been expressed in Aristotle's prayer for peace and understanding in a Christlike spirit. "From the murmur and subtlety of suspicion with which we vex one another, give us rest. Make a new beginning and mingle again the kindred of nations in the alchemy of love. And with some finer essence temper our mind."

In the words of Baroness Helen Giskra, a welcome guest in his country house, "Dr. Coomaraswamy was that wonderful combination, an erudite scholar and a kindly tolerant man. He had what Goethe called a "panoramic mind" and nothing in the way of art, history or philosophy was foreign to him. His curiosity led him to delve deeply into all those subjects and find new meanings which he illuminated by his learning and expressed in words of literary beauty. Dr. Coomaraswamy is a great loss but he was for many years a great giver. Both East and West may be grateful for the results of his critical and creative genius."

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### AN APPRECIATION.

(*Mrs. Winifred Holmes, London.*)

Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy is so well-known that there is little to be said which has not been said before about his work; his books are his own true monument. But perhaps a postscript can be added to these fine works of scholarship. Dr. Coomaraswamy started with the inestimable advantage of being himself an inheri-



tor of the Indian tradition. He did not come in from outside, as do his Western colleagues. He was Indian and he looked at Indian art from within; he understood the *feeling* of it and of its subtle differences and nuances; its colour and texture and associations were all part of his emotional and sensuous make-up, while its spiritual significance spoke directly to his soul.

Only an Englishman can really *savour* English poetry, however well that poetry may be understood and enjoyed by a Frenchman, because the language of that poetry holds childhood and race associations which cannot be translated. Nor can they be acquired by an outsider. In the same way, an Englishman cannot savour, although he may admire and appreciate, French poetry.

So the Indian scholar and art historian starts with the greatest advantage of all when dealing with Indian art. He belongs to it; it belongs to him. Because of this *belonging* Ananda Coomaraswamy was able to make certain fundamental discoveries which Western scholars had not made. The most important one was that—to use his own words—‘Indian art was from the time of the Aryan invasions the joint creation of Dravidian and Aryan genius, a welding together of symbolic and representative, of abstract and explicit language and thought.’ These racial preoccupations,’ as he called them, ‘may have been determined before the age of metals.’ He finds during the course of time first one and then another tendency uppermost, while in the Gupta period they become fused into a ‘perfect synthesis,’ thus making Gupta art the most satisfying of all periods of Indian art. Scholarship never stands still. Further discoveries have been made and inscriptions deciphered since

Ananda Coomaraswamy wrote his books, but the conclusions he reached on the general lines of his subject cannot be superseded. He felt the pulse of the Indian tradition as no Western scholar, however brilliant or careful, can ever do, and yet he knew the West well enough to know how to write for it. His use of English is always clear and vivid, even when dealing with abstractions and aesthetics. His loss is a real one: but like the monuments of Asoka, his works remain.

### A. K. COOMARASWAMY.

(*Dr. P. K. Gode, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona*).

In concluding my remarks about Fine Arts in India I must not fail to offer my respectful tribute to the memory of Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy who passed away since you met at Nagpur a year ago. My contact with this greatest exponent of Indian Art and Literature commenced in 1938 when I edited his *Notes on the Katha Upanisad* for the *New Indian Antiquary*. I shall never forget his willing co-operation in all my subsequent editorial activities. Indology in general and Indian Art in particular has suffered the most irreparable loss in the demise of this mystic and magnetic personality, loved and respected by scholars of all nations of the world. *I am sure that the All-India Oriental Conference will co-operate whole-heartedly in any scheme organised by Indian scholars to commemorate the name and fame of this great patriot, who by his forceful penetrating vision and unparalleled love of the beautiful kept the banner of Indian Art ever flying in the remotest parts of the world.*

(*Presidential Address for the Section of Technical Sciences and Fine Arts at the Darbhanga Session of the All-India Oriental Conference in October 1948*).

## ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY, A CATHOLIC *EMINENTER.*

(Mrs. Katharine Gilbert, Duke University,  
Durham, U.S.A.)

In the summer of 1942, after correspondence about references to classical sources and exchange of offprints, I talked one day with Dr. Coomaraswamy in his place of work in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. The talk ranged far: books (he recommended for my reading *Peaks and Lamas*), art, philosophy, the state of the world, religion. I asked my interlocutor to tell me what were the implications of his obvious erudition in the literature of the Roman Catholic Church and his sympathy with its doctrine. His articles on *The Mediaeval Theory of Beauty* in the *Art Bulletin* had struck me as the best in their kind. I could not be quite sure whether he had become an avowed son of the Roman Church or whether his easy leaps from Christian Scriptures to Hindu to Islamic to Greek and Egyptian simply signified his research of profound analogies. With unforgettable swiftness and humorous glance he turned to me, saying, "No, I am not a Churchman. *I am too Catholic to be a Catholic.*" Since 1942 I have come to know much more of this scholar's writings, but for a sentence-characterization I have never found anything equal to this self-portrait. It hits off in a trice his religious and aesthetic traditionalism; his universality of interest and knowledge; and his bent for intellectual play—play on words and through symbolic reference.

As all his readers know, though Dr. Coomaraswamy did not give exclusive adherence to Thomist teaching, he believed in it as one adequate formulation of eter-

nal truth. Quotations from St. Thomas and his poetical exponent Dante, as also from St. Augustine and St. Bonaventura, abound on his pages. He agrees with these wise and good men when they say that the essence of the world is an Order created by God; that the things of sense are emblems of this Order to a rightly directed mind; that it is the final vocation of all men to re-integrate themselves into the harmony of this Order; that God draws all being to him through the joyous light and constraining cord of his goodness. He also agrees with them that for individuals to hold off in stubborn isolation is metaphysical evil; that salvation is mediated through such metamorphosis as is expressed in the Eucharistic meal; and that the things and pleasures of sense and time are sometimes props for the weak but always to be subordinated to their symbolism of the final good.

So far Dr. Coomaraswamy was hardly distinguishable from any intellectual professing Roman Catholic.

But, as he said of himself, his mind was too universal to confine its loyalty to the doctrine of any one organized Institution. The great tradition of truth and religion was for him as appropriately linked with the Greek Plato as with the Indian Buddha and the Christian St. Thomas. The nature of things had for him an eternal structure to which men of insight at all times and everywhere penetrate. In his concern with this body of absolute truth, Dr. Coomaraswamy thought of himself as a meta-physician, that is, as an intellectual devotee of the realm of spirit beyond time and space.

As Art Curator, Dr. Coomaraswamy's theory of his peculiar task was an immediate deduction from his general philosophy. To him the first excellence of art

is its truth or 'iconographical correctness,' i.e. its appropriate rendering in visible terms of central religious teaching. Art for him was one kind of metaphysical statement, and artists and true connoisseurs, serious students of final things. A second excellence of art closely involved with the first was its moral instructiveness. Art, so conceived, is a guide to right action. It is good in so far as it conduces to a happy and useful life. Again, artists are not first of all beings with a special sensitivity, vision, or plastic power, but with a 'vocation,' i.e. a call to give religious instruction through graphic means. In the larger sense all men are artists who make things in the spirit of a vocation. This being true, art, the Curator taught, has a right to freedom, not from the censorship of those responsible for the community's well-being, but from commercial pressures and pulls. Art is bound and free as religion is bound and free.

For Dr. Coomaraswamy the beauty of art is to remind rather than to delight. Aesthetic savour fulfills its function when it becomes a support for contemplation. For example, the "aesthetic shock" of the loveliness of the dewdrop passes properly into an awareness of the transitoriness of all living things. Finally, just as there is only a minor distinction of accent in art's truth as spoken by the spatially separated oriental, Thomist, and American Indian, so the history of styles in its temporal succession yields only accidental variations. Truth is eternal, not progressive or conditioned, and art being the symbolic communication of truth, is also essentially identical from age to age.

It is clear that Dr. Coomaraswamy's religion, philosophy, and aesthetics were intimately connected

and in fundamental postulates identical. As his general metaphysics spread to include the tenets of Greeks, Romans, Egyptians and the faith of men of goodwill everywhere, so his art scholarship flew from country to country and culture to culture showing the good design and symbolic reference of Maori portraits, Shaker furniture, Dürer's "knots," and Ceylon basket-work. There is amazing variety in his subjects of study and illustrative material. The multiplication of kinds of examples is as impressive as the theory is profound. And yet, in spite of the breadth and the depth, Dr. Coomaraswamy's Catholicism—more than Roman though it was—was basically simple. Moreover it was limited, for it was a militant orthodoxy. It was bound to bar out all thought of a pluralistic and empirical cast, and all art resting for its main appeal on sensuous charm and immediate delight. There were for this thinker as many clear-cut heresies as clear-cut truths. He teaches that modern culture is an illusion. There is for him no such things as artistic genius. Our bourgeois economy has a false value-scheme. The development of philosophy since Descartes and Locke is on a wrong track. In aesthetics, the current emphasis on aesthetic surface, on formal elements in abstraction from 'literary' meaning, and on 'function' without consideration of religious symbolism is provincial—"bourgeoisie fantasy."

This combination of great universality with persisting exclusiveness raises a critical problem for the interpretation of our subject. How could these opposing qualities be combined in one spirit? The key is found, I think, in the third characteristic I noted in the first paragraph when I was analyzing the significance of Dr. Coomaraswamy's semantic self-portrait:

“I am too Catholic to be a Catholic”—his bent for intellectual play, play on words and through symbolic reference. His universality is, I believe, only partially intellectual and religious. As it covers territory after territory and culture after culture, it is moved by the swiftly glancing temperament that delights in aesthetic play. As Dr. Coomaraswamy leaps from language to language and locus to locus with his identical symbol, he seems to me to produce the enlivening shock of a multi-dimensional metaphor. His ideas are not *worked* into their new relations when they arrive at a new context. The word ‘aesthetics,’ for example, always retains for him its original association with sensuousness, and does not grow as the discipline itself has grown. The words ‘sensibility’ and ‘pleasure’ have a resisting fixity of meaning for him, always pejorative. So when he says (referring to Kant’s expression): “Disinterested aesthetic contemplation [disinterested pleasure] is pure non-sense,” he seems not to have undergone the labor of thinking through Kant’s criticism of aesthetic judgment, with its alteration of the color of aesthetic pleasure. Along with a core of valuable truth, then, Dr. Coomaraswamy may be said to have furnished, despite his theory to the contrary, a great metaphorical encyclopedia, where multiple forms and meanings are condensed for the delight of the sensibility and imagination. If his scholarship, while very great, at times dipped, it may have been because his nimble wit—approaching the punning habit at times—clashed together signs and symbols externally alike rather than logically entailed. Such an interpretation as I here very tentatively suggest attributes to the great scholar even more Catholicity than is usually attributed to him or

than he would have admitted. He distrusted feeling. But it seems to me that a brilliant imagination, giving language to feeling, sometimes achieved unity and bonds for him that supplemented those he established by his learning.

[Some material in this paper is drawn from a book-review of mine appearing in *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. XXX, No. 2, June, 1948, used by the kind permission of the Editor.]

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### DR. ANANDA COOMARASWAMY

(*Prof. O. C. Gangoly, Calcutta*)

In the sudden death of Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy within a few days of the celebrations of his seventieth year, the study of Indian Art and Culture, Civilization and Philosophy, and the cause of Indian Nationalism have suffered a grievous and irremediable loss. In him the world has lost a versatile scholar, a collector and connoisseur of Art of rare sensibility and discrimination, a mystic philosopher of a wide range of thought, with a rare insight into the three great disciplines of civilization, namely, Art, Science and Religion. In him India has lost her greatest art-critic, and art-historian, and the most learned and authoritative exponent and interpreter of the basic principles of Indian Art and Aesthetics, her greatest champion and defender of the values of Indian Civilization in all its phases and aspects. The wide and almost encyclopaedic range of his studies and his critical understanding of Western Philosophy and Art helped him to demonstrate the fundamental unity of man's approach to the deepest and highest problems of life; this was richly demonstrated by his brilliant essays in the elucidation of the comparative values of Indian and



medieval European Art in its Gothic Christian phases. Yet he began life as an enthusiastic student of the objective science of Geology to which he made many new and original contributions, and his scientific training in early life lent to all his thoughts, to all his writings and to all his studies of Art, a rare precision, a subtle power of analysis, and a distinctive and accurate way of presentation of his themes, which have never been excelled by any author in the East or in the West. His accomplishment as a great linguist, happy in all the major European and Indian languages, imparted to everything that he wrote a highly exquisite literary flavour. He wrote the English language with an erudition, with a mastery, with a flexibility, with an expressiveness and a charm rarely attained by any Englishman. Educated in England in his youth, he earned the diploma of a Doctor of Science from the University of London, and in later life he devoted himself to profound and intensive studies of the leading languages and cultures of India, specializing in Hindi, Pali and Vedic Literature. In him the culture of the East and the West had met in rare and surprising unity, bringing forth fruits of the highest values to the stores of the world's culture. As a publicist and an educationist his contributions deserve the highest praise and admiration. Indian Art had suffered grievously in the past owing to bad and insufficient reproductions. In his brilliant series of books and monographs he presented Indian Art through the most expensive and accurate processes of reproductions in order to bring forth and demonstrate their highest quality and beauty. It will be impossible to present within the limits of this article anything like an exhaustive survey of his great contributions to Art

and Literature. His researches into all phases of Indian Art and the elucidation of the intricate evolution of its history can never be surpassed and shall ever remain as a standing monument to his genius.

By an unhappy combination of circumstances and by the philistine attitude of Indians towards the finest flowers of their own civilization, India and modern Indians had lost the advantage of a personal contact with this high priest of Indian Nationalism and the greatest teacher and authority of Indian Art, and it is sad to think that the loss of India has been the gain of the United States where he was destined to live the greater part of his life. He never sought publicity in any form or kind and led the life of a recluse and a devotee to the cause of Indian Art, for which he incessantly worked to make new discoveries and incessantly wrote to set forth their meaning and significance. He visited India three times staying for long stretches to study the monuments at first hand and to collect materials and data for the understanding of the whole evolution of a great cycle of Art, unique in the history of the culture of the world. In the course of an extended tour in Northern India during the autumn of the year 1910, he collected an enormous quantity of the finest specimens of Indian Paintings and Drawings and other master-pieces which presented Indian Art in hitherto unknown phases and expressions. This enormous collection of Indian Art he offered to present to the Indian Nation, on the condition that an adequate Museum and Gallery should be built at Banaras, he himself offering to act as its Curator. A printed Appeal was issued, and widely circulated, but our nationalists impervious to the claims of Indian Art failed to respond to his appeal.

And ultimately the Trustees of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, agreed to accept the collection and built up a worthy Gallery to house and to present the collection for the benefit of students and connoisseurs from all parts of the world. This collection now stands as a unique and the most comprehensive presentation of all phases of Indian Art brought together under one roof in any part of the world. Indeed, there is no collection in any museums of India which present such a connected and comprehensive picture of the history of Indian culture as the Indian wings of the Boston Museum. It is impossible to estimate in rupees, annas and pies the extent of the loss of this treasure to India by its transference to a distant corner of the world, inaccessible to the general bodies of Indian students. The loss of India has been an invaluable gain to America and a gain to the access in prestige and understanding of Indian Art in the West. Since this transfer of one of the finest collections of Indian art, chosen and selected by a gifted and talented connoisseur of rare discrimination and knowledge, various Indian collectors have attempted to build in India important collections of Indian Art, but none of these later collections can approach the Ross-Coomaraswamy collection of the Boston Museum, in the range and rarity of its items. To build such a collection is itself a signal service to the knowledge and understanding of a great culture which is still a sealed book to the majority of Indian Nationalists.

Dr. Coomaraswamy's appointment as the keeper of the Boston collection and as the Research Fellow in Indian Art, brought him opportunities for profound and extensive studies for elucidating the history of its evolution, studies which he published in the Bulletins

of the Museums in incessant series of short but erudite articles, revealing the glory of Indian Art, presented with a wealth of scholarship and citations which have extracted unstinted praise from savants from all parts of the world. Unfortunately, his signal services in the cause of elucidating the finest phases of Indian civilization have been very little known to his brother-nationals in India and the name and fame that he had acquired in India during the years 1909 and 1910 at the height of the Swadeshi Movement to which he gave a brilliant lead in the right direction by his lectures and articles (many of which were published in the pages of the *Modern Review*) faded out of memory, when this Banished Yaksha was forced to make Boston his home and his venue of cultural studies. The Indian Universities have several times invited many Western Orientalists to deliver Extension Lectures and the Indian Oriental Conferences have even invited some English Orientalists as Presidents of their sittings, but the claims of this eminent and erudite Indian scholar have been deliberately neglected and ignored in spite of repeated suggestions made by the writer. A prophet is, indeed, never honoured in his own country!

It is necessary to recall the actual nature of the fruits of his studies in the field which he had chosen and which he enriched with rare colour and flavour. Yet the task is impossible to fulfil within a limited space and we must content ourselves with a bare recital of the most important and significant of his many publications.

His first negotiations with the basic foundations of Indian culture began during his few years' stay in Ceylon as the Director of the Mineralogical Survey of

that island. In the intervals of official duties he was sorely aggrieved by the denationalized outlook of Sinhalese youths, wearing foreign costumes and adopting English names and ignoring the ancient Sinhalese culture under the enervating influence of English education. Dr. Coomaraswamy attempted to change the attitude of his brethren towards their ancient heritage and published and edited for two years the *Ceylon National Review*, preaching the value and beauty of indigenous culture of the island. This led to a scientific survey of the surviving guilds of Sinhalese craftsmen and their beautiful crafts, the history of which was set forth in his erudite monograph on *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art* (1908). It was the writer's privilege to request this prophet of Indian culture to render his tribute to the shrine of Indian Art proper. And the response came in a few weeks in a stimulating pamphlet on the *Aims of Indian Art* (May, 1908) later reprinted in the pages of the *Modern Review*. This was followed by his challenging paper read at the Congress of Orientalists at Copenhagen (August, 1908) in which he courageously and ably refuted the theory of Greek influence on Indian Art, creating a great sensation among the coteries of European Archaeologists. Then followed a succession of beautiful publications, setting forth in accurate facsimiles the merits of Indian Drawings and Paintings (Hindu as well as Mughal) in two series of admirable portfolios published by the India Society, London, which, for the first time, opened the eyes of European connoisseurs to the beauties of these treasures, the high merit and technique of which challenged the merits of Holbein and Ingres. As practical aids to the study and understanding of Indian Art he published in 1910 his admirable portfolio of

*Selected Examples of Indian Art*, reproducing with comments, forty well-chosen masterpieces, many in colours. This was followed by a series of 100 collotype Plates reproducing distinguished examples of Indian Art under the caption *Visvakarma* to which the famous artist Eric Gill contributed an illuminating introduction eulogizing the values of Indian Art. These publications were not only eye-openers to European students, but also to Indians, till then absolutely impervious to the appeal of their national Art. In the intervals of incessant articles on many phases of Indian culture (later collected in 1918, in the *Dance of Shiva*), Coomaraswamy published through the Oxford University Press (1916) two admirable folio volumes on Rajput Painting, which for the first time recovered the identity of Hindu-Brahmanical Paintings, hitherto confused by European writers with Moghul miniatures. The demonstration, illustrated by 78 admirable examples for the first time placed Hindu Paintings on its own pedestal. The text set forth, with scholarly accuracy and philosophical interpretation, the entire spiritual atmosphere of Vaishnavite and Saivaite doctrines of thought in relation to which the Rajput paintings were proved to be the visual commentaries on the Bhagavata and Shaiva Puranas. Raphael Petrucci and Laurence Binyon and other European connoisseurs acclaimed this new eye-opener with unstinted praise. In the same year, a popular survey of Buddhist culture was given in his *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, admirably illustrated by typical Buddhist masterpieces and specially drawn miniatures by Dr. A. N. Tagore and Nanda Lal Bose. Three years before this work, an Edinburgh publisher issued his little volume on *The Arts and Crafts of India and*

*Ceylon*, which with its 195 illustrations is still the best general survey in a handy form. His duties in the Boston Museum brought forth four admirable *Catalogues of the Collection*, (Sculpture I, Rajput Painting II, Jaina Painting III, Moghul Painting IV) which for accuracy and scholarship will stand as unsurpassable models for Museum inventories. The introductions to these catalogues and the bibliographies annexed to them are mines of information and permanent guides to the study of their subjects. In the stately series of tomes of the *Ars Asiatica*, Dr. Coomaraswamy contributed two important volumes, one on the *Sculptures of Bodh Gaya* (Vol. 1935), another on the *Oriental Miniatures of the Goloubew Collection* (Vol. XIII, 1929). That he was equally at home in his erudite excursions into Hindu Paintings as in Musalman Miniatures is proved by his various essays and articles, richly documented at every step and especially, by his small monograph on the *Treatise of Al-Jazari on Automata* (Boston, 1924). His series of illustrated articles on Moghul Iconography (*Artibus Asiae*, 1927) is replete with new information and data, throwing a flood of light on little known aspects of the theme. His *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* (1927) is the only complete survey of the subject destined to remain as an indispensable text-book for specialists as well as for ordinary students. His service in the field of Buddhist Archaeology and Iconography are invaluable. In his epoch-making essay on the *Origin of the Buddha Image* (1927), he completely demolished Foucher's thesis on the Greek origin of the Image. In his *Elements of Buddhist Iconography* (1934), he analyses and traces the origins of Buddhist Art to Vedic sources

and supports his thesis by illuminating references covering the whole field of Vedic literature. His erudite dissertation on the *Nature of Buddhist Art* (published as an Introduction to *The Wall Paintings of India, Central Asia, and Ceylon*, 1938) displays an encyclopaedic knowledge of the vast expanse of Pali literature which is truly astounding. On many points, he cites parallel ideas from Greek, Latin and mediaeval Christian literature to elucidate the basic ideas underlying Buddhist iconography. His rich contributions to Comparative Mythology are attested by several learned essays, out of which two outstanding ones may be here cited:—"The Tree of Jesse and Indian Parallels or Sources" (1929), and "The Iconography of Durer's 'Knots' and Leonardo's concatenation" (1944). His two dissertations on *Yaksas* offer the most illuminating interpretation of a very little known phase of Indian Iconography, documented at each step by a wealth of illustrative photographs and drawings unsurpassed by any works on Indian Art. His meticulous examination of the *Silpasastras* and the relative texts have given us rich fruits of his brilliant studies on this topic in numerous articles. His learned and accurate rendering of various texts bearing on the techniques of Indian Art have thrown a flood of light on the most obscure phases of its history. On the theoretical aspects of the subject his outstanding contributions are the translations of the *Sukranitisara*, *Vishnu-dharmmottara*, *Silparatna*, *Abhilasartha Chintamani*, and his *One Hundred Passages on Early Text on Painting*. His meticulously accurate philological interpretations of the technical words reveal a stupefying erudition bearing on the whole literature of the subject. The most illustrative examples are his essays on



*Paroksa, Abhasa, and on Alamkaran.* For the last ten years, he had almost exclusively devoted himself to the study of Vedic texts and their interpretation. These investigations appear to be the crowning laurel of the scholastic career of one who began life as a man of science and an expert geologist. Numerous essays bearing on his studies of the Vedas attest the marvellous philological feats of an aesthethician and surprise us by the astounding range of his scholarship and expert knowledge. The present writer is not qualified to assess the merits of his Vedic studies, but competent scholars have lavished unstinted praise on his two booklets, *Angel and Titan: an Essay in Vedic Ontology, and A New Approach to the Vedas: An Essay in Translation and Exegesis.* There is hardly any phase of Indian culture which he has not touched and transmuted into gold. His researches into *Early Indian Architecture* documented by illustrative drawings is a solid contribution to the subject, minutely describing each member of Indian architectural construction by its technical term, drawn from the whole field of early Sanskrit literature. As a Reviewer, he has revealed new methods and manners. Most of his reviews are independent articles, supplementing the data of the subject treated, with information unknown to the author reviewed. Thus, his *Indian Architectural Terms*, a veritable encyclopaedia of the subject, has grown out of a review of Dr. Acharyya's books on Indian Architecture, and it now stands as an admirable and indispensable text-book giving a mine of information for all future students of the subject. The range of his wide knowledge, his exhaustive researches on any particular topic, his careful and meticulous way of handling his subjects made him as happy in deal-

ing with Early Indian Terracottas as with obscure points in Buddhist Iconography, as happy in treating with any phase of Mughal Painting as in dealing with Hindi Ragmala Texts, with illuminating commentaries on the philology of archaic Hindi words occurring in musical inscriptions. As an Orientalist, with a wide range of subjects he surpassed Professor Sylvain Levi; as a Philologist, he has challenged the works of many authorities, and, as an Historian of Art, his works surpass those of Renan and Maspero. It is unfortunate that the rapid progress of his scholarship took him many miles away from his popular and propagandist essays of his early Swadeshi days, with the wide popular appeal of his lectures reprinted in *Art and Swadeshi* (1911) and his admirable *Essays in Indian National Idealism*, and in his later works he became too much of a mystic and a metaphysician beyond the reach of ordinary individuals, though still exciting the envy and the admiration of scholars. Most of his writings are lit up by a surfeit of breath-taking references and parallel passages from all the philosophical writers of the world, and, sometimes, an interpretation of the symbology of an ordinary Indian Picture or Icon is supported by citations from Kausitaki Brahmana, Plato, and Jalaluddin Rumi, as well as from Homeric epigrams and Coptic Gnostic treatises! His works drew the warm appreciation of Western savants, but Indians have yet to pay their debt of tribute to one of their greatest prophets. Dr. Coomaraswamy is dead, but he will live in the inspiring and shining pages of his writings, the brightest banners symbolizing the supremacy of Indian Culture and Civilization.

## MEETING COOMARASWAMY.

(*Mr. Wilfred Wellock, Birmingham.*)

Dr. Coomaraswamy's writings are difficult to come by here. Prior to 1946 what I have read of them I borrowed from Eric Gill and his friends. These were mostly short works, but they greatly impressed me. They harmonised with my own thinking yet lit it up with shafts of bright light.

It was after these experiences that I discovered while on a lecture tour in the U.S.A. that Coomaraswamy was at the Boston Museum. I got him on the telephone and went to see him. To my astonishment he began to quote me from memory and thereupon fetched several brochures of mine from his shelves. I confess I felt embarrassed. He bubbled over with ideas. It was imperative that the mechanistic, materialistic trends of our times be changed and it was we who believed in creative living who must do it. He begged me to write to this journal and that, get in touch with this person and that informing me of kindred spirits in France and other European countries. His mind was like a telephone exchange in touch with all the vital spiritual forces everywhere. It was a most impressive conversation. He wanted me to spend the evening with him, but this was impossible and so he loaded me with a number of his smaller writings. The time passed like lightning and I left with my mind like a charged battery. It was a memorable occasion which I shall always treasure.

Altogether Coomaraswamy was a man whose mind was so mature that he was able to transform a most remarkable store of knowledge into rivers and lakes of wisdom from which one could drink with profit and

satisfaction whenever one turned to him. And his phrase stuck. How often have I repeated his now famous saying that "*An artist is not a special kind of person, but every person can be a special kind of artist.*" It now occurs to me that during our long talk in his office in the Boston Museum, he said he felt that the time had come for those who were labouring for a return to creative living which I had suggested to him might be described as a new creative era, should try to contact each other for their mutual edification and understanding, and perhaps try to gather together, if not as a world group of kindred spirits, at least as an area, say of a Continental group, in order to know each other better, to learn what one and another were doing, and perhaps to discuss ways and means of furthering their common purpose.

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### IN MEMORIAM—A. K. C.

(*Mr. Marco Pallis, Tibet*)

There is only one kind of tribute worthy of Ananda Coomaraswamy: to put his teaching into practice, to follow the way he pointed to, to renounce whatever seems incompatible with that way, at whatever cost. Each man, to the best of his ability, must do this for himself and his children, in his own house, before ever he can expect others to follow him. Without the force of personal example, precept is an ineffective weapon. Nor must the would-be disciple of Ananda start off by pinning his hopes on public movements, conceived on a national scale; the traditional life, like charity, begins at home, though it does not end there. Moreover, nothing is to be regarded as so small as not to count towards the reintegration in tradition that is

one's aim; especially at the outset, minor questions of formal correctitude count for a great deal towards the task of re-attuning an individuality partially warped, as a result of modernist contacts and influences, to the traditional norms. The worship of a very concrete *murti* may be a relatively external practice, but it is nonetheless a gate into the formless and must logically precede any attempt at meditation on *Brahma Nirguna*. Likewise, the *karma* and *bhakti margas* will have to be traversed, whether slowly or quickly, before the path of pure, unadulterated *jnana* becomes a practicable proposition. What is needed first is for a man to ask himself, whenever a choice of paths lies before him, "Does this agree with the traditional point of view or is it rather connected with the modern profanity?" This method will apply to a man's work, to the things he possesses, to the education of his children, to his clothes and theirs, just as it will do to the correct accomplishment of the family rites and so on—with each form of tradition, whether Muslim, Hindu, or other, though details will vary somewhat, the principle is the same, since all these paths, as Ananda Coomaraswamy himself said, "lead to the same summit."

Let no man presume to invoke the name of Coomaraswamy who, when about to buy something new or to replace something old, forgets the local craftsman and goes and gets a factory-made article just because this happens to be the easier course at present; let not his name be invoked, either, if one still, for one's child, considers English a more important study than the *Shastras*, or if one continues to value Matriculation or a B.A. above *dharma*.

A man who will make a bonfire of all the modern-

istic furniture and ornaments in his house as a sacrifice to *Durga* will have offered incense than which no other smells sweeter in the Mother's nostrils, so says the voice of Ananda Coomaraswamy; and after such a clearance of profane rubbish it will at last be possible to think of replacing it with real things made by the hand of real men, whether new or old. Whoever trains his son to cherish the soil and to work it intelligently, or to practise a handicraft with love, or who refurnishes his house, or builds another, in true Hindu or Muslim style with the help of whatever craftsmen may have survived, thus giving them work instead of only praise, or whoever lives the family life according to the traditional pattern and wears good native clothes free from incongruous admixtures and abstains from letting his head be filled with the trashy sentimentalism of modern literature, or whoever refuses to profane his ears and eyes with the cacophony of the wireless and the erotic falsifications of the cinema, all those indeed who act in some such manner have the right to claim discipleship of Ananda Coomaraswamy to a greater or lesser extent. Examples can be multiplied indefinitely, but these few must suffice in order to show what kind of an attitude is demanded.

And let such people come together: an added strength will accrue to each one from the thought that he is not alone. At the same time no one must try to lean too heavily on the others, for only he who is prepared, if need be, to remain as the only man in the world following the path of *dharma* is worthy to tread that path. *Dharma* itself always will imply two things: on the positive side an activity and on the negative side a renunciation, and both halves are

needed for wholeness of life.

The present writer first got to know Coomaraswamy, well named the Doctor, through having consulted him by letter over some difficult questions connected with Tibetan Buddhism. One thing led to another—how many mistakes would have passed unnoticed but for Ananda's help. We never were fated to meet in the flesh; but the friendship was, if anything, the deeper for that lack of a personal contact. To sum up Ananda Coomaraswamy's qualities as an expounder of the traditional teaching under its many forms would require more than just a few pages. He was a master of analysis, and he could always be trusted to beat the moderns at their own game. He was a master of synthesis, and one who never lost sight of the wood for the trees. He had the gift of tongues in more senses than one; literally, since his accurate knowledge of languages classical or spoken was prodigious, and metaphorically, in that he could make use of the language of all the traditions of the world, past or present, at will, resorting to this one for the purpose of illustrating that, so that at one moment it seemed to be a Christian voice that was speaking, at another a Platonic voice, then again a Hindu or Buddhist one, then it might be a voice belonging to a Sufi or a Redskin: the Scripture has said "all peoples and languages shall praise the Lord;" he was the living exponent of this doctrine.

Once again let it be said: the tribute most worthy of Ananda Coomaraswamy is to put his teaching into practice; no other garland so befits his memory. The price of such a garland, as of a rare pearl, is great; but its flowers are of the kind that will not fade.

## DR. A. K. COOMARASWAMY'S LITERARY CRAFTSMANSHIP.

(*Professor B. S. Mathur, M.A., B.A. (Hons), Kanpur,  
India.*)

Ruskin has very beautiful ideas about a perennial piece of literature. I cannot but refer my readers to them as I am keen on their appreciation of real literature as we find it in the writings of a sage who is no more with us in his physical garb but who lives in his writings and who through his writings promises to be a source of eternal delight and instruction to his readers. Ruskin writes:

“The author has something to say which he perceives to be true and useful, or helpfully beautiful. So far as he knows, no one has yet said it: so far as he knows no one else can say it. He is bound to say it clearly and melodiously if he may: clearly at all events. In the sum of his life he finds this to be the thing, or group of things, manifest to him: this the piece of true knowledge or sight, which his share of sunshine and earth has permitted him to seize. He would fain set it down for ever: engrave it on rock, if he could: saying, ‘This is the best of me: for the rest, I ate, and drank, and slept, loved, and hated, like another: my life was as vapour, and is not: but this I saw and knew: this, if anything of mine, is worth your memory.’ That is his ‘writing’: it is, in his small human way, and with whatever degree of true inspiration is in him, his inscription, or scripture. That is a Book.”

What a great wealth in these ideas? A true Book must be a perennial piece of delight and instruction. It can be both, and for ever, indeed, if it is communicated in a simple and forceful fashion. Again what is communicated as a permanent piece of literature



must be a sacred writing, the sum total of one's experience and knowledge which can enable an individual to reveal himself. When he reveals himself he is bound to reveal God that is in him. And so he is generous in imparting sacredness. And this he must call his Book, a record for all and for ever, a thing of beauty and joy for ever which the devouring times cannot find an easy prey and which will ever remain green in our memory and mind. Such a claim, to my mind, is made by the writings of Dr. Coomaraswamy. A student of literature, therefore is justified in presenting a study of Dr. Coomaraswamy's literary craftsmanship while others may think of so many other aspects of Dr. Coomaraswamy for their homage.

I have no hesitation in stating that his writings are for eternity. They have such a deathless spark of sacredness in them. Who can think of forgetting God? Our age might be an age of science. Literature that is sacred and instructive cannot suffer at the hands of science. A philosopher, who has seen life as a whole, who has seen such a wealth of things both in East and in West, and who has tried so ceaselessly and so successfully to unite both, cannot but be remembered for his writings. He shows the best in man and in God. He seems to have made himself sure of both the worlds. Who can forget him? A great synthesis he seems to have arrived at, the synthesis of the human and the divine, the synthesis of the East and the West; indeed, a great divine harmony is his consummation.

This is with reference to the kernel of his philosophy. Now, turn to the garb that he has given to his philosophy. That is simple and effective. Call

that grand and tremendously impressive. What is the secret? Simplicity is united with intensity of thought. And the result can be imagined. We have to think of Dr. Coomaraswamy as a sacred and effective teacher. There is not the end of the story. We have to think of him as a great artist, who knows what he has to say and who says it so simply. Is there any justification to call this simple fashion a literary craftsmanship of the sage?

I must make it clear that to my mind literary craftsmanship consists in simplicity communicated simply and forcefully. I have to thank a philosopher of the West to describe my idea of craftsmanship by borrowing his words with reference to the qualities of a philosopher, who is a spectator of all times and of all existence. According to Dr. Joad, a philosopher must have a sound knowledge of the past and the present, along with two attributes of critical analysis and impressive expression. These gifts a philosopher must have to be a successful philosopher. I say these gifts a literary artist must have along with vision and imagination. I find this combination in Dr. Coomaraswamy. His writings are not all emotion. They have reason, knowledge, vision and imagination, delivered in a simple fashion. Here is my idea of Dr. Coomaraswamy's literary craftsmanship. I have now to refer to his writings to support my thesis that in his writings he is a literary artist and that through his craftsmanship he seems to have known and lived the Art Of Life. And as such he is for eternity a delightful writer.

But it must also be observed that Dr. Coomaraswamy has no set art in his writings. This absence

of so-called art shows the spontaneity of his writings. After all we recognise a genius by his not following any rules. The golden rule of art is that it follows no rule. What is its result? There is naturalness added to genuine wisdom for eternity and for universal appeal. This rule of following no rule shows sincerity, the first and fundamental substance of good writing. The writer or the artist has a certain store of wisdom allowed to him by his experience. This wisdom has granted him utmost moments of joy and bravery to face the struggle for life. His mind is informed and formed as well. He is sincere and sincerely urged to profit the world by his wisdom. He must write. He must create. And all this for mankind. Why should he have the air or art of artificiality? He is just generous and in being generous he is profiting himself generously. Let him be clean of his breast. And so Dr. Coomaraswamy does not hunt for art or artificiality. He is just himself, just divine and just universal and also just delightful and delighting.

There is life behind his writings, there is emotion wedded to reason, and also there is simplicity wedded to intensity. Indeed, a master of synthesis, an artist of harmony and concord, having an air of achievement and of challenge. Dr. Coomaraswamy writes:

“Whatever place is held in the heart of Europe by the love of Dante for his Lady Beatrice, of Paolo for Francesca, of Deirdre for Naoisi, is held in India by the love stories of Rama and Sita, of Padmavati and Ratan Sen, and the love of Radha: in the absolute self-surrender of the human soul in her to the Divine in Krishna is summed up all love. In this consecration of humanity there is no place for the distinction—always foreign to Indian thought—of sacred and profane. But when in love the finite is

brought into the presence of the infinite, when the consciousness of inner and outer is destroyed in the ecstasy of union with one beloved, the moment of realisation is expressed in Indian poetry, under the symbol of the speech of Radha, the leader of the Gopis, with Krishna, the Divine Cowherd. And Krishna is the Lord,—the ascetic, for whom all earthly beauty is a vain thing, and the dancing girl, who is the mistress of every art that charms the senses.”

You want sacredness wedded to sensuous joy. You want directness wedded to impressiveness. You want intensity of thoughts communicated in crystal clear words. All this you have in plenty in the passage taken from Dr. Coomaraswamy. And now remember the occasion. Dr. Coomaraswamy is describing an Indian musical party, and he rises to these heights of sublimity and thought and sacredness. How can Dr. Coomaraswamy escape from his personality, from his individuality marked by infinite sacredness and reading? You will have to admit that our sage is not taken with mere sensuousness. He wants to go deeper and he goes undoubtedly. The gain is our own. We have our sacred love, our ancient sacred love, which is our inspiration for ever, interpreted by this intelligent mind who sees nothing wrong in that, in fact, nothing wrong in love itself. Love begins in adoration of the physical beauty and for its maturation or consummation it must develop into a divine love with divinity itself as in the case of Radha and Krishna. So all distinctions of profane and sacred must disappear. Let us have experience and experience will tell its own story of conquest, of final consummation and absorption with God, of the union of finite with infinite, yes, of the union of man with God ultimately. This,

man's salvation, is the end through love. And why not truth itself? Upon reflection it will be clear that this pursuit of beauty through love is identical with pursuit of God through truth, a lesson so beautifully, and successfully taught by Mahatma Gandhi. Dr. Coomaraswamy has communicated another precious idea of the great lesson that the West can learn from the East. This lesson of the sacredness of the East, the West must learn. The present moment might go away for ever.

“All this is passing away: when it has gone, men will look back on it with hungry eyes, as some have looked upon the life even of Mediæval Europe, or of Greece. When civilisation has made of life a business it will be remembered that life was once an art: when culture is the privilege of bookworms, it will be remembered that it was once a part of life itself, not something achieved in stolen movements of relief, from the serious business of being an engine-driver, a clerk, or a Governor.”

Here is a challenge and warning to both—East and West. The West has to learn the spirituality of the East and the East has to stop imitation of the West, lest life should be a mere business and not an art as it should be. Art of life has to be else it will not be lived in the light of the teachings of God. Man is selfish and will go on adding selfishness to his already brimming stock of vices.

These words of Dr. Coomaraswamy are quite memorable. They are unique in thought contents, brevity and aptness. It is plain that Dr. Coomaraswamy is for culture and art, for beauty and truth and sublimation of emotions in the light of reason and culture. He has significantly referred to moments stolen from the serious business of being an engine-

driver, a clerk, or a Governor. Life requires the work of an engine-driver, a clerk, or a Governor. But that is not the whole story of life. Not even the fundamental story of life. There must be a serious attempt to live the art of life in harmony and absence of selfishness and business that leads to, and is the result of, selfishness itself. No question of stealing moments. There must be a set plan to create an art of life. This plan will consummate in joy and universal benefit. He seems to exclaim with Kabir:

I laugh when I hear that the fish in the  
water is thirsty:

You do not see that the Real is in your home, and  
you wander from forest to forest listlessly!

Here is the truth! Go where you will, to Banaras  
or to Mathura: if you do not find your Soul, the  
world is unreal to you.

Perhaps he is not so gentle as Kabir. He does not merely laugh. He thinks, and critically, of the vain search of material benefits in life by the West and so he exclaims, with all force, that it is time for all of us to stop this mad round of life. Truth of soul must be out. He says nothing new here, but says it forcefully and one may hope his utterance will have its result. Then there will be no discrimination between man and man. The divine origin of man will proclaim itself that all over the world there is one race, the human race, and one blood, the human blood. Like Swami Vivekananda, Dr. Coomaraswamy might say with justification:

“I am to create a new order of humanity here, who are sincere believers in God and care nothing for the world.”

Yes, there ought to be fearlessness in virtue and sacredness.

Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy appears in the role of a world reformer for peace and culture. He is Indian in his outlook but at the same time he cannot forget humanity, he cannot lose sight of his mission for harmony. He writes:

“The world may be likened to a vast, as yet unordered garden, having diverse soils and aspects, some watered, some arid, some plain, some mountain; the different parts of which should properly be tended by different gardeners, having experience of diverse qualities of soil and aspect; but certain ones have seized upon the plots of others, and attempted to replace the plants natural to those plots, with others more acceptable or profitable to themselves. We have not to consider only the displaced gardeners who naturally do not admire and are not grateful for the changes introduced into their plots: but to ask whether these proceedings are beneficial to the owner of the garden, for whom the gardeners work. Who is this owner but the folk of the world of the future, which is ever becoming the present? Shall they be glad or sorry if uniformity has replaced diversity, if but one type of vegetation is to be found within their garden, flourishing perhaps in one part, but sickly in another: what of the flowers that might have flourished in that other part had they not been swept away?”

There is no indignation in spite of the utter and dangerous displacement. He does not think in terms of the displaced but certainly he thinks of the natural benefit that must accrue to the coming generations. There must be something for eternity, for people to come. Life must be eternal: it must be a veritable progress. If there is diversity it must be allowed to exist. All domination and exploitation must

stop. There must be a perfect atmosphere for growth. Let there be nothing binding. This is his message. Note in what a forceful fashion it has been communicated. There is nothing of exaggeration in holding this piece as a memorable piece, showing Dr. Coomaraswamy's literary and artistic qualities. Vision, vividness and thought are united in delivering his message. There is beauty of language, image and vision. And there is directness that is distinct and pointed. There is no escape from his meaning, from his message, if we have intelligence and will to exercise. All praise to him as a master craftsman in literature.

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### ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY.

*(Professor G. E. G. Catlin, London.)*

About Ananda Coomaraswamy as critic and apostle of Indian art I am not competent to speak. But this I can and would say, that all of us, in these days of specialization, so unlike the days of Leonardo da Vinci and Goethe, are under an immeasurable debt to such men as this son of Ceylon, and father of the Indian Renaissance, who brought together into one integrated life the gifts of the philosopher, the student of art, the man of letters, the theologian. It is an impoverishment of our age that we have too few such men. Coomaraswamy with Albert Schweitzer are among the great exceptions. And even in the field of politics it is interesting to note that Coomaraswamy like Bertrand Russell, had the vision to insist that the remedy for the evils of mechanization lies in the



reversal of the trend towards governmental and industrial centralization. It lies in a world government with limited objectives on the one side and in devolution and the development of local and village industry on the other.

Like Gandhiji, Ananda Coomaraswamy was an interpreter of East to West and, be it added, of West to East. As such he, with Gandhi, Tagore and Aurobindu are among the designers of the garden of a world culture in which earth alone can grow healthily the flowers of a world community. Here too he also made his contribution in pointing out, not where the great faiths of the world are in error, but where they have all in their various measures seized upon underlying and central truth, and have, as M. Jacques Maritain has pointed out, a genuine mystic vision.

Child of Ceylon and England and yet so widely thought of as a great Indian in himself, when Dr. Coomaraswamy came to America he expressed a unification of cultures, not by the dilution of each but by the scholarly appreciation of all. He can ill be spared. Now let us search for his successor who can carry on his work and express to the West the thought and feeling of renascent Asiatic nationalism. This it is our duty and privilege to encourage, not as an exclusive Asiatic racialism but as a contribution of each member, each with peculiar gifts, to what Mazzini acclaimed as the concert of mankind, the total orchestra of human genius. Let us expect the day of a strong China, a rich India, a renascent Indonesia; and hope that these lands will receive world interpreters sympathetic, talented and renowned as Coomaraswamy.

## ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY.

*(Mr. Lawrence Hyde, Surrey, England.)*

It is today widely accepted that the realisation of world unity depends upon our success in harmonizing and reconciling the Eastern and the Western elements in human culture. The Oriental genius for achieving an inner relation to the Centre must be as fully acknowledged as our Western genius for mastering the problems which are presented to us on the Periphery. Or quite simply, Repose and Action must be experienced as one.

We do not know enough about the physical, psychological and spiritual constitution of human beings to say with any precision what exactly is called for to produce that exceptional type of mind which is equally responsive to Eastern and Western wisdom. Obviously in the case of that distinguished philosopher Sri Aurobindo his notable capacity for understanding European thought owes a great deal to his education in England. In the case of Coomaraswamy there was a still deeper factor involved, since he was of Anglo-Tamil parentage. He carried within his very blood-stream racial elements which were propitious to playing the part of an interpreter between East and West.

Needless to say, this biological fusion might easily enough have proved the source of wasteful tension and conflict. But fortunately it found expression in an extreme sensitiveness both to Oriental and Occidental values, as well as a remarkable capacity for relating them to one another. He was able to master Western science with the same ease with which he dealt with the problems of Eastern art and philosophy, while he had also the precious gift of seeing them in their

proper relation to one another. He thus appeared as a distinguished representative of the emergent type of thinker whose ideas and actions will express the spirit of a world culture, and not merely that of one of the traditional forms of civilization.

Representatives of this essentially twentieth-century tendency are of course to be met with everywhere; for we are participating, in confusion and agony, in the birth of a new world. But amongst them there are very few who have worked in this field with such spiritual and intellectual distinction as A. K. Coomaraswamy. For he brought to the task a remarkable combination of qualities: exceptional subtlety of mind, delicate perception, the power of philosophical synthesis, and most valuable of all, a rare purity and humility.

My acquaintance with his writings is far too slight to justify me in attempting a general review of his work. But I should like to say something about the very important contribution which he made to the cause of universal religion. No modern thinker has brought out more decisively the nature and significance of the true Wisdom Religion, or what we are now accustomed to refer to as the Perennial Philosophy. What he took his stand upon in this field was what may be described as basic metaphysics. To the Oriental within him this aspect of knowledge was congenitally sympathetic, for it is an almost elementary assumption in the East that fundamental truth is to be sought for beyond the discrepant formulations of partial philosophies.

Yet his ideas brought with them no inconsiderable challenge even to Oriental philosophers, some of whom were somewhat dismayed by his brilliant expo-

sition of the thesis that at the root of both Hinduism and Buddhism there lay the same basic doctrine which the scholars of both schools had failed to interpret correctly.\*

Of greater interest to us in the West, however, was his courteous but uncompromising exposure of the limited conception of Eastern teachings which is entertained by the majority of Occidental philosophers and theologians. Thus in discussing Hinduism he does not hesitate to affirm that "it would hardly be 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." And he proceeds to show how different are the realities from the transmogrification which they have undergone in the minds of European thinkers whose vision has been restricted and warped by their obstinate attachment to the historical creeds and systems which they had been brought up to think of as absolute.

Not less impressive was his capacity to reveal the spirit of the Perennial Philosophy by learned and discriminating quotations from the writings of the Platonists and the Christian and Mahomedan mystics. And by so doing he brought out in a decisive fashion the universal character of the coming Faith. It was,

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\* 'The more superficially one studies Buddhism, the more it seems to differ from the 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 respects, if any, Buddhism is really unorthodox.' *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 45.

as he was aware, pioneer work. But he looked forward to the time when there should be written a *Summa* of the *Philosophia Perennis*, "impartially based on all orthodox sources whatever." Only the unimaginative will believe that the claims of such a compilation could become accepted except at the cost of a long and persistent struggle with reactionary tendencies. But the truth must in the end prevail. And amongst those who have contributed to this adjustment of our vision Ananda K. Coomaraswamy must always occupy an outstanding place. For he not only experienced truth as an Oriental, but was capable also of interpreting it to us in the West in terms which are perfectly congenial to our minds.

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### DR. A. K. COOMARASWAMY

(*Dr. Basil Gray, Keeper of Oriental Antiquities,  
British Museum, London*)

Death seems often to claim a man just as his life-work is coming to full fruition; and it is so with Dr. Coomaraswamy who has recently died in the United States. For forty years he has been engaged in reconciling the West with Indian art and thought, and now 1947, year of India's political independence, is likely also to see dispersed the last vestiges of the "smoke clouds which," as Sir William Rothenstein put it, "had all too long obscured the splendid achievements of Indian sculpture." The writer's exhibition of Indian Art at the Royal Academy will probably mark the end of that particular prejudice, and it is to Coomaraswamy above all that our gratitude for this is due. It is sad to think that the occasion cannot now be enhanced by his presence and appreciation. Those

who are aware of this debt must pay their tribute to him.

Born in Ceylon seventy years ago and educated in England at the University of London, he returned to his native land to work in the Mineralogical Survey, but after three years came again to this country, with a message. He had perceived the last flickering of the mediaeval arts of India in Ceylon. Starting from a protest against the destructive effects of industrialism and the impact of European art on Indian culture, in which he naturally found himself allied with the movement in this country in which C. R. Ashbee and Lethaby were prominent, he passed beyond this to regions of thought and interest in which he found the less organised culture of the United States with greater social freedom a more favourable atmosphere; but he remained to the end turned towards the older civilisation of Europe especially as represented by the mediaeval German mystics, in his search for an idea of life of universal application.

Coomaraswamy continued to seek an integration of life and thought, of art and philosophy and of Eastern and Western aesthetic and theology. This unity of the spirit was his answer to the disintegrating forces in modern life and society, consciousness of which made him a rather lonely figure in his later years, as he lived his own retired life, in spite of honours given to the doyen of Indian studies in three continents. Personal contact showed him still as perceptive as ever of quality, and enjoying to the full the carefully chosen collections of Indian art which he had built up at the Museum of Fine Arts at Boston during the last thirty years. He produced elaborate and scholarly catalogues of these during the twenties amply illus-

trated and, as in all his writing, directing the reader to the significance of the objects described both in their historical context and also especially as expression of ideas. From his earliest writings on Sinhalese art in 1908, he always sought the *rasa*, the essential "passion" which is behind every true work of art, whether in literature, music, painting, or sculpture, and in an integrated society finding simultaneous and complementary expression through each art.

Coomaraswamy was not primarily a literary scholar though his translations of vernacular poems and technical passages from Sanskrit were needed in view of their neglect by the professed literary scholars. The list of his publications in all its copious variety shows him as the pioneer in a largely unmapped field: he provided a general "map" in his excellent *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, and views of the land he pioneered in volumes of reproduction published by the India Society (of which he was one of the founders in 1910) and by the Boston Museum, and, above all, in those united to a most valuable text in the two volumes of *Rajput Painting* published by the Oxford Press in 1916, which marked an epoch in the appreciation of Kangra painting in the West. He was a man of striking appearance with his strong body, perceptive eye, and quick understanding, bent to his life's purpose for which he was uniquely placed.

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### ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

(*Dr. Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, K.C.I.E., K.C.S.I.,  
Madras*).

The multiform contacts between Ceylon and India have always been intimate and have resulted, among

other things, in a lively and continuous interchange of ideas, literary and artistic. From the days of the Ramayana and through the Buddhist epoch, Lanka played a notable part in the history of India and vice versa.

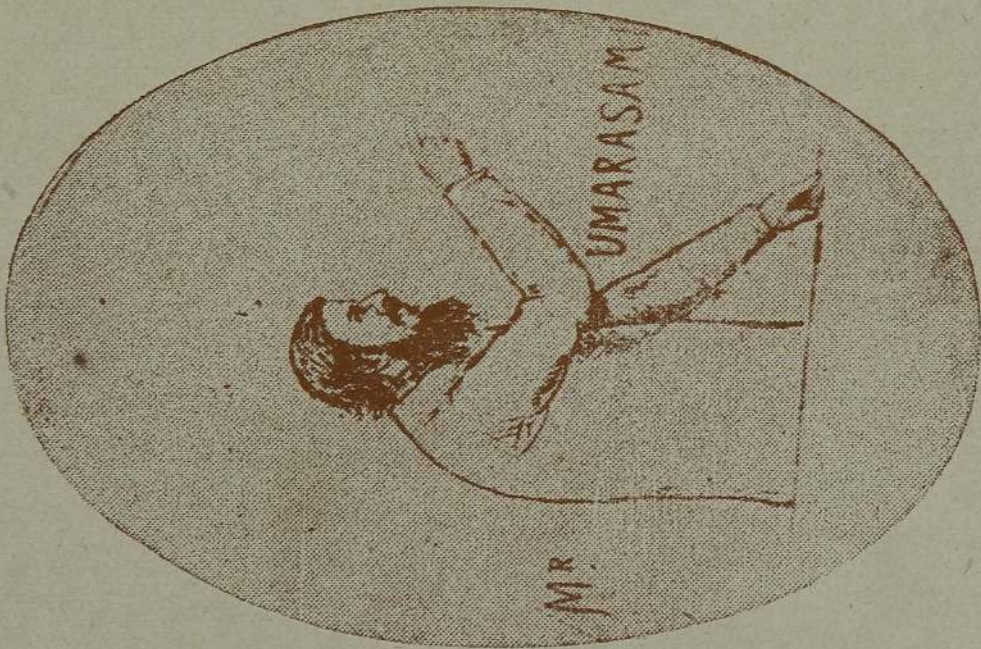
The middle of the last century witnessed the activities of three men who did a great deal to foster the unity of outlook and the friendliness between Ceylon and India and who, in their several ways, contributed to promote the cause of Indian culture. All the three—Sir P. Arunachalam and his brother, Sir P. Ramanathan as well as Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy—were natives of Jaffna which was practically an offshoot of the Tamil land; but every one of them played a great part in the life and—politics of Ceylon. The literary and educational work of Sir P. Arunachalam and Sir P. Ramanathan are well known to every one in the south of India. Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy not only made a great position for himself but he bequeathed to India and the world of Art his son, Ananda Coomaraswamy.

The generation to which Coomaraswamy's father belonged adopted European ways and educational methods in pursuance of which, young Coomaraswamy was sent to England for education very early in life and he wound up his academic career with a Doctorate of Science in the London University. Returning to Ceylon, he accepted office as Director of the Mineralogical Survey of the Island but the claims of literature and art were paramount and he devoted his life to the study and elucidation of Indian Art in its various aspects. His equipment was many-sided and is proved by his Fellowship both of the Geological and the Linnean Societies. As happened in the cases of





Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy



Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy  
(From a sketch in "Christ-  
mas Debates" edited by  
Mr. Lorenz)



Tagore and of J. C. Bose, so it was with Coomaraswamy; and his Indian contemporaries began to recognise his merits only after he was made a Research Fellow in Persian and Indian Art in that centre of intellectual activity. Both in that capacity and as Vice-President of the India Society, he did pioneering work in explaining to the English and American public the meaning and significance of the artistic output of India.

His services were even more fundamental. Macaulay had held up to scorn the literature and the legends of India and European connoisseurs had damned Indian Art with faint praise. It should be remembered that the traditional arts and crafts of India have survived the impacts of invasion and vandalism; and in various corners of India, masons and sculptors are still to be found, especially in the Indian States, who continue the vital tradition of the immemorial past. Lord Curzon did more than any Indian for the preservation of the monuments of the country and unfortunately, educated India, in the early years of the 19th century, was almost studiously neglectful of its heritage. The arousing of the national consciousness with regard to the ancient and mediaeval art of India was largely the work of Ananda Coomaraswamy and E. B. Havell; and credit must also go to Abanindranath Tagore and his followers including Nandalal Bose, in effecting the renaissance of Indian painting by drawing inspiration from Ajanta. Happily such ignoring of our Art is a thing of the past and India is now on the threshold of a new age. The new nationalistic movement has indeed created a revolution against the imitation of the West.

Combining in himself a deep knowledge of Bud-

dhistic philosophical and artistic masterpieces and those of the Aryan and Dravidian intellect and spirit, Dr. Coomaraswamy started a movement for national education in Lanka in the vernaculars as an essential preliminary to the revival of Indian culture. He lectured in American and European centres on Indian and Sinhalese Art. He studied the methods of the Indian craftsman and wrote on his technique. He spoke on Art and Swadeshi and analysed the Visvakarma legend in collaboration with Sister Nivedita and produced excellent examples of Indian Art exhibiting the treasures of India and Ceylon. The name of Dr. Coomaraswamy is especially associated with the study and exposition of what has been designated "Rajput Painting." The term is perhaps misleading for the reason that, as pointed out by Mr. Havell, although the traditions of Hindu painting were specially formative in Rajputana, yet they were, by no means, exclusively Rajput. Travancore, Cochin, Pudukkotta, Kashmir, Bengal and Gujerat produced their own Schools of Art which owed their inspiration to the same influences that operated in Rajputana and all Hindu painters, even when painting on paper, have followed the technique of Mural painting which was a feature of the Hindu Chitrasala. Whereas the Musalman painter was concerned mainly with the life of the Court and the Camp, the Hindu artist was not only a chronicler of rural and scenic aspects but essentially a religious teacher clothing the mysteries of religion in familiar garb and introducing into his paintings the events of daily life. The so-called Rajput painting is, in fact, a sequel to the Buddhist frescoes wherein the Indian artists displayed perfect acquaintance with the intricacies of the effects of light,

and Coomaraswamy himself has thus described Indian Art: "This vigorous archaic outline is the basis of its language. Wiry, distinct and sharp as that golden rule of art and life desired by Blake: sensitive, reticent and tender, it perfectly reflects the severe self-control and sweet serenity of Indian life."

Dr. Coomaraswamy specialised in the exposition of Hindu painting but this was not his only sphere of activity. He published his own reading of Lord Buddha and his gospel. He tried to effect a new approach to the Vedas and he wrote on the Transformation of Nature in Art, in addition to compiling a sumptuous catalogue of the Indian collection in the Museum at Boston. All art is one although its manifestations may be many; and it is therefore not surprising that Dr. Coomaraswamy lectured and wrote on the art of dance as illustrated by the Dance of Shiva and Kali and Krishna and collaborated with an Andhra expert in a publication on *Abhinaya* entitled *The Mirror of Gesture*. His work was ever characterised by a keen faculty of discrimination as well as the utmost delicacy of feeling. Behind and above all his activities there was a passionate devotion to Indian aspirations and an ambition to create in the country of his origin, a devotion to those impulses which made India the paradise of Fine Art in the days of the epic past. The interpretation to the European and American world of the essential and inseparable symbolism of Indian painting and sculpture and the explanation of the inner spirit and rationale of Indian Art were the main contributions of Dr. Coomaraswamy; and reading one of his works *Why Exhibit Works of Art?* published in 1943, one realises with what concentrated enthusiasm he

applied himself to his self-imposed duty of interpreting Indian thought-forms such as those personifying the allegories of Nataraja dancing the Cosmic dance, Krishna as the protector of his flock capturing the souls of his devotees with the music of his flute and the eternal virgin, Kanya Kumari, waiting for her union with the Lord.

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## AN APPRECIATION OF A PALI BUDDHIST SCHOLAR

*(Miss I. B. Horner, M.A., London.)*

To Ananda K. Coomaraswamy the term "genius" may be aptly and truly applied. His devotion to truth and the search for it was the guiding motive and master passion of his intense intellectual life. To this end he brought to bear immense and unrelenting energy, an exact and scrupulous scholarship, a trained and disciplined mind which could be either analytic or synthetic as occasion demanded, and perhaps above all, and in consequence of these factors, his knowledge, which was supremely well organised, grew to vast encyclopaedic proportions. So much so, that there is probably no one person alive who could do justice to the many branches of his critical or constructive mental activity.

He culled his knowledge from a variety of sources for, owing to his remarkable gift for languages, the literature of many lands was accessible to him; he had no need to rely on translations, but could make his own, and a splendid translator he was. His works are filled with his own renderings, it may be of isolated passages or of a word, but whatever it is he always seems to me to "hit the target"—and in the language

of archery he found much symbolic value and content<sup>1</sup>—so it is all the more to be regretted that he never made a translation of any complete work.

There never seemed to be a question one might ask him on, for example, geology or botany, on India or America, on art or architecture, on philosophy or religion, on folklore or symbolism, to which he could not supply a detailed, interesting and original answer. And this was usually characterised by a way he had of lifting the question to some higher sphere of thought and showing that it had connections with other, and sometimes, surprising subjects. I can only describe this particular aptitude of his by saying that under his touch knowledge seemed to fall together; pieces of knowledge no longer appeared as separate items, but came into line with one another as related parts of one whole. That is to say, often surface differences vanished, leaving a similarity and sometimes a unity of thought in their place. He showed how one thing fitted in with another, and how it might be only the modes of expression or other symbols that varied but which, deriving primarily from figures of thought rather than from figures of speech, were pointing, in all related aspects of the complex pattern, fundamentally and universally in the same direction. The underlying significance a scholar can discern in a collection of data and the doctrine he can perceive in this data and can formulate from it are of the utmost importance. Otherwise the data must remain fragmentary and relatively unimportant. Coomaraswamy was well equipped to synthesise the data he found scattered

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1. *The Symbolism of Archery, Ars Islamica*, vol. X, 1943.

throughout the great religious, philosophical, scientific and poetical literature of the world. He was a master of putting together what belongs together.

Thus, to cite but one instance, he came to realise that the catchwords of folklore turn into the signs and symbols of the *Philosophia Perennis*. The two are then seen to have one common aim: the finding of the Waters of Life, the living waters of deathlessness or immortality. "The signs and symbols of the Quest for life which have so often survived in oral tradition, long after they have been rationalised or romanticised by literary artists, are our best clue to what must have been the primordial form of the one spiritual language of which, as Jeremias says, 'the dialects are recognisable in the divers existing cultures.'<sup>1</sup> Or again, at the end of his brilliant article on "The Sea"<sup>2</sup>—a symbol which interested him profoundly, after drawing on Brahmanical, Buddhist, Greek, Christian and Islamic sources, he wrote: "The point is, rather that such collations as have been made above illustrate a single case of the general proposition that there are scarcely any, if any, of the fundamental doctrines of any orthodox tradition that cannot as well be supported by the authority of many or all of the other orthodox traditions, or in other words, by the unanimous tradition of the *Philosophia Perennis et Universalis*."

Thus it was that in his approach to Buddhism Coomaraswamy "traced back beyond their first representation in Buddhist iconography through the aniconic period of the Brahmanical Vedas, even into the Rig Vedic period itself,"<sup>1</sup> the significance of such

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1. *Symplegades* (Studies.....in Honor of George Sarton, 1946), p. 465.
  2. *The Sea* (*India Antiqua*, 1947), p. 94.



symbols as the Tree of Life, the Pillar of the World, the Lotus-Throne, the Earth-Lotus and the Word-Wheel and showed that "they represent a universal Indian symbolism."<sup>1</sup>

In bringing Early Buddhism into a relation with its great predecessors in Indian literature, Coomaraswamy has rendered it inestimable service. From now on it can no longer be regarded as a code or system of "mere morality" and nothing more. It is far greater than that. From now on Early Buddhism must be seen as part and parcel of the *Philosophia Perennis et Universalis*; and it is not too much to say that it has been accorded this, its rightful place, by the far-seeingness of Coomaraswamy. He regards the Buddha as a Solar Hero, priest and king who, in his quest for the Deathless for whose successful termination he must reach the Further Shore at the back of the Sun (and the Sun-door is a gate to Life), sets rolling the Wheel, the *brahmacakka* or *dhammacakka*. The Wheel is both the guardian of the Further Shore (the Indian version of the Other World), and also that which gives access to it; but to gain access the Hero must set the wheel rolling and then pass through its spokes or "rays" with all speed. The speed with which the Hero (or Thief) must pass through the Clashing Rocks, or their variants,<sup>5</sup> is transmuted in the Perennial Philosophy into the flash of Enlightenment. This comes, in common parlance, all of a sudden, and is in contrast with the long long faring along the Way, "much as the sudden release of the arrow contrasts with the archer's long training."<sup>6</sup>

4. Foreword by W. E. Clark to *Elements of Buddhist Iconography*, Harvard, 1935.

5. *Symplegades*.

6. *Time and Eternity, Artibus Asiae*, 1947, p. 45.

Coomaraswamy saw much meaning in the Buddha's epithets, and has left some posthumous material on them which we hope will be published in due course. Three that may be alligned in connection with the Solar Hero are "Kinsman of the Sun," "Giver of the Deathless" and "Wheel-turner" (*cakkavattin*). None of these epithets can be fully comprehended if the others are left out of account; all are related; and any attempt to explain one would be incomplete without some consideration of the others. As I have said, under Coomaraswamy's masterly scrutiny knowledge "falls together."

This is true of Early Buddhism not only when it is regarded as a separate and individual system or set of teachings; it is also true of Early Buddhism when it is regarded as a historical development of the Vedas and Upanishads, or when regarded as having material that indubitably belongs to the Perennial Philosophy. Coomaraswamy has indeed thrown a great light on Pali Buddhism, illuminating these three aspects of it. He takes the texts as they stand<sup>7</sup> and he quotes freely from them. He does not think that because a word or a phrase appears at first sight to be obscure, this must be the result of a scribe's error which is therefore in need of emendation. He sets himself the task of finding out what it does mean (rather than what it might or ought to mean), often by drawing on comparable words, phrases or ideas which he has found in other literature.

It would be impossible here to assess all his findings connected with Early Buddhism. It must suffice to refer to two of the themes which he thought of

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7. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 48.

fundamental importance for its right understanding and which, since he saw Buddhism as a whole, are not unrelated the one to the other. The one is the conviction, which Coomaraswamy had long held and with ever growing tenacity, that Early Buddhism recognises *two selves*, in dramatic contrast with each other, the one composite and mortal, the other single and immortal,<sup>8</sup> and that it is the One Self the many are to find,<sup>8</sup> “‘That One’ who makes himself manifold and in whom all beings again ‘become one.’”<sup>9</sup> For there could hardly be a greater mistake or a greater falsification of Early Buddhism—unless it be the misconception that shrouds the word *nibbana*, “a Buddhist key-word, than which, perhaps, no other has been so much misunderstood”<sup>10</sup>—than to say that it is a doctrine which teaches “no-self,” “no-soul.” For all that is meant is that the five *khandhas*, the “psycho-physical existent,”<sup>10</sup> is not my Self; or, in other words, “misery, mutability, un-Self-ishness (*dukkha, anicca, anatta*) are characteristics of all composite things, all that is not my-Self,”<sup>10</sup> and in contrast to which Self is stable, *thitatta*, and simple or incomposite, *asamkhata*.<sup>11</sup>

What then is this Self which is all that not-self is not? Coomaraswamy’s answer is that, in one of its aspects, it is the Buddha, not the historical man and teacher, called Gotama, but the First Principle: “The ‘Buddha’ and ‘Great Person,’ Arhat,’ ‘Brahma-become’ and ‘God of Gods’ of the Pali texts is himself the

8. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 58; and *Time and Eternity*, p. 39, n. 19.

9. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 73.

10. *The Living Thoughts of Gotama the Buddha*, by A.K.C. and I. B. Horner, Introduction, Part II

11. *Time and Eternity*, p. 38, 40.

Spirit<sup>12</sup> (*atman*) and Inner Man of all beings.....the Buddha in Brahma, Prajapati, the Light of Lights, Fire or Sun, or by whatever other name the older books refer to the First Principle; and.....insofar as the Buddha's 'life' and deeds are described, it is the doings of Brahma as Agni and Indra that are retold."<sup>13</sup> This is the second of the themes we can refer to here of whose truth Coomaraswamy was convinced and on which he insisted. In other words, the Buddha, the Awakened One, is not only one and the same "descent" as Agendrau, Krishna, Moses and Christ, whose birth is eternal; he is also to be identified, as he identified himself, with the Eternal Law (*dhamma sanantana, akalika*) which, "synonymous with the Truth, is the ultimate authority and 'King of kings.' It is with this ultimate, timeless and temporal, transcendent and immanent authority that the Buddha identified himself, that Self in which he has taken refuge: 'he who sees the Dhamma sees me, he who sees me sees the Dhamma.' One of the most impressive of the Buddhist books is called the Dhamapada, "Footprints of the Law;" it is a chart and guide-book for those who walk in the Way of the Law, which is also the Way of Brahma or Brahma-faring, and 'that old road was followed formerly by the All-Awakened.' The Buddhist words for Way and seeking, with the Self as object, both imply the following of tracks or footprints. But these tracks end when the shore of the Great Sea is reached .....The way prescribed is one of self-naughting, virtue and contemplation, walking alone with Brahma;

12. See also *Some Pali Words*, under *Atta*.

13. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 73.

but when the end of the 'long road' has been reached, whether here or hereafter, there remains only the 'plunge' into the Immortal, into Nirvana, into that fathomless Ocean that is an image at once of Nirvana, Dhamma and the Buddha himself."<sup>14</sup>

This comparatively long passage is quoted at length for to me it is a compendium and a summary of Coomaraswamy's views of the fundamentals of Early Buddhism. It appears in a work that has been published posthumously, and in whose preparation I had the privilege of collaborating: Coomaraswamy wrote the Introductions, we both chose which passages we wished to include, and in the main I translated them, while all the time letters and postcards sailed and flew across the Atlantic which so unhappily divided us. But he did not live to see the proofs of this book, and for help in reading them I am deeply grateful to Mrs. Coomaraswamy.

In the end Coomaraswamy got to the philosophical position where the Buddha as the Freedman—freed from the hobble of Death and freed from all inconstancy and mutability (*anicca*), from "all the ill that is denoted by the word 'mortality,'"<sup>15</sup> the conqueror of Mara, who is the hunter and trapper of those Buddhist stories which have a Tar-baby and "stick-fast" motif<sup>16</sup>—is Dhamma-become and Brahma-become, escaping to this Deathless state when he "recollects himself."<sup>17</sup>

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14. *Living Thoughts of Gotama the Buddha*, Introduction, Part II. 6. 23.

15. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 50.

16. *A Note on the Stick-fast Motif*, *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 57, No. 224, April-June, 1944.

17. *Recollection, Indian and Platonic*, *Supplement to the Journal of the American Oriental Society*, No. 3, April-June, 1944.

Like these, he is timeless and without duration; he transcends the aeons; they call him "awake" (*buddha*) who discerns the aeons, the flux in which they fall and rise (Suttanipata 517).<sup>18</sup>

The Pali canon presents little systematic account of the concepts it uses or the teachings it wishes to convey, unless these be of a moral order. The answer to a metaphysical or philosophical problem presented by one passage must often be sought, and found, in another; and the significance of terms and ideas can often only be grasped by collating the different passages where the same terms and ideas occur. Coomaraswamy, ranging widely and with profound intelligence, over the huge body of literature that constitutes the Pali canon, has done a remarkable amount to bring together citation after citation bearing on the same topic. Such collations may be found throughout several of his writings on Buddhism. They add immeasurably to our sounder knowledge and acuter vision of a subject on which he never failed to shed new light.

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ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY  
(*Dr. Stella Kramrisch, Calcutta*)

Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy's voice was that of the spiritual conscience of man. This voice had become practically inarticulate in the age into which he was born. Materialism in its Christian aspect, an ill-employed legacy of the antithesis of body and spirit, had blotted out man's higher knowledge, with the achievements and accretions of science in the service

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18. *Time and Eternity*, p. 38 ff.

of industry. As the Spirit had become hidden its Form could not be seen. There is no Form unless it is informed by the Spirit. This is its manifestation. Dr. Coomaraswamy was a "Seer." He saw the goal and recognized its many manifestations all over the world in its Form, in the art of man. His vision made him see through each of them its source whence all the forms and works of art originate. He went straight towards the Light.

Science which had given him his training made his tools sharp and precise. They were, moreover, doubly sensitized by his parentage and education by which he was at home in the East as much as in the West. While he criticised the impact of Western materialism on the East and the eagerness by which it was accepted, he saw at the same time on an altogether higher level the essential similarity of East and West. That is how at the beginning of his unerring, unremitting work of forty years, he wrote on Mediaeval Sinhalese Art and translated into English part of the Elder Edda. His mind encompassed the sum total of Tradition, in the East particularly in India; it ranged from ancient Greece, the world of Islam and that of Mediaeval Europe to the present situation. Measured against his knowledge the modern mind confronted him in its abnormal shape, estranged from Tradition; the modern mind, a purely Western phenomenon functioning without spiritual impulse. This abnormal position had consolidated from the days of the Renaissance, the age of the self-assertion of man's personality and embraced a chaos of expressed idiosyncracies, such as "Romantic hieroglyphs," "art for art's sake" and totalitarian discipline. All these are stop gaps; the zest and virtuosity in their appre-

ciation is to fill the void caused by the estrangement of man from the Spirit and from perfection.

India, where the traditional form of life and art survives to this day, owes to Dr. Coomaraswamy not only a comprehensive statement of her art and thought. This statement is illumined by the light which is in the contents as much as in their presentation. It clarifies to modern men his abnormal position, his estrangement from his Self, from Tradition, whereby he has become an outsider who has forfeited his birthright.

Dr. Coomaraswamy's teaching and preaching are valid on the highest level and pertain to every sphere, intellectual, artistic and moral. Their validity inheres in the sense of value which Dr. Coomaraswamy testified in front of all works of art, in front of all work and thought of man. Weighed by an immense knowledge and erudition his scales registered no other weight but which thought and form have with reference to Ultimate Perfection.

This 'normal' valuation could not brook the aesthete's sensual approach nor could it tolerate naturalism in art. While the latter has had its day and has almost passed away, the former has its adherents. Naturalism in art was a byproduct of the scientific attitude in its earlier phases while aestheticism belongs to its psychological phase; both these contrary attitudes are symptoms of man's estrangement from his Self whereby he views, as only an outsider can, the surface of things and their behaviour.

The theory and content of art and not its appearance were the avowed objectives and guides of Dr. Coomaraswamy's quest. They formed an integral quest of his ever widening ever intensifying know-



ledge. He carried with grace its ever increasing weight. It gave felicity to his diction, so that the clarity of illumination shines through his deathless work.

## I MEET ANANDA COOMARASWAMY

[The following is an interview Dr. S. Chandrasekhar, M.A., PhD, D.Sc., Professor of Economics, Annamalai University, South India, had with Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy at Boston shortly before the renowned scholar's death taken from the *Times of Ceylon* with the author's permission.]

On reaching Boston, I telephoned the Museum of Fine Arts for Dr. Coomaraswamy, but was told that he had not come to the Museum that day because of a slight indisposition.

On phoning him at his residence he said he was sorry that he was not feeling well, but was kind enough to suggest that we go for a drive and have a discussion in his car, if I "promised to ask no biographical details," for Coomaraswamy is one of the most modest of men.

I had met Coomaraswamy once before when he delivered a most learned lecture before the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art to an admiring but lost audience but on seeing him I was re-impressed by his slim and stately figure of six feet two inches, a crop of flowing white hair, a clear olive complexion, a prominent nose, and a short grey beard—a combination of *Mahatma Gandhi and Bernard Shaw*. While Mrs. Coomaraswamy (Mrs. Dona Luisa Coomaraswamy), his brilliant Argentine wife, who is a linguist and a scholar in her own rights, sat at the wheel, Dr. Coomaraswamy and I discussed various things.

As that morning's newspapers were full of Pakistan—it was a few days before Mountbatten announced the plan for partition—I asked him what he thought of it. "I suppose partition is inevitable," he said. "Perhaps it would be better if India were divided into a number of independent states or entities for the present, if a sufficient number of subjects are reserved for the central government. As for a corridor between Eastern and Western Pakistan, it is simply fantastic and impossible. Looking at our Moslem problem objectively, I must say that Moslem grievances are not legitimate."

"What about the Princes?" I wanted to know. "I am not against the Princes," he was emphatic. "Ask them to live up to our traditional *Raja Dharma*. It is true we have only a few Indian Princes living up to the classical ideals of monarchy, like the late Maharaja of Mysore. My plan would be to let the Indian Princes rule, so long as they behave themselves, judged by the canons of Indian rulership. And if they don't come up to the mark, why, just throw them overboard. The trouble with the Indian Princes today is that they do not know their responsibilities, because they are not educated in their own culture. Once the British leave they will not have to pretend to be Anglo-Indians. If they behave as true Hindus or Moslems they can establish successful and popular administrations."

We then discussed the recent piece of legislation of the Madras Government permitting Harijans to enter Hindu temples. Dr. Coomaraswamy was in favour of the legislation, though he added that nobody in India understands the real and classical significance and objectives of the Hindu caste system. "If anybody

understood this institution he would know that every *Hindu is born casteless*. And a man can only be a Brahmin if he has proved himself to be one. According to this definition I wonder whether there are many Brahmins left in India. Caste is not to be based on birth—was never intended to be so—for if a man becomes an engineer he must be called a *Sudra* and if he becomes a trader he must be called *Vaishya*. I would like to see not the abolition of caste, but the intensification of caste in this direction. In this sense, only the discoverer of truth, the creative artist, and the teacher can be *Brahmins*; and not the Brahmin cooks, the Brahmin clerks, and all the other so-called Brahmins.”

If I understand Dr. Coomaraswamy aright, he stands for the abolition of caste as it is today. He deplored the abolition of the Departments of Philosophy and Humanistic Studies in Indian colleges and universities, as well as the great importance given of late to technological studies. He said he was shocked to find that not even ten per cent. of the Indian students coming to the United States on Government of India scholarships were pursuing cultural and humanistic studies. He then said, “Every student seems to be studying chemical engineering. I suppose they will make India a storehouse of explosives! I have met several Indian students, but they seem to bring nothing to this country. Not an iota of Indian culture. They are ignorant of their own country’s heritage. They wake up only after coming here and then they learn when it is too late to learn or understand their own culture. How can these students understand India? They are like unorganised barbarians, coming here trying to

learn the American trick, which is beneath contempt.

I am against the concept of raising the standard of living endlessly. There will never be a possibility of contentment. Life is larger than bath tubs, radios and refrigerators. I am afraid the higher the standard of living the lower the culture. Why, more than fifty per cent. of Americans have never bought a book in their lifetime, and the Americans have the highest standard of living in the world. Literacy is not education and education is not culture."

I asked him whether he was against raising India's percentage of literacy. "There is no necessary connection of literacy with culture, and to impose our literacy and our contemporary literature upon a cultured but illiterate people is to destroy their culture in the name of our own. For the sake of brevity we shall assume without argument that culture implies an ideal quality and a good form that can be realized by all men irrespective of condition; and since we are speaking of culture, chiefly as expressed in words, we shall identify culture with poetry; not the kind of poetry that nowadays babbles of green fields or that merely reflects social behaviour, or our private reactions to passing events, but with reference to that whole class of prophetic literature that includes the *Bible*, the *Vedas*, the *Edda*, the *great epics*, and in general, the *world's best books*, and *the most philosophical*, if we agree with Plato that *Wonder is the beginning of philosophy*. Of these books, many existed long before they were written down. Many have never been written down and others have been or will be lost. From the the Indian point of view a man can only be said to *know* what he knows *by heart*; what he must go to

a book to be reminded of, he merely knows of. Our real concern is with the fallacy involved in the attachment of an absolute value to literacy, and the very dangerous consequences that are involved in the setting up of "literacy" as a standard by which to measure the cultures of unlettered peoples. Our blind faith in literacy not only obscures for us the significance of other skills (like oral traditions of all great literatures) so that we care not under what such human condition a man may have to earn his living, if only he can read, no matter what, in his hours of leisure; it is also one of the fundamental grounds of inter-racial prejudice and becomes a prime factor in the spiritual impoverishment of all the "Backward" people whom we propose to "Civilise."

We next discussed the profound ignorance of even fairly educated Americans about Indian affairs not to speak of the abysmal ignorance of the average American. I asked Dr. Coomaraswamy what he thought of the handful of American scholars who teach Sanskrit or head departments of Oriental studies in certain large American universities. To be specific, I asked him what he thought of American scholars like William Norman Brown of the University of Pennsylvania, J. C. Archer of Yale University, and others at Harvard, Columbia and California. "They are all able scholars," Coomaraswamy admitted, "but American Indologists are only philologists, and to them Indic studies are not a living experience. For an American to teach Sanskrit or to do research in Indic studies may show a love for quaint things or, what is even worse, be just a calling. What this country needs is a department of Oriental studies in every college and university, staffed by

scholars to whom Oriental studies are a living experience and not just an academic discipline.”

I asked him what he thought of the need for a cultural attache in all of our embassies and consulates, now that we are organising for the first time the Indian Foreign Service and opening embassies and consular offices in the major countries of the world.

“It is very important,” Dr. Coomaraswamy replied. “Like France and other countries, we need a cultural attache in every embassy and the men who are sent for this work ought to be men who are Indians, first and last, and yet capable of being citizens of the world. I hope Pandit Nehru does not overlook this.”

Speaking of Pandit Nehru, he observed: “Nehru is the man of the hour and of the moment, because we have been caught unawares and unprepared, and he speaks a language that the West understands; Gandhi, despite all his errors, is the man of the age—our age. Gandhi is great because he has dared to speak of non-violence in a time of violence, of peace and brotherhood in a time of degradation and human destruction. He has spoken of man’s highest inner quality, and though we, who are of limited vision, cannot expect to follow him, we cannot refrain from admiring and even worshipping him—a man who is showing us a way which cannot perhaps be followed until mankind is tamed. *We in the West want Gandhi’s India and no other. Don’t think that by imitating us in the West, monkey do as monkey see, you are doing anything but monkey tricks. The greatest tribute I can pay the Mahatma is that he is the only unpurchasable man in the world.*”

Lack of space prevents me from recording completely here even a few of the views and expositions

of Dr. Coomaraswamy on various subjects. But I must mention that he thinks very highly of Nandalal Bose, Jamini Roy, Baba Herur, and Stella Kramrisch, in the realm of Indian art. He paid a glowing tribute to Stella Kramrisch's recent monumental study of *The Hindu Temple*. It is difficult to do justice to Coomaraswamy's views on art in this brief article, for he has written about art, not just Oriental art, in the last four decades with such mastery and understanding. He expounds the traditional philosophy of art as exemplified in the traditional arts and crafts from the classical, Oriental and mediaeval European times.

"What is the purpose of art?" one might ask. His answer is simple, "Effective communication, as ever."

Dr. Coomaraswamy continued: "If India would regain her soul she must go back to her classical art, music, handicrafts, and dance, above all to her sages and her scriptures. We need more Radhakrishnans, Bharatan Kumarappas and Das Guptas, men who can understand and expound the spirit and culture of ancient India."

Regarding the problems raised by the contact between East and West, Dr. Coomaraswamy had a great deal to say. It is necessary to lay down here his views with the precision with which he invariably writes and speaks. To Dr. Coomaraswamy, "East and West imports a cultural rather than a geographical antithesis; an opposition of the traditional or ordinary way of life that survives in the East to the modern and irregular way of life that now prevails in the West. It is because such an opposition as this could not have been felt before the Renaissance that we say that the problem is one that presents itself only accidentally in terms of geography; it is one of

times much more than places. For if we leave out of account the "modernistic" and individual philosophies of today, and consider only the great tradition of the magnanimous philosophers, whose philosophy was also a religion that had to be lived if it was to be understood, it will be soon found that the distinctions of cultures in East and West, or for that matter North and South, are comparable only to those of dialects; all are speaking what is essentially one and the same spiritual language, employing different words but expressing the same ideas, and very often by means of identical idioms. Otherwise stated, there is a universally intelligible language, not only verbal but also visual, of the fundamental ideas on which the different civilizations have been founded. But if East and West are at cross purposes it is only because the West is determined, at once resolved and economically determined to keep on going it knows not where, and calls this rudderless voyage 'progress.'"

To Dr. Coomaraswamy the reason for this cultural impasse is simple and obvious. "This apparent problem of East and West is there because we have not produced enough scholars to whom not only Latin and Greek (but also Arabic or Persian, Sanskrit or Tamil, Chinese or Tibetan are still living languages in the sense that there are to be found formulations of principles pertinent to all men's lives; we need translators bearing in mind that to translate without betrayal one must have experienced oneself the content that is to be carried across."

Dr. Coomaraswamy continued, "That is, we need theologians who think no more or less in terms of Christian than of Islamic or Taoist theology, and who



have realized by a personal verification that, as Philo said, *all men whether Greeks or Barbarians actually recognise and serve one and the same God.*"

He warned against what he called the indiscriminate and undigested cultural contacts between the East and West. There are two possible and very different results that can follow from the cultural contact between East and West. One can, like Jawaharlal Nehru, and in his own words, "become a queer mixture of East and West, out of place everywhere and at home nowhere, or being still oneself, one can learn to find oneself in place anywhere and at home everywhere—in the profoundest sense a citizen of the world."

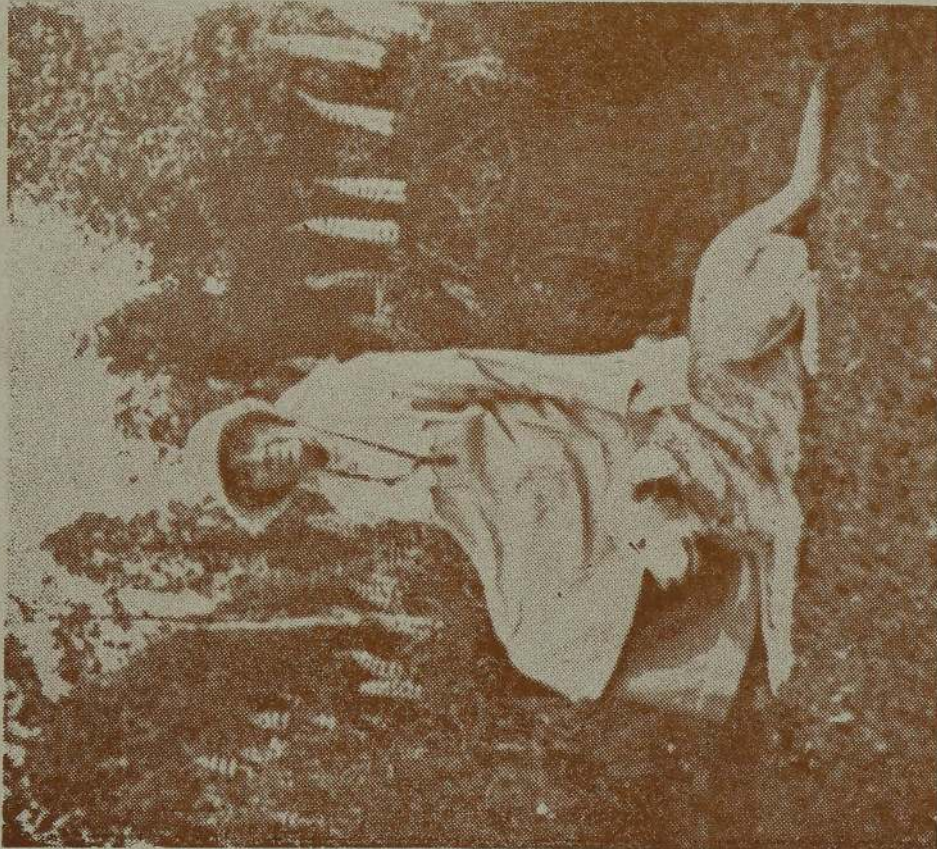
Dr. Coomaraswamy, who is well known here, in Europe and in India only in scholarly and learned circles, has consistently shunned publicity and the American craze for personal exhibitionism.

Though he has been living and writing in the United States for the last thirty years, he is not as well known as any cheap politician—Indian or American—who may champion the cause of India, or as the author of an average best seller, because Dr. Coomaraswamy speaks and writes with such care, precision and scholarship that make his utterances look almost learned mathematical formulas, far beyond the comprehension of even the intelligent lay reader, not to speak of the uninformed but articulate politician. And even those scholars that know about him or have read his writings know very little about his career or his background.

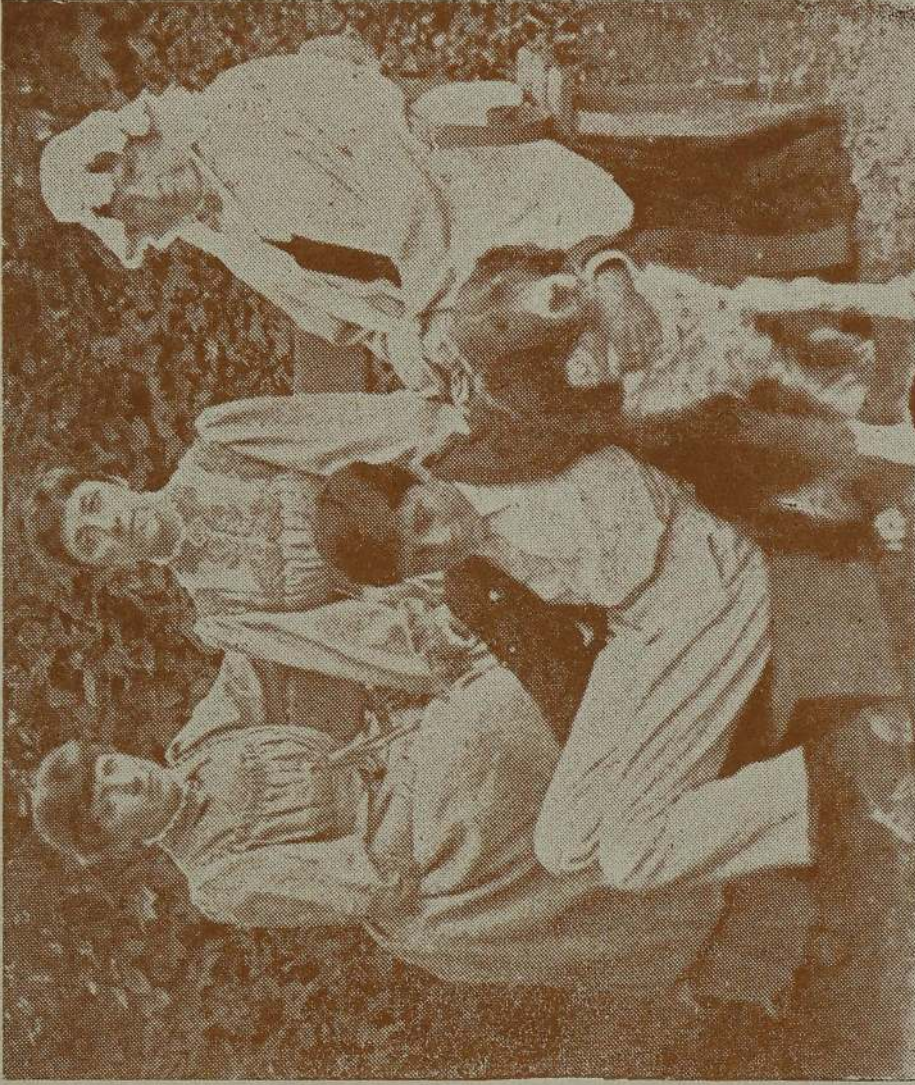
Yet some knowledge of his background is necessary for the understanding of his thought. Most students of Coomaraswamy's writings may not know

that his middle name is Kentish and that his mother was British. Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy was born seventy years ago in Colombo, the son of Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy, the first Hindu barrister and a scholar in English, Pali and Sanskrit. Unfortunately, Sir Mutu died before his son was two years old and the young Ananda was brought up in England by his British mother. He received his education first at Wycliffe College at Stonehouse in Gloucestershire and later at the University of London from which institution he obtained the degree of Doctor of Science in Geology. At 22 he began contributing articles to learned periodicals and at 25 he was appointed Director of the Mineralogical Survey of Ceylon. It was while working in Ceylon that he discovered the tragedy of the imposition of Western culture and "civilization" on Oriental life, arts, and crafts. Since then Coomaraswamy has described, defended and championed the cause of Oriental arts and crafts which were fast disappearing in the face of Occidental, machine-made, mass-produced cheap manufactures.

From 1905 to 1917 Dr. Coomaraswamy travelled extensively both in Europe and the Orient, observing and studying the tragic results of the inevitable impact of two cultures. When in 1917 he was appointed Research Fellow in Indian, Iranian and Moham-medan Art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Dr. Coomaraswamy had already become well known as an outstanding scholar in studies pertaining to a dozen fields and countries ranging from ancient Greece and India down to the human problems of modern Asia and Europe. Since 1917, Dr. Coomaraswamy had written and lectured, expounding all that is truest, noblest and best in the world's great religions, philo-



Lady E. C. Coomaswamy (in June 1925) died in England in 1942 at the age of 92.



Dr. Ananda K. Coomaswamy as a young boy with his grandmother, mother and aunt in England.



sophies and arts. He was the author of more than sixty books and monographs.

As we drove back to Dr. Coomaraswamy's country residence in Needham, Massachusetts, he told me he would be retiring the following year from the museum and that he was planning to return to India after an absence of thirty years, to settle down to enter into what he called, "this *vanaprastha and sanyasa ashramas*." I asked him where he was likely to settle. "Perhaps at the foot of the Himalayas or in Tibet. Some spot where I shall be least accessible."

I asked the Doctor whether, after having lived thirty years in Boston, accustomed to all the myriad comforts and conveniences of the American way of life, he would not find life in the Himalayas difficult. He answered, "These comforts are beneath contempt! Look at this house. I don't have a radio because I can't stand one. The longer I have lived in the United States the more Indian I have become, and therefore I shall be happy when I settle down in India."

As Mrs. Coomaraswamy showed me the Doctor's large, well furnished and book-littered study upstairs, I noticed that his library contained books in some dozen languages. Mrs. Coomaraswamy explained that the Doctor works every day, including Sundays, from seven in the morning until ten in the evening, permitting himself very little relaxation.

In the midst of innumerable paintings, sculptures, bronzes, books and manuscripts, almost hidden away, were two typewriters. Pointing to the typewriters, Mrs. Coomaraswamy explained, "That is the Doctor's and this is mine." I saw a pile of typed manuscripts next to her machine, and Mrs. Coomaraswamy added that she was completing a large book on the history

of Indian thought which she hopes to finish before she accompanies her husband to India.

As I went downstairs to bid the Doctor goodbye and thank him for sparing me the time, he asked me whether I had studied Plato's *Republic* and Marco Pallis' *Peaks and Lamas*. I said I had read the *Republic*, but not *Peaks and Lamas*. He showed me a copy of the book and described it as "one of those very rare books which it is almost impossible to over-praise." And as for Plato's *Republic*, he advised, "Read it again." As Mrs. Coomaraswamy drove me to the station where I was to catch the train back to New York, she further explained the Doctor's views on various subjects with a zeal and understanding befitting an ardent disciple.

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## THE NINTH OF SEPTEMBER

(Mr. Robert Winzer Bruce, Vermont, U.S.A.)

I was at the home of Dr. Coomaraswamy on the day of his death. I was just ready to show him some of my paintings when he was stricken.

He had been up in his room all morning working on a book, he was finishing. About 11 a.m. he came down to the front lawn where Mrs. Coomaraswamy and I were trimming some shrubbery.

"I wish I were 10 years younger," he said watching us work.

"Well sometimes I wish I were too," I said hoping to cheer him up with a jolly word. (I had just turned 31).

He came on down into the garden and talked a while about pleasant things while watching a large bull frog in the gold fish pool. He asked me if I had finished Kumarappa's book *Capitalism, Socialism and*



**Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy in the garden during the last hour of his life—September 9th, 1947. He is shown enjoying looking at a large bullfrog which had made his home in the small gold fish pool. Drawn by Mr. Robert Winzer Bruce.**





*Villagism* which he had loaned me. He said he had given a copy to Professor Sorokin of Harvard University but had not had a chance to see him since. Soon he left us and went around to the garden back of the house.

Then Mrs. Coomaraswamy and I went up to my car to get out my paintings. I set them out against the car and she called the Doctor. He came around from the back of the house and up to the car saying "I feel dizzy headed." He sat down on the ground, with Mrs. Coomaraswamy's help. Then he lay back and lost consciousness. In a few minutes I thought he was dead, for he never moved or regained consciousness. In the meantime, we were rushing around getting water to throw in his face, trying to call an ambulance, a doctor and doing everything we could think of to do.

When the ambulance and a doctor arrived about ten minutes later, the doctor said that Dr. Coomaraswamy was dead of a heart attack and that there was nothing we could have done to save him.

I could hardly believe what I knew was true. He was the first person I ever saw die. What a simple process death is, I thought, and how natural. It is no more than lying down to sleep when you are tired.

I knew I had seen the passing of a great man. It seemed a shame that I should be chosen to see it, who had known him so short a while, whose knowledge of him and his work was so lacking, whose acquaintance with his stature was so limited. There were many I knew, who could much more appreciate the magnitude of such an event. It was an honor, which through no merit of mine, I was given. The responsibilities of

of this possession I begin to assume in giving what I can for this book.

He is the first world-wide scholar I have known. His immense learning in Art, History, Theology, Symbolism, Religious Psychology, Christianity and Greek Mythology awed me in our first private conversation. His intimate acquaintance with the details of the literary works of the Greeks, the Romans, the Church Fathers and Mystics, as well as the labyrinthine ways of Hinduism and Buddhism rather startled me.

His humility, his fair mindedness and the ease with which I could talk with him seemed amazing in the face of his vast scholarship. At that time a couple of weeks before his death he showed me a pile of 18 unfinished manuscripts upon which he was working.

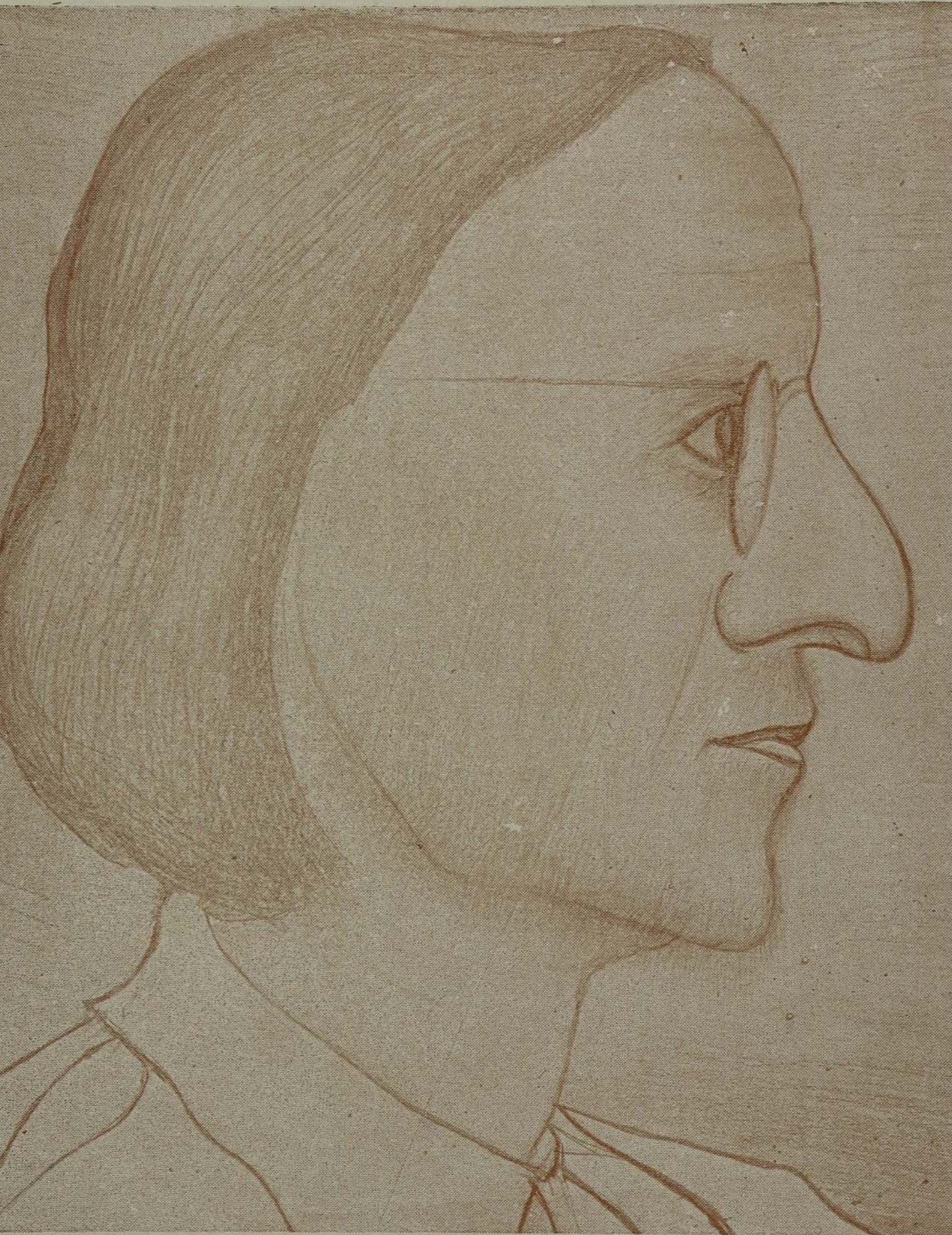
Besides his learning and his humility there is one other quality of which I must speak. That is his physical grace. He was very tall and thin but straight and he moved with an extraordinary gracefulness. The raising of a hand in gesture was, while not in the least dramatic or studied, somehow beautiful. Perhaps it was the naturalness of his movement. Perhaps it was the reflection of the serenity of his soul. I don't know, I only know I saw it and would like to see it again, it is so rare a thing

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### ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

*(Dr. Marguerite Beck Block, Associate in Religion,  
Columbia University, New York.)*

As this issue† of the Review goes to press, we are saddened by news of the passing of one of its



**sketch of Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy done by Mr. Robert  
Winzer Bruce.**



valued contributors, Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. In the four articles and many book reviews of his which we have been privileged to publish, he has given us generously of his vast erudition and his stimulating originality of thought. We shall in future feel the lack of his personal interest, expressed in many helpful suggestions and criticisms. We shall also miss his salty (sometimes peppery!) comments on our editorial emendations of his texts.

Besides his friendly co-operation with the *Review of Religion* since its modest beginnings, we have still other causes for gratitude to him. Our splendid selection of slides of Indian images and temples, in the Bush Collection of Religion and Culture, was made with his advice, and very largely from his own photographs. And his works, the *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, *Rajput Painting*, *The Origin of the Buddha Image*, *Elements of Buddhist Iconography*, and *Yakshas*, to name but a few, have been the foundation stones on which our card index is built.

There are others far better qualified to praise Dr. Coomaraswamy's life work in the field of Oriental art the great collections assembled in Boston under his direction, the depth and breadth of his research, and the richness of his literary output, but the present writer wishes here to pay tribute to him as a teacher. Some of us who were fortunate enough to attend his course in Indian art at the Metropolitan Museum, in 1933 I think it was, will never forget the unique quality of the experience. We were not permitted to take notes (they were furnished us on mimeographed sheets) but sat in the Stygian darkness and stifling jungle heat of the unventilated classroom, our attention concentrated on the brilliant images on the screen

—strange, fascinating, repellent, beautiful! And the quiet, even tones of the lecturer's voice flowed on, carrying us with him into an unknown, exotic world—evoking rather than expounding, revealing esoteric meanings, arousing in us feelings and dim racial memories we had never known we possessed. It was more like an initiation into ancient mysteries than a course in "art appreciation"! We emerged a trifle shaken into the spring brightness of Fifth Avenue, with the dazed eyes of one who truly "on honey-dew hath fed, and drunk the milk of Paradise."

Besides this peculiar glamor with which he invested his subject, one remembers also the sharp, pungent remarks with which he expressed his scorn of all poor craftsmanship: "After the curtain has gone up, it is too late to produce a masterpiece," a maxim to which he lived up with meticulous care, each lecture of his being as precisely constructed as a ship model. We learned from him that art is of the very stuff of life, to be *used*, not stared at in a museum, that it has a normal function in human life, and is not (or should not be) "the pearl in a sick oyster": "Art is simply man's handiwork done finely." His contempt for the pathological exhibitionism of so much of contemporary art was distinctly refreshing.

One of Dr. Coomaraswamy's most endearing traits was his generosity toward many other workers in his field, and his liberal appreciation of their contributions. When the dancer, La Meri, was seeking a publisher for her magnificent book on *The Gesture Language of the Hindu Dance*, it was his gracious offer to write a Foreword, thus lending his own great prestige to the work of an unknown author, which won for it accept-

ance by a distinguished university press. Another example of this fine spirit was his warm friendship for the late Heinrich Zimmer, who came to our shores a refugee from Hitler's Germany, and since Zimmer's untimely death, Dr. Coomaraswamy has rendered generous assistance to Mr. Joseph Campbell in his difficult task of editing the Zimmer manuscripts for publication.

In his own philosophy, Coomaraswamy belonged actually to neither East nor West, but to that transcendental realm which includes the highest speculations of both—the metaphysical “one world” of the *Philosophia Perennis*. There he walked, detached and aloof, with his chosen companions—Gautama Buddha, Sankara, Plato, Plotinus, Boehme, and Meister Eckhart. And it was in the terms of this philosophy that he confessed his own faith in

*the impassible “immortal, incorporeal Self of Chandogya Up. VIII. 12.1, the “That” of the famous dictum, “That art thou.” And, just as for Plato, so in the Vedic books, this deathless, impassible Inner Man and very Self “dwells together with” the human, mortal, passible self in the “house” or “city” of the body for so long as “we” are alive. It is this (Holy) “Ghost” that we “give up” when we die: and the poignant question arises, “In whom, when I go forth, shall I be going forth?” (Prasna Up. VI.3), the answer, according to which we shall be “saved” or “lost” depending upon whether before the end we have known “Who we are” . . . .\**

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†Review of Religion, November (1947).

\*Review of Religion, VII (1942), 35f.

## A TRIBUTE

(*Dr. Alvan C. Eastman, Director, Winnipeg Art Gallery, Canada.*)

*Formerly Assistant to Dr. Coomaraswamy.*

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, has had a number of prominent Japanese scholars who have left their mark as interpreters of Far Eastern arts to Americans, such as Okakura Kakuzo, Anesaki and Kojiro Tomita, the present Curator. The interpretation of the arts of China, Korea and Japan has therefore been going on for several generations. But the extraordinary gifts of Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy have interpreted to the present generation the arts and culture of India within the short span of approximately thirty years of his association with that Museum.

This was first as Curator of Indian and Moham- medan arts in which time he built the finest collection of Indian arts without exception in America. Later, not only Boston but the world at large profited by his phenomenal scholarship, his penetrating understanding and his graceful literary style while he was Fellow for Research. Certain of his publications the *Dance of Shiva* and other early essays—are already classics. His typically scholastic writings and their revelation of truth, the succinctness of his statements are too well known and appreciated by all Indian scholars to need comment here. Suffice it to say that one of his great contributions, the conclusive proof of the Indian origin of the Buddha image, was made in comparatively few pages, whereas volumes had been written by his immediate predecessors to prove the Greek origin. His researches and contributions are without parallel in the field of Indian art.



Dr. Coomaraswamy reached three worlds—the world of scholarship, in some measure the world of educated men in the West, and the world of educated men in Asia. In particular he reached a very large body of his own countrymen. All this was accomplished apart from his immediate contributions to building and publishing the collections of Indian and Mohammedan art in the Boston Museum.

In his contact with students he was usually encouraging, always loyal and ever kind. He found time to read their manuscripts, frequently offering helpful suggestions and aiding them in their careers by good reports whenever the opportunity arose. He was always the warm and sympathetic scholar, as all who knew him personally will remember. They today are carrying on the work he inspired and stimulated them to do, and will be ever grateful to his memory.

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## A TRIBUTE FROM *BLACKFRIARS*

(*Mr. Bernard Kelly, Windsor, England*).

News has reached us of the death, shortly after his 70th birthday, of Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy. Dr. Coomaraswamy was for many years an occasional contributor to *BLACKFRIARS*, and it will be remembered that Eric Gill wrote of him in the *Autobiography*: 'I believe that no other living writer has written the truth in matters of art and life and religion and piety with such wisdom and understanding.' During all his curatorship at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts—where he was wont to describe himself simply 'as a research fellow at this museum'—the degree of distinction in his connoisseurship and the vastness of the

learning displayed in his expository and literary work was almost fabulous. Indeed it is entirely in accord with a fully established reputation, rather than a merely private judgment, to say that no work left his hands that any living man could have done more perfectly.

The introduction to Western minds of the cultural fruit of the East was the external structure of the task within which his life's work developed. It involved finding a common language of thought in which the products of a consciously metaphysical way of life could be explained to modern Western people. This again involved affirmations at two levels. The first was to show in folk-art and folk-lore, the fairy tale and the old wife's tale the sturdy, if almost submerged, survival of a traditional and enlightened wisdom common to all peoples from time immemorial until yesterday. The second was the developed metaphysical understanding of art, its operation and its products, its exemplary, formal and final causes. Here he found it necessary to recall a public for whom metaphysics had come to be associated only with silly jokes about looking for a black hat in the dark to the living relevance of the great theses of Plato and Aristotle, the Platonists, Augustine and the scholastics. Thus it fell to the Indian scholar to teach his Western public their own traditional wisdom in order that they might have some ground from which to understand his.

That, so to say, was the task we Westerners gave him to awaken us. For the life's work it was only a stepping stone. Samples of his later work are to be found in such exegetical essays, published in the journal of the American Oriental Society and similar transatlantic journals, as *Rgveda* 10, 90, 1 *aty atisthad*



**Lady E. C. Coomaraswamy**  
**(about 1905)**



*dasangulam*. To read such work, even with an understanding lagging far behind his scholarship and the angelic simplicity of his exposition, is not to be assailed by any superficial, because generalised, theory of the universality of religions, but to be made witness, if not participant in the penetration of light by light: East and West respectively illuminating each other while retaining their distinctive idioms.

An angel among intellectuals, yes, as St. Thomas was. But Catholics who have come in contact with him or his work will remember also the high challenge of his unfailing charity. He never spoke of devotion or of the love of Christ as if he had not experienced them.

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## A TRIBUTE

from "THE WYCLIFFE STAR"

(Mr. W. A. Sibly, Stonehouse, Glos., England.)

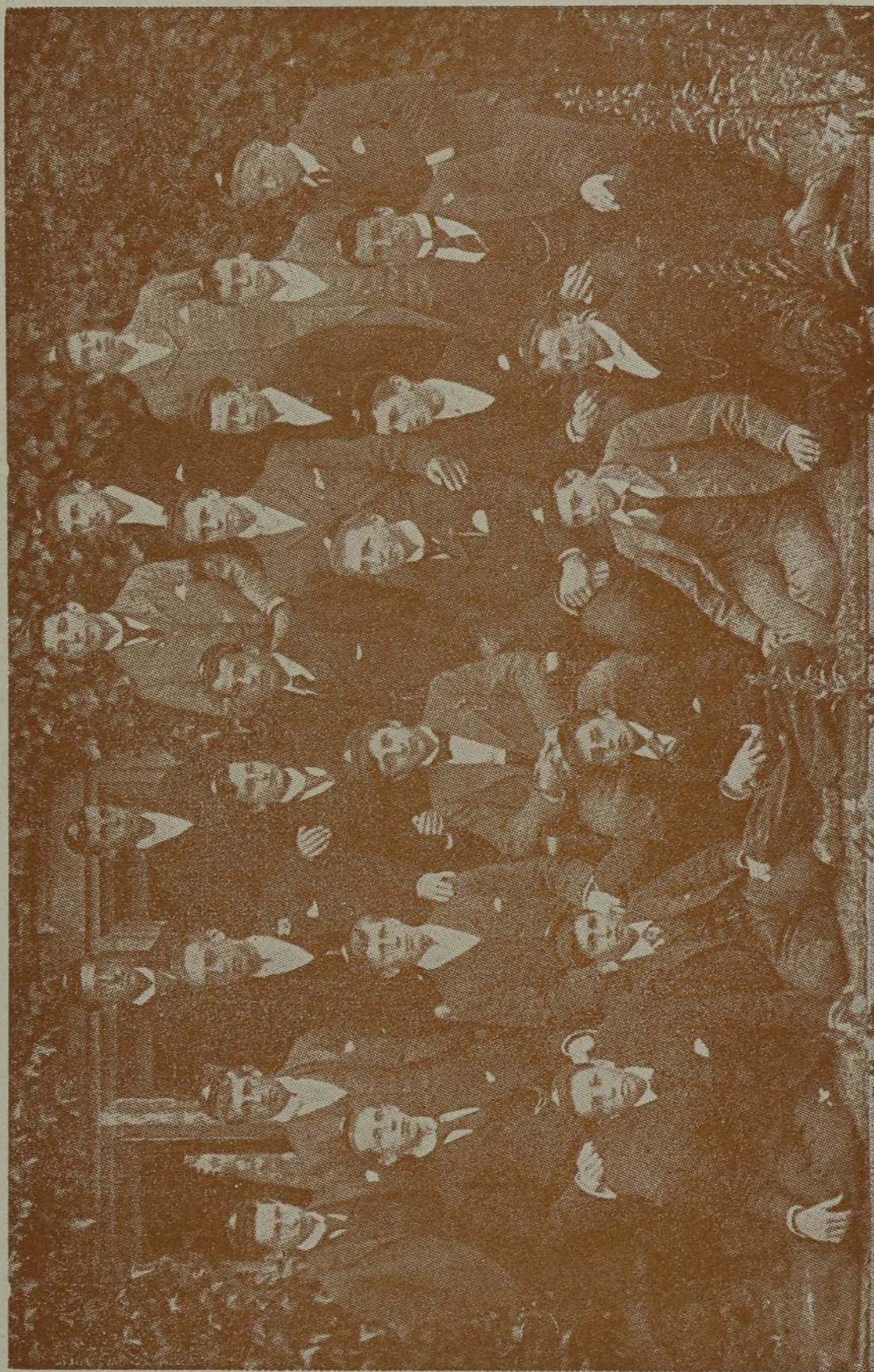
The death of Dr. Coomaraswamy less than three weeks after widespread celebrations last August, in Ceylon and elsewhere, of his 70th birthday, came as a shock to friends and admirers in many lands. For the brief biography which follows we are indebted to *The Times*, *The Ceylon Daily News*, and to old numbers of *The Wycliffe Star*.

His grandfather was the first Tamil representative in the Ceylon Legislative Council. His father, Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy, was a leading light of that Council and of the Legislative Assembly, and the friend of many Englishmen, among them Disraeli, who presented him with a Royal Worcester tea-set as a token of his regard. In 1875 Sir Mutu married an English lady named Beeby from Kent, and when

Ananda was born in 1877 he received the second name of "Kentish." Lady Coomaraswamy left for England next year for the sake of her health, and her husband died on the very day that he was sailing to rejoin her.

Probably it was the fact of Mr. G. W. Sibly's vegetarianism which brought A.K.C. to Wycliffe in 1889, when he was twelve years old, and he remained at school for more than six years. Just at first he found adjustment difficult, and there were a few stormy and exciting episodes which older Old Wycliffe's will remember, but he soon settled down to play a distinguished part in the life of the School. He was a House Monitor by 1892, and became Curator of the Field Club and a Prefect in 1893, for he had great intellectual gifts. Dr. Arthur Sibly fostered his interest in Science, and encouraged him to contribute a three-page article to this magazine in April, 1895, on the Geology of Dove-row Hill. As a boy he was a great fossil-hunter. During this year he was Head of the School, and on June 4th, in what the *Star* describes as the best debate of the session, he moved in the Literary Society "that the slaughter of animals for food is neither necessary, beneficial nor right." It is an interesting commentary on this motion that fifty years later he sent his younger son Rama Ponnambalam Coomaraswamy from Boston, U.S.A., to Springfield, the vegetarian House at Wycliffe. He left, possibly for a visit to Ceylon, in 1895, but was back again at Wycliffe in 1897, when he played for the 1st Association XI and was commended for his skill at centre-half.

Having secured his inter-Arts while still at school, he entered University College, London, and gained his



Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy at Wycliffe College—amongst Prefects in 1895, seated third from left in the second row with cap. (Photograph kindly given by Mr. W. A. Silby).





D.Sc., followed by a Fellowship. His first public appointment was as Director of the Mineralogical Survey of Ceylon. His scientific work was distinguished and exact, but during these years (1903-1906) his mind turned increasingly to questions of art and nationalism. According to *The Times* he initiated the movement for national education, the teaching of the vernacular in all schools, and the revival of Indian culture, and with these objects in view he became President of the Ceylon Social Reform Society.

His first monumental book, published in 1908, was *Mediæval Sinhalese Art*, and this was followed in 1913 by *The Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, which *The Times* calls "the standard work of reference on this subject." In the preface he gave expression to his philosophy of art. "The Hindus have never believed in art for art's sake; their art, like that of mediæval Europe, was art for love's sake." Both in art and in political and social outlook he had much in common with the thought of John Ruskin and William Morris.

With his first wife, who fully shared his outlook, he did much exploratory work in Ceylon and India before returning to England, when he soon went on to Boston, Massachusetts, where he held the post of Fellow for Research in Indian, Persian and Moham-hedan Art, and for thirty years he was Keeper of its great Museum of Fine Arts. In addition he was a Fellow of the Linnean Society and of the Geological Society, and one of the founders of the Royal India Society in London. So he became the chief interpreter of the life and art of the East to the Western World. He contributed many articles to magazines, including all the articles on Indian, Sinhalese, and Indonesian

Art in the fourteenth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

Among his books are *Hinduism and Buddhism*, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, and in the shorter but arresting *Why Exhibit Works of Art?* and other later works he further expounded his philosophy. Small wonder that the *New York Herald Tribune* called him "the scholar, curator and priest of Indian Art."

To honour and commemorate his 70th birthday last August a magnificent volume, with forty contributions from writers in many lands, and illustrated by some eighty plates and further textual illustrations, was published, but unhappily "A.K.C." had died before it could be presented. The occasion was further celebrated by a great meeting in the hall of the University of Ceylon, where a portrait was unveiled by the Chief Secretary, who read a tribute from the Governor-General to one whom the *Ceylon Daily News* in its leading article described as "so far the greatest Ceylonese of the twentieth century."

Dr. Coomaraswamy had just given up his post at Boston, with the intention of leading what he called "an approximately *vanaprastha* life" somewhere in the Himalayas. But this was not to be, for he died at Needham, Massachusetts, on September 9th, leaving a widow, two sons and a daughter, and a record and a reputation in their several ways unique.

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## ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

(*Mr. Ashton Sanborn, Secretary, Museum of  
Fine Arts, Boston.*)

In 1917 Dr. Denman W. Ross, a Trustee of the Museum and one of its distinguished benefactors, made





a permanent gift of his large and varied collection, which had been on loan for many years. He greatly enhanced the scope and value of his gift by the addition of a collection of Indian art, thus establishing for the first time an Indian Section in an American museum. Most of the small bronzes in this collection, the Jaina manuscripts, all the Rajput paintings, and some of the Mughal paintings had been assembled by Dr. Coomaraswamy from whom Dr. Ross acquired them.

It was a natural corollary to the acquisition of this collection of Indian art that Dr. Coomaraswamy, who was of mingled Ceylonese and English parentage, with a degree from the University of London, should have been invited to arrange, study, and catalogue it. Thus it came about that he remained a member of the staff of the Museum for thirty years until his sudden death on 9th September, 1947.

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, were issued by the Museum between 1923 and 1930. In his later years as Fellow for Research in Indian, Persian, and Muhammadan Art, he devoted his attention almost entirely to philosophical, ethical, and religious studies, seeking primarily to reveal what he considered the common basis of Oriental and Western philosophic thought.

His productivity as an author in an abstruse field was phenomenal, and by his writings, by his lectures far and wide, and by his voluminous correspondence with scholars throughout the world he established for

himself an international reputation as a scholar and an author.

His appearance was arresting, for he was tall and spare of figure with a leonine head of hair and an ascetic face, usually grave but which on occasion could soften into an engaging smile. Not long before his death he had expressed the intention of returning to India to live out the rest of his life in philosophical retirement, but fate decreed that only his ashes should return to his native country,—to Banaras the Sacred City of the Hindus.

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### A RARE SPIRIT WE ARE PRIVILEGED TO MEET IN A LIFE-TIME

(*Dr. Richard St. Barbe Baker, Dorset, England*).

It was in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, that I first met Ananda Coomaraswamy. I had come over from England to give an archaeological lecture in Boston and the Doctor was most helpful in tracing for me references to trees in Oriental art. This led to a friendship which was strengthened during the years which followed.

By a strange coincidence he was also a correspondent of my colleague Henry G. Finlayson, Executive Secretary of the *Men of the Trees*, who had sent in previously *The Providential Order of Fairplay*, on which Dr. Coomaraswamy's contribution to *Trees* was a commentary. To give readers an opportunity of seeing for themselves what so interested the Doctor it will be as well to read the original article, which appeared in *Trees, Journal of the Men of the Trees*, (Spring issue, 1945 Page 107-108).

This conception is in advance of present thought, but I felt that my good friend in Boston was striving towards the same end, as far as I could judge both from my personal conversations and from his writings. This was confirmed by the contribution which appeared under the title: *Mr. Finlayson's Providential Order of Fairplay in the October issue of Trees, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Pages 69-71) including note by H.G.F.*

Dr. Coomaraswamy's picture of ancient thought comes very close to the view which advanced conservationists are now entertaining. It is to be regretted that he did not live to see the fulfilment of his vision. He would have been deeply moved if he had seen the leading article in the issue of *Trees*. (*Spring Issue 1948—Pages 115-118*).

Coomaraswamy was one of those rare spirits we are privileged to meet in a life-time. His indictment of modern Western civilisation was justified insofar as it is now evident that our way of life cannot be maintained. We are characteristically consumers, appallingly weak in natural genius, and are now suffering the effects of the ruthless exploitation we have so long practised. Dr. Coomaraswamy saw hope in the universal application of the providential order of fairplay and already we are encouraged by the fact that forty-four countries have united to conserve and replenish the natural resources of the earth in spirit if not yet in actual operation.

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## ONE OF EARTH'S CHOICEST SPIRITS

(*Mr. Henry G. Finlayson, Dorset, England.*)

At the request of Richard St. Barbe Baker, the Editor of *Trees*, Journal of the Men of the Trees, I

formulated the minimum price of Humanity's existence on this planet as respect for earth, neighbour and better self, and he published the article in *Trees* in Spring 1945 under the title: *The Providential Order of Fairplay*. He was surprised to find that, although the effort was important, no comment was made on it. After waiting in vain for a response he asked me whether I knew anybody who could comment intelligently on such a subject. I told him that the only man in the world I could think of who would be able and willing to do so was Dr. Coomaraswamy, whose letters and articles in the Press had led me to believe him to be one of the strangely few men of free intelligence and integrity. As it happened, Richard St. Barbe Baker knew him personally and at once asked him for the comment which eventually appeared in *Trees* in Autumn 1945. I had never seen Dr. Coomaraswamy but corresponded with him, and I had come to regard him as one of earth's choicest spirits.

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### A TRULY DEDICATED LIFE

(*Sri Sisir Kumar Ghose, Santiniketan, India.*)

Three years ago, far from home, in Boston, died a great contemporary, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. It was the end of a truly dedicated life, and its greatness will grow as the years pass. As Rothenstein said, "Today, if India takes her due rank as a first class artistic power, it is in large measure owing to Coomaraswamy." But Coomaraswamy's works are food for the grown-up, he could not be popular or a populariser. An age obsessed with the trivial and the transitory, bent on disintegrating the physical atom no less than



the human personality, naturally neglects, where it does not condemn, the defenders of the significant and the eternal. Coomaraswamy himself chose to work in comparative obscurity, so much so that, for a person of his importance, he is little known outside learned and artistic circles. Studiously avoiding all forms of dilettantism he did not crave for the approval of the market place. His inner life was his own affair and he did not press it before the public gaze.

It is an interesting and instructive lesson how the young Director of Mineralogical Survey of Ceylon suffered a sea-change and turned into a devotee and champion of the 'traditional' view of Art and Truth. It was while working in Ceylon that Coomaraswamy found out for himself the futility of imposing western European culture on oriental life and oriental arts. The mineralogist grew interested in the relics of ancient art, 'fossils' that spoke a strange wordless language which he could not at first decipher. From these he focussed his attention to the way of life---which included its forms of thought—from which this art had sprung. He would go to the roots, even to the "roots above," he would track Wisdom to its Source.

From 1905 to 1917 Coomaraswamy travelled widely both in Europe and in the East, gaining a first hand knowledge of the arts of different places and different periods, a knowledge which was to be useful to him in his later work. Some of his books on oriental art had already been published and in 1917 he was appointed Research Fellow in Indian, Iranian and Mohammedan Art in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, a position he held with distinction till the time of his death.

Curator and collector, Coomaraswamy made the Indian section of the Boston museum a thing of beauty, while as a critic he brought the meaning of that beauty to a far wider public. He is the author of more than sixty books and monographs, full of passion and profundity. It would require a good deal of intellectual competence to evaluate these volumes, yet what was Coomaraswamy's contention, in brief? That contention, to summarise the thesis of his last book, *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought?*, was that the normal or traditional view of art is one which conceives of art as rhetoric, as a means of expressing truth as distinct from a purely aesthetic activity. This, according to him, is the view which "the greater part of mankind has accepted from prehistoric times till yesterday." The artist, he believes, has a "priestly or ministerial" function and it is this which makes Christian and oriental religious art the same in kind and intention. Coomaraswamy's criticism in this matter is utterly sound—where most modern aberrations are just fury—though at times he allows the extremes of ascetical tendency to lead him to surprising conclusions. But he is by no means temperamental, he has an authority for every statement he makes, and not the least part of his scholarship, which draws from more than half a dozen languages and ranges freely from theology to anthropology, is the forest of footnotes without which no article by Coomaraswamy is ever complete!

But it is not merely in the role of a scholar or connoisseur that Coomaraswamy appeals to us. He is also a teacher, an *acharya*, a Master in the grand tradition. It may sound strange, but he is, or should be, one of the educating forces in India and the world.

During the years of the Swadesi, it was Coomaraswamy, who, along with Annie Besant, Rabindranath, Sri Aurobindo and others, taught us the fine points of nationalism which politicians are apt to overlook. Coomaraswamy not only helped, in Europe and America, towards a better understanding of things Eastern but he had found in the traditional doctrine a wide formula of reconciliation between the East and the West. In this task he drew largely upon the truths of the spirit as revealed by the artists and mystics of all ages. For, to use his own words, "nations are built, not by politicians but by artists and philosophers." The one country where, in spite of vicissitudes, the traditional doctrine has persisted and shown a marvellous power of renewal is India. That is why he is emphatic that "India's contribution to the world does not and can never justify her children in believing that her work is done. There is work for her to do, which if not done by her will remain ever undone." Few Indians have been so alive to that trust and duty as Coomaraswamy. His insight, incisiveness and power of exposition were all used in the service of the truth which he had seen so clearly and from which he never swerved.

"What is the purpose of art?" (he had once been asked).

"Effective communication, as ever."

"But what can works of art communicate?"

"Let us tell the painful truth," retorted Coomaraswamy, "that most of these are about God, whom nowadays we never mention in polite society."

But God and art are not to be approached through the intellect and metaphysics alone and we are not

surprised that Coomaraswamy the intellectual was at heart a Vaishnava.

How will we honour this great teacher? How will a free India honour the memory of this lover of all things beautiful and true? A Coomaraswamy Institute, a Coomaraswamy Memorial Lecture or a Chair of Aesthetics, preferably at Santiniketan, are some of the possible ways in which we can hope to continue the work so nobly begun and conducted by him. For in the last analysis the manner in which we continue his work will be the measure of our gratitude to him.

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### THE SCIENTIST

(*Dr. K. Kularatnam, M.A., D.Sc., University of Ceylon, Colombo*).

The first Ceylonese Doctor of Science of the University of London, a Fellow of University College, London and a Geologist by training, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy arrived in Ceylon in 1903 at the age of 26. He worked at his own expense for a year at mineralogy and geology. His scientific discoveries roused opinion in London and Ceylon to have a Department of Mineralogy. He accepted for four years the the post of Director. At the expiration of the period he left Ceylon. True to high geological tradition, Coomaraswasmy spent most of his time in the field, conducting his traverses on foot and by bullock cart and thus came to know his Minerals and Rocks very intimately indeed. Here lies the secret of his success and also of his early introduction to the new fields of art, archaeology, religion and sociology, whose attractions, unfortunately for Ceylon and Geology, tore him away so early in his career from his first love! By



**Dr. Ananda. Coomaraswamy**  
**(President of the Ceylon Social Reform**  
**Society, 1903-1905).**



direct personal contact, he came to know the place, folk and their work well. His discoveries during that short period and the contributions he made to Geology and Mineralogy perhaps far outweigh the total output of all his successors during the past forty years, despite their luxury limousines and lounges without which, it is to be regretted, geological work apparently refuses to get a start to-day.

Apart from the classic *Administration Reports of the Mineral Survey of Ceylon* which contain the accounts of his field surveys and investigations, Coomaraswamy published several authoritative papers and academic discussions in the *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society*; the *Geological Magazine, London*; *British Association Reports*; the *Mineralogical Magazines*; the *Spolia Zeylanica*, the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*. Other contributions of no mean importance are the *Glossary of Sinhalese Mining Terms and names of Gems*, and a *Bibliography of Ceylon Geology* (1906) which has since been brought up-to-date and published separately by Wadia. Coomaraswamy's mind and thought worked far ahead of his time. This needs no proof when we recall how on some of the intricate problems of petrology and mineralogy which he raised in his papers on (1) the Crystalline limestones of Ceylon, (2) Graphite, (3) the scapolite-wollastonite rocks of the Galle Series, (4) the Balangoda Group, etc., no finality of opinion has yet crystallised out, though the attention of several outstanding geologists in Europe and America has been focussed on them during the past forty years.

Among the discoveries of economic importance to Ceylon made by Coomaraswamy were the finds of workable occurrences of mica, graphite, corundum

(ruby and sapphire), moonstone, iron-ore, rare-earth minerals and others,—all accomplished within the short period of four years. The first large-scale geological map published of any considerable area in Ceylon was that of a part of the Kandy District by him in 1906. It is significant that since then no smaller map has ever been issued, but for two small-scale sketch geological maps of the Island by Adams and Coates. Considering the importance of large-scale geological maps as one of the primary foundations of agricultural and industrial planning it is a crying shame that the country has been kept waiting for nearly half a century and not received even a single sheet of this essential pre-requisite. Coomaraswamy's divorce from Geology has therefore definitely resulted in irreparable loss to our economic progress. What is most urgently required to-day to remedy this extremely unsatisfactory position, is a strong central body composed of scientists, agriculturists, industrialists and businessmen to guide and direct the Geological Department to give first place to first things and to bring about a better co-ordination of work between sister Departments.

No account, however brief, of Coomaraswamy's career as a geologist and mineralogist can afford to miss some of his spectacular discoveries. In the year 1904, a new mineral was identified and added to the list known to mineralogists. It is a cubic mineral of high specific gravity which on analysis proved to be an oxide of thorium and uranium. The cubes are usually very small (about 2/10 inch) and the colour is dark brown. This mineral was discovered by Coomaraswamy. It is a pity this fact is not generally known, especially as the importance of this mineral





Yours sincerely  
A. Coomaraswamy

**Dr. Ananda. Coomaraswamy**  
**(Editor of "Ceylon National Review" 1903-1905)**



has today been immensely enhanced because of its radioactive properties. As is characteristic of Coomaraswamy's scientific modesty, instead of immortalising his own name through this mineral,—a practice extremely common with mineralogists, e.g. Allanite, Fergusonite, Geikeilite, Baddeleyite, etc,—he preferred to name it simply as thorianite,\* after the principal chemical element, thorium, present in it. It was only as a result of a letter (dated 28-12-44) received by the present writer from Dr. Coomaraswamy's son, Rama, asking for a specimen of 'thorianite, (father's discovery),' that he was led to seek and find confirmation of this fact! Serendibite, Geikielite and Baddeleyite were other minerals discovered in Ceylon in Coomaraswamy's time.

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## ANANDA COOMARASWAMY DAY IN CEYLON

(*Dr. M. D. Raghavan, National Museums, Colombo.*)

We are met here to honour a great Ceylonese, one of the most notable sons of Lanka, one whose name and fame has traversed the bounds of this picturesque Island. In the remembrance of this Day which we treasure as Ananda Coomaraswamy Day, we feel an abiding interest, as the birthday of one who was among the earliest of the sons of Lanka to hold up the torch of learning which has lit up the whole world, and who has held aloft the banner of nationalism in Sri Lanka with a lofty sense of love for the land of his birth. The significance of this day, is one

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\* E. K. Cook. Geography of Ceylon, pg. 74. "A very remarkable rare mineral" called thorianite which was first found in Ceylon (in 1903) is also associated with veins.

\*\*Coomaraswamy A. K. The New Mineral (Spolia Zeylanica, Vol. II, pg. 57.)

which we recognise, would grow with the years. In thus honouring a great soul we honour ourselves which makes us conscious of our own *Dharma*, how best to acclaim the distinguished son of Lanka that Ananda Coomaraswamy is. Much has been already said and written of Ananda Coomaraswamy which shows that in himself he is an inexhaustible field of study. That is the mark of a great man. I have no doubt that as the years roll on, the future generations would spend more and more thought and time, interpreting his thoughts and ideas which he has expressed in his prodigious output of books and research papers, lectures and essays, the great interpreter that he was, from science to arts and culture, from culture to metaphysics and philosophy, and from philosophy to religion and art criticism.

If here I may give a personal touch to this occasion, it is to the day when some years ago, I had the good fortune to have a day with him when he visited the Madras Museum. I had the supreme delight and the great privilege of conducting him over the archaeological and sculpture galleries of the Madras Museum. I had often in the day to look up to his towering figure and meet the gaze of his sharp intellectual eyes, presenting a picture of a gripping personality.

The recollection of that day has often recurred to me. It recurred to me in August 1947 when we in Ceylon celebrated his 70th birthday, under the chairmanship of Sir Charles Collins. On that day was unveiled at the St. George's Hall, the striking portrait which we see before us today in this Hall. That celebration we owe to the foresight of Dr. G. P. Malalasekera. Little did we who participated in that celebration then realise that, that was to be the last



**Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy**  
(“Illustrated London News” April 25th 1863).



Birthday that we were destined to celebrate during his life time. For the great soul passed away on the 9th September of the same year.

The present move to celebrate the event has come to us from the Museums Association of India which really has a great responsibility in this matter, because the National Museums of Ceylon is an integral member of the Museums Association of India.

Ananda Coomaraswamy comes of eminent Tamil ancestry— of a distinguished family from Manipay— in Jaffna a family distinguished for its public services. His father Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy has had the distinction of being the first Asiatic to receive a Knighthood, and the first Ceylonese to be called to the Bar in the reign of Queen Victoria. Within the course of an all too short a life span of 44 years, Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy did fruitful service in the Legislative Council and in the field of scholarship. Among his published works are translations of works in Pali such as *Dathavansa* and *Suttanipata*— Buddhist sacred works in Pali, and an English translation of the Hindu drama, *Arichandra*. Marrying an English lady of Kent, he returned to Ceylon in 1875 and took up residence in his new home “Rheinland,” in Bamba-lapitiya, which has given the place, its present name of Rheinland Place. It was in this Colombo home of Rheinland, that Ananda Coomaraswamy was born in August 1877. Shortly after, for the sake of the mother’s health, the mother and the baby left for England. His father Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy was not able to follow them to England, for death overtook him on 4th May 1879, it is said on the day on which he was to sail. Ananda Coomaraswamy had his education in England, first at Wycliffe College,

Stonehouse, Gloucestershire, and at University College, London, where he took his B.Sc. degree with honours and his D.Sc. degree later.

Returning to Ceylon at the young age of 23 almost his first public service was as Director of the Mineralogical Survey of Ceylon from 1903-06, and his early publications were reports of the geology of the Island. Through the Social Reform Society which he founded on April 22nd, 1905 of which he was the President, and as the Editor of the *Ceylon National Review*, he made vigorous efforts to give the language of the Island, their rightful place in the scheme of the national education; and for the stimulation of indigenous arts and crafts. The first number of the Journal published his article which proclaimed the man—an article entitled *Kandyan Art, what it meant and how it ended.* In 1907, Coomaraswamy left Ceylon for England to publish his *Magnum Opus*, so far as Ceylon is concerned, the *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, which appeared in 1908. Opening with a socio-economic structure of the times, the book reviewed the state of the Sinhalese Arts and Crafts as they prevailed in the 18th century, with chapters giving a comprehensive review of the whole field of indigenous art. A national contribution of the greatest asset, the book is charged with intense national feeling, for the uplift of both the art and the artisan, and the craft and the craftsman. It is an inspired work the like of which has not been witnessed in Ceylon in the the field of folk arts. In its appendices he has given us an insight into the life of the peoples such as the Kumbakaraya, or the Potter, and the Kinnaraya or the Matmaker,—in the folk songs which they sing as they work,—songs, which alas, are not heard today



spread on the board and allowed to dry. Upon the board so prepared the pupil learnt to draw, using for his pencil the spine of a sea-urchin (*ikiri katuva*) mounted in a bamboo handle; or failing that, a pointed style of *kumbuk* (*Terminalia glabra*) bark. Now-a-days, ordinary slates and slate-pencils are used.

The first copy was the *vaka deka*, or double curve of Fig. 5; the boy had first to trace over and over again the teacher's copy on the *yati-poruvva*. After some control of the hand had thus been acquired, and the form was deeply impressed on the pupil's mind, he had to draw the same from memory, particular care being taken to show the right feeling in drawing the subtle curve. When he had attained some proficiency the figure was complicated by the addition of 'wedges' (*paturu*); then a 'flower' (*sina mala*) was added at one end (these are seen in Fig. 6), and finally the *vaka deka* by means of internal divisions and external additions, was made into the designs known as *katuru mala* (Fig. 7), *mottak karuppuva* and *tiringi tale* (*talaya* or *talai*\*)

(Figs. 4 and 8, and Pl. XVII). These are successive complications all based on the original *vaka deka*. The ornament of which the *tiringi tale* is built up is called *liya pata* or *liya pata* (q.v. in Chapter IV). The *tiringi tale* itself is not a form used in decoration, but is rather a 'tour de force' or test of skill; when the pupil was able to draw a good example, not from a copy, of course, he was considered to be proficient at this sort of work. A few specially good specimens have been handed down in craftsmen's families from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; these, like some working drawings for royal jewellery which I have seen, were executed on Dutch paper, which was also used for the very rare illuminated manuscripts. Pattern or copy books (*'padimakada pot'*) were regularly used, and I have seen both modern examples, and an early one (Pl. XIV., 1) on Dutch paper. Old copies were often set also on loose sheets of Dutch or other paper, and not in regular books. Sinhalese paper was coarse and ill adapted to fine brush drawing such as that of Fig. 8. English paper came into use later.

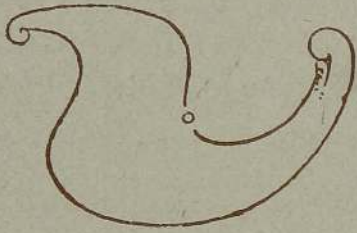


Fig. 5. *Vaka deka*; modern drawing,  $\times \frac{1}{2}$ .

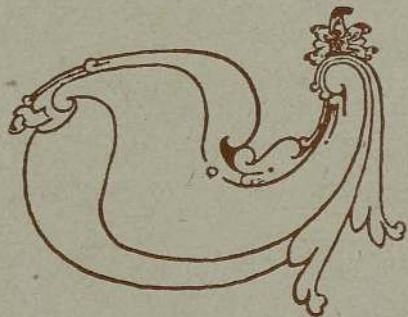


Fig. 6. *Vaka deka* with *paturu* and *sina mala*; modern drawing,  $\times \frac{1}{2}$ .

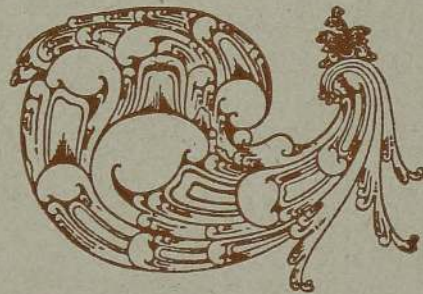


Fig. 7. *Katuru mala*; modern drawing,  $\times \frac{1}{4}$  [D.S.M.].

\* The words '*mottak karuppuva*' and '*tiringi tale*' are of interest as they are probably corruptions of Tamil '*mottaik karukku*' (blunt or round edge), and '*tirigu talai*' (twisted blade); I have seen the latter word written '*tirikit talai*' on a Sinhalese drawing (Fig. 4) dating from about the end of the eighteenth century. '*Katuru*' is probably a corruption of *kartri*, 'agent' or 'craftsman.'

**"A classic has been written" (Sister Nivedita)  
A page from Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's  
*Mediaeval Sinhalese Art.***



in the villages of the craftsmen, mostly silenced by the economic hardship that these people have had to contend against.

Others have spoken of his approach to art, of his art criticism and his contribution to world knowledge. Speaking as an anthropologist, the thing that distinguishes him from others, is to my mind his cultural approach. He never worried over political or economical problems as such. His method was the cultural method and he believed strongly in the cultural approach to economic and political problems. Enthroned, the dethroned culture; best sums up his message, give stability of life to the artisan, to the craftsman, place him on his feet, enable him to live, enable him to sell his crafts, develop his art, do things to revive dying and dead craftsmanship, and all will be well; all economic and political progress would then fall in line. It is in this view of preaching the cultural life that his life work is of lasting value to this island. It is on this that he based the spirit of nationalism. The same message that he preached in Ceylon, he preached in India. His book *Essays in National Idealism*, published by G. A. Natesan of Madras in 1909, changed the course of life of many a man I knew. For, in the words of St. Paul, what is the use of gaining the whole world, and losing one's own soul. And it is to the soul, whether of Ceylon or of India, that he made his appeal. In the pages of his *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, than which there is no greater work on Ceylon or in Ceylon,—barring of course the sacred books and the Ceylon Chronicles of old, Ananda Coomaraswamy has given us the material to work upon and revive national art. That it is bearing fruit today, there is considerable evidence.

The cultural approach is what we most need in Ceylon today—the cultural outlook to economic problems.

Yet another instance of Ananda Coomaraswamy's cultural approach, I may point out,—which shows how all embracing his insight was. In piecing together the trends of events in the development of the social system of the Sinhalese, I had the occasion recently to turn over the pages of *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*. I was surprised that Ananda Coomaraswamy has his own observations to make on this subject as well and his words have their own interest. Says he, "The Caste System of Ceylon is similar to the Dravidian in South India and differs from the well known four-fold caste division of the Hindus generally. The Sinhalese people from an early date had constant and intimate relations with the Tamils in South India. So it is that we find the Dravidian and not the Aryan Caste System among the Sinhalese. In this system, the cultivator, ranked the highest. With the spread of Aryan civilisation came the Brahmanical system, which was superimposed upon the Dravidian, so that the Brahmin and Kshatriya ranked above the cultivator."

As a student of Culture, Ananda Coomaraswamy took his stand on traditions. The glories of Lanka's past—the days of Anuradhapura, Pollonaruwa and Kandy—inspired him and he mourns the passing of the Kandyan monarchy which fostered the indigenous arts and crafts. A born critic of the creative and constructive type, he exposed the processes of degeneration of indigenous arts under the impact of changing conditions of life.

He clearly saw that in Ceylon the old order was changing, yielding place to new; It was Robert Louis Stevenson who observing the changes taking place in the life of the Pacific Islands of his generation exclaimed "Change is bloodier than bombardment."

Ananda Coomaraswamy felt likewise and his mission which he expounded in the pages of his *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, was to stem this tide of change, to control it and to guide it in national channels. His prophetic words were not of much avail,—and indigenous arts languished. The problem has now come to us with greater force than ever, and national Lanka is proving that Coomaraswamy was right. It is the great secret of Lanka that despite Westernization in externals, there has always been the spark of nationalism awaiting revival. What has made such a revival now possible is the foundation that Ananda Coomaraswamy has laid in his own life and in his *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*. There is yet another side to his life, which opens an as yet untouched aspect of Ananda Coomaraswamy's life. I mean his relations with the Colombo Museum.

Speaking of Ananda Coomaraswamy's work in the Colombo Museum, it is really another silver lining in Ceylon's cultural horizon. For in the Museum he did work which has paid higher dividends at the hands of the successive Directors of the Institution. His work the *Bronzes of Ceylon* published as a Museum publication is the only work of the kind on the metallic art of Ceylon, in the publication of which, he has laid the Department of Museums and students of art under a deep debt of gratitude. The Museum is indebted to him for a very handsome collection—which comprises a representative collection of all the sections—jewellery, mineralogy, textiles, pottery, brass work and bronzes. If I had more time—about a month before me, I would have brought together all his collections—whether purchased or donated, in one room in the Museum and made a special exhibition of

the Coomaraswamy collections. These collections are now distributed over almost all sections of the Museum. A few of them are here shown in this Hall. His attachment to this Museum can be indicated by the fact that even as late as 1937, he had the kindness to send from America a fine carved Kandyan Plank Bedstead with a typical Game Board cut out in a corner. It speaks much of Ananda Coomaraswamy's solicitude for the Colombo Museum that he should have taken pains to have this particular specimen shipped from Boston to Colombo. This plank-bed which you can see here, is a donation by him. The lacquered wooden Box for preserving Palm Leaf Manuscripts shown here is another unique object from his collection. His wife Mrs. Ethel M. Coomaraswamy was also interested in Sinhalese Embroidery work. The two embroidered Betel Bags shown in the case are from her collection. The blue bag with the *Nari-Lata* design in the centre is a unique specimen. Ananda Coomaraswamy's collections purchased for the Museum are mainly those described in his *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, to which must be added those received from him as donations. I should not omit to mention that while on the Mineralogical Survey, he gave three Museum Lectures—on the General Principles of Geology; the Life History of Minerals; and Formation of Rocks and the General Geology of Ceylon. Himself and his Assistant Mr. Parsons also worked in the Museum gallery identifying, labelling and exhibiting mineralogical collections. Not only the Museum, the Library,—also benefited by his collection of Ola manuscripts, 111 of which were purchased for the Colombo Museum Library. A few of these are on view here. These collections and their association with Ananda

Coomaraswamy have often stirred in me the lines of the poet:—

But, Oh, for the touch of a vanished hand  
And the sound of a voice that is still.

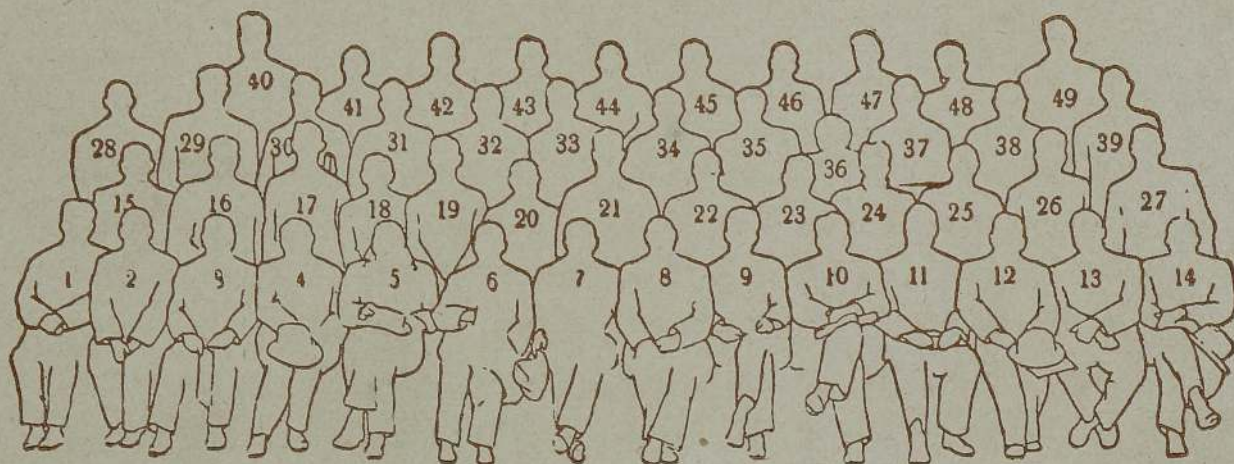
India no doubt has great cause to honour a personality who more than any other single soul did most to interpret Indian art to the western mind, which had not till then be attuned to a proper understanding of the art of India; or to an appreciation of the cultural environment in which Indian Art found its inspiration and development. He was also the great apostle of Indian nationalism in its cultural aspect. In this respect his name is remembered in India as much as that of Rabindranath Tagore, and rightly revered as one of the great forces in the cultural Renaissance of India.

I would not have thought that in Ceylon we needed the lead of India to honour her own sons. India has indeed a way of honouring her great sons, which we might as well emulate—one of favourite methods is to present a volume of essays and papers to a distinguished person on his sixtieth or seventieth birthday. We have had a great example recently in the volume of essays presented to Jawaharlal Nehru on his sixtieth birthday. In this volume is included one of the Polonnaruva bronzes—the figure of Sunderamurthiswami, a figure which Ananda Coomaraswamy has illustrated and described in his *Ceylon Bronzes*. Here then is a link with Ceylon, that finds a place in this magnificent volume of essays published under the name of *Nehru Abhinandan Granth*. I cannot recollect such a move having been made in Ceylon to honour the name

of Ananda Coomaraswamy. So it was with gratification that I came by a volume of Essays presented to our distinguished Ceylonese on his 70th Birthday under the editorship of Mr. Bharatha Iyer entitled *Art and Thought*. The contributors are all from India, Europe and America. This book of Essays saw the light of day as a posthumous tribute, though I understand a proof copy of the Book was rushed to Coomaraswamy at the birthday dinner held at the Harvard Club. What I mean to point out is that here in Ceylon we could do something worthwhile yet to honour the name of such a great gem of Ceylon—as Ananda Coomaraswamy was, a gem that has shone all over the world ‘with a lustre of the purest ray serene,’ that it is time to turn our thoughts as to how best we can perpetuate his memory. Whatever form such a memorial may take, it should be something in tune with the spirit of his own life’s work in Ceylon, such as an endowment for a research scholarship for the promotion of the arts of this Island. I find I am not the first to express this opinion, for a Ceylonese has already conveyed the same idea in these words, “We in Ceylon who cannot boast of great men with the same moral or intellectual stature as those in India, must appropriate this noble son of Ceylon before he is claimed or acclaimed by others.” In this connection I should mention that an interesting compilation entitled *Homage to Kalayogi, Ananda Coomaraswamy—A garland of Tributes*, has been edited and published by S. Durai Raja Singam of Kuantan, Malaya, which brings together contributions from admirers far and near.

[Speech delivered at the Coomaraswamy Day Celebrations held in Colombo on August 22nd 1950.]





## NEAR EASTERN CULTURE AND SOCIETY

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Myron B. Smith</li> <li>2. John A. Wilson</li> <li>3. Edwin E. Calverley</li> <li>4. George Sarton</li> <li>5. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy</li> <li>6. Abdulhak Adnan Adivar</li> <li>7. Phillip K. Hitti</li> <li>8. H. A. R. Gibb</li> <li>9. G. Levi Della Vida</li> <li>10. Costi K. Zurayk</li> <li>11. Richard Ettinghausen</li> <li>12. Matta Akrawi</li> <li>13. Gustave E. Von Grunebaum</li> <li>14. Mehmet Aga-Oglu</li> <li>15. M. Hessaby</li> <li>16. Mostafa M. Hafez</li> <li>17. R. Bayly Winder</li> <li>18. Harold W. Close</li> <li>19. George C. Miles</li> <li>20. William Thomson</li> <li>21. E. P. Arbez</li> <li>22. Jibra'il Jabbur</li> <li>23. Solomon L. Skoss</li> <li>24. Florence E. Day</li> <li>25. Eric F. F. Bishop</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>26. Halford Hoskins</li> <li>27. Edward Jurji</li> <li>28. Ernest Dawn</li> <li>29. Charles B. Fahs</li> <li>30. Mortimer R. Graves</li> <li>31. Franz Rosenthal</li> <li>32. W. Norman Brown</li> <li>33. T. Cuyler Young</li> <li>34. Sidney S. Glazer</li> <li>35. Amir Boktor</li> <li>36. Ilse Lichtenstadter</li> <li>37. Donald N. Wilber</li> <li>38. J. Christy Wilson</li> <li>39. Walter L. Wright, Jr.</li> <li>40. Harry Hazard</li> <li>41. G. R. Loehr</li> <li>42. Willard Beling</li> <li>43. George M. Barakat</li> <li>44. Harold Hoskins</li> <li>45. H. D. Howard</li> <li>46. Izz-al-Din Al Yasin</li> <li>47. Robert R. Solenberger</li> <li>48. M. Sherif Basoglu</li> <li>49. Wilfred Smith</li> </ol> |
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**Members of the Princeton  
University Conference  
Group.**



## TRIBUTES FROM TWO FRIENDS IN 'ARS ISLAMICA'

(Dr. Richard Ettinghausen, Washington)

When Ananda K. Coomaraswamy passed away on September 9, 1947, the world of Oriental studies lost one of its great pioneers. Parentage, training, and personal taste imparted to him a predilection for Indian art and for Rajput painting in particular, yet he contributed a great deal to research in Mughal and Persian painting and iconography. His catalogues of the Indian and Persian miniature collections in the Boston Museum are done with great devotion and knowledge and are thus indispensable to the student in the field. As his life work unfolded Dr. Coomaraswamy's major aim became a search for the meaning of works of art together with a desire to show the inherent unity in the different artistic idioms of traditional civilizations. Through his many contributions he not only increased our knowledge in this respect, but exerted also a decided influence on other scholars whom he led beyond a purely esthetic appreciation of art objects.

Dr. Coomaraswamy's contributions to *Ars Islamica* represent his endeavour to trace the meaning of pictures and symbols in Islamic art and to relate them to other civilizations, they also give witness to his search in ever-widening spiritual regions. This approach is epitomized in a short but significant paper entitled *A Note on the Philosophy of Persian Art* which represented his comments during the art session of the conference on Near Eastern Culture and Society during the Bicentennial celebrations of Princeton University in March 1947. It seems fitting that

Dr. Coomaraswamy's last contribution in the field of Islamic art is published in this journal, on whose Consultive Committee he served since its inception.

To anyone familiar with the departed scholar's work—and even to one who has only glanced at the bibliography of his writings published in 1942, on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday, in Volume IX of *Ars Islamica*—it is obvious that his research in Islamic art was but one facet of his many activities. To do fuller justice to his memory the following memorial by one of his close friends is printed.

*From*

(*Dr. Benjamin Rowland, Jr., Cambridge, Mass., U.S.A.*)

With Dr. Coomaraswamy's passing it is difficult to say whether the field of Oriental art has lost one of its greatest interpreters or, as his epitaph, to state that the *philosophia perennis* has been deprived of its most articulate exponent in our generation. For many of us his death is such a personal sorrow in the departure of an old friend, always ready to counsel in matters metaphysical or practical, that we are less aware of the full significance of his loss to the world. From his earliest publications on the mineralogy and geology of Ceylon in the first year of our century up to the appearance of his last major work, *Time and Eternity* (Ascona: *Artibus Asiae*, 1947), Dr. Coomaraswamy, to quote Goethe, "became in the different stages of his life a different being." The first of Dr. Coomaraswamy's many *avatars* was as a scientist studying the rocks and precious minerals of his native island of Ceylon. After a short period dedicated



**Near Eastern Culture and Society (Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaaraswamy at Princeton Univ., Bicentennial Conference, 1946, Conference Group).**



to attempted social reforms in India and Ceylon, he turned to writing on Indian and Sinhalese art, at first, perhaps, as a surer means of properly interpreting India to the Western world.

There could be no more appropriate description of Dr. Coomaraswamy's real stature than Goethe's definition of the creative writer: "When a writer leaves monuments on the different steps of his life, it is important that he should have an innate foundation and good will; that he should, at each step, have seen and felt clearly, and that, without any secondary aims, he should have said distinctly and truly what has passed through his mind. Then will his writings, if they were right at the step where they originated, remain always right, however the writer may develop or alter himself in after times." Dr. Coomaraswamy's publications, it is instinctively felt, will "remain always right." His *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* (Leipzig, New York, London, 1927) remains the standard work on the subject, just as his later essays on "the traditional or normal view of art" are models of exegesis that belong to quite another phase of his being. The metamorphosis of Coomaraswamy, the art historian, into Coomaraswamy, the quester after the meaning of the metaphysical basis of form in traditional art, is already accomplished as early as 1933 in his *New Approach to the Vedas* (London: Luzac, 1933). Although it might seem that in his last years Dr. Coomaraswamy was less interested in works of art, it is not that he loved art less, but truth more. The whole effort of his intellect in this final decade of his life was dedicated to revealing how human cultures in all their apparent diversity are but the dialects of one and the same language of

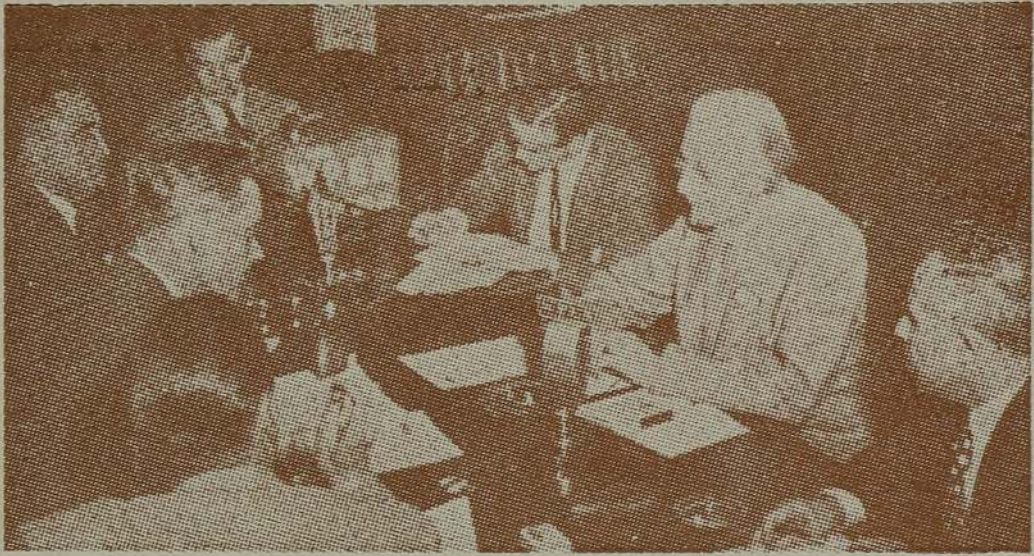
the spirit, that there is "a common universe of discourse' transcending the differences of tongues."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Coomaraswamy was careful to say, "I have never built up a philosophy of my own or wish to establish a new school of thought."<sup>1</sup> The influence of his works dealing with traditional art and tradition has been extraordinary: it has been both extraordinarily good and extraordinarily bad. Nothing could have been clearer than his statement of the meaning of Oriental and Mediaeval art and that this meaning expressed in inevitable artistic terms was of greater significance than what our art historians describe as "style." His inveighing against art without meaning was healthy and timely, too, at a moment when the cult of unintelligibility in modern art was at its zenith. Although many scholars, including the writer, are grateful to Dr. Coomaraswamy for turning their thoughts to the meaning of meaning in art, the influence of his words in other directions has been anything but fortunate. Although Dr. Coomaraswamy never even remotely suggested the desirability or the possibility of a return to a traditional art in this untraditional age, his late repudiation of post-Renaissance art seemed to offer a kind of escape for anyone who could not adjust himself to modern art as a result of an inability to adjust to modern life. Flight into the past or to exotic corners of the world is nothing new: once upon a time it used to be called Romanticism. Dr. Coomaraswamy did not mean his words to be taken as a kind of emotional, sentimental

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<sup>1</sup>This and other quotations, unless otherwise noted are from the typescript of Dr. Coomaraswamy's farewell address to a group of friends on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, August 22, 1947.





**Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy at the "Near Eastern Culture and Society" Bicentennial Conference, Princeton University, March, 1947.**

Conference participants assemble around the WPEN Philadelphia, microphone for a broadcast from the Graduate College Library. Reading clockwise around the table from the left are: Alan Grey and Robert Johnson of WPEN, Matta Akrawi, Director of Higher Education for Iraq, Horace Fowler of WPEN, Dan D. Coyle '38, Assistant Director of Public Relations, Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, and Habib A. Kurani of the State Department (Top)—H. A. R. Gibb, Professor of Arabic, the University of Oxford, and Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, (Below).



substitute for reason. He did not recommend a return to primitivism or mediaevalism in art any more than he advocated our wearing coats of mail. For the ills of our modern world, he prescribed a change of heart and not a change of costume. Although he pointed out the inferiority of art for art's sake to art made to fulfill a need in a traditional society, it would be a mistake to believe that Dr. Coomaraswamy categorically repudiated every aspect of post-Renaissance art. "The artist's function is not simply to please, but to present an ought-to-be-known in such a manner as to please when seen or heard, and so expressed as to be convincing."<sup>2</sup> That Dr. Coomaraswamy discerned this function even in certain modern painters could be illustrated by objects in his own collection: the last actual work of art that the writer discussed with Dr. Coomaraswamy was a water colour in his home by Charles Demuth, in which he could recognize an almost Oriental sensitivity to the growth and articulation of things in nature.

The universality of Dr. Coomaraswamy's interests has so often been remarked on that there is little need to catalogue his attainments here.<sup>3</sup> The all-embracing nature of his creative intuitive interpretation of related concepts in separate cultures can nowhere be better illustrated than in the magisterial and definitive paragraph—a single footnote to the *Transformation of Nature in Art*—which gives the complete essence of the meaning of the first of Hsieh Ho's Six Principles of

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<sup>2</sup>A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought?* (London, 1946), p. 250.

<sup>3</sup>R. Ettinghausen, in H. Ladd, "The Writings of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy," *Ars Islamica*, IX, (1942), 125; J. A. Pope, "Review of *Why Exhibit Works of Art?*" *Review of Religions*, VIII (1944), 314-319.

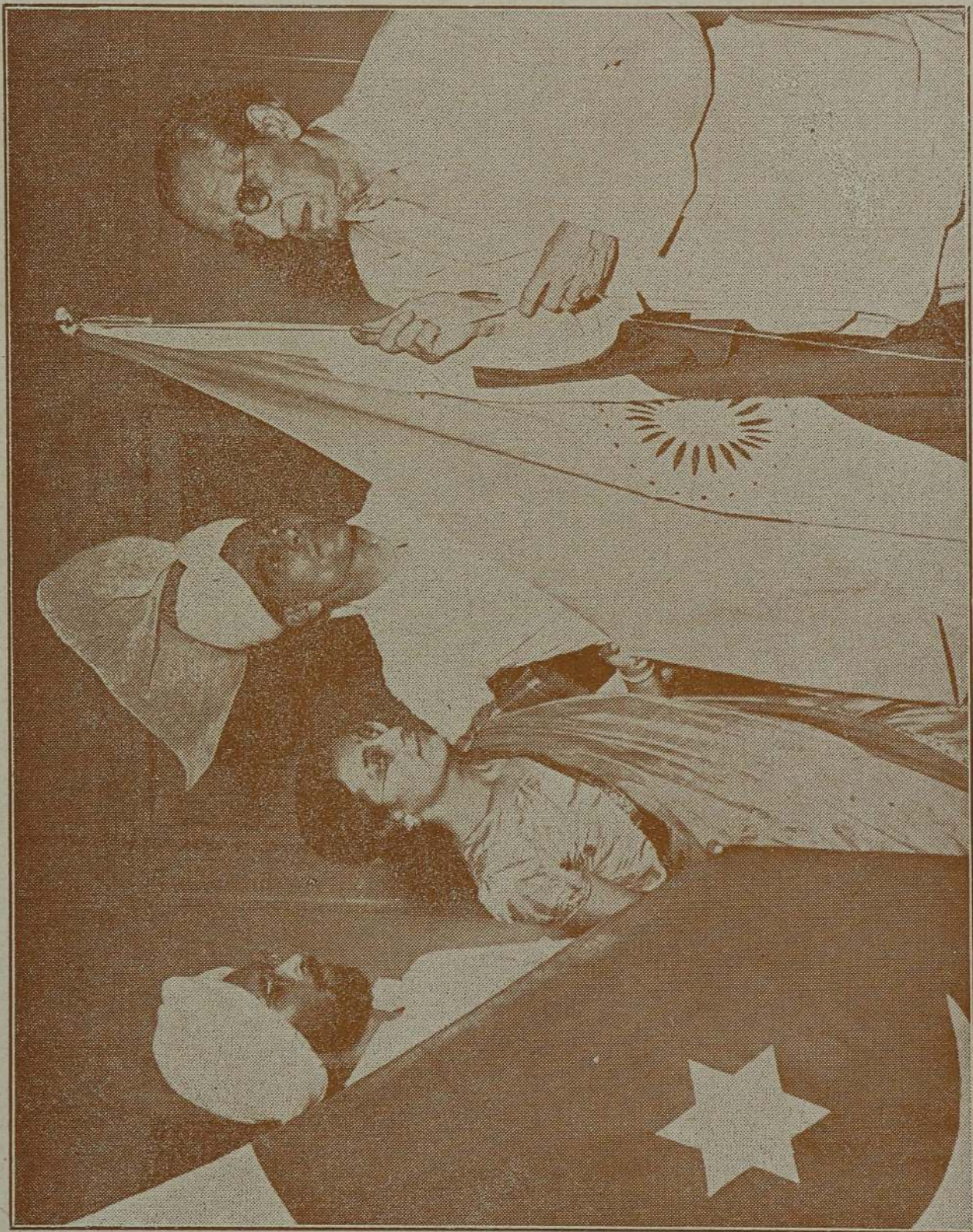
Painting, *ch'i-yun sheng-tung*, in its relation to the Indian concepts of *cetana* and *prana*.<sup>4</sup> That Dr. Coomaraswamy's interests included the Islamic field is not surprising in view of the importance of Arabic and Persian scientists, philosophers, and mystics in the preservation of traditional knowledge. Although it cannot be discerned from a perusal of a bibliography of his writings, the reading of books like the *Transformation of Nature in Art* and *Time and Eternity* will reveal that he was as familiar with the ideas of Ibn Hazm and Djala al-Din Rumi as he was with the *Summa Theologia*.

Although Dr. Coomaraswamy was happily acclimated to his American environment, he always felt a strong link with his homeland. The writer remembers with what happiness and pride Dr. Coomaraswamy on one of the last days of his life displayed the many newspaper clippings with tributes for his seventieth birthday which had just arrived from Ceylon.<sup>5</sup> One of his last official acts was the raising of the Indian flag at a meeting for Indian students marking the Indian declaration of Independence. If on this occasion he seemed, for some, unduly critical, it was because he wished to impress on his countrymen the necessity to "be themselves" in a world of "organized barbarism and political pandemonium." Over and beyond the satisfaction that he must have felt at the appreciation of his work in India, Dr. Coomaraswamy had come to feel more and more the necessity to seek

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<sup>4</sup>A. K. Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (Cambridge, 1935), pp. 186-187 (p. 19, note 20).

<sup>5</sup>Tributes published in the *Kesari*, Jaffna, Ceylon taken from *Homage to Kalayogi Ananda Coomaraswamy* edited by S. Durai Raja Singam and tributes in the *Ceylon Daily News* and *Times of Ceylon*.



**Dr. Ananda. Coomaraswamy with India's Flag at the Independence Day Celebration, Boston, August 15, 1947—Boston Globe.**



and know from experience his spiritual home that logically he had come to know so well. With the gradual unraveling of so many threads in the web of traditional learning, Dr. Coomaraswamy's understanding had come to involve belief, and only a short time before his death he announced his plans for a return to India, a home-going (*asram gamana*) with the ultimate aim of fulfilling the last stage (*asrama*) in a pilgrimage to the fabulous mountain-home of the gods, for him the penetration to the heart of the great *mandala* that is the end of his and every pilgrimage, the realization of what he implied in his farewell: "May I know and become what I am, no longer this man So-and-so, but the Self that is also the Being of all beings, my Self and your Self."

[Another tribute of Dr. Benjamin Rowland appears on page 45.—Ed.]

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**ANANDA, THE BLESSED ONE, WAS A  
PRESENCE THAT IT IS HARD TO  
BE WITHOUT**

(*Mrs. Margaret Marcus, Cleveland Museum, Ohio*)

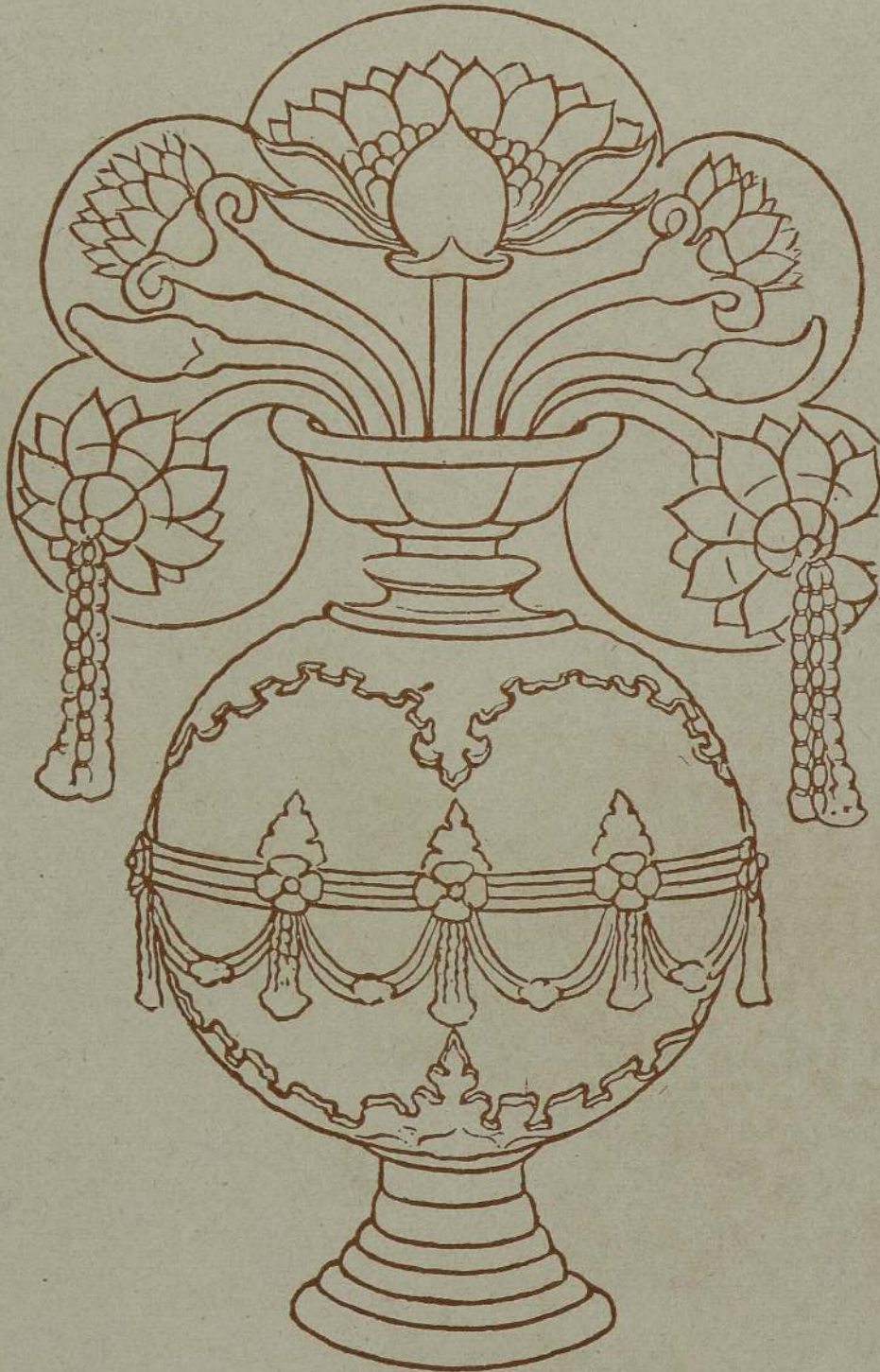
From the moment I had read his *Dance of Shiva*, I have been stimulated and moulded in my thinking and values by Coomaraswamy's intrinsically creative writings; writings, which as I learned to know him over some twenty-six years, I grew to realize were but one aspect of the expression of a rich and complex personality. He was one of those rare ones who wanted the great myth, the ideal way of life and being to come alive again in universal measure. He believed that this was possible, as Confucius did, and almost identically followed Confucius' logic for this

end. "Rectify your terms, clarify your thinking, and your character and conduct will grow in the right direction." In more ways than this he was close to Confucius, not through direct influence at any point. but because the intuitive thinking of both men was the same. Coomaraswamy insisted, for instance, as Confucius did, that nothing he said was new, that he found through tireless research what was lost and translated out of many tongues to remind us of a great tradition that we had forgotten. How like Confucius as he sought the poems of the provinces of China to find in them the evidence of a pure tradition, or pored over the Book of Changes for a similar revelation!

As I have felt that the stress in much editorial comment has been on Coomaraswamy's vast erudition and scholarship I wish to emphasize that in my evaluation of him, his creativeness is the essential point, in fact it was the very motive behind his scholarship. It is my conviction that Coomaraswamy was at no time merely piecing together as scholar and researcher the broken strands of a precious, once unbroken, mesh that had held all members of a society, even the weakest, safe within its web. His brilliant observations of analogies between attitude of thought over the centuries and over the world were a *making* not a recording. He heard and saw in a process of creation not recreation. Just as Kasyapa saw the true meaning of the lotus in the hand of the Buddha.

Even the early interpretation of the meaning of the south Indian dancing Shiva was a creation. The iconographical factors essential to this meaning were there for all to see but it was Coomaraswamy's alive-





Bowl with Lotuses after a line drawing by Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy in his work on *Yaksas*.



ness to relevance and meaning, that brought these factors into a form of thought. This is true creativeness. And what jewels of interpretation followed this, through the years; as his reading of the significance of the Chinese t'ao t'ieh mask (equally applicable to the mysterious Totonac "yoke") hidden away in a book review in the *College Art Bulletin*.

From beginning to end he hungered for meaning, and a meaningful background conducive to spontaneous living, authentic, homogeneous, traditional. How well I remember how he welcomed such backgrounds when he found them, as he did among the Melanesians whom Malinowski describes, or the Tibetans, in Marco Pallis' *Peaks and Lamas*, the Esquimos in Poncins and Galantieres *Kabloona*.

I cannot refrain from remembering all the further ways in which he expressed himself as a creative person aside from his writings. He was a master draftsman, either with pencil or with brush. Few people realized how many of the immaculate drawings with which his articles were illustrated were his own. How amazing they are, never dull copies, never free interpretations, but always capturing completely the spunky vitality of a Bharhut relief, the radiant beauty of an Amarvati form! More than this he did independent brush and pen, or pencil subjects. These were most often in the traditional Indian style of the Rajput school, masterly in the way that the fluent line indicated the contours of the forms involved; although he could also handle delicate washes in chiaroscuro in the western manner if he chose. He was a photographer of real distinction. This medium, as well as that of the brush, he used to record the essence of mood or fact.

He wrote poems too, as tender, direct, and fine in form as those of early Provence. Eric Gill was chosen to illustrate his *Three Poems*. These were love poems. His understanding of eros is a matter of great interest as he saw its roots in traditional Oriental thinking and philosophical symbolism and so in essence sanctified. In each and every phrase of these, he binds personal love with God and his works; as when he writes in *From New England Woods*

“My breasts and feet are fair and fine  
But not more silvery than the birch  
And not more fragrant than a flower  
Do not desire me more than these.  
As you love trees and clouds love me”

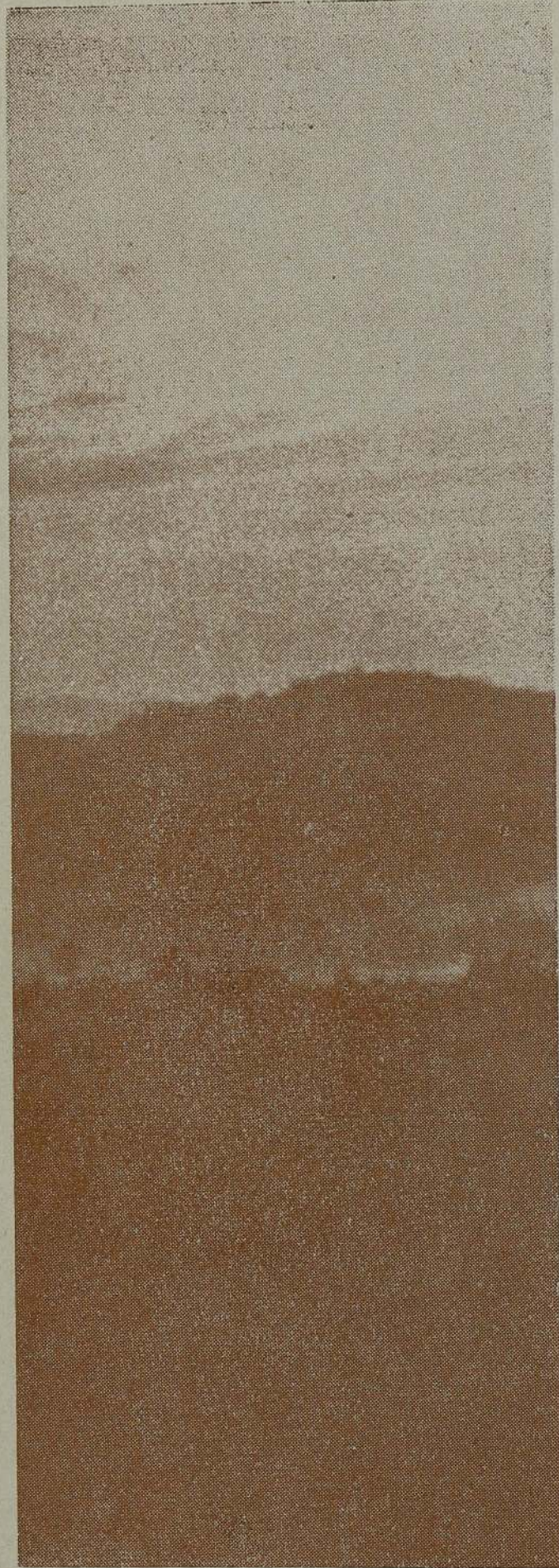
or in *Body and Soul*

“Adrift on such sea  
I am evermore free  
Dear branch of God’s tree”

or in *Beauté de ma Belle*

“J’ai vu la beauté de ma belle  
N’a jamais vecu une autre telle  
Et pour ses lèvres et pour les seins  
Je loue toujours le bon Dieu”  
.....Plutot toujours grace a Dieu!  
.....Encore toujours grace a Dieu!

Besides poetry, painting, and photography, he did many other things. In England he had his own printing press and both printed and bound the books that he had translated. He was an intelligent and eager gardener and an enthusiastic fisherman. In fact there was nothing that he ever did, or thought, or was as a person, that was alien to, that did not move toward, his primary desire: to touch life at its quick, directly and creatively. One of the greatest



*Yaksi Chanda* from Bharhut, Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's drawing, from *Yaksas*, Smithsonian Institute Publication.

Landscape—a photograph by Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy.



gifts that he had for those who knew him was himself. Never have I known a more generous man, nor one with less awareness of himself, less ego. He spent himself more lavishly than anyone can ever measure on those who were near to him or who came to him for help. That there were degrees and measures of achievement in other men never entered his mind. He made everyone feel that he was capable of anything that he chose to achieve. In fact, with those whom he loved most, he could not rest until they had a creative outlet of their own. Tender, sensitive, confident and compassionate to his fellow man Ananda, the blessed one, was a presence that it is hard to be without.

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### COOMARASWAMY AND AMERICA

(*Mr. William E. Ward, Cleveland Museum, Ohio.*)

As the bee collects nectar and departs without injuring the flower, or its color or scent, so let a sage dwell in his village.

—*The Dhammapada IV*

Few are there among men who arrive at the other shore; the other people here run up and down the shore.

—*The Dhammapada VI*

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's village was the countryside. But for many years of his life he was forced to live much against his better judgment first in an apartment and then in a home in Boston. To Boston he had been summoned from Ceylon. The Boston Museum of Fine Arts invited him to arrange, study and catalog a large collection of Indian art that

had been given to the Museum. After this initial task was completed he remained a member of the staff of the Museum for thirty years. His untimely death on the 9th of September, 1947, brought to a close the life of one of America's most brilliant scholars. (I say America because he had been adopted by American scholars).

During the later years of his life and work in America he did dwell in his village, for he took a small cottage in the country outside Boston and spent his summers fly-fishing and tending his garden in the wilds of Maine. "It is impossible for one to obtain salvation who lives in a town covered with dust."<sup>1</sup> Foremost in Dr. Coomaraswamy's mind there was always the dream that one day he would return to India and live his remaining years.

Dr. Coomaraswamy's love for nature was well illustrated in his numerous visits to dog shows in and around Boston. He was always a fond owner of dogs. And of course he spent long relaxing hours fishing in Maine. Frequently in his vivid and scholarly letters to friends one notes more than casual mention of gardens, *i.e.*, in a letter to Margaret F. Marcus, a devoted friend and student; "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."

We note also that while in the country if not hard at work in his garden he would be found at his desk. There was that inner creative force ever driving him to write and delve deeper into universal symbolism and philosophy. While a creative artist in every res-

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<sup>1</sup>Bandhayana Dharma Sutra II, 3, 6, 33 (tr. by A. K. C.)





**Dr. Ananda. Coomaraswamy, ca. 1935.**



pect we note a continuing desire to be as impersonal as possible in his writing; he spoke always out of a common storehouse of wisdom, as for example in a letter to Margaret F. Marcus; "Someday you must try to tell me what interests you in the material I assemble. You realize I say nothing, or try to say nothing, that can properly be attributed to me individually." It is this same impersonal point of view that we see in Indian and all of Oriental art:

"The Hindu sculptor is not a social personality; he does not choose his themes; his productions are neither useless ("fine art") nor meaningless ("decorative art"); he never exhibits himself; his work is "exhibited" only when set up in the place for which it was made; he is not interested in technique (as distinguished from application), but only in skill; his work is always intelligible to those who are his patrons."<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Coomaraswamy then gives us a view of the modern artist; he "is a special or abnormal kind of man endowed with a peculiar emotional sensibility which enables him to see what we call beauty."<sup>3</sup>

A good friend speaking of Dr. Coomaraswamy noted that he was interested in Western and Oriental culture, but equally at home in the primitive culture of the Pacific Islands and the American Indian culture before the white man. He was much concerned over the ugly connotation in the use of the word 'native' as applied by Europeans to the men whose land they had invaded. Here too we note that he

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<sup>2</sup>*The League*, published by the Art Students League of New York, New York City, Spring, 1933, Volume 5, No. 3, page 4.

<sup>3</sup>*Blackfriars*, April 1935, p. 247.

concerned himself much over the misconception of literacy—as meaning only the ability to read and write as opposed to wisdom stored in the memory.

Upon completion of cataloging the Boston Museum's important collection he was persuaded to remain on the staff of the Museum as "Keeper of the Indian and Mohammedan Collection"; and because of his post with the Boston Museum their collections have grown and become among the finest and most important in the country, indeed equalling the collections of England. Much of his time at the Museum was spent in writing and delivering an occasional lecture for students of Oriental art and philosophy at New York University. Later he was given the higher post of "Fellow for Research in Indian, Persian and Mohammedan Art." During this period his scholarly works of philosophical, ethical and religious studies flowered into full bloom. It was now that he sought primarily to reveal what he had so long considered the common basis of Oriental and Occidental philosophic thought.

It was in England that he became interested in printing and the production of books. In 1908 while in England, he published his first book, a book which Dr. Andreas Nell holds as his best. This book, *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, is a masterpiece not only of prose and assembling of material in an encyclopedic fashion but of excellent design. For this project was more than the mere writing of a text on Sinhalese decorative art; it is the expression of a creative artist masterfully presenting in all its refinements a work of art to be treasured by connoisseurs and scholars alike. This is the work of a man who has "arrived at the other shore." This is the work of a man who has caused

the East to stir and take inventory of its accumulated inherited cultures. *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art* was the first of 500 publications to come from his pen.

Ananda Coomaraswamy, a poet as well, had as a good friend Eric Gill, whose simple and powerful illustrations did much to enhance pieces of Dr. Coomaraswamy's fine verse. Perhaps it was through his association with Eric Gill that Dr. Coomaraswamy became interested in drawing with the pen, pencil and brush; or perhaps it is even more logical that his interest in Rajput painting and drawing caused him to seek more understanding of drawing through the practice of the art of fine drawing itself. This may well be, for as the fine line drawings which he worked on during his period in Boston are masterpieces, they are more often in the Indian schools of Rajput drawing than in the Western manner which American and European artists have developed. His two volume *Yaksas* published by the Smithsonian Institute are filled with his careful drawings made from original sculpture in India.

Throughout his career he was keenly interested in photography and through friendship with such an eminent photographer as Alfred Stieglitz, Dr. Coomaraswamy reached a technical perfection as a fine photographer.

We have said much of Dr. Coomaraswamy's life in America was spent in Boston and Needham. It was not until after he had lived and worked in America for some time did he feel the need to be closer to nature. While he was living in New York, he was briefly interested in the American scene as we think of it today. Nevertheless he was much interested in the life and culture of the American negro. Much of his free time

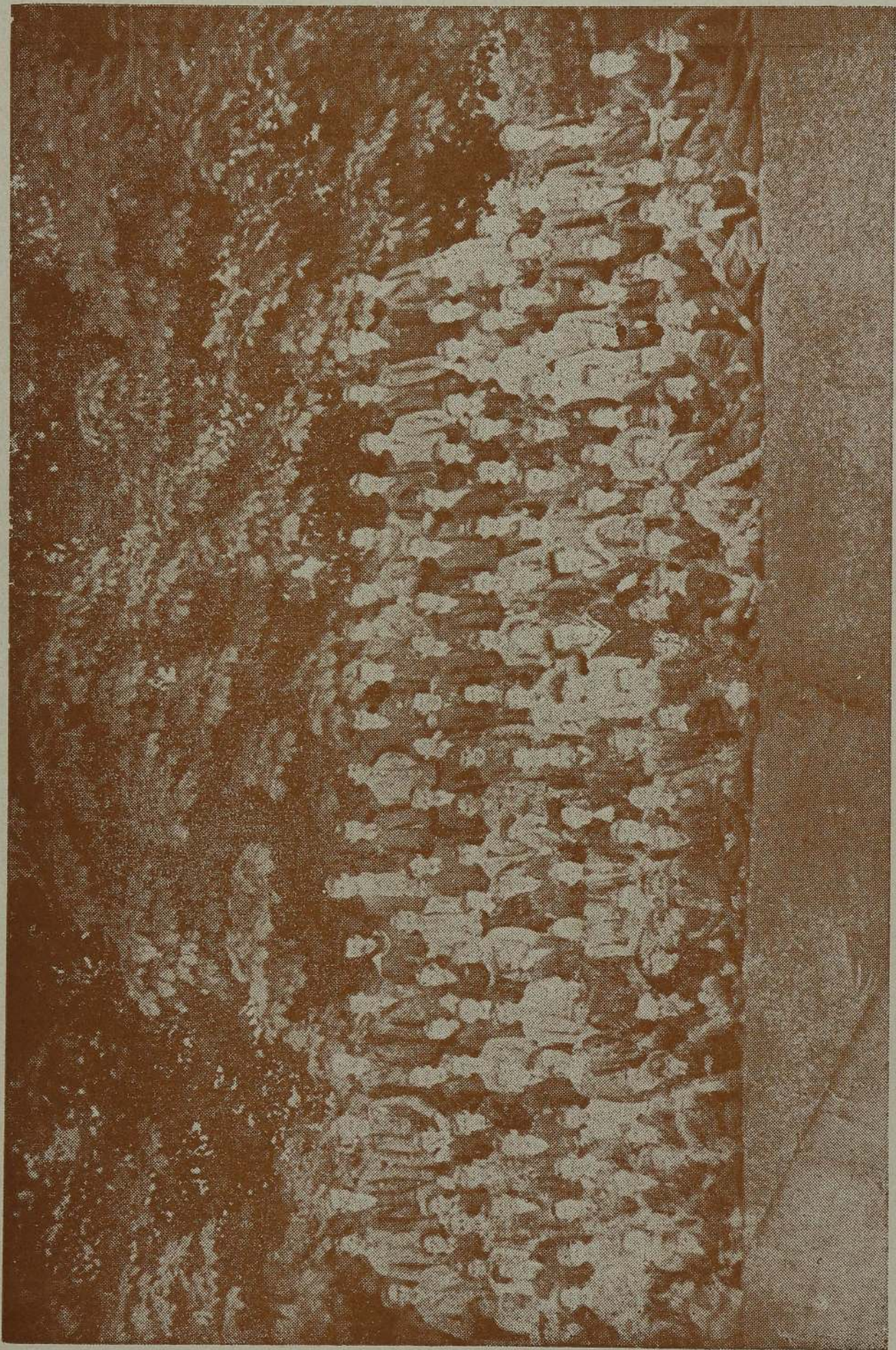
would be spent in the negro districts of Boston and other eastern cities. It is no doubt the music of the negro as well as American folk music that attracted Coomaraswamy. This is most interesting for Coomaraswamy was trained as an engineer and a scientist, yet he was keenly alive and became completely possessed with the rhythms of primitive and exotic music. It is possible here to apply his philosophy that all forms of art are religious and thus art becomes "visual theology," implying that all genuine art is religious.

The wide range of his knowledge of literature (in original texts) both Occidental and Oriental was a vital factor in his developing the ability to embrace the whole of the secular and religious thought of both the east and the west (universal range of metaphysical thinking). He read Sanskrit, Pali, Sinhalese, Latin, Greek, German and French with the ease that we read English. His numerous translations are notable for their clarity and insight into meaning. Dr. Coomaraswamy points out that the modern conception of art has brought us to a point where man must choose between art and life. He points out "formerly and in Asia art was not an alternative to, but a means to life."<sup>4</sup> He stressed that art is not an "expression of personality but a release from personality."

Dr. Coomaraswamy's important opinions on modern education somewhat parallel those on art. For example he says dealing with the subject of contemporary education, "Nowadays nothing is taught of self knowledge but only of ego knowledge and for Jung, this inflated ego was the root cause of the last war." He asks the question, "Why does a modern education isolate its victim?" And he goes on to say,

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<sup>4</sup>In a letter to Margaret F. Marcus.



**Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy (see arrow) at Wycliffe College.  
(Photograph kindly given by Mr. Crofton E. Gane).**





“The isolation I speak of makes a modern man what Plato called a playboy interested in fine colors and sounds but ignorant of beauty.” He goes on to define ignorance as “the disease of which the current crisis (war) is the symptom; the disease equally of contemporary Christianity and contemporary skepticism (between which there is not so much difference).”

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy spent less than a decade of his seventy years in his native land. This perhaps was as it should have been, for in America he was more able to fulfill his mission in the world as “scholar, curator and priest of Oriental art.”

### A CLASSMATE'S TRIBUTE

(*Mr. Crofton E. Gane, Bristol*).

Ananda Coomaraswamy was respected by the boys of Wycliffe College partly on account of his scholastic ability but not less by his prowess in kicking up his leg level with or above his head.

He had his ordinary share of “teasing” by his schoolmates based in part on his being of different nationality and colour, and to arouse his ire which could only be done in safety when out of reach of his arms and legs. This was only in his first years at school when his temper was a very quick one.

A clear impression remains of his interest and proficiency in the Field Club excursions. Dr. Arthur Sibly led these to gravel beds where “Ammonites”—or similar insignificant terms labelled our findings for the School Science Show cases—here and beside the local streams Ananda gleaned and gleamed. He left school with the affectionate regard of his contemporaries who have followed his distinguished career with the greatest interest and little surprise.

## ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

(*Mr. J. V. S. Wilkinson, Library, Baroda House,  
London.*)

I have, like everyone else who knew Dr. Coomaraswamy and his work, the highest admiration and respect for his character and talents. He was indeed a unique figure, and, I suppose, more than any man of his time, contributed to an understanding by the West (as well indeed as by the East) of Oriental thought and art. I only had infrequent correspondence with him in recent years, but he was invariably courteous and helpful, and never failed to shed new light on any problem about which I consulted him.

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 THE GENIUS

(*Dr. F. L. Woodward, M.A. (Cantab.),  
Rowella, Tasmania.*)

I first met Ananda Coomaraswamy in Ceylon, in 1904. He had then just been appointed Director of the Mineralogical Survey, financed by South Kensington Museum, London. He and his assistant, Mr. Parsons, used to travel all over the country in bullock carts, living for the most part in the jungle in their tents and carts, busied with the geology, gems and minerals of Ceylon. The son of Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy, an accomplished Sanskrit scholar and benefactor of the Ceylon Tamils, and an accomplished English lady, he had studied at London University, of which he was then B.Sc.

When not abroad in his cart he lived in a bungalow just outside Kandy with his wife, Ethel, herself an artist and German scholar; she was busy translating Dr. Geiger's *Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa*, I spent many pleasant days there. He was then occupied

**THE PONAMBALAM BROTHERS**

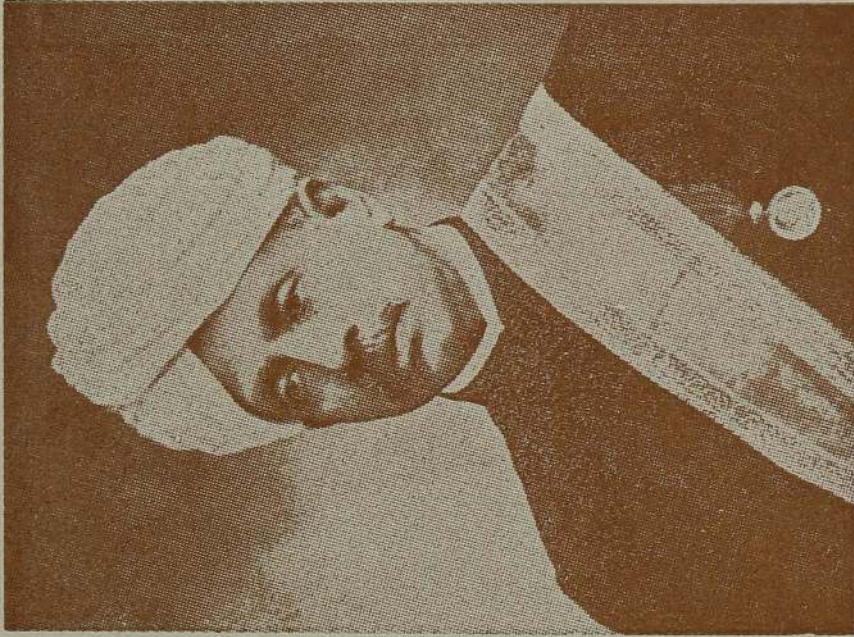
(Distinguished Cousins of Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy).



**The Hon. Mr. Ponambalam  
Coomaraswamy.**



**The Hon. Sir Ponambalam  
Ramanathan, Kt., K.C.,  
C.M.G.**



**The Hon. Sir Ponambalam  
Arunachalam, Kt.**



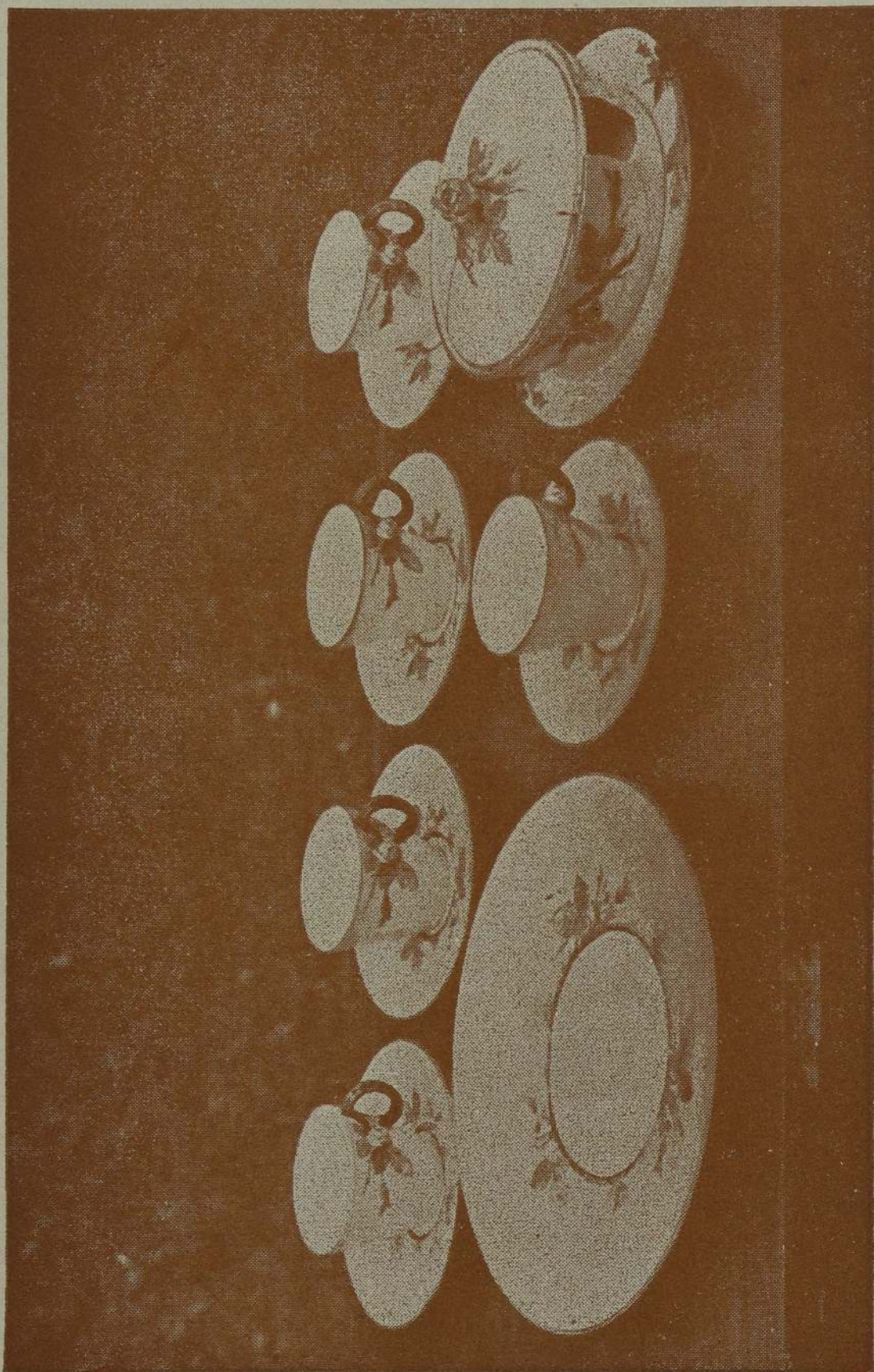
with his fine work on Ceylon *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, parts of which I remember reading, when he was typing it out as a *thesis* for his London Doctorate of Science. This he gained about 1905. Tall, of aquiline features and of distinguished bearing, he wore European clothes, but always with a turban.

In the years 1905-7 there was much talk in Ceylon of the necessity of dress reform and a return to ancient customs. A society was formed and a journal started, which, however, became the *Ceylon National Review*, in the editorship of which I joined him and Mr. W. A. de Silva. This journal was devoted to all aspects of national welfare in Ceylon. Later he thought and wrote of the proposed Ceylon University, and still later his cousin Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam started the *Ceylon University Journal*, with which also I was associated. Both Journals survived only a few years, and, as is the way in Ceylon, died natural deaths for want of support. He left Ceylon, I think, in 1907, since which time I never saw him, but have corresponded with him frequently during the following years, when he was director of the Oriental Art Department at the Boston Museum, U.S.A. When he left Ceylon for U.S.A. he was succeeded by Mr. Parsons who was unfortunately lost in the jungle at Nuwara Eliya, December 1909, at the same time as the famous disaster of Messina. His body was not discovered till some years later. He went to England with his wife and bought an ancient building at Campden, Gloucestershire, where he set up a printing-press, once used by the famous artist, William Morris, the Essex Press, where he turned out many volumes, his *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, *Thirty Indian Songs* etc. His range of intellect was wide. He was well acquainted

with Tamil and Sanskrit literature, though he did not claim to be a scholar in these languages, and was familiar with the classical languages of Europe. Though not himself a musician he had a complete understanding of the Indian modes of music, the symbology of the gestures of dancing women on which also he wrote a book. Before leaving the East he joined the Theosophical Society, of which Mrs. Annie Besant became President in 1907, she herself being keenly interested in the revival of Indian art and literature. After some years in England, busied with innumerable writings and printings, he went to Boston, U.S.A. as Director of the Oriental Art Department of the Museum, and this post he held till his death in 1947 at the age of seventy.

It would be impossible for me to enumerate the many books and articles he wrote during those years; he always sent me a copy. Latterly he spent much time over the Pali Scriptures, and, while modestly not claiming to be a Pali scholar, sent in many suggestions to the late Dr. C. A. Rhys Davids, and at the time of his death was busy with a volume of extracts from the *Tipitakas* together with Miss I. B. Horner, Secretary of the Pali Text Society.

He had no patience with the feeble imitations in modern art of ancient works, which can never be produced again. Their time has passed. One cannot step twice into the same stream. So also he would not allow of reconstruction of Gothic or other ancient buildings, holding with William Morris, whom he regarded as one of his masters, that one may prop up, repair and strengthen a building, *but never restore*. To conclude this brief record of this most distinguished son of Ceylon and England (for his gifted mother



Tea service presented to Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy by Lord Disraeli, now  
with Mr. Sri Kanta Ponnambalam.

—Studio Sun, Colombo.





was English) I will say that he was successful because he possessed the secret of developing what is called genius, the imperishable atom which records the *karma*, but which is powerless until developed. What is called 'genius' may be born with imagination, but no genius is born with knowledge. Knowledge can only be acquired in the ordinary way, by the power of intense concentration on what one is doing. This he had, whether designing a picture, copying a figure, printing a fine page or writing an article. Thus possessing by heredity on both sides a finely complex brain and, as we should say in the East, a rich *karmic* record of past lives, he, by this application, may be termed a genius. To think that a genius is 'heaven born' and steps forth in perfection is an error.

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## IN COOMARASWAMY EAST AND WEST MET TO THEIR GREAT MUTUAL ENRICHMENT

(*Rev. A. G. Fraser, M.A., Stirling, Scotland.*)

I first knew Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy in his early days in Ceylon, and thereafter kept in touch with his work and writings and we corresponded occasionally. We were both newcomers to Ceylon and to our work there when first we met, and our meetings were comparatively few as our work lay mainly in different parts of the island. But we enjoyed meeting and enjoyed agreeing and disagreeing.

Ananda Coomaraswamy was a brilliant talker and was deeply cultured. He had the courage of his convictions and feared no man. I remember when I was fiercely attacked in the newspapers he plunged into the fray in my defence. Ceylon owes him a deep debt of gratitude for the great work he did to pre-

serve her ancient monuments. He not only appreciated them but was able to awaken both peoples and government to their glory and their value. In him East and West met to their great mutual enrichment. His literary and artistic work and his exquisite printing will keep his work before the eyes of many generations.

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## ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

(*Dr. Hari Prasad Sastri, London.*)

Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy has placed India as a land of art and beauty on the art map of the world. His constructive appreciation of Indian literary and plastic art makes him perhaps the highest figure and a real son of India. He has exalted Indian art and literature to the most eminent position which it now occupies in the world. I know of no better work on Buddhism than his, I saw the other day in the British Museum and an English translation of a Persian poem by him, one of the best works I have seen on the subject. His modest living, his apathy to cheap fame, his eagerness to render justice where it is due, entitle him to a very high position. I wish every lover of Asiatic art to study Coomaraswamy's writings carefully. May his soul rest in peace.

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## A KARMA YOGI

(*Dr. Lanka Sundaram M.A., Ph.D., New Delhi*)

When in December 1946 I had the opportunity of meeting Ananda Coomaraswamy in Boston, I felt humbled in the presence of a great savant and *karma yogi*. To have had the privilege of conversing with him was to me something of a sacrament, and I had felt that my American tour would, even though I was

BURNING AND MELTING  
BEING THE SŪZ-U-GUDAZ OF MU-  
HAMMAD RIZĀ NAŪ'I OF KHABŪ-  
SHAN TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH  
BY MIRZA Y. DAWUD OF PERSIA  
AND ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY  
OF CEYLON

**Photograph of cover of *Burning and  
Melting.***



visiting that country in the name of my own, had become incomplete if this pilgrimage to Sage Ananda were not there. He and I appeared on the same public platform in Boston, and I can never forget the radiant spirit of a great soul which he showered on the assembled people. Ananda is in direct line of descent from the sages of *Bharat Varsha*, and in him India claimed a spiritual son, who, more than everyone else, interpreted her arts and architecture and culture to the Western world. Sage Ananda has now joined the Eternal, but his name and work will be remembered by one and all who ever care to think of India and her glorious cultural heritage and present contribution to the enrichment of Man.

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## ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

(*Capt. Anthony M. Ludovici, Suffolk, England*).

The death of Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy deprives the Indian people themselves of the greatest champion of their nationalist aims, and the civilized world at large of one of the most enlightened, persuasive and scholarly advocates of an aesthetic as opposed to a mass and machine-produced material culture. In both of these spheres he had shown himself consistent and convinced from the very first and, in one of his last brochures—*Why Exhibit Works of Art?* (1943)—made, I think, the most compelling appeal of all in favour of once more reconciling “work” with culture. The fact that for generations they had been divorced and that “work” is understood by the great majority of the populations of the West to mean something from which the worker has to recover by a

resort to “edifying,” or at least relaxing, leisure pastimes, was a theme Coomaraswamy was never tired of expounding. But he expounded it with a much more formidable apparatus of knowledge and insight than did either Ruskin or Morris and, above all, with a much deeper understanding of what was at stake. For he saw, as no man before him had ever clearly seen, the imminent peril of a world situation in which the majority of common men know of no deeper incentive to their labours than the remuneration these secure them.

In the first decade of the century I knew Coomaraswamy well. We used often to meet and discuss the problems we each had at heart and, although we differed on certain fundamental matters, to one of which I shall allude, my artistic upbringing and leanings inclined me to accept at least his analysis of the essential wrongness of Western industry. Nor have I read any of his works which has not confirmed me in my general agreement with him on this subject. For he was no romantic reactionary, but a logical, cool and penetrating analyst of the subjects of which he made himself master. He was a tall, strikingly handsome man, with features decidedly Eastern, one in fact who could speak of beauty, as it were, by the right of an instinctive affinity. Owing to his mixed parentage (Indian father and English mother) he was not so dark as the average Indian and having the accent and demeanour of an Englishman, could be convincing on a London platform or in any company of Englishmen. Thanks to his command of Greek, Latin and Sanskrit, he was probably the greatest scholar of his age in the Scriptures of both East and West, and was therefore a formidable exponent of the philosophical and ontolo-

gical foundations of his cultural doctrines.

Educated as a scientist (he made the original Government geological survey of Ceylon) he soon, however, turned his attention wholly to aesthetics, and one of his principal services in this field was to make the art-treasures and art-principles of his Fatherland familiar both to the Western World and the Indian people. His contributions to the philosophy of art, despite the mass and distinction of his predecessors in the field, are original, profound and, in my view, uniquely important; whilst his successful attempt properly to place the artist in society, is indispensable to all who pretend to any grasp of sociological problems. For in Coomaraswamy, they will encounter no vagueness, no sentimentalizing, no merely nostalgic revivalism. Everything is clear-cut and wholly matter-of-fact. The artist's role, his function, his impulses, even his moral code, are all defined with the coolness and exactitude of a mathematician discoursing on the magnitudes of given bodies. But the reader feels the burning passion which could inspire such calm clarity; for only fire could have reduced to their elements the scattered and heterogeneous heaps of refuse which constitute Western aesthetics and the Western conception of the place of aesthetics in civilization. Coomaraswamy's last piece of writing—*Art, Man and Manufacture*—contributed to an interesting symposium on *Our Emergent Civilization*,\* sums up and restates the fundamental principles for which he stood. But those who cannot get access to this book need not despair. In his other writings, most, if not all, of which are to be found in England,

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\*Harper & Brothers. New York, 1947. Demy 8vo. pp. 321. Price, \$4.50.

they will be able to become acquainted with his considerable achievements in the special domain which he made his life's study.

By way of conclusion, I must mention, all too briefly I am afraid, one of the more fundamental matters on which I felt bound to differ from him. I should have pointed out above that, in his advocacy of Indian Nationalism, Coomaraswamy always argued strictly on purely cultural grounds. He expressly denied that the Nationalism he had in view had any basis in breeding and racial standardization. Nevertheless, he claimed emphatically that its prerequisite was what he termed the "re-establishment of a standard of quality." This position I attacked from the first, and for the following reasons:—

I never have believed that Man can express what he is not. His expression, whether in Art, or any other individual utterances, is always the externalization of what is in him. If there is not quality in him, therefore, it is futile to expect quality in what he expresses. To recover or re-establish quality in Man's expressions of himself, he must first be re-born as a psycho-physical organism possessing quality. Thus I ascribe the Brummagem wares of Western industry, so deeply offensive to Coomaraswamy, not to any extraneous influences, whether economic, scientific, moral or political, but to the fact that Western mankind long ago became biological Brummagem; therefore, that their natural expression could not, in any case, be other than shoddy and devoid of the quality Coomaraswamy sought for in vain. Similarly, if it is essential, for the recovery of Indian Nationalism, that "a re-establishment of a standard of quality" should be effected I claim that it is idle to work or agitate or reform with



this end in view by hortatory and educational means alone. Not until you have made a population something more than biological Brummagem will you eliminate shoddy from its life.

But this objection to Coomaraswamy's doctrines, although fundamental, leaves his penetrating analysis of the artist and his function in society wholly unscathed, and it is by this analysis and the teaching that arises out of it that the brilliant subject of this brief and inadequate appreciation is likely to be known and valued by an enlightened posterity.

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## ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY AND THE PHILOSOPHIA PERENNIS

*(Mr. Thomas Derrick, Coldash, Berkshire England.)*

Ananda Coomaraswamy, with the blood both of Europe and of Asia flowing in his veins, devoted his life to excavating the wisdom of the ages as he found it submerged and forgotten. He found it in Asia: he found it in Classical Greece; and he found it in Historic Christendom and the Fathers of the Church. Two books\* recently published he would commend, not because they were compiled to do him honour, but so far as they may cause men to turn again to the *Philosophia Perennis*.

One, in the English language, comes from Asia. The other is published in England and America. This is as it should be, for Coomaraswamy was as detached from mere geography and as apart from Time as the

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\*A *Garland of Tributes*: Kuantan, Malaya. Edited by S. Durai Raja Singam.

*Art and Thought*. A Volume in honour of the late Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy; Edited by K. Bharatha Iyer.

Truth that he ministered. He built bridges across the centuries as he built them between nations and races, for his concern was with something detached from both, referred to by St. Augustine as "Wisdom that was not made, but is now what it always was and ever shall be."

Both works he saw, although uncompleted, on the occasion of his 70th birthday, August 22nd 1947. He died on the September 9th following, at Boston, in America, too soon for his intended last return to India. The first work consists of a vast mass of testimony to the man and his achievement, from all sorts of people, many of India, but also of England and America. It tells much about his life, his origins, and the immense range of his studies. The other consists of forty contributions by scholars of both East and West, writing upon the traditional Art and Thought of India, China, Tibet, Babylonia, Persia and Europe; of the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Christian and Islamic Civilisations in all their varied aspects.

So far as Coomaraswamy's name is known in England, it will probably be as a writer upon Art. He has even been referred to as an Art Critic. But this is to suggest a most restricted view of both the nature and range of his activities. He wrote of the traditional or "normal" view of art and of the life and work of Man in the World, with which, art he would say has "normally" been integrated, a view which has been accepted from pre-historic times until yesterday, until that is, the last two centuries of Humanism and the "technological" society we know to-day; which society he indicted as an outrage upon the nature and dignity of Man, involving a sub-human existence, insofar as that tradition has been lost. He endorses

Ruskin's dictum that industry without art is brutality; would approve Lethaby's definition of art as the right way of doing necessary work, and also his use of the word when he bracketed the "arts" of agriculture and architecture as changing the surface of the world. But the Art-critic as ordinarily understood, does not include agriculture within his purview. He is concerned with Art considered exclusively from the aesthetic angle, as a "luxury product" segregated in a "Gallery," so as to be "appreciated" in hours of "leisure." This is the view of the little girl quoted recently in the *New English Weekly* as saying that "she liked poetry because she liked the taste of nice words in her mouth." She also no doubt, likes chocolates, and for the same reason. And her father, most probably, inherits and accepts without question this view; which is of art as purely a matter of aesthetics and within a category entirely separated from work and the production of utilities, although he might concede some importance to the "application of Art to Industry" by aesthetic specialists trained in an "Art School," as their species of cosmetics might make the article more "saleable," saleability providing the ultimate standard. Thus do we seek to emulate the qualities of the ancient exhibit in the Art Museum! Such exhibits the spectator commonly assumes to be of necessity rare and costly, and entirely useless apart from their aesthetic qualities. Hitherto, he would reflect, their enjoyment has been the exclusive prerogative of the wealthy collector and connoisseur; but now, through the institution of public galleries and museums, such enjoyment has been made available to all. But the forced labour by which he himself lives, he regards as in the nature of things, from which his

leisure activities (exhibitions of Art being gone) provide an amelioration. He does not feel deprived as a worker. Art, which he may have been taught at school to “appreciate,” he sees as a matter of play-hours, and not of work-hours; just as his daughter does not expect to eat chocolates in classtime. It is a very superior department of the “Entertainment Industry” coming within the category of “culture.” It is “Third Programme.” Towards it he remains, and is completely resigned to remaining, a spectator. But to Coomaraswamy, as he said repeatedly, “the artist is not a particular sort of man, but every man is a particular sort of artist.”

That is the exact contrary of the current view of the artist as a peculiarly gifted man deserving special privileges, which must include complete “freedom,” to enable him to enrich society by his self-revelation which may require explanation by experts, since it derives from mysterious psychological powers vested in a highly exceptional man. Nobody would regard the Pottery that emanates from Senor Picasso’s studio as pots and pans for use. They are Art; and are intended for contemplation. The same applies to the objects in the Art Museum. They are not regarded as a normal response by ordinary workmen to the work-a-day requirements of neighbours; made for the Market Place—and not for the Sale Room: for ordinary use—and not for the Art Collection. Yet that is what they were. The men who built the village of West Wycombe in Buckinghamshire were without aesthetic obsession, and did not work according to personal inspiration, but according to the traditions of their various trades, for people much like themselves, with no special training in or preten-

sion to "good taste." We owe it to the initiative of the Royal Society of Arts that the entire village is now vested in the National Trust, which is itself evidence of our admission that something has been lost from ordinary working life, or it would not be thought necessary to preserve its traces. From such a life, the practice of what we call the "Fine" arts has not hitherto differed essentially. They are also the response of responsible workmen, but to the more complex requirements of wealthier patrons. The portraits of Velasquez were painted as a part of the necessary paraphernalia of the Spanish Court, as were the triumphal arches which he designed in honour of Royal Visitors. His picture of "The Surrender of Breda" was not conceived as an exercise in aesthetics, but to serve a practical purpose as a visible memorial to Spanish chivalry, and a particular achievement of Spanish arms, executed by a master of his trade, and possessing the devotion to his trade necessary for him to attain to mastery; using the word "trade," of course, in the traditional sense of "calling" or "vocation," and not of mere trafficking. The family portraits by Reynolds or Sir Thomas Lawrence were a part of the furnishing of the life of the hereditary English landed gentry; and were required to be of dimensions proportionate to the houses in which they were to hang. They did not begin as aesthetics any more than did Chippendale's chairs, intended primarily to be sat upon. They were made with art, which is to say with skill, just as were the other furnishings of English country mansions, or of English country cottages. It was for those of a later generation to devise a system under which art and work are disassociated, in which the words "trade"

and "master" have come to have entirely different meanings, and whose standards are quantitative and commercial. The disappearance of the craftsman—the fully and personally responsible workman—continues. Even the domestic arts decline as women are absorbed into "Industry," and may be deprived of their chosen vocation as their children are handed over to the officials of the municipal creche. The word "vocation" may still be heard as applied to the priest, but rarely in regard to anybody else. As industrial organisation becomes more impersonal and mechanical, and consequently—from the quantitative angle—more "efficient," less and less is demanded of the mass of men. As processes become more and more "fool-proof" any fool can operate them—as is intended. This alone is enough to account for the strains and dislocations of contemporary industrial life. Hence the ennui. Hence the demand for shorter and shorter working hours, with no clear idea of how the hours of leisure are to be spent, and the consequent search for external distraction and bemusement provided by an "Entertainment Industry" and the contemplation of other peoples "culture." Where in England Samuel Pepys found a "nest of singing birds," to-day he would find a "loud-speaker."

To his survey of the contemporary scene Coomaraswamy brought an immense erudition that covered the great cultural periods of all the lands he visited in the course of the world-wide travel called for by the nature of his activities. Yet in regard to it he made no claim to propound any views of his own, except so far as he had adopted them. These were, he claimed, intrinsic to the *Philosophia Perennis*, which can be recognised wherever it has not been



*House at Mutuwal now owned by Messrs. Walker Sons Ltd. where Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy was born.—Studio Sun, Colombo.*



*“Rheinland,” the house where Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy was born is now demolished—now it is “Rheinland Terrace” a built up area of modern houses.—Studio Sun, Colombo.*



*Bungalow now occupied by Mr. Donald Obeysekera where Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy's grandmother died. The house has seen extensive additions and renovations by Mr. Obeysekera. It is at Rajagiriya and stands on over 50 acres of land.—Studio Sun, Colombo.*





forgotten. Characteristically he renounced any claim to "copyright" in his writing, for what he sought to convey, he said, was not personal, but inherited and universal; "only the logical deductions of a lifetime spent in the handling of works of art, the observation of men at work, and the study of the universal philosophy of art from which our own 'aesthetic' is only a temporary provincial aberration."

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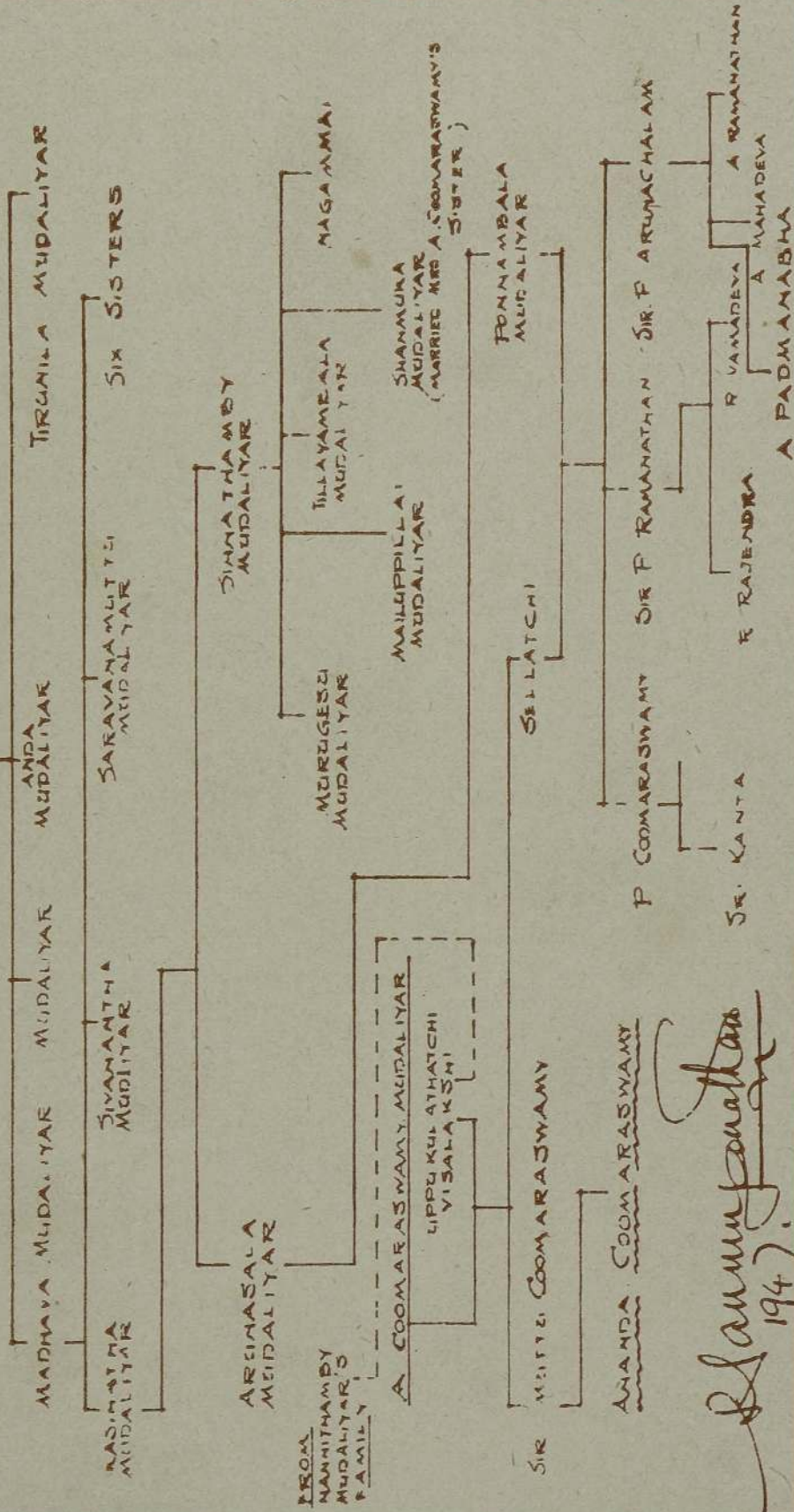
### THE SCHOLAR BORN OF THE EAST

(*Sri S. Durai Raja Singam, Kuantan, Malaya.*)

For me, as for several of his admirers throughout the world, the 9th of September, 1947, will always be pregnant with a sense of personal loss, for on that day Gurudev Ananda K. Coomaraswamy passed away. I shall not be guilty of emotional exaggeration when I say that, on receiving the sad news, I felt as though something had gone out of me. I have been a staunch admirer of this great savant in my humble obscurity as a schoolmaster and my one regret is that I did not know him earlier through his works, to which I owe such a wealth of spiritual buoyancy. There are three reasons for which Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy possesses me—he is the greatest expounder of Oriental art and philosophy, the ambassador of understanding between East and West and he is my countryman. Gurudev Ananda Coomaraswamy hailed from Jaffna, the son of the distinguished Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy and an English mother Elizabeth Clay Beeby and I would not be human if I did not feel a certain pride in the fact that he came from the same part of the country as I though of course he belongs not only to Ceylon and India but also to the whole world.

Born on August 22nd 1877, he was educated at Wycliffe College and the University of London, specializing largely in Science. In 1903 he was Director of Mineralogical Survey for Ceylon but a few years later turned to Indian internal affairs to initiate a movement towards a national education system for India. In support of his effort he founded and was President of the Ceylon Social Reform Society and edited the *Ceylon National Review*. When Ceylon was trying to become wholly westernised and was belittling everything Indian he had come to the forefront to stem the tide of degeneration. He then directed his tremendous powers of concentration and learning to the arts and in 1910-1911 he was placed in charge of the art section of the United Provinces Exhibition in Allahabad, India. Six years later he joined the staff of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts to begin the most productive period of his career. Side by side with his museum work, he contributed much in the world of letters. He was a Fellow of the British Geological and Linnean Societies, and the University College of London, a founder and Vice-President of the Royal India Society of London, honorary member of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute of India. He also received honorary degrees from the Universities of London, New York and Ceylon as well as high recognition from learned societies of three continents. He was a prolific writer and author of several publications all of which have received respectful attention. The world, however, will assess him impersonally as a master-mind in his sphere, an eloquent speaker and and a choice author of over six hundred publications on Eastern art against its religious and philosophic background in more languages than one As a prolific

FAMILY TREE OF ANANDA COOMARASWAMY  
LOKHANADA MUDALIYAR OF MANIPALY



Family Tree of Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy—Drawn by  
Sri S. Sanmuganathan, Colombo.

*S. Sanmuganathan*  
1947.



writer, none perhaps realized better than he the truth in the Roman saying *ars longa, vita brevis*; and a clue to the real inner Ananda Coomaraswamy may be found in the words he wrote to me: "I have enough work in hand for another life-time."

The debt to him of India and Ceylon lies perhaps in the fact that, by his profound insight and recognition of relative merits he turned the tide of servile adulation for all things Western even in matters of art and spiritual development, in which the East, he stoutly maintains, is not inferior to the West. He rescued Eastern art from the obloquy of antiquity as objects fit only for preservation for eyes in a museum by initiating its true renaissance in his mother country and other Eastern countries bound to it by cultural affinities. Indeed, he re-discovered for many the India of the ages and unfolded her variegated and classic cultural patterns from time immemorial. No Indian has ever touched upon nobler themes from India's art, history and civilization than Ananda Coomaraswamy. What Shri Jawaharlal Nehru said of Swami Vivekananda is equally applicable to Ananda Coomaraswamy. "Rooted in the past and full of pride in India's heritage, he was yet modern in his approach to life's problems and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and the present."

True to ancient Indian tradition, he was for the last thirty years an emissary of Eastern culture to the West unfolding as he did during his life time, the wisdom of saints and philosophers from Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and Taoism. Nor was he merely extensive in his erudition to the point of Catholicism. His work the outcome of dedicating a life-time to cultural matters, embraces art, music,

drama, mysticism and folklore of the East, all of which he had explored extensively to the full in his works. And on these he ever brought to bear Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas and also the religious texts and thought of India, China and other lands of the East. He is in short a towering beacon in his sphere, writing for the select cultured minds of the world. Romain Rolland in his Introduction to the French edition of the *Dance of Shiva*, says: "Ananda Coomaraswamy is one of those greatest Hindus who nourished, like Tagore, on the culture of Europe and Asia and justifiably proud of their splendid civilization, have conceived the task of working for Eastern and Western thought for the good of humanity." Dr. Langdon Warner of Harvard University pays tribute to Ananda Coomaraswamy's being in advance of the times—a true signal of all geniuses. In a letter to the writer he states: "It is my belief that our true debt to Ananda Coomaraswamy will not be appreciated during his life-time and that a century may elapse before art critics and historians of religion and philosophers will turn to his writings for source material."

And now death has claimed him for his own, incredible and stupefying though it is because of his endearment to his admirers. Yet only a few months ago, one could recall, he was being lionized as a savant on his 70th birthday by well-wishers in America, England, India, Ceylon and other parts of the world. Dinners were held in celebration of the occasion, festchrights presented and his portrait unveiled at the King George V Hall of the Ceylon University. He had been all in all thirty years a Research Fellow in Indian, Persian and Mohammedan Art at

the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Museum Officials, who described him as "one of the greatest scholars in his field" admitted that under his direction Eastern, Indian and Persian collections at the museum have become the most important in the world. He was an exceptional linguist who spoke even Icelandic. Dr. Coomaraswamy was aided greatly in building up the museum's outstanding collection of Far Eastern art through his ability to communicate to people in many lands in their own languages.

Throughout his life he searched the Scriptures of all men in order to better his own, and always for his own need to understand what there was to learn "here." This led to his enormous work, from articles a few pages to large books and the number of titles he wrote are somewhat over 650. "Other men" he used to say, "will read these writings, but I hope they shall not think of me as something novel."

Everyday of his life he grew wiser and gentler, everyday far away from his own land he became more Indian and more orthodox, he was brought to think this way by the very logic his scientific training gave him and because he took his learning to its roots, and was not satisfied with the surfaces alone. He said over and over, "I am indebted to every thinker and philosopher and considered the TRUTH no matter what part of the world they stem from." He was as completely selfless a man as one could imagine, and praise of any sort would make him very shy. Perhaps he detested above all things *aham*. From a human interest I asked him once to write his autobiography and he replied, "I have enough work in view that I could complete in another lifetime. The wisdom of India should have taught you that portraiture of

human beings is *asvargaya*. All this is not a matter of modesty but one of principle."

Tall, well over six feet, he had a large head with beautiful deep set eyes, an aquiline nose, a mouth denoting at the same time a keen sense of humour and a great kindness and his demeanour was entirely amiable and friendly. He was not only one of the greatest scholars in the world but combined also the gift of a most profound mind with those of a keen spiritual insight and a highly religious attitude towards life and human beings. Although he spent his days in the splendid Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, he loved beauty and *rasa* of the Divine presence it carries with it, that his own home was another museum full of beautiful paintings, sculpture and art objects mostly from his beloved India. His contention was that the motion produced in the soul by the sentiment of beauty in objects is one of the most immediate avenues of communion with the Divine Reality which is upholding all beings into Beings; and as he did not recognise a cleavage between the artist and the artisan, he considered that a beautiful teapot or a beautiful scarf was quite capable of awakening the eyes of the soul as any other object of beauty.

Dr. Coomaraswamy's death though at the age of three score and ten, is a veritable irony of fate, for it was in his mind to retire from his post and live simply near the Himalayas for the remainder of his life in a mode approximating as far as possible to the *Vanaprastha* (forest - dwelling) — idea of Indian sages. The writer wrote to him to inquire if he would revisit India and Ceylon in the near future as there were many anxious to have his *darshan* and he



I have the highest respect for Mahatma Gandhi's work in this field. ~~He has~~ By his advocacy of satya-graha he is reminding us of one of his most ancient ideals and is not only a teacher for India but a jagat-guru.

But non-violence, as he also knows, is not merely a matter of refraining from visibly violent actions; it is a matter of making peace with our Selves, one of learning to obey our Inner Man; for none but the outer man, a eye, is aggressive.

**Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's reply to the question,  
"What is your tribute to Gandhiji for achieving freedom  
through non-violence?"**

(In a letter to Sri S. Durai Raja Singam).



replied: "My wife and I are returning to live in Northern India for the rest of our lives. This will be by the end of 1948. We mean to live in *retirement*. I shall not take part in any public functions or affairs whatever but individuals who wish to do so will be free to visit us."

The most lovable characteristic of Dr. Coomaraswamy is his complete affability. On Indian Independence Day he saw the fulfilment of a cherished dream of his and when I asked for his message to New India he wrote to me on the 15th of August 1947 (Independence Day) the following:—"*Be yourself. Follow Mahatma Gandhi, Bharatan Kumarappa, D. V. Gundappa, Abul Kalam Azad, Abdul Gaffar Khan and Sri Ramana Maharishi. Co-operate with such men as the Earl of Portsmouth, George Bourne, Wilfred Wellock, Jean Giono, Fernando Nobre. Why consider the inferior philosophers? Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.*"

When he was asked what tribute he paid to Gandhiji for having achieved freedom through Non-violence, he wrote: "*I have the highest respect for Mahatma Gandhi's work in this field. By his advocacy of Satyagraha he reminded India of her most ancient ideals and is not only a teacher for India but a Jagat-Guru. But non-violence, as he also knows, is not merely a matter of refraining from visibly violent actions, it is a matter of making peace with ourselves, one of learning to obey our inner man, for none but the outer man or ego is aggressive.*" Like all great men, Dr. Coomaraswamy was a citizen of the world untrammelled by narrow nationalist bonds and ever encouraged cultural intercourse to bridge the chasm of ethnocentrism in our modern world. This is what he

advocates succinctly to strengthen the ties of India and Ceylon: "In the educational field, exchange professorships and studentships. Politically, alliance for common defence." Similarly, the affinity and understanding of a once common Hindu heritage, he opined, could be fostered between India and Java, Bali, Malaya, Siam, Cambodia and Ceylon. In addition he suggested the establishment of chairs of India's cultural history in wider aspects and renewed contacts as contemplated at the first All-Asia Conference. The above are some of the treasured extracts from a letter which he wrote to me a few weeks before his death. He saw his dream of FREE INDIA fulfilled. It is a pity that we have been deprived of his valuable guidance when it is most needed in the nation's cultural endeavours in the next few years that will be eventful in *Gandhi's East*, a term so beautifully coined by Dr. Coomaraswamy. When the full story of *Gandhi's East* is written the historians will not forget Ananda Coomaraswamy. To-day in India when the country has just celebrated its deliverance, when the 'finale' has just been written by Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders to the beautiful allegory of *Mata Bharat* which Coomaraswamy wrote in his *Essays in National Idealism* it is but right that we keep alive his memory rather than remember vaguely of the numerous services rendered by "myriad-minded" Coomaraswamy for the cause of our culture and artistic revival.

How best can his memory be perpetuated now that he is gone? Perhaps leaders of India and Ceylon will keep alive his memory in some suitable form. Perhaps some day a fitting memorial in the form of a Coomaraswamy Cultural Centre will be established by

a grateful generation of admirers in this land or may it not be wise for us Indians and Ceylonese to establish a Coomaraswamy Chair of Eastern Religions and Philosophy at one of our Universities. Will not our wealthy philanthropists award Coomaraswamy Gold Medals to research students in the field of Asian history and culture at our universities in India, Ceylon and Malaya?

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### DR. A. K. COOMARASWAMY HAD WORK PLANNED FOR THE NEXT 100 YEARS

*(Mr. Robert Paul Dars, Boston, U.S.A.)*

In the death of Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, the Museum of Fine Arts with which he was so long a distinguished member of its Asiatic staff, lost one of its brilliant scholars. Under his guidance and discernment the magnificent collections of Indian and Persian Arts were assembled and catalogued.

His real achievement, however, was his untiring effort in bringing to the attention of the modern world of letters, through his interpretation, the thoughts of the great truth seekers of the past, both of the East and West. It was his desire to place before the Occidental world the glories of the teachings of the East, stressing the accomplishments of Indian culture. It was his claim that though the apparent differences between the basic ideas of the Occident and Orient seemed unsurmountable, the essentials and the truths which they both proclaimed were the same; as truth is truth which neither time nor place can change. He was indefatigable in his work. He wrote without hesitancy and did practically all his writing directly on the typewriter. His

mind functioned with rapidity and clearness and his ability to select words that would express the desired shades of meaning was astounding. He once told me that he had work planned for the next one hundred years. He had little use for the so-called "civilization" of the West. He abhorred the "factory" system of the present-day world with its deadening pace. To him every worker should create for the joy of creating. The object made could not be divorced from its maker. Mass production stifled all individual creative effort. He fought against the invasion of our modern machine age into the countries of the Orient. The early and disciplined craftsmanship was his ideal. It led to a creative development and gave direction point and purpose to living. He believed that every man should work for the delight of working otherwise he became a slave eking out a mere existence.

Dr. Coomaraswamy was ever willing to aid a student in the quest of learning. He was always ready to explain in great detail an answer to a question which was asked with a sincere desire for knowledge. He was the champion of all culture and thought. His entire life was dedicated to the explanation of truth as exemplified in symbol and the written word. His scholarship, as shown by his voluminous writings, will always speak for itself.

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## ANANDA COOMARASWAMY

### *Esse Omnium Est Superesse Divinitas*

(Dr. Ruth Nanda Anshen, Ph. D., New York).

"As one embraced by a darling bride knows naught of "I" and "Thou," so self embraced by the foreknowing (solar) Self knows naught of a "myself" within or

a "thyself" without. It is this Self that the man who really loves himself or others, loves in himself and in them; all things are dear only for the sake of the Self. In this true love of Self the distinction of selfishness from altruism loses all its meaning. He sees the Self, the Lord, alike in all beings, and all beings alike in that Lordly Self. "Loving thy Self," in the words of Meister Eckhart, "thou lovest all men as thy Self." All these doctrines coincide with the Sufi. "What is love? Thou shalt know when thou becomest me."

Such may be said to be the epitome of the metaphysics of Ananda Commaraswamy. Through his words we find the meaning of *logos* and *eros*. Sombart has said that the erotic and the ontologic man is dead. Coomaraswamy has helped to return him to life. He has revived the erotological man and has pointed to the deep strength of the truth, even as Eckhart has, that: "I must go down unto Eternal Death and Annihilation lest the Last Judgment come and find me Unannihilate and I be seized and given into the hands of my own selfhood."

Coomaraswamy was profoundly cognizant with Plato and Plotinus that the enunciation of abstract principles and doctrines is not sufficient. He emphasized again and again that abstract principles and doctrines only engender validity when they are suffused with the implicit suggestion of the concrete unity of experience whereby every abstract entity obtains its vigor and vitality. He pointed to the fallacy of Leibnitz in embracing the necessity of finite monads based upon a substratum of deistic infinitude, showing the limitation in Leibnitz' thought in not recognizing that infinitude is mere vacancy

apart from its embodiment of finite values. For the notion of understanding requires some grasp of how the finitude of the entity in question requires infinity, and also some notion of how infinity requires finitude. Coomaraswamy was cognizant of a deep metaphysical truth; the truth that Buddhism in emphasizing the sheer infinity of the divine principle robbed its practical influence of energetic, originative values and activity, and he pointed to the equal truth that Christianity, on the other hand, in pragmatizing the spirit, compelled it to congeal in the pitiless lava of the phenomena, while in postulating the immortality of the soul condemned it to a relativism on earth and bestowed upon *caritas* its inevitable denigration into *cupiditas*.

The significance of Coomaraswamy's thought lies in his idea of existence. Abstraction involves emphasis, and emphasis vivifies experience, for good, or for evil. All characteristics peculiar to actualities are modes of emphasis whereby finitude vivifies the infinite. In this way creativity involves the production of value—experience, by the inflow from the infinite into the finite, deriving special character from the details and the totality of the finite pattern. This is the abstraction involved in the creation of any actuality, with its union of finitude with infinity. But Coomaraswamy declared that consciousness proceeds to a second order of abstraction whereby finite constituents of the actual thing are abstracted from that thing, this procedure being indispensable for finite thought.

In applying this principle to the problem of gradation and evolution, Coomaraswamy's analysis is invaluable. He refutes the Hegelian interpretation of



progress with its panlogism and its attempt to embrace within its own law all experience under the aegis of reason. He abrogates the doctrine of a creation "in the beginning" and that of the gradual development of new species as being irreconcilable with each other. These two propositions are doubtless incompatible if the mystical account is to be interpreted historically. The serious mythologist, however, is well aware that to interpret myth as factual history is to mistake the genre; and that a myth can only be called "true" when time and place are abstracted. If the doctrine of special creation is understood as it has generally been interpreted by Christian and other philosophers, then gradation and evolution are not irreconcilable alternatives, but only different ways, respectively ideal and historical, formal and figurative, algebraic and arithmetical, or describing one and the same thing.

In these philosophies causality is taken for granted; nothing happens by chance. The impossible never happens; what takes place is always the realization of a possibility. But we have to take account of two orders of causes, one, a First Cause, in which the possibilities inhere, and, two, Mediate Causes, by which the conditions are provided in which the possible becomes the necessary. The First Cause of the existence of things, or in other words their possibility, is often called "God," but also "Being," "Life," or "Nature" (*natura naturans*). This First Cause, whether philosophically "absolute" or mythically "personified," is the direct cause of the being of things, but only indirectly of the manner of their being. The manner of their being (according to which they are distinguished as species) is determined by the Mediate

Causes, known or unknown, of which the result is the production of the given species or individual at a given time or place. The category of Mediate Causes does not exclude any of those forces or tendencies or determining accidents on which the evolutionist relies as explanations of the observed series; if he differs from the philosopher in ignoring a First Cause, it is because he is not discussing the origin of life, but only its variety. Also, if by "in the beginning" we understand an operation completed at a given moment, i.e., at the beginning of time itself, then of course gradation and evolution become incompatible concepts. As to this "beginning," it must of course be realized that, as St. Augustine declares, the question, What was God doing before he created the world, is meaningless; or to say the same thing in other words, that a succession of events in the eternal now (of which empirical experience is impossible) is as inconceivable as the notion of a locomotion in the Infinite. What our philosophers actually understand by "in the beginning" is a logical and not a temporal priority. So Coomaraswamy, following Meister Eckhart, shows that "God is creating the whole world *now*, this instant," and, faithful to Jacob Boehme, points out that "it is an everlasting beginning." Referring to the Rgveda, Coomaraswamy reiterated, "this creation cannot be regarded as a single definite act: it is regarded as ever proceeding." This does not mean that it is unfinished in *principio* and *ex tempore*, but that it is apprehended by ourselves as a temporal sequence and *as if* cause and effect could be separated from one another by sensible periods. Coomaraswamy quotes Philo when he declares that "at that time,

indeed, all things took place simultaneously.....but a sequence was necessarily written into the narrative from one another,”—just as it is necessarily written into the evolutionist’s narrative; for what Gradation states *sub specie aeternitatis*, the Myth relates *sub specie aeviternitatis*, and History *sub species temporis*. “What is rooted in the nature of the All is, in the Myth, figurately treated as coming into being by generation and creation: stage and sequence are transferred, for clarity of exposition, to things whose being and definite form are eternal.” (Plotinus, *Enneads* IV. 8.4.) The validity of Coomaraswamy’s position is an echo of the *Mathnawi* of Rumi II. 970, where one reads, “The beginning which is thought, comes to an end in action; know that in such wise was the construction of the world in eternity.” And finally Coomaraswamy’s argument may be consummated by a line from Dante’s *Paradiso*, XXIX 20-1, *Nè prima nè poscia procedette lo discorrer di Dio sopra quest “acque.”*

The concepts, then, on the one hand of the eternal and ideal pattern or “intelligible world,” unextended in space and time, and on the other of a temporal and “sensible world” extended in space and time as an echo, reflection or imitation of the other, are not alternative, but correlative. Each implies the other; the uniformity of the intelligible world is in every way compatible with the multiformity of its manifestations. A real conflict of science with religion is unimaginable; the actual conflicts are always of scientists ignorant of religious philosophy with fundamentalists who maintain that the truth of their myth is historical.

The problem of the “Self”, the Self which has

suffered so much denigration at the hands of the pragmatist, empiricist and Freudian degenerating into a mere solipsism, an oscillation between the *ding an sich* and the *être pour moi*, a *pro ratione voluntas* without principles and without norms, has occupied almost the center of Coomaraswamy's thought. *Metanoesis* means to come to an understanding *with*. The word "with" must be stressed because in order to grasp the problems involved it is essential to remember that all words containing the prepositions *co* or *con*, *sum* *sun*, and all such terms as self-control," "self-government," and "self-possession" (*com-posure*), imply a relation between *two* things which are in the final analysis respectively human and divine. In this respect Coomaraswamy is an orthodox Platonist for Plato himself makes an analogous observation in the *Republic*, 431A, B, 436B. When you are rid of self, then you are Self-controlled and when Self-controlled, you are Self-possessed and when Self-possessed, then you are possessed of God and all that he has ever made. All this implies "to be together with" and "to come together with," which in turn implies con-gress and unification, a "becoming one" in the erotic no less than in other senses even as *telos* means to be perfected, to marry or to die.

In other words, the great comprehension is a kind of synthesis and agreement by which our internal conflict is resolved or, as the Sanskrit texts point out, in which "all the knots of the heart are loosed." If we were to ask, an agreement of what with what? the answer would be evident: unanimity *homonoia* of the worse and the better, human and divine parts of us, as to which should rule. It is the command to us made by Plato: the assimilation of the knower with

the to-be-known, in accordance with the archetypal nature, and coming to be in this likeness, which likeness now begins again to be formed in us.

Coomaraswamy, committed as he is to the intrinsic organicity of man and the cosmos, finds no contradiction but rather vital analogical references among various philosophies, whether of East or West, whether ancient or modern, that embrace this organic unity. He quotes Plato again and again declaring with him that "when the two parts of the mortal soul have been calmed and the third part of the soul is so moved that we are of one mind with our real Self, we thus obtain true knowledge in the stead of our opinion." (Republic 571, 572). In terms of Indian philosophy this is for Coomaraswamy also the marital agreement, or unanimity of the elemental self with the prescient solar spirit in a union transcending the consciousness of a within or without; or as he himself says, "the fusion of the Outer King with the Inner Sage, the *Regnum* with the *Sacerdotium*."

When Parmenides declares that to be and to know are one and the same; when we read in the Upanishads that we come to be of just such stuff as that on which the mind is set; when we are reminded by St. Paul in the Ephesians that we must be renewed in the spirit of the mind; then we embrace with Coomaraswamy the truth that to repent is to become another and a new man, and that this transformation is a transformation of one's whole being from human to divine understanding, from paranoia to metanoia.

The sagacity of Coomaraswamy is not eclipsed by his erudition. Neither has he abrogated his right to be called a man. He has not repudiated his humanity. In his metaphysics we discern the possi-

bility of finding oneself ultimately in the presence of an Ideal Judge who knows all Good and Evil. The world as we approached it seemed so restless, so disheartening, without teleological significance. The world of our postulates was a brighter one only because we determined to make it so. But there was something lonely and isolated in the thought that the postulates received, as a response from the world of reality, only their own echo—and often not even that. Their world was rather their own creation than a universal truth that gave them independent substance and support. Frequently there seemed to be nothing solid that could reverberate at all. But Coomaraswamy has shown us that we may look upon a truth that is indeed not dependent on any subjective longings, on whims of social tradition, on demands of our personal narrow lives. Indeed, what is a mind that feeds upon itself? It is empty. The real function of the human mind is not to describe things as it sees them, but as they are. Either we shall be free from things, and slaves to our minds, or free from our minds because submitted to things, or rather to the intelligible truth which is embodied in them and akin to our mind.

Man is not isolated although in him alone the life current overcomes resistance that elsewhere has arrested its advance. Yet he is different; for in him we find no limit set to that advance nor do we see any resistance that shall bring it to an end, not even, perhaps, the barrier of death. An implacable law decrees that spirit must encounter the resistance of matter, that life cannot advance without bruising that which lives, and that great moral results are purchased by blood and tears. But for Coomaraswamy

humanity is saved in the midst of material suffering or material pleasure from moral downfall while the people appealing in their desolation to the heroism of love and to the unity of the finite with the infinite, raise on high the paeon of deliverance from the depths of ruin and of grief. To the force which feeds only on its own brutality Coomaraswamy opposes that which seeks above and within itself a principle of life and renovation. While the one is gradually spending itself, the other is continually remaking itself, and reveals to us our creative power in a life that has become our own—a life we guide and determine towards the fulfillment of our destiny. To Coomaraswamy we owe an everlasting debt of gratitude, gratitude for the reassurance that the life of the spirit is not dead, and that infinity fecundated by finitude will ultimately breathe into us, the knowledge of our just place in the cosmos, a place somewhat less anthropomorphic than it has been considered but not reducing our dignity and that will lead as unwavering through the valley of the shadow.

For Nature can only be viewed as a domain of multiple actual occasions in process. Each of these occasions comes to be in an indivisible stretch of time, by making internal to itself, in a creative act, all that lies beyond it in the universe. Nothing is simply located here and not in some sense also there. But just what meaning the universe has for a particular occasion, only that occasion can decide as it comes to be, after which it perishes, though not without acquiring a kind of immortality in nature and in God. This metaphysics unites notions which modern thought has commonly held apart, such as actuality and potentiality, physical and mental, God

and nature, universal and particular, thought and feeling. It deepens the concept of reason making it as fundamental as consciousness, language, inference or any other special power. Coomaraswamy's metaphysics stands as a great modern synthesis, on a scale of comprehensiveness and elaboration rare in the history of philosophy.

The Vedic doctrine which is neither pantheistic nor polytheistic, nor a worship of the powers of Nature, has shown us that *Natura naturans est Deus* and that all her powers are but the names of God's acts; that *Karma* is not "fate" except in the orthodox sense of the character and destiny that inhere in created things themselves and, rightly understood, determines their vocation; that *Maya* is not illusion, but rather the maternal measure and means essential to the manifestation of a quantitative world of appearances, by which we may be either enlightened or deluded according to the degree of our maturity; that Reality is immutable and is not what its appearance seems to reveal in particular things which are ceaselessly appearing and disappearing, beginning to be, then progressively changing, decaying, and coming to an end; that finally *Reality* is not alone plurality, diversity, mutability and caducity but is rather *esse omnium est superesse divinitas*, namely, the being of all things is the divinity which is above being and this constitutes reality.

In such wise has Ananda Coomaraswamy brought to our consciousness the passion and wisdom that keeps the flame of the spirit alive. He has shown that it is contrary to Buddhist, as it is to Vedantic doctrine, to think of ourselves as wanderers in the



fatally determined storm of the world's flow. Our immortal Self is anything but a surviving personality. We are reminded that "it is not this man So-and-So that goes home and is lost to view," but the prodigal Self that recollects itself, and that having been many is now again one and inscrutable, *Deus absconditus*. "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven" and the realization of Nirvana is the flight of the Alone to the Alone. But it is not a dark solitude that the spirit of Coomaraswamy now inhabits in eternity. If he were to speak to us, as indeed he still does, perhaps he would say with Plotinus, "I am here with that to which we are all ultimately committed in a great and ineluctable surrender, I am here with the One which is neither an *it*, nor a *he*, and it is because nothing in it is that everything comes from it; so much so that in order that being be, the One itself is bound not to be being but the father of being, and being is its first-born child.

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### ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

(*Dr. V. Raghavan, Head of the Department of Sanskrit, University of Madras*).

Jayeiva patya usati visasre tanvam atmanah  
Yasmai kala Bharati tam KUMARASVAMINAM numah

It was nearly nineteen years ago that I first got into touch with Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. I had published some papers on *Indian Theatre and Dance* in the *Triveni*, Madras and on Sanskrit Texts on Painting in the *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Calcutta. I had quoted in one of the former Dance articles, Kathakali and Other Forms of *Bharata Natya* outside

Kerala, a half-verse from the *Vishnudharmottara* on some images appearing to smile as it were in the sweetness of their form, and looking like possessing the breath of life, and instanced in that connection the figure of *Rajagopala* at the Mannargudi Temple; Coomaraswamy marked this passage and asked me to give the exact reference to the half-verse in the *Vishnudharmottara*.

In my article on Sanskrit Texts on Painting in the *Indian Historical Quarterly*, I had criticised Coomaraswamy's interpretation of the terms *Rasachitra* etc. in the Painting chapter of the *Silparatna*, and in explaining the correct meanings of these terms, I had, for the first time, shown in extenso the indebtedness of the *Silparatna* text to that of the *Abhilashitarthachintamani*. Coomaraswamy not only accepted my interpretation of the terms *Rasachitra* etc., but got from me the exact references to the painting portion of Someswara's work and produced his translation of that portion in the *Technical Studies*, in the notes to which he made several references to my articles.

Another set of my articles in which Coomaraswamy took interest is *Natyadharmi* and *Lokadharmi* in the *Journal of Oriental Research*, which he later listed in the Bibliography at the end of his revised edition of the *Mirror of Gesture*. He expressed himself against the wrong and undue stress laid by me in my interpretation of the terms *Anukara* (imitation) and *Sadrsya* in the article on *Lokadharmi*, and after his further elucidation, in his own penetrating manner, of the exact import and limits of *Sadrsya* applicable to Indian Art, embodied in the volume on *Transformation of Nature in Art*, I came to understand that term in its proper perspective.

The increasing volume of day to day official work in purely literary fields prevented the further maintenance of regular correspondence, but communion through books and articles continued; reprints of his articles on Aesthetics were coming, and as a daily student of *Alankara-sastra* I was following everything that he wrote on Indian and mediaeval Christian aesthetic. Even later when his preoccupation was with comparative religion, my work continued to get his attention; he mentioned my paper on Dara Shikoh's *Majma-ul-Bahrain* (Mingling of the Two Oceans) in his on the One Summit to which all Paths Lead, included in the latest collection *Bugbear of Literacy*. Shortly before he passed away, he made enquiries about me and my work through one of our younger scholars who had been abroad. These recapitulations show how and to what extent Coomaraswamy influenced the mind and imagination of younger workers in the field of India's artistic and cultural heritage. The Sanskrit verse homage at the head of this article figured in a contribution that I made on the occasion of Coomaraswamy's sixtieth birthday, but which, strangely and unfortunately, was omitted and could not reach him.

The work of Coomaraswamy, like that of a true genius, was marked by both quantity and quality; numerous, varied and of outstanding excellence, his writings are all the more remarkable for their packed-up matter, the allusions and authorities cited almost for every phrase and sentence never however, disturbing the flow of the elegant diction that he always commanded. To scholars, his notes and bibliographies were objects of as much meticulous study as his essays, some of these references being too inaccessible

but very important publications, for example, the Earl of Portsmouth's *Alternative to Death*, a book that I tried very hard to get at. For pithiness, pregnant suggestion and poignant saying, his last years' expositions concerning philosophy and forms of society became especially remarkable.

Whatever the field one is working in, one finds that Coomaraswamy has something on it; recently, during my work on a critical edition of a Sanskrit work called *Sringaramanjari* on the different types of lovers, I found that I had some excellent material in Coomaraswamy's writing on the *Eight Kinds of Nayikas*.

For a whole generation he had been the foremost authority on Indian art and archaeology, and the greatest exponent of the ideals, methods and achievements of Indian art. His exposition has been an eye-opener not only to the West but more so to Indians themselves, who had fastly become oblivious of their heritage. But all this distinguished contribution of his was transcended by his last years' preoccupation in the larger field of life-philosophy, society-pattern and the common spiritual heritage of humanity. Spirituality is the inescapable inner magnet within Indian art and culture to which every true inquirer is ultimately drawn. To quote Coomaraswamy himself, his work progressed from Indian art to "the wider field of the whole traditional theory of art and of the relation of man to his work," and to "the fields of comparative religion and metaphysics," (*Talk at the Boston Dinner*), and "no day passed in which he did not search the Scriptures and the works of the great theologians of all ages." (*The Religious Basis of Forms of Indian*

*Society*). “During many years,” he says, I have collected from Eastern and Western sources parallel passages in which identical doctrines have been enunciated.....in order to show that the doctrines themselves are cognate in the same sense that etymons, e.g. of Greek and Sanskrit are cognate.....” (*The Common Wisdom of the World by A. K. Coomaraswamy, Munshi Commemoration Volume*). “I am convinced with Jeremias that the human cultures in all their apparent diversity are but the dialects of one and the same language of the spirit.....” (*Boston Dinner*). It is by his masterly exposition of the traditional view of art, craft and vocation, and of this “common universe of discourse” that he built up a new school of international intellectuals and literateurs who became profound believers in the *Philosophia Perennis, Sanatana Dharma*. While on one side the limited range and settled canons of official orientalism in the West and textual scholarship in India could not often see eye to eye with him, forgetting the fact that frequently the insight of an attuned imagination pierced to the truth more unerringly than the eye of mere scholarship or the spectacles of philological indexes, his expositions of the traditional view of life ran, on the other, counter to prevalent political and social doctrines in the West which he denounced in scathing terms as “a commercial financial institution having theft as its final object” and as “a mechanism” in which “the ‘whole man’ was reduced to mere ‘hands,’ ‘cogs in a wheel,’ ‘copies of copies.’” While we in India are being swept by these ideologies from the modern West and would cry at any call to preserve tradition as *atavism*, a steadily growing community of savants in the West has come to believe in the wisdom of the

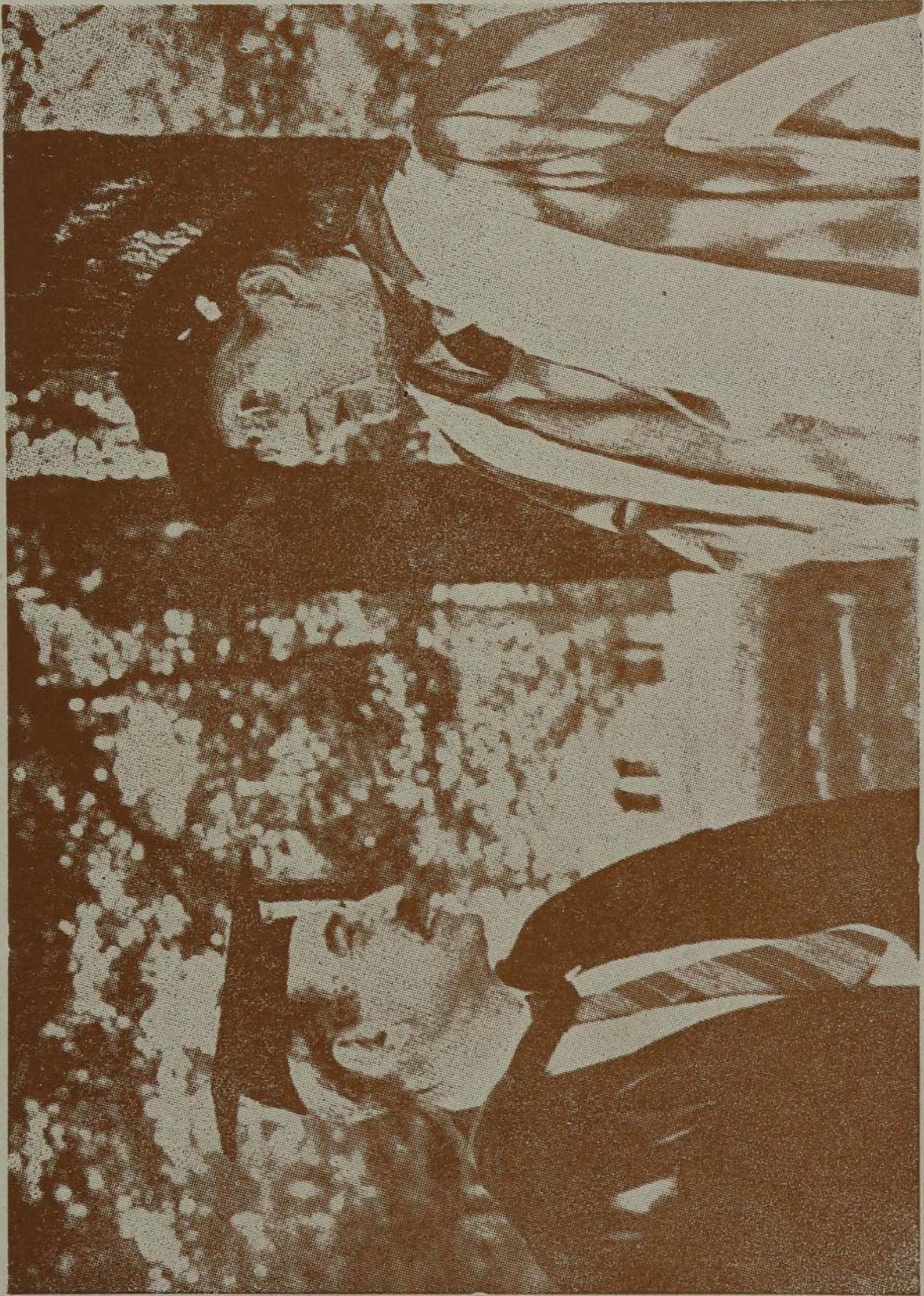
teachings of Coomaraswamy. These are our new 'Astikas,' and Coomaraswamy their 'Acharya' ended up as a true 'Rishi' by resurrecting this 'Darsana' of tradition. The earlier we garner up the remnants of our traditional culture, the greater the prospect of the ark of the new and free India saving itself from deluge.

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## UNIQUE MEDIATOR BETWEEN THE WORLDS OF INDIAN THOUGHT AND WESTERN SCHOLARSHIP

(*Dr. Richard G. Salomon, Kenyon College, Gambier,  
Ohio, U.S.A.*)

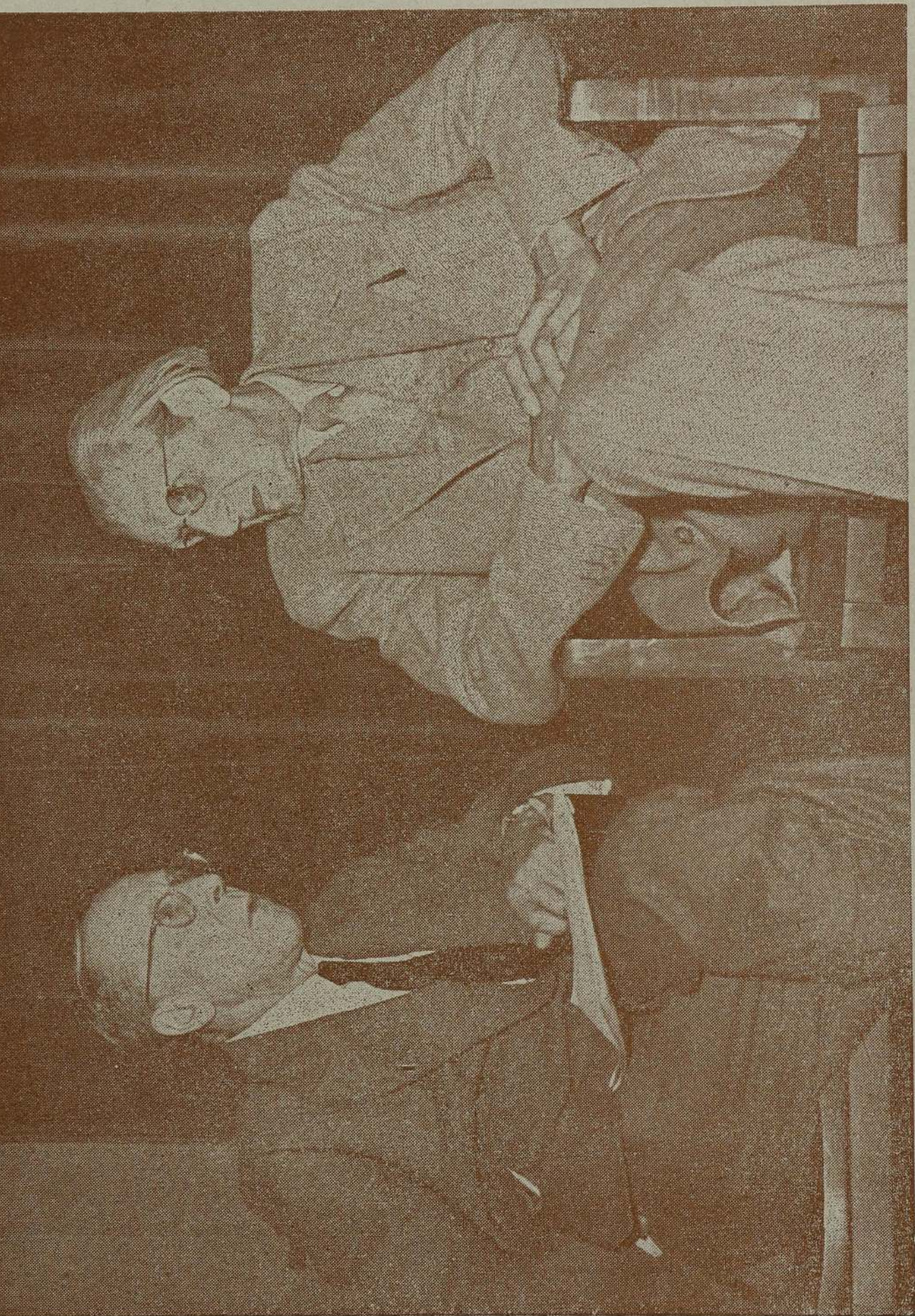
In my collection of photos there is a picture showing Ananda Coomaraswamy in discussion with myself. The photo is a cherished memento of the first Kenyon Conference on the Heritage of the English-Speaking Peoples which was held here in the fall of 1946, not long before Coomaraswamy's death. He appears in the picture in the colourful regalia of the University of London. For me, there is much of symbolical value just in this circumstance. Coomaraswamy will live in our memory as a unique mediator between the worlds of Indian thought and Western scholarship. Equally equipped with the intellectual armour and the traditions of both Eastern and Western civilization, he had been invited to participate in the Kenyon Conference "as a critic of Western ideas and attitudes" which formed the subject matter of the addresses delivered at that Conference. I had the privilege of listening to his lecture: "For what heritage and to whom are the English-speaking people responsible?" In listening to it then, as now in



**Professor Richard G. Salomon of Kenyon College talks with Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy at Kenyon College Conference, Ohio, (October, 1946).**







**Sir George Bailey Sansom and Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy at Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio, October, 1946.**



re-reading the printed text, I was deeply impressed by his admirable integration of intellectual honesty, profound scholarship and deep, almost mystical, spirituality. I did not feel the sting which his criticisms left with some of my Anglo-Saxon friends. To me, it was not difficult to hear, through the harsh accords of critical polemics, the "eternal melody" of his thought: his belief in Humanity. Being myself of German background, I have loved from my early years the Song of Songs of Humanity: Lessing's version of the old oriental parable of the Three Rings, in his "Nathan the Wise." Ananda Coomaraswamy, at that moment, appeared to me like a re-incarnation of Lessing's Sage, professing a wisdom that is above all differences in creed.

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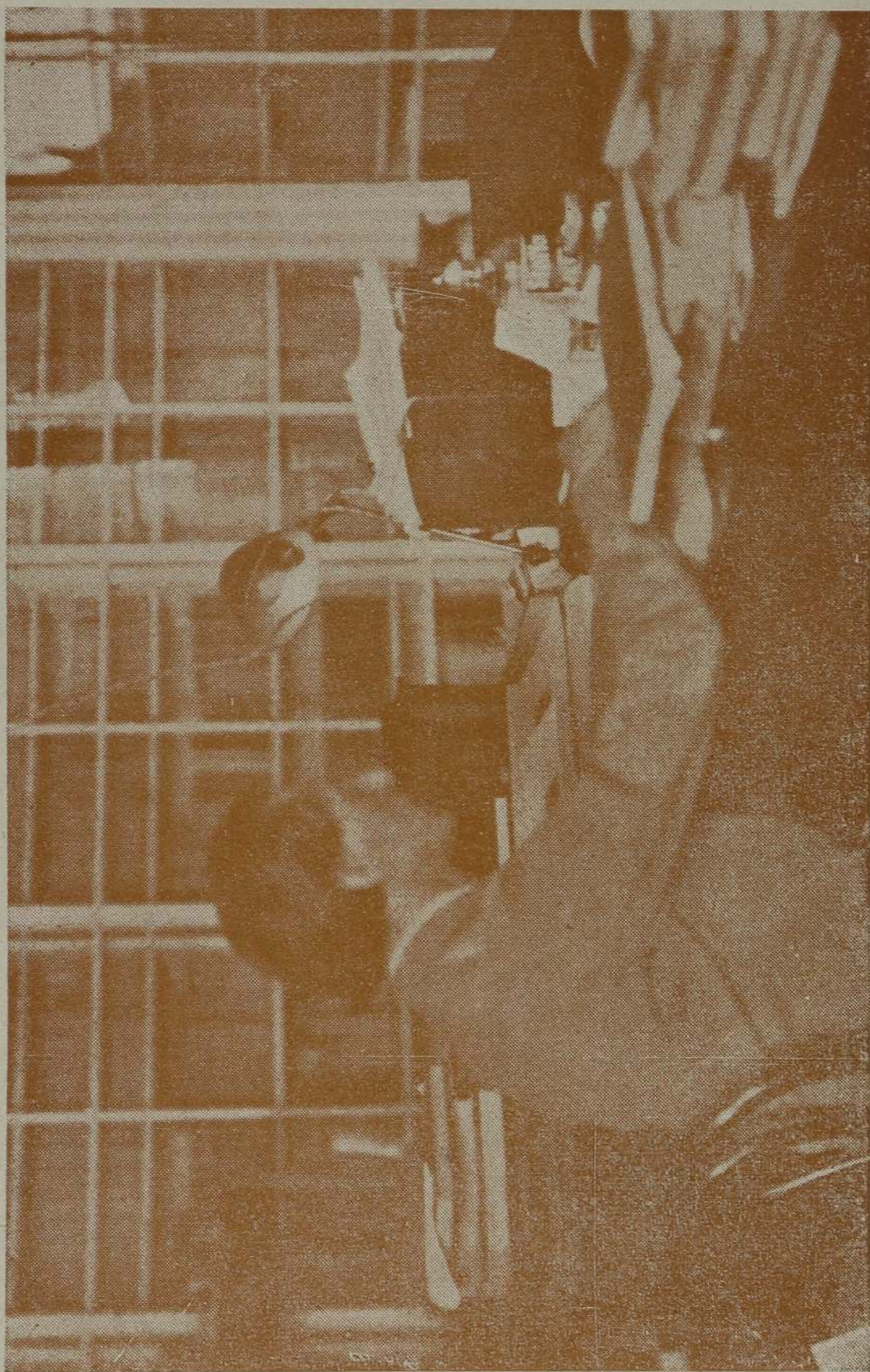
## ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

*(Sir George Sansom, London)*

I had a great respect for Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's personality and his work and I always made a point of seeing him whenever I visited Harvard University, or the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. These occasions were, however not frequent and I cannot say that I knew him at all intimately. I remember well our meeting at Kenyon College, and I recollect very vividly his striking, I might say magnificent appearance, when he took part in an academic procession, wearing the robes of a Doctor of the University of London. He had great dignity and was somewhat aloof, at least in his later years: but I found him always ready to answer very carefully and copiously questions which I sometimes put to him in writing on the history of Indian thought and art.

*In Memoriam**(Mrs. Edna W. Salsbury, Washington, U.S.A.)*

He who was one of us  
 And yet more of the East,  
 Lover and interpreter  
 Of root-things, root-beauties  
 Of the land of his birth;  
 He, the Gurudev  
 Of those whose memories  
 Are hallowed shrines  
 Lit by undying constancy—  
 He has gone Thence,  
 Even so a part of us  
 Accompanies him.  
 He was our Teacher—  
 He has not ceased to teach.  
 His words, an endless chain  
 Of untarnishable gold:  
 Gold fired in flames of truth,  
 Universality,  
 Brotherhood in Art.  
 He, through them  
 Does not cease to teach,  
 To mold new thought with old  
 Till we new beauty find  
 In all products of the mind  
 As he would have us do.



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



## A WONDERFUL MAN

*(Dr. Mary Schimer, Boston.)*

I knew Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy personally. He did not take pupils usually, being busy with research work but since I lived in Boston I used to go to the Museum quite often. I got to know Dr. Coomaraswamy and had the privilege of reading under his guidance for a while. I went to see him before I started on my trip to the East, and he seemed quite well, a little tired-looking and thin but not more so than usually. Everybody in America had the highest admiration and regard for Dr. Coomaraswamy. He was a wonderful man.

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## DR. ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

*(Dr. Robert Treat Paine Jr., Asst. Curator Asiatic Dept. of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts).*

The intellectual productivity of Dr. Coomaraswamy was hard to realize 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. His work at the museum evolved gradually from the history of art to the underlying principles of aesthetics and from these to the study of metaphysics. With each change of interest the radius of his influence became greater. Yet to his colleagues in the museum the quietness of his personality never suggested the eminence of his position.

He loved a philosophical argument, but it was rather his keen perception in the use of words which

made him a stimulating conversationalist. The naturalness with which he could pass from the medieaval or oriental point of view to the modern often became an incentive to thought. One day he remarked that "vacation" no longer had its original meaning. Once it designated a holiday or Holy Day, while now it suggests merely a period of idleness. Distinctions in connotation caused him to observe broad social changes, changes which were anything but progressive from the Doctor's point of view.

Even in discussions of art theory which often took place in the museum dining-room it was hard to correlate one's own field of interest with his theories which concerned all of art. But what was surprising was the consistency of his theory and taste, even in fields where he did not possess any specific knowledge. In the whole range of Chinese art he felt that the bronzes of the Shang and Chou periods were the most monumental products of this culture. Despite the glories of Sung painting, he was moved most by the primitive ritualistic work of unknown, or at least arguable, meaning. He enjoyed this type of art not because it conformed to his ideas but because this was an art which his attitude made enjoyable.

Few men could have been more industrious. His office in the museum was pleasantly withdrawn so that he was seldom disturbed. To him interruptions, unless they were to benefit the work of a fellow student, were wasted time in his zeal to clarify and express his thoughts. He seemed in his being to illustrate the saying in one of his favourite authors, Meister Eckhart, that "the soul is constant only to this unknowing knowing which keeps her pursuing."



## THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH TO ART

(*Dr. Leland C. Wyman, Ph.D, Boston University, U.S.A.*)

“It is in this arena that I shall throw down a minimum challenge: I put it to you that it is not by *our* aesthetic, but only by *their* rhetoric, that we can hope to understand and interpret the arts of other peoples and other ages than our own.”<sup>1</sup>

One aspect of our culture’s compulsive habit of wasting much precious time in fuss and bustle about non-essentials is the frequent preoccupation of educated men with just what kind of an “-ologist” their colleague may be. This magic in labels is nowhere more evident than in the field of education. The man who does not find himself tied by training, circumstances, professional requirements, or the insistence of his colleagues, to one restricted tag is rare indeed. One such great mind by its very nature could not be trammelled by the inventions of feebler intellects was that of Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy. We were first drawn together by mutual interests in art, in education, but especially in anthropology, and it is of Coomaraswamy “the anthropologist” that I would speak here.<sup>2</sup> and, in spite of my remarks, above, I would

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1. A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought?* (London, 1946) p. 34. Italics mine.

2. Others have and for long will continue to speak of him as an accomplished linguist, historian, metaphysician, social philosopher. In his earlier years he even attained eminence as a geologist and mineralogist (Director of Mineral Surveys for Ceylon). And all of us who knew him have poignant memories of his kindness, his friendliness, his capacity for moving simplicity as well as for profundity. On short acquaintance our awe before his learning was not lessened but was soon tempered by affection. I remember with gratitude his pains in answering my slightest question, but I recall with warmth his talking “dog-talk” to my Scottish terrier.

apply a "label" to his approach to art, one which he himself prefigured when he spoke of "the superiority of the anthropological to the psychological and aesthetic approaches to an unfamiliar art."<sup>3</sup> To restrict his multifarious approach by one such designation is no fairer than to tie his name to a single discipline, but for the purposes of education in art "the anthropological approach" is more meaningful than simply "the Coomaraswamy approach" and is more apt, I believe, than any other possible title. For Dr. Coomaraswamy was ever mindful of what the native artist had to say about the use and meaning of his product, and this is the attitude of the anthropological field worker. Said he, "My thesis will be, then, that if we propose to use or understand any works of art (with the possible exception of contemporary works, which may be 'unintelligible') we ought to abandon the term 'aesthetic' in its present application and return to 'rhetoric,' Quintillian's *bene dicendi scientia*,"<sup>4</sup> and in his discussions of the arts he was as ready to quote from the writings of Boas, Malinowski, Fr. Schmidt, Parsons, Mead, as from those of aestheticians or art historians. In any specific instance he was curious not only about the statements of the native maker but also about those of native artisans of "traditional" societies anywhere,<sup>5</sup> Iceland, Celtic, Australian, American Indian. As he himself said of the anthropologist, he was "looking for something that is neither in the work of art as if in a place, nor in the artist as a private

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3. The Art Bulletin, Vol. XXI, p. 204, 139.

4. Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought? op. cit., p. 10.

5. Cf. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Indra and Namuci* (Speculum, Vol. XIX, pp. 2-23, 1944), p. 18 ff.

property, but to which the work of art is a pointer," and, "For him, the signs, constituting the language of a significant art" were "full of meaning."<sup>6</sup> "The superiority of the anthropological" approach to art should be nowhere more valid than in the teaching of art appreciation and history in College and University, so for those who will attend here was Dr. Coomaraswamy's great contribution to art education.

Another contribution, perhaps one of his greatest, was to the understanding of the inter-relationships of the mythology and folklore of the world, and folkloristic studies are usually considered a branch of anthropology. He once wrote, "Peut-être aucun sujet n'a-t-il été étudié par le savant moderne d'une façon plus 'extensive' que celui du folklore; et peut-être n'en est-il aucun dont l'interprétation ait été faussée par plus de préjugés"<sup>7</sup>, and "Le contenu du folklore est métaphysique. Notre impuissance à le reconnaître est due en premier à notre ignorance insondable de la métaphysique et de ses termes techniques."<sup>8</sup> Without ranging himself dogmatically on either side of the controversy as to whether or not it is now possible to reconstruct an *ur-mythos* which became world-wide by whatever process, and without proselytizing as to

6. *Symptom, Diagnosis, and Regimen* (College Art Journal, Vol. 2, pp. 121-124, 1943).

7. There is, perhaps no subject that has been more extensively investigated and more prejudicially misunderstood by the modern scientist than that of folklore." *Figures of Speech*, op .cit. p. 216.

8. *De La "Mentalite Primitive"* (Etudes Traditionnelles, 44e Annee, No. 236, pp. 277-300, 1939), pp. 277, 278. "The content of folklore is metaphysical. Our failure to recognize this is primarily due to our own abysmal ignorance of metaphysics and of its technical terms."

source<sup>9</sup> he compiled and interpreted metaphysically innumerable unsuspected parallels, sparing no portion of the world's literature or oral tradition. Quite justifiably he could say "nous-mêmes, qui nous appelons des anthropologistes."<sup>10</sup>

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## TAGORE AND COOMARASWAMY

(*Sri Amiya Kumar Sen, Visvabharati, India*).

It is over two thousand years that Rajarshi Asoka sent a *Bodhidrum* sapling to be planted on the soil of Ceylon. This symbol of spiritual relationship of India and Ceylon, as also of India's goodwill and *maitri* towards Ceylon, helped to add a new chapter to the time-old intercourse that existed between these two countries. From that day onward Ceylon valued and fostered this gesture of goodwill not as a country conquered with the force of arms, but as a neighbour won through love and *dharma*. The destiny of these countries has not followed the same course, their political history in the subsequent centuries presented too many diversities but Ceylon always nursed in her heart of hearts the spiritual message she received from India though India herself was not the self-same India all through. In her journey through the road 'rugged with the rises and falls of nations,' India saw her days of spiritual and moral bankruptcy. A period of such evil days just preceded the occupation

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9. "But we have no intention whatever of suggesting that India was therefore the source of the Western *matiere*." *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, op. cit., p. 18.

10. *De la mentalite primitive*, op. cit., p. 279. "We, who call ourselves anthropologists."

of India by the westerners. A sudden conflict with western civilization awakened India from her slumber and she again engaged herself to re-discover her spiritual and moral inheritance. Beginning from Raja Rammohan and Ranade down to Tagore and Vivekananda,—we come across a galaxy of great Indians whose life-long endeavour it was to find out the forgotten spiritual and cultural wealth of India of olden days. In this critical and very memorable time of her history Ceylon also sent two of her greatest sons to the soil of India as if as a token of her past indebtedness to her. This incident can only be compared with the sending of *Bodhidrum* sapling by Asoka over two thousand years back. In personality and spiritual strength too, these two great souls were like a *Bodhidrum*. They were Anagarika Dharmapala and Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. They found in India two other great contemporaries whose mission in life was similar to theirs. They were Swami Vivekananda and Gurudeva Rabindranath Tagore. As a result of their joint effort it has been proved beyond doubts that though separated in the political sphere India and Ceylon have a heart common to both, looking apparently like a disconnected unit Ceylon is only a part of Greater India.

The life's *sadhana* of these four great souls was very similar but among them the similarity between Anagarika Dharmapala and Swami Vivekananda and between Coomaraswamy and Tagore was still greater in many respects. The two, first mentioned, were essentially missionaries and religion was their special field though none of these were religious preachers in the narrow sense of the term. The other two never donned a missionary's garb though they acted as the

Ambassadors of Indian civilization and culture among other nations of the world. Anagarika Dharmapala and Swami Vivekananda first met in Chicago in the Parliament of Religions, the effort of both being the unfolding of the spiritual significance of Indian culture. And Rabindranath and Coomaraswamy first met in their effort to feel and foster the cultural unity of Asia which was preached by Japan's great son Count Okakura. The movement for regeneration of Oriental Art mainly through the effort Okakura saw, from its very inception, an exponent of Indian culture like Rabindranath at its helm. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy appeared as the interpreter of Indian and Oriental Art and was responsible in many respects for its wide appreciation. But in this task of interpreting art he could not evidently shut himself to discussion of art alone. He had to interpret anew different aspects of Oriental civilization and culture. It was in this *Sadhana* of 'Discovery of India' as also of Asia that Tagore and Coomaraswamy met.

The personal relation between the two continued unabated for many years. Coomaraswamy enjoyed the friendship of the poet and Acharya Abanindranath in the ancestral home of the Tagores at Jorasanko in Calcutta. He was also the guest of the poet at Santiniketan. They also met more than once outside India. Cordial correspondence between the two continued over a long period of time. From the records kept in the Tagore Museum at Santiniketan it can be seen that the two exchanged letters as early as 1913. The last of the letters kept in the said Museum is dated 1934. Coomaraswamy always cherished a high respect for the Poet because the latter's literature was replete with India's eternal message to the world. Coomara-

swamy also voiced this message only in a different way. He was one of the very first to realise that Tagore's writings should reach the western mind. He with the late Ajit Kumar Chakravarti first rendered Tagore's poems into English (The first translation appeared in the *Modern Review* 1911 March-April). It was also Coomaraswamy who hailed Rabindranath, the painter, in inimitable language. Rabindranath in his turn, always respected Coomaraswamy as one of the greatest Indians who took upon their shoulders the task of rediscovering India.

In outward appearance, too, similarity between the two could not have escaped even a casual observer. After the death of Coomaraswamy the following observation appeared in one of the monthly journals:

"Slightly bent with age, hair turned grey in study and service, face serene lit by two dark eyes and with a thin beard struggling to reach his neck, he seemed an ancient *rishi* in a modern garb. He reminded one of Gurudeva Tagore in his stoop, in his demeanour and even in his walk. (*Modern Review* September 1947).

But this friendship and mutual respect and this outward resemblance are not the only things worth mention about him. A more close study reveals an awe-inspiring similarity between their way of thinking and method of work.

The most important event in the history of Asia including India in the last few centuries is the conquest of Asia, political and cultural, by the nations of the West. The first shock of this conquest overwhelmed Asia, so much so that she appeared very humble before the western eyes. But this shock again woke her up from her age-long stupor. The first son of Asia who could face the western civilization and culture equipped with the best traditions of the east

was Raja Rammohan Roy. 'Rammohan Roy was able to assimilate the ideals of Europe so completely because he was not overwhelmed by them, there was no poverty or weakness on his side.' (East and West: Greater India: Rabindranath Tagore).

Rabindranath and Coomaraswamy are the best results of this assimilation of the West and revival of the East. Rabindranth's family traditions and early breeding gave him an atmosphere where he could realise the greatness of the East. His stay and training in Europe in the subsequent years helped him to see the best of western culture and put and weigh it in contrast with the traditions of the East. Coomaraswamy, on the other hand, was connected with the West by blood and education but nurtured an oriental mind as if by instinct. Rabindranath passed the last days of his life at Santiniketan in an atmosphere of the *Asrama* life of the old days of the Upanishads. Coomaraswamy also expressed an intention of retiring to a serene *Asrama* life. This wish of his was never fulfilled. But this shows his bent of mind.

In their condemnation of the aping of the West both of them were equally severe and strong.

'The young generation of the East.....in their intoxication with the new wine of boisterous energy from the West are, likewise growing unstable in their gait. (Satyam. Talks in China: Tagore).

Have you ever thought that India, politically and economically free, but subdued by Europe in her inmost soul is scarcely an ideal to be dreamt of, or to live, or die for. (Art and Swadesi: Coomaraswamy).

This does not mean that they were conservative and were for banning outright everything western. Both were fully alive to the great benefit we might derive out of our contact with the West. Their teach-





**Dr. Rabindranath Tagore and Dr. Ananda  
Coomaraswamy.**

(From a photograph by Babu Hiralal Sen,  
Santiniketan, published in the *Modern  
Review*, Calcutta for April 1911).



ing it was to take stand in the middle, with the East on the right, and the West on the left..... not to keep India in her latter day narrowness by ignoring in her history the advent of the west.' (East and West: Greater India: Rabindranath Tagore). They were for assimilation, for harmony, for creation.....opening up the high-road by which the thought-treasure of the East may pass to the West and the West to the East (Ibid). Coomaraswamy in his *Eastern Wisdom and Western Thought* harps again on the same tune. Rabindranath always stood for 'the Union of Cultures.' India was to him 'the vast shore of humanity' which invited all people from all countries. *Visva-Bharati*, the International University founded by him was the symbol of his ideal. Very similar was the ideal of an oriental University as dreamt by Coomaraswamy, though he never founded any such institution.

'Our university must above all be a school of oriental learning sufficient not only for ourselves, but to attract scholars from all parts of the world to learn the wisdom of the east in the east (Education in Ceylon : Art and Swadesi: Coomaraswamy).

But this exchange of ideas and 'Union of Cultures' between the West and the East could not produce the desired result if one party displayed vanity and the other felt small. Rabindranath in his numerous lectures during his over-seas tours and Coomaraswamy in his articles cautioned the West to shake off the false sense of vanity and learn wisdom at the feet of the East.

The smallness that the East felt was due to the ignorance of her inheritance and the absence of the feeling of kinship between the different units of the

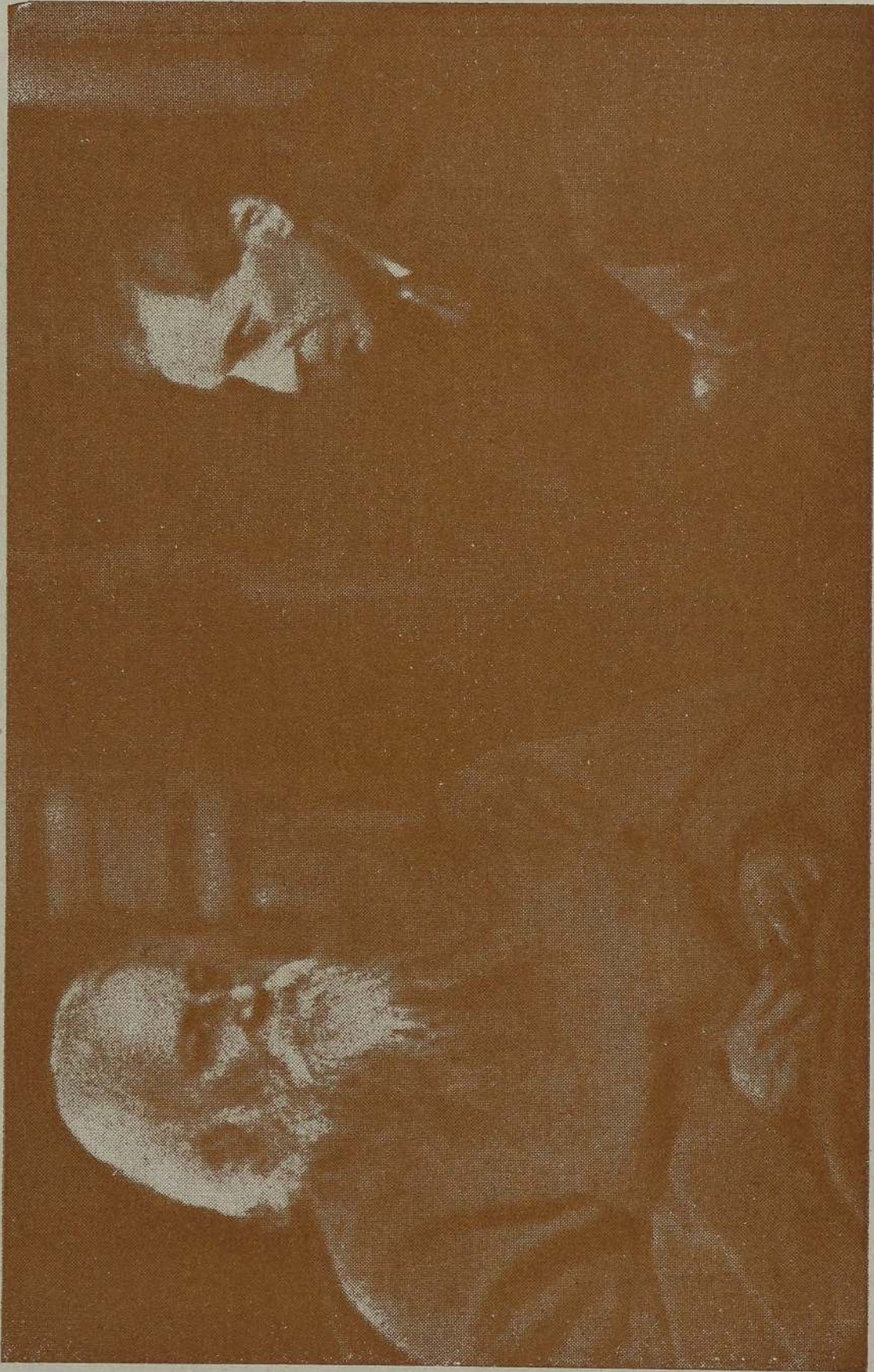
east. Rabindranath and Coomaraswamy were drawn close to each other through their ceaseless effort to remove this ignorance and to discover the broken threads that once linked the countries of the East. Rabindranath was a close associate of Count Okakura, the initiator of the mantra 'Asia is One.' In his literature, all through his life, and during his tours in China, Burma, Indonesia and Ceylon, he time and again pointed out that the forgotten link among these countries must be restored before we can hope to get our esteemed position in the assembly of the nations of the world.

'I have come to ask you to reopen the channel of communion which I hope is still there; for though evergrown with weeds of oblivion its line can still be traced. I shall consider myself fortunate if through this visit, China comes nearer to India and India to China' (To my hosts: Talks in China : Tagore).

It seems to us no accident that Coomaraswamy succeeded Okakura as the Director of the Oriental Section of the Boston Museum, for he too like his predecessor, was a believer in 'One Asia' and worked for the '*Discovery of Asia*'. He not only unearthed 'the *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*' but in thousand other ways tried to restore the bonds of union among the countries of the east. In one of his lectures to the students of Ceylon he says:

'I must also refer to a moment to which I give the name in my own mind of '*Discovery of Asia*' (Education in Ceylon: Art and Swadesi: Coomaraswamy).

This '*Discovery of Asia*' by an Indian presupposed the '*Discovery of India*' because unless each country of Asia were fully alive to its own heritage, the exchange of cultural ideals and communion among them



**Dr. Rabindranath Tagore and Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy**  
(taken during the time of the Poet's last visit to America in 1934).



in the field of thought could not take place. In order to discover Asia both Rabindranath and Coomaraswamy had to discover India anew. Those who have contracted even an average familiarity with Rabindranath's literature must have been struck by the fact that it contains the message of India from the earliest Vedic days down to the present day. As a matter of fact, we know of no literary figure like Rabindranath, Indian or foreign, whose writings have reflected so completely the cultural heritage of the past, the hopes and aspirations of the present and guidance of the future of his own country. The explanation of the Upanishads, the literary appreciation of Kalidasa, the restoration of the half-forgotten *padas* of the Vaishnava poets and every other effort to discover the ancient glory of India marked all the stages of his long and eventful life. He undertook frequent foreign tours not as a tourist or even as the Poet Laureate of India. He had a definite purpose in view and that was to make clear to the peoples of the other lands the significance of Indian civilization and culture. He invited foreign scholars and teachers to the educational centre of *Visva-Bharati* not only to be taught by them, he also infused the traditions of Indian culture into their minds.

Coomaraswamy too all through his long and active career took upon himself the task of rendering the ideal of Indian civilization to Indians as well as foreigners. Coming out in public as the interpreter of the spiritual significance of Indian Art he had, for reasons very apparent, to proclaim to the world what India had to teach in the field of art and culture in general. He, moreover, explained the inner meaning of the Vedas, Upanishads and Gita to foreigners in order

to make their access to these invaluable scriptures easy.

The comprehensive knowledge of a country and its people is not possible only through its classical literature and the culture of the aristocrats. It is even probable that, mixed up with many spurious elements not having their roots in the soil of the country, classical literature and aristocratic culture sometimes resist such comprehensive knowledge. But folk literature and folk culture presents an unadulterated account of a country and its people. Rabindranath, therefore, took a pioneer's effort in digging out Indian folk-literature and folk-culture from age-long oblivion. He not only collected various folk-songs but initiated others in and outside Bengal to take up this task in right earnest. He gave the folk-music the same place of honour occupied by the classical music, he combined folk-metres with grave and elegant ideas in his poems, he created a taste for folk-art through his village upliftment centre at Sriniketan. When he was once called upon to deliver an address in the Indian Philosophical Congress, he did not dilate upon any branch of the six systems of Indian Philosophy. He chose *The Philosophy of the People* as the subject of his discourse.

Coomaraswamy too, did not remain satisfied only with his explanation of the *Nature of Folk-lore and Popular Art* but in many cases was responsible for the collection and publication of folk-songs. He was of opinion that the best literature of a country would combine within its compass the qualities of the classical and the folk-literature of that country. In his introduction to the English version of the Bengali poems of *Vidyapati* he says:



“His position as a poet and maker of language is analogous to that of Dante in Italy and Chaucer in England. He did not disdain to use the folk-speech and folk-thought for expression of the highest matters. Just as Dante was blamed by the classical scholars in Italy so Vidyapati was blamed by pundits.....Vidyapati's Vaishnava padas are at once folk and cultivated art—just like the finest of Pahari paintings where every episode of which he sings finds exquisite expression.” (Vidyapati, Bangiya Padavali: Ed: Coomaraswamy and Arun Sen).

The advancement of science and the extension of commercial relations between the different countries in the 18th and 19th centuries brought one evil at their wake. People everywhere became very pragmatic in their outlook of life. Utility and profit-making was becoming the main factor in life and education. Beauty and knowledge for its own sake, held only a very insignificant place compared to utility. Rabin-dranath and Coomaraswamy stood for balance and harmony through the revival of our sense of beauty against the absolute sway of utility. Their remarks in this respect sound very similar:

‘Gross utility kills beauty. We have now all over the world huge production of things, huge organisation, huge administrations of empire obstructing *the path of life*. Civilization is waiting a great consummation, for an expression of its soul in beauty. This must be your contribution to the world. (To Students: Talk in China: Tagore).

‘In exchange for this world of beauty that was our birthright, the nineteenth century has made our country a ‘dumping ground’ for all the vulgar superfluities of European over-production, (Swadeshi, True and False: Art and Swadeshi: Coomaraswamy).

As in our daily life we were being carried away by a sense of utility, so also in our political life, the first enthusiasm of our consciousness made us lay too much

stress on immediate gain. This loss of balance according to Tagore and Coomaraswamy was detrimental to our interest in the long run. Intensely patriotic, they both were of opinion that political freedom gained by any possible means could not be our aim. The one-sided view of life which pawned every other thing to gain political independence and commercial interests, would mean loss of faith in greater humanity and that would bring about dangerous consequences. To be severed from our old traditions and be satisfied with self-government would mean the death of spiritual India. Our political leaders were blind to these things but these two sentinels were never tired of repeating the words of caution:

‘Therefore I would urge my own countrymen to ask themselves if the freedom to which they aspire is one of external conditions. Is it merely a transferable commodity?’ (The spirit of Freedom: Creative Unity: Tagore).

‘Those of us in India, who have come under the delusion that mere political freedom will make us free, have accepted their lessons from the west as the gospel truth and lost their faith in humanity.....This becomes possible only because people do not acknowledge moral and spiritual freedom as their object. (Nationalism in India: Nationalism: Tagore).

‘Learn not to waste the vital forces of the nation in a temporary political conflict but understand that art will enable you to reestablish all your arts and industries on a surer basis. Swadesi must be something more than a political weapon. It must be a religious artistic ideal. (Art and Swadesi: Coomaraswamy).

‘Have you ever thought that India politically and economically free, but subdued by Europe in her inmost soul is scarcely an ideal to be dreamt of or to live or die, for: (Art and Swadesi: Coomaraswamy).

To them it was not the rein of political power that we should first of all take into our own hands

but it was the system of education that needed most to be nationalised. Both thought that an India with even one generation of National education would not need fight for freedom.

'I repeat that our education is the thing which we should first of all take into our hands.' (The way to get it done: Greater India: Tagore).

It is a marvel to me how a self-respecting people can endure for a day, not the system of government—but the system of Education from which we suffer. (Swadesi True and False: Art and Swadesi: Coomaraswamy).

It is for this reason that Rabindranath shifted the sphere of his public activity from politics to education quite early in his career. Both he and Coomaraswamy were for an overhauling change in the system of education through which the young generation of India would become alive to their past traditions, would learn to assimilate the culture of the East so that they might face the West on equal terms, ready to receive what is best in her and giving out their best at the same time. Both dreamt and worked for a better world of mutual goodwill and understanding which would pave the way to a free commerce not of commodities but of ideas among nations for the benefit of all and leading all to a more glorious future the world has ever seen.

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## AN EVENING WITH DR. COOMARASWAMY

(*Dr. Albert Franz Cochrane, Boston, U.S.A.*)

In the Egyptian Book of Ptah-Hotep, one of the ancient writings known to man, we are admonished in these words: "Be not haughty because of thy knowledge: converse thou with the ignorant as with the scholar: for the barriers of art are never closed, no

artist ever possessing the perfection to which he should aspire." And reading on, we come to this striking sentence: "Love for the work they do, this brings men to God."

Like so much that was written in the once fertile Valley of the Nile, these words live today as fresh and virile as when first recorded on the unrolled papyrus of the scribe who gave them eternal life, nearly four thousand years before Christ. Through the ensuing centuries they have been re-discovered independently by countless Saints and Philosophers of all lands and races: found anew, but always in the faithful echo of that first writing in the ancient Book of Ptah-Hotep.

Those who knew Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, in life and in scholarship, might well accept those two sentences from the remote ages as cornerstone and keystone respectively of his profound inquiry into Life and the arts that interpret its meaning. There is one thing I admired above all else in Dr. Coomaraswamy's scholarship, deeply humanistic and practical, that he never devoured the shell in place of the yolk. He recognized art, at least in its higher plane of expression, to be a map of Infinity, leading to God Himself, the Supreme Artist. Men of smaller talents endeavour to view Art, as they view Life itself, not connecting the planned and ordered Universe, circling and closing only upon itself, endless movement without purpose.

Metaphysically expressed, the artist, by the very nature of his gift, aspires to a perfection which he can never attain, for Perfection is God; but his art, belonging as it does to the great stream of creative force, functions at its highest when it brings mankind to a greater knowledge of God.

Likewise, while realizing full-well that “the beauty of a work of art is independent of its subject,” Dr. Coomaraswamy rightly and insistently contended that “to the artist, himself, the subject is never immaterial. He has ever been concerned with saying clearly what had to be said. In all ages of creation, the artist has been in love with his particular subject—and when it is not so, we see that this work is not ‘felt’—he has never set out to achieve the Beautiful, in the strict aesthetic sense, and to have this aim is to invite disaster, as one would seek to fly without wings.” To the artist, then, there must be purpose, and Beauty is its incidental but great by-product.

The deeper Dr. Coomaraswamy inquired into the motivations of significant epochs in art, Asiatic and European alike, the more certain became his conviction, and the more clear its enunciation, that the noblest function of art is to increase man’s appreciation of God in the on-sweeping anthropomorphic stream of creative expression, wherein conflux efforts human and Divine.

Indeed, he reserved for the very last sentence in his notable and culminating work on *The Transformation of Nature in Art* this summarizing thought as regards the often condemned and so-called “idolatrous” use of images in worship, Indian or otherwise: “The modern aesthetician and Kunsthistoriker, interested only in aesthetic surfaces and sensations, fails to conceive of the work as the necessary product of a given determination, that is, as having purpose and utility. The worshipper, for whom the object was made, is nearer to the root of the matter than the aesthetician who endeavours to isolate beauty from function.”

Like most of men of superior attainment, Dr. Coomaraswamy had numerous avenues of interest radiating from and feeding the central plan of his studies. But in the perspective of the philosophic viewpoint, they all seemed to converge, one upon the other, to make conterminous and indivisible the ethnographic boundaries that history arbitrarily has tended to build up between the past and the present, the East and the West. Much of his inquiry has naturally centered upon the continuing pageant of India in its seemingly contradictory roles of an all but insulated, self-contained sub-Continent, and as a component and inseparable part of European and world culture to which it has contributed much, and most of that in a manner indirect and elusive: influence that is felt more than observed or recorded.

Those who knew Dr. Coomaraswamy as the Keeper of the superb Indian, Persian and Mohamedan collections at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, knew him also as an ardent and energetic protagonist of a strong and vital India of Tomorrow. More than thirty years ago, as a pioneer spirit in the Young India movement, he published—in London—an essay boldly asserting that "It will never be possible for the European nationalist ideal that every nation should choose its own form of government, and lead its own life, to be realized—so long as the European nations have, or desire to have, possessions in Asia. What has to be secured is the common co-operation of East and West for common ends, not the subjugation of either to the other, nor their lasting estrangement." A few days before his death in 1947, Dr. Coomaraswamy was able to celebrate with a group of Indian students at Harvard University, Cambridge, the re-emergence of India as a

self-determining nation. But even in the long years of struggle to give realisation to that dream now become a practical actuality—an actuality itself poignantly accentuated in the almost immediate assassination of Mohandas K. Gandhi—Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy was awake to India's faults and weakness, as well as to her strength. And so he wrote, in those early years, chidings even more applicable today than then: "The flowering of humanity is more to us than the victory of any party. The only condition of a renewal of life in India, or elsewhere, should be spiritual, not merely an economic and political awakening, and it is on this ground alone that it will be possible to bridge the gulf which as been supposed to divide the East from the West. And so while India is occupied with national education and social reconstruction at home, she must also throw in her lot with the world: what we need for the creation of a common civilization is the recognition of common problems, and to co-operate in their solution. Meanwhile, it is not sufficient for the Western world to stand aside from the development of Asia, with idle curiosity or apprehension wondering what will happen next. There is serious danger that the degradation of Asia will ultimately menace the security of European social idealism, for the standing of idealism is even more precarious in modern Asia than in modern Europe: and that would be a strange nemesis if European Post-Industrialists should ultimately be defeated by an Industrialism or Imperialism of European origin established in the East!.....Asia is like the artist in the modern city—doing nothing great mainly because nothing heroic is demanded of him. *The future of India depends as much upon what is asked of her as upon what she is!*"

When one is fortunate enough to have a philosopher as one's guest for an evening, it may not be deemed quite polite, but it most certainly is not unwise to permit and encourage him to do most of the talking. And so, with Dr. Coomaraswamy as that guest, and

through the simple device of taking sentences here and there from his writings, without special regard to chronological or textual sequence, but also without conscious distortion, we ask and have answered the question: "What, Doctor, in your opinion, is the greatest contribution that India has made, or can make to humanity?"

The reply is: "All that India or any people can offer to the world proceeds from her philosophy. Of course, every race must solve its own problems, and those of its own day. I do not suggest that the ancient Indian solution of the special Indian problems, though its lessons may be many and valuable, can be directly applied to modern conditions. The Brahmanical idea is an Indian 'City of the gods,'—as *devanagari*, the name of the Sanskrit script, suggests. The building of that city anew is the constant task of civilization; and though the details of our plan may change, and the contour of our building, we may learn from India to build on the foundations of the religion of Eternity.

"Where the Indian mind differs most from the average mind of Modern Europe is in its views of the value of philosophy. In Europe and America the study of philosophy is regarded as an end in itself, and as such it seems of but little importance to the ordinary man. In India, on the contrary, philosophy is not regarded primarily as a mental gymnastic, but rather with deep religious conviction, as our salvation from the ignorance which forever hides from our eyes the vision of reality. Philosophy is the key to the map of life, by which are set forth the meaning of life and the means of attaining its end. It is no wonder, then, that the Indians have pursued the study of philosophy with enthusiasm, for these are matters which concern all. The challenge of the East is very precise: To what end is your life? Without an answer to this question there may indeed be change, but progress is impossible; for without a sense of direction, who knows if we do not return upon our footsteps in everlasting circles?"



Correctly enough, Dr. Coomaraswamy makes no claim that India's contribution to the animistic philosophy of man's relation to God's eternity is exclusively her's. Egyptian society was practically builded upon the thesis, and all races of people, at least in their beginnings understood and acknowledged as much. Indeed, the latest claim to a place in the continuity of that great theme comes to hand in a book just published as these lines are written. Interestingly enough, it deals with *The Indians of the Americas* and its author, Mr. John Collier, who has spent more than twenty-five years living among the surviving once powerful tribes, presents a strong and convincing argument which, while dissipating much of the misunderstanding engendered by the sudden contact of the White Man with a totally new and superficially "savage" peoples, clearly indicates that tribal life, both in the disassociated and differing nations of the north and the closely knit empires to the south, were, and continue to be, deep-rooted in an all-pervading controlling cosmic consciousness.

So new will this viewpoint be to many who have not had Mr. Collier's opportunity to study at first hand these fascinating peoples the aboriginals of the New World, it should be interesting to quote a passage or two, if only to indicate how similar can be the claims advanced in behalf of each race in the inherent sense of participation in the cosmic scheme. For example: Mr. Collier was one of but two white men ever permitted to witness the annual night-long sacred dance by the Pueblo Indian tribes atop ten thousand-foot high Taos Mountain in New Mexico. "On this night, at this place," he reported, "the spirit of the Pueblo religion could have been mistaken by none.....The

rejoicing was not only a human rejoicing; and that marvellous ever-renewed, ever-increasing, ever-changing leap and rush of song was not only human song. A threshold had been shifted, forces of the wilds and of the universe had heard the call. That is what the tribe believed: that is how it seemed. The Indian's relationship to the forces and beings (evoked in the sacred dance) is not chiefly one of petition or adoration or dread, but rather a seeking and sharing in joy. It is a partnership in an eternal effort." And speaking of Indian "culture" in general, he insists that "they (the American Indians) had what the world has lost. They have it now. What the world has lost, the world must have again, lest it die. Not many years are left to have or not have, to recapture the lost ingredient.....the ancient, lost reverence and passion for the earth and its web of life.....with the universe and with God. So the Indian record is the bearer of one great message to the world. Could we make it our own, there would be an eternal and inexhaustible earth and a forever lasting peace."

The differing and totally un-related Indian civilizations of Asia and the Americas, historically speaking had this in common: each had its "glorious" epoch of achievement, followed by a prolonged period of decay: each has its prophets of a new dawn and brighter tomorrow: each has been the victim of European aggression and domination, although the seed of internal disintegration was, in retrospect, easily evident in the empires of both the Inca and the Maha-raja.

"The beauty and logic of (Asiatic) Indian life belongs to a dying past," says Dr. Coomaraswamy, "and the Nineteenth Century has degraded much and created

nothing. The decay of Asia proceeds partly of internal necessity, because at the present moment the social change from co-operation to competition is spoken of as progress, and because it seems to promise the ultimate recovery of political power, and partly as the result of destructive exploitation. In Europe, the War is merely the evidence and not the cause of chaos; there is immediate hope for Europe since he that is down need fear no fall. Western civilization stands at the beginning of a new movement, and is not without renewed religious motivation. But India affords the most tragic spectacle of the world, since we see there a living and magnificent organization, akin to, but infinitely more complete than that of Mediaeval Europe, still in the process of destruction. Inheriting incalculable treasure, she is still incalculably poor, and most of all in the naivete with which she boasts of the poverty that she regards as progress. One questions sometimes whether it would not be wiser to accelerate the process of destruction than to attempt to preserve the broken fragments of the great tradition.

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“But it is not only in Philosophy and Religion—Truth and Love—but also in Art that Europe and Asia are united: and from this triple likeness we may infer that all men are alike in their divinity.”

\* \* \*

“There are no degrees of beauty: the most complex and the simplest expression remind us of one and the same state. The sonata cannot be more beautiful than the simplest lyric, nor the painting than the drawing, merely because of their greater elaboration. A mathematical analogy is found if we consider large and small circles; these differ only in their content, not in their circularity.”

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“The vitality of a tradition persists only so long as it is fed by intensity of imagination.”

\* \* \*

“Beauty can never be measured, for it does not exist apart from the artist himself, and the *rasika* (appreciative critic or spectator) who enters into his experience.”

“The true critic, *rasika*, perceives the beauty of which the artist has exhibited the signs.”

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“The poet is born, not made; but so also is the *rasika* whose genius differs in degree, not in kind, from that of the original artist.”

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“It is of the essence of art to bring back into order the multiplicity of Nature, and it is in this sense that it ‘prepares all creatures to return to God.’ Decadent art is simply an art that is no longer felt or energized.”

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“True art, pure art, never enters into competition with the unattainable perfection of the world, but relies exclusively on its own logic and its own criteria, which cannot be tested by standards of truth or goodness applicable in other fields of activity.”

\* \* \*

“Modern European art endeavours to represent things as they are in themselves, Asiatic and Christian art to represent things as they are in God, or nearer to their source.”

\* \* \*

“Asiatic art is ideal in the mathematical sense: like Nature, not in appearance, but in operation.”

\* \* \*

“Every artist discovers beauty, and every critic finds it again when he tastes of the same experience.”

\* \* \*

“It may be claimed that beauty exists everywhere; and this I do not deny, though I prefer the clearer statement that it may be discovered anywhere.”

\* \* \*

“If bees have been deceived by painted flowers, why was honey not provided?.....The more an image is true to nature, the more it lies.”

\* \* \*

“Mere narration (*nirvaha*, *itihasa*), bare utility, are not art, or are only art in a rudimentary sense. Only the man

of little wit can fail to recognize that art, by nature, is a well-spring of delight, whatever may have been the occasion of its appearance. On the other hand, there cannot be imagined an art without meaning or use. The doctrine of Art for Art's Sake is disposed of in a sentence quoted in the *Sahiya Darpana*, V.L. Commentary: 'All expression (*vakya*), human or revealed, are directed to an end beyond themselves (*harya-param*) or if not so determined (*ata-partve*) are thereby comparable only to the utterances of a madman.'"

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There are many persons who, in viewing art foreign to their own experience, find such unfamiliar objects to be without merit or, as in the case of the ten-armed figure of such a typical Indian deity as *Mahishamardini*, to be even repulsive because humanity itself offers no counterpart to such as they. I have reserved for my final quotation, Dr. Coomaraswamy's interesting answer to this oft-expressed objection:

"In these figures we cannot speak of the many arms as 'additional members' because in a human being they might appear to be such.....These images belong in a world of their own," and their artistic merit must be judged solely by the "logic of the world they represent." "It is no criticism of a fairy tale to say that in our world we meet no fairies: it is no criticism of a beast-fable to say that after all animals do not talk English or Sanskrit. Nor is it a criticism of an Indian icon to point out that we know no human being with more than two arms!

"To appreciate any art, we ought not to concentrate our attention upon its peculiarities—ethical or formal—but should endeavour to *take for granted* whatever the artist has taken for granted. No motif appears bizarre to those who have been familiar with it for generations.

"For those should not air their likes and dislikes in Oriental art, who, when they speak of art, mean mere illustration: for there they will rarely meet with what they seek, and the expression of their disappointment becomes wearisome."

**DR. ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY: His  
Conception of Art.**

(*Sri P. Sama Rao, Bellary, India.*)

*All shafts of light, all shadows of darkness  
Pour from the Soul on my being, O Sea,  
And my heart becomes a trembling shadow  
Amidst these uncertain shades.*

*What hope is here or truth?*

*What fear trembles? What lie invades?*

—SAGAR-SANGIT: C. R. Das.

I

Just as to the late Chitranjan Das the Sea was his beloved, to the late Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, who is no less a mystic, Art was his beloved, despite the fact that everything save God was an illusion, and Art, besides, was a blasphemy in the words of Roger Fry. The immortal relation to art which he established had nothing trivial or fissiparous about it; for he ardently believed with the primitive faith that "the more abstract the truth you wish to teach, the more you must allure the senses to it," and the physical tie between the sexes is as much a true and efficient basis for spiritual endeavour as the Yogic contemplation is. *Brihadarnayaka Upanishad* lays down, "For just as one who dallies with a beloved wife has no consciousness of outer and inner, so the spirit also, dallying with the Self-whose-essence-is-knowledge has no consciousness of outer and inner." Just as this identification of the subject with the object is the chief aim of the Yoga philosophy, it is also a pre-requisite for the most perfect art;" for as this savant explains, "it is a test of art that it should enable the spectator to forget himself, and to become its subject as he does in

Sudhir  
Khastagir



**DR. ANANDA COOMARASWAMY.**  
**(A dry brush sketch by Sri Sudhir Khastagir).**





dreams.” In other words as he himself inimitably expatiates,” not merely the female forms felt to be equally appropriate with male to adumbrate the mystery of the Over-Soul, but the interplay of all psychic and physical sexual forces is felt in itself to be religious.”

Thus to him there was a close “analogy between amorous and religious ecstasy.....” In this vein he evolves a synthesis between the seeming contradiction committed by the Indian imager when he represented on the temple walls with the same sensuous glamour “the Yogi and the Apsarasa, the saint and the ideal courtesan.” This perfect catholicity of vision was the monopoly of the Indian artist alone, although a William Blake here or a Francis Thompson there in the West could stumble into the right mood of oneness (Cf. *Kathopanishad* line, *Drisyate tvagryiya budya sukshmaya sukshma darsibhih*’), and exclaim with respect to poet’s function,

*“To see a world in a grain of sand,  
And a heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,  
And eternity in an hour.”*

or,

*“Life with Death  
In obscure nuptials moveth  
Commingling alien, yet affined breath.”*

respectively, which have parallels in verses 11 and 14 of *Isavasopanishad* when freely translated read

*“Knowledge and non-knowledge—  
He who this pair conjointly knows,  
With non-knowledge passing over death,  
With knowledge wins the immortal.”*

*“Becoming and destruction*

*He who this pair conjointly knows,  
With destruction passing over death,  
With becoming wins the immortal.”*

—(Holmes).

The Indian artists therefore, according to this savant were “not afraid of Love or Death but played their part without dismay or elation; and this freedom is the secret of the power of their art”; for they were always gifted with the vision which saw one Protean Life behind all Names and Forms—they worshipped Death and Life alike, for they knew that THAT pervades this universe is changeless and imperishable.”

It is not therefore hard to see why art was Dr. Coomaraswamy’s sole passion in life. It was both an inspiration and necessitous food and clothing to his physical being. The pursuit of art cleared his outlook of all cloudening motes so that he could easily grasp the quintessence of things, and thereby apprehend the Divinity that lay concealed behind their appearances. Thus what the Vedic seer invoked poetically in

*‘Hiranmayena patrena satyasyapihitam mukham,  
Tat tvam Pushannapavrunu satya dharmaya drishtaye’*  
which when translated reads, “With a golden bowl remains closed the face of Truth. Uncover it, O Pushan, so that I devoted to Truth, may behold IT.”

Ananda Coomaraswamy has invoked through art-criticism, and has well succeeded in presenting to us, a synthetic conception of Art which excludes all barriers of nationalism. He is explicit in the matter when he has declared, “I do not perceive a fundamental distinction of arts as national—Indian, Greek, or English. All Art interprets life: it is like the Vedas, eternal, independent of the accidental conditions of

those who see or hear." The reasons for such a finding are not far to seek, because "it is the artist's function" in his own words again, "to cultivate same-sightedness, to recognise one Reality behind the pleasant and unpleasant Names and Forms, the familiar and unfamiliar formulas, it is needful to go behind the merely representative element to the purely emotional content of art, its dealings with love and death, for these are exactly the same to all in all nations and times all over the earth." It is this content, the movement of the Spirit that is universal subject-matter of art, and the "meaning of art is far deeper than that of its immediate subject."

Like creation our theories of Art are multifaced and variously based, however, upon our own capacities to experience to one essential 'Plastic Force' indwelling them all. As the Doctor remarks, "The shadows of reality are of many varied outlines and move across our vision with mysterious elusiveness. 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." It is the duty of the artist in that process of synthetization to succeed in seeing the ONE in the many and many in the ONE. Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy's contribution towards the proper understanding of the oneness of Truth, Beauty and Goodness behind the temporal phenomena in life, is indeed remarkable. What the acute philosophers like Plato, Baumgarten, Hegel and others failed to explain, this eastern savant of the mechanized XXth century has succeeded in clarifying. As he himself has beautifully said, "But let us not love art because it will bring us prosperity; rather because it is a high function of our being; a door for thoughts to pass from

the unseen to the seen, the source of those high dreams and the embodiment of that enduring vision, that is to be Indian nation's not less, but more strong and more beautiful than "than ever before, and the gracious giver of beauty to all nations of the earth." This is indeed a clarified statement of the injunction of Yagnyavalkya to Maitreyi Vth Brahmahana of *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*:

*"Lo, verily, not for the love of the gods are the gods dear, but for the love of the soul the gods are dear;*

*Lo, verily, not for the love of the Vedas are the Vedas dear, but for the love of the soul the Vedas are dear;*

*Lo, verily, not for the love of the beings are beings dear, but for the love of the soul beings are dear;*

*Lo, verily, not for the love of all is all dear, but for the love of the soul all is dear."*

Coomaraswamy's statement abovenoted in the nutshell not only defines Art but also fixes the attitude of the artist towards his subject. It evidences his high patriotism also. It is therefore no hyperbole to assert that in the history of art-criticism his place is unchallenged and unique.

## II

Dr. Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy was a happy blend of the eastern and western cultures, which culminated in the output of quite a good mass of precious literature of aesthetic criticism, at once edifying, serene and universal in outlook. His works have been many and various ranging from 1908 to 1947, and all of them are concerned in justifying and edifying the Indian traditions of Art embodied in the Vedas,

*Upanishads, Brahmanas, Silpa Sastras*, and books on Rhetoric like the *Dasarupa* and *Alamkara Sastras*, against the rather chaotic and imperfect conceptions of art of the western rhetoricians and Christian mystics, inclusive of Plato, Quintilian, Plotinus, Diogenes, Baumgarten and Hegel. He has brought upon his studies his vast learning, his high imagination and his intuition, quite characteristic of our old Rishis. In a way his works comprehend a thorough examination into every theory of Art, such as 'Art for Art's sake,' 'Art for morality's sake,' 'Art for pleasure's sake,' and are hall-marked for the synthesis he has evolved out of them all, which transcends and clarifies all the purblind notions obsessing us today. This synthesis is not exclusive but takes in its sweep every human activity that is reminiscent of the Godhead, the triune principle of Baumgarten's Truth, Goodness and Beauty, which the western philosophers and mystics propounded as the real base of all artistic endeavour. Our savant elucidates and spiritualises this principle into 'SANTHAM, SIVAM and SUNDRAM' and establishes beyond all doubt that genuine art is a Sadhana, in that it emulates the Divine, and reflects the eternal attributes such as bliss, auspiciousness and beauty of the Infinite.

According to Plato all beautiful objects have their archetypes or divine parallels in heaven, and highest art is concerned only with their reproduction by the human. In the same way as the Doctor has pointed out, "Indian works of Art are called counterfeits or commensuration (*Anukruti, Tadakarata, Praktikriti Pratibimba, Pratimana*, and likeness—*Sarupya Sadrisya*). This does not mean that it is a likeness in all respects that is needed to evoke the original, but

an equality as to the whichness and whatness or form and force of the archetype; it is this real equality or adequacy that is the truth and the beauty of the work.....” In other words, what Plato means by imitation and by art is an “adequate symbolism.” The element of goodness in a piece of art has been defined by Plato similarly, with which our savant is in perfect accord, when he comments, “Plato has always in view an attainment of the best both for the body and the soul, since for any single kind to be left by itself pure and isolated is not good, nor altogether possible; the one means of salvation from these evils is neither to exercise the soul without the body nor the body without the soul.” For Art is Yoga, and Yoga is perfection in action (Yogah karmasu kausalam, of Gita). A perfect act is that that is adequate to the great End, dispassionate, and void of any desire, save perhaps of the aspiration initially to reach the Divine through the four steps, *Sarupya*, *Samipya*, *Salokya* and *Sayujya* (Cf. Verse 28 of Sri Samkara’s SIVANANDALAHARI.)

SILPI according to our Silpa Sastras comprehends the poet, the sculptor, the painter, the musician and the dancer, and he must be a perfect *karmin*. As the Doctor sums up, “He should be one who wears a sacred thread, a necklace of sacred beads, and a ring of kusa grass upon his finger; one (who) delighting in the worship of God, faithful to his wife, avoiding strange women, true to his family, of a pure heart and virtuous, chanting the Vedas, constant in the performance of ceremonial duties, piously acquiring a knowledge of various sciences. In order that the artist should produce a delectable piece of art he has to pass through all these four stages, before the subject with all its adequacy and essence is limned on his own

mind. This enjoins on him due contemplation of his subject with all the perfect consecration and adamant faith of the primitive. The Yogic concentration prescribed in AGNI PURANA, SUKRANITI SARA and Tantric Texts like the PRAPANCA SARA (Sri Samkara), and the Buddhist KIM-CHIT-VISTARA-TARA SADHANA are no less essential to the artist as to a spiritual aspirant. This raises the moot point whether intention is at all necessary for him either in conception or execution, of his subject. The Doctor is quite explicit and conclusive on the point when he has successfully asserted to the negative in deeming the artist as but a vehicle merely for the in and the out-flow of the great beauty dwelling in Divinity. As has been already said intention and resolution are constituents of the artist's being only to the extent of perceiving in his own self the Super-Self with an infinite bliss akin to that of the latter as described by Sri Samkara in Verse 95 of SVATNA NIRUPANAM, which translated reads:

*“On the vast canvas of the self, the self itself paints the picture of the manifold worlds, and the Supreme Self seeing but Itself enjoys great delight.”*

According to Dr. Coomaraswamy highest art lies only in the perfect coordination between thought and its expression in the clearest and the most comprehensive and edible manner. All the finites with their sweet suggestion of the Infinite, the Eternal and the Divine, are but the concrete tangible shadows or reflexes of the Absolute (Cf. Plato), that lurks behind appearance and phenomenal existence, investing however, the creation with its own matchless glow. Thus

the One Reality behind all being is its own evidence through symbols such as words, forms, shapes, gestures, melodies in which IT manifests ITSELF, through the instrumentality of the heart and the brain that could experience IT. This perception has its source in the same Reality too, and its being in the highest spiritual plane, however distinct it be from IT, partakes its divine complexion and is quite inseparable from its parent in the last stage of perfect becoming IT. Thus the highest artistic activity seeking to reduce the Infinite into finites of tangible form and melody is the activity of the unconditioned Absolute at a manifestation of ITSELF conditionally. In other words the artist is but a medium for the Divine to exhibit Himself and His ineffable glory. There is thus only 'inspiration' in the artist when he is 'possessed' by Divinity, but not 'intention' or mechanical deliberation, as these words are commonly understood. Invocation of the Divine by artists and poets to bless their efforts with success bears therefore no other connotation or justification. Hence the artist is but a creature of the Divine Will, and his artistic creations glow only and in direct proportion to as and when the Divine wills them. The Indian artists were therefore non-egoistical and never for a moment owned their achievements to themselves. Till the Persian and the Moghul Schools with their secularity began to influence the Indian artists, the Indian artists preferred to remain anonymous. This explains why we have not been able to locate even one name among the builders and carvers who chiselled miles and miles of delightful forms at Amaravathi or Borubudur or Badami, or painters who decorated with rhythmic lines from their brushes the caves at Ajanta.



## III

From a perusal of the Doctor's work on aesthetics it is not difficult to see how hard he toiled at the altar of Art for a proper understanding of it. These works besides differentiating in the matter of technique and outlook the Hindu, the Jain and the Buddhist art, draw a sharp line between the styles of the European and the Oriental Schools in general, and the Rajput and Moghul Painting in particular. In this he has not failed to keep his vision clear as to the oneness of the cultural activity common to them all. He stresses that these differences in representation are the outcome of the differences in races and their own peculiar mode of thought. Thus the essential quality of art buried below their distinctive garb is but accidental. These differences should not be allowed to purblind one's eyes into believing in any nationalization of art. Since Art is universal, it admits of common appeal to all and sundry irrespective of race. That is the message and the synthetic vision of our savant. According to this writer Art is nothing but a perfect activity of the finite to become the Infinite. In the process of becoming It the self withdraws into itself to find its own atomic essence in great humility, naturally and unconsciously, in order that it may relate itself to the atomic oneness of the Supreme Self imminent in Nature and in other creation. In its great recession or retreat into a quality of seeming deadness to everything save itself its dynamism reduces itself into a static equilibrium, a state of great placidity, composure and repose, and a perfect readiness to absorb and reflect the essential quality of the Divine-itself having become partly divine. As

Jung has put it, in psychological terms, this concentration or Yoga “is the willed introversion of a creative mind, which retreating before its own problem and inwardly collecting its forces, dips at least for a moment into the source of life, in order there to wrest a little more strength from the mother for the completion of the work. The result of the reunion of the self with the Super Self is a fountain of youth and new fertility.’” This relation of the soul to the Super-Soul through concrete and tangible action is Art. It is not therefore that which does not suggest nor commemorate the Infinite and the Eternal.

This infinite suggestion is called Dhvani by our Sanskrit rhetoricians. Verses 41 and 42 of *Uttara Gita* set out this eternal relation between the soul and the Super Soul through the finite intermediaries like sound, light and mind. The expression or the suggestion of the great Infinite is Aksharam or the atomic essence or subtle quality of the Divine. This is none other than Parabrahma as celebrated glowingly in Chap 339 of AGNI PURANA;

*“Aksharam paramam brahma sanatana majam vibhum,  
Vedamteshu vadamtyekam chaitanyam jyotirishvaram.”*

Thus as the savant asserts after Sri Samaskra’s comment on Brahma Sutra (I, 1, 20, 21), “God is the actual theme of all art.” So the art which simply depicts externalities of life photographically, or captures even sensuously only the transitory or the illusive moment, without a faint suggestion of the inherent motif-force actioning between them all, is no art. All highest art is hieratic in its conception and spiritual in its essence, because “the gods are the dreams of the race, in whom its intentions are mostly perfectly fulfilled. From them we come to know its

innermost desires and purposes. Secular and personal art can only appeal to cliques; but a hieratic art unites a whole race in one spiritual feudalism.”

#### IV

Thus far we have concisely considered Dr. Coomaraswamy's metaphysical and comprehensive conception of Art in general and the Indian art in particular. His perception into the ideals and the historicity of the Chinese and Japanese Arts—their peculiar landscapes and figure compositions—is no less true and illuminating. While affirming their parentage from the Indian Art these two children exhibit their own individual traits, the percolation of Confucianism and Tao-ism into their constitutions. There was no landscape painting in India before the advent of the Persian influence, and even the few backgrounds which have been added to the figure compositions in Raga-mala Series and Ritu Samhara in colours, have been decorative simply, and are justly meant to hit off the figures in the foreground. In other words the depiction of Nature in Indian Painting occupies but a subordinate place. She was not accorded a pre-eminent place or status of her own in any artistic conception. There was even a tendency to look down upon her as more ephemeral and illusive than the humans, although the humans were but a part of her. But in the arts of China and Japan Nature had her own equal, if not a better, place with the humans (Cf. Hiroshige's 'Kiso Mountains in Snow' series, Otamaro's 'Fireflies' for instance), and as the savant has pertly observed, “the Chinese landscape painter's interests are far from topographical; he uses the familiar scenes of lonely mountains and forests to interpret

and communicate a mood, or express a philosophic concept.....In one way he uses Nature's form as the phrases of a philosophical language, likening mountain and mist, dragon and tiger, to the Great Extremes." In Binyon's phraseology, "the life of Nature and of all non-human things is regarded in itself; its character contemplated and its beauty cherished for its own sake, not for its use and service in the life of man. There is no infusion of human sentiment into the pictures of birds and beasts, of the tiger roaring in the solitudes of the hawk and the eagle on the rock crag, rarely is there any touch of the sportsman's interest which has inspired most European pictures of this kind." The Doctor is not slow to grasp or less sensitive to be harped into a poetic utterance of his own or less acute as not to relate these three sister arts of India, China and Japan: "Even the smallest flower, the most trivial insect can thus be represented with such an intensity of vision as to seem a world in itself; and this world is a part of humanity as man is a part of the world by nature. The world of Nature is not merely an object of interest but a perpetual expression of the One Life. This is the 'Sermon of the Wild,' and to be sensitive to these prophecies and intimations is characteristic alike of poetry and painting in the later developments of the Mahayana. Thus in China as in India, but in a different fashion, thought "expressed in art developed from an early hieratic formulation to a representation of the pure transparency of life." Most of the best specimens of the Chinese and the Japanese art like Korin's paintings "sing their own essential beauty" in their own silence and loneliness.

## V.

Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy is no mere theorist or sophist. His utterances embrace every field of human activity and have the sanctity of the practical wisdom of our sages. He is a traditionalist, not enslaved to tradition. He regards it as distilled experience of persons possessed with acute vision in various walks of life, and as it is entitled to our reverence and adoption, especially when we have no better substitutes. He is of Blake's temperament which exclaimed "Enthusiastic admiration is the first principle of knowledge, and its last." The Doctor defines Art: "To give a clothing, a perfect form to one's thought, is to be an artist.....Art is as much a means of expression as a language, as a behaviour in general; both when sincere, express the character and the preoccupations of the individuals or race to which they belong." He exhorts us to love art not because "it will bring to us prosperity; rather because it is a high function of our being; a door for thoughts to pass from the unseen to the seen....." He has his own reasons for it. He properly believed that there could be regeneration of India only "through art and not by politics and economics alone." For "a purely material idea will never give to us the lacking strength to build up a great and enduring nation. For that we need ideals and dreams, impossible and visionary, the food of martyrs and of artists." True nationalism which is not avaricious and politically obstrusive, lies only in the emulation of the racial ideals and enthusiastic preservation of its delectable evidence, be it in literature, or painting, or sculpture, or music, or dance. As Dr. Nicholas Roerich put it these are 'Sacred Signs.' Doctor Coomaraswamy's definition of culture betokens

artistic existence in the light of the true Swadesi “which is only a way of looking at life.” While Plato as he puts it “identified culture with the capacity for immediate and instinctive discrimination between good and bad workmanship,” he explained Plato’s definition by including in it, “a certain quality of recollectness or detachment, a capacity for stillness of mind and body,.....and a power of penetrating mere externals in individual men or various races. Culture includes a way of life essentially balanced, where real and false values are not confused; also I think a certain knowledge of, or interest in, things which are not directly utilitarian, which do not merely give pleasure to the senses or confirm a prejudice.” This is indeed a restatement of our Scriptures that way. With these standards necessary for correct evaluation of anything, we could easily see the reasons why our present day judgments of men and things which are uncultured are warped, deficient, and purblind. In other words, the genuine critic is he who is as proficient culturally as the creative artist. While the function of the one is to discern the quality, the function of the other is to produce the quality. Speaking of the art-critic or historian he says, “He needs only to be able to recognise truth and life when he sees them. All good art has similar qualities, and so also all bad art is bad in much the same way. But every great cycle of artistic expression has certain characteristics and a particular genius of its own, and expresses certain preoccupations. If the critic’s work is to be of any value he must so understand this genius as to be able to trace the evolution of its expression, to define the period of its fullest development, to point to the examples in which its bias is most perfectly expressed,

and above all to correlate its form with the movement of the human spirit that finds expression throughout.

The critic is therefore not a mud-slinger but a judge and a reconstructor in his own manner. In order that we may properly appreciate our art-heritage he prescribes,—“The Indian must see with his own eyes. Two things are needful, one that he should be saturated with the traditional art of the race in order that he may know, HOW TO SEE, the other that he be saturated with the traditional culture of the East, that he may know WHAT TO SEE—for it would be meaningless to base the decorative art of a people upon rare plant forms, however beautiful, which have not appealed already to the race imagination and have no part in the race life or in their literature.” Thus he directly defines the ‘Function of Schools of Art in India.’ He does not swear at science nor scowl upon it. His ripe mind which has seen the many in the ONE, and ONE in the many is not walled into compartments. So he says “We need science and above all concrete efficiency; but it is not any science or any efficiency that will help us, only a rational and human science, and efficiency directed to high ends.” Thus he indirectly defines science as a manner of thinking in concrete terms the phenomena of the Finite and the Protean reality of the Infinite. The Hindu temperament which is synthetically essenced sees nothing like the religious, the aesthetic and the scientific standpoints militating against one another; for the Hindus united them all in their finest work, whether musical, literary or plastic; for as the savant says, “The Hindus have never believed in Art for Art’s sake; their Art like that of Mediaeval Europe was an Art for Love’s sake.

## VI

To those who denounce Indian Art as being essentially, hieratic, Dr. Coomaraswamy has a very convincing answer to give: "The images of Buddha of Avalokitesvara, of Vishnu, Siva, in their sattvic aspects were intended to represent the nearest likeness to God that art could reach. Now 'expression' as Herbert Spencer puts it, 'is feature in the making.' All these variations of feature constituting that we call 'Expression' represent the departure from the perfect type. The more human in expression, the less does Hindu sculpture approach its own perfection.....Such qualities as nobility, peace, graciousness, which involve in their perfection a superhuman balance of intellect and emotion, can alone be rightly 'Expressed' in a symbol of divine life.....Everywhere the Indian images seem to express, perhaps unconsciously the idea that in all work it is 'but this body' that acts, while the Self, serene, unshaken and unattached, is but a spectator of the drama where itself is manifested as an actor."

"A good painter" says Leonardo Vinci "has two chief objects to paint, namely, Man and the intention of his soul. The first is easy, and the second is difficult. because he has to represent it through the attitudes and movements of the limbs. He should therefore have realised the truth of the abovesaid remark of Ananda Coomaraswamy when he exclaimed, besides, "That figure is most worthy of praise which by its action best expresses the passion that animates it." In the technical aspect of Art there is absolutely nothing to connect the 'goodness' or 'badness' of the informing passion" as the Doctor has properly stressed. In other words, "all art which has any such



conscious purpose is sentimental and the true ethical value of art appears in its quality of detachment and vision." To go a few steps further and in the words of Hsieh Ho (Chinese Painter of the sixth Century A.D.), the artist is only concerned with "whether or not the work exhibits the fusion of the rhythm of the Spirit with the movement of living things." The same test is however emphasized by Mr. C. J. Holmes—a modern critic, in demanding the qualities of Unity, Vitality, Infinity, Repose, for these are "no more or less than the rhythm or economy of the Spirit" and "the presence of this Spirit is Beauty." It is here that Indian Sculpture of Indian gods and goddesses excels all other sculpture in the world.

Judged by the above standards the productions of the Indian modern artists are quite meagre in quality; for they lack woefully the consecration and the lyrical spontaneity of our works of even our Mediaeval India. The Modern Sculpture is any thing but Indian both in spirit and in the manner of execution. The modern Indian Painting suffers also from the same deficiencies, barring a few solitary exceptions from the brushes of people like Nanda Lal Bose and Asit Kumar Haldar. The generality are deliberate and rather mawkish. Dr. Coomaraswamy's review of the *Calcutta Paintings*, though dated about 1912, still holds good, and the Bengal Painters have not benefited themselves thereby. While admitting the gracefulness of their lines, he bewails their lack of vitality; and their general quality: "They are often sentimental in conception; weak in drawing and tamasic in colouring. This especially applies to the mythological and heroic subjects. None can portray the gods but those who have themselves seen: to modern India the gods

are shadowy and unreal.....Again the colouring of many of the *Calcutta Pictures*, especially the later Japan-influenced works of Mr. Tagore (Abanindranath Tagore) is muddy in the extreme, and the tones throughout so low as often to make the subject of the picture hard to decipher. This is as far as possible a departure from the pure clean-colour schemes of earlier Indian art, although its vagueness lends charm to the treatment of certain subjects." It is not prejudice nor want of vision that has prompted the above rather sweeping remark of the savant. It is based upon his realisation "of the efficacy of art as an agent of universal synthesis, thus of effective religion," as Dr. Jacques De Marquette has justly observed. Besides, if the artist is an unsullied adorer of the aspect of beauty in the divine he has but to adore it with the most rhythmic line and form, at once glamorous and serene like the very qualities of Beauty, he himself has experienced having become partly divine.

To sum up the achievements of this "towering personality whose Olympian sovereignty was even more impressive than that of the great patrician Tagore," one needs to study his *Art and Swadesi*, *The Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, *Transformation of Nature in Art*, and *The Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought?* to name but an outstanding few. His life was but a "demonstration of the Integration of Art in the process of deification of creation in the return to unity of the Consciousness functioning through the many." In lifting consciousness from the PRATYAKSHA to the PAROKSHA vision Art does not only bring about "the most desirable of all human good in the consummation of inner harmony and through a temporary *Daivam Mithunam* of his lower

and higher natures.” His contributions are therefore unique as they all stress ‘the deep cultural unity of mankind’ through Art. Sylvan Levi has observed with truth, that in his utterances he has carried the common cultural inheritance of mankind to new summits “by the influx of the full values embodied in the *Sanatana Dharma*.” It is no praise to him to assert that he helped “to restore to man the full stature of his world-wide citizenship, high above all sectarian racial sectionalisms. We could very well repeat to him the query of Rabindranath Tagore, “My poet, is it thy desire to see thy creation through my eyes?” and answer ourselves with Dr. Cousin’s comment, “The artist has in some way given eyes to the Hidden One; the observer looks back through those eyes, and gets through them a glimpse of the Eternal.”

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### ANANDA COOMARASWAMY.

(*Sri B. S. Sitholey, Lucknow.*)

When one comes across a person of such unquestionable genius that he need only be known in order to be revered, one may only state what he has achieved and express gratitude for it.

It has not been my privilege to meet Dr. Coomaraswamy in person, but I wrote to him once, and I treasure his letter in reply for his dignified courtesy and for one of the most important observations on folk-art he has made therein. As a student of his writings since 1910, the more I have known of his mind through them the more has my reverence for him grown. It is impossible not to be impressed by such a master mind—a mind sensitive as the perfectly tuned strings of the *vina*, penetrating, judicious, and

all-understanding. To the detachment of the scientist that he was he added his warm human sympathy. To few it is given to possess such depth of insight into the fundamental and the genuine. His writings bear in the fullest measure the impress of his mind and personality and wisdom.

Dr. Coomaraswamy came providentially at a time when the civilization and culture of India, developed and matured through the ages, were being crushed by the materialistic machine-age outlook. He raised the alarm, told us what had gone wrong and how it could be put right. He saw not only India but the whole world threatened and bent all his energies to fighting the disruptive forces at work. Writing about the renaissance of Indian culture, he observed: "Our problem is not so much of the rebirth of an Indian culture as it is one of preserving what remains of it. This culture is valid for us not so much because it is Indian as because it is culture." Events have proved him to be completely right. With independence gained by methods founded on the old culture and unparalleled in history for their moral elevation, India, choosing the correct path, is to-day the only country in the world whose political ideology rests on spiritual basis. How wonderfully he judged and with what inspiring faith he determined his life-work!

His extensive writings are so important that quotations could be made from almost every page of them, but I have to confine myself, within limitations of space, to giving only a few extracts in order to indicate the inimitable way of his approach to a problem. His interpretations give shape to and express one's own thoughts—an identity which is proof of the validity of the interpretations. To have the fullest

understanding of anything was evidently his prime purpose, as from such understanding alone can the truth be known and right action determined. And because of this his writings are characterized by perfect lucidity, sincerity, expressiveness, and aesthetic purity.

In an essay on education in India he summed up foreign rule in one of the most arresting sentences ever written. "One of the most remarkable features of British rule in India," he wrote, "has been the fact that the greatest injuries done to the people of India have taken the outward form of blessings." We see here the scientist appraising the situation objectively and dispassionately, the patriot and the humanitarian grieved at the wrong done, and the well-wisher pointing out that the "blessings" had only produced, as Lord Macaulay had devised, "a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect." On India attaining independence, Dr. Coomaraswamy's significant message to us was—"Be Your Self." This, in fact, he has been impressing on us from the very beginning.

Dr. Coomaraswamy was one of the very few in the modern world who rightly asserted that art is a vital part of human life, and not an amusement or an intellectual exercise, being intimately bound up with human emotions, feelings, sentiments, ideals and aspirations, and that to ignore it or to debase it was to reduce oneself to a mere automaton satisfying only the physical and utilitarian wants. His studies and researches had convinced him that the spiritual content of Indian art, a product of the oldest living civilization and culture, was essential not only for India but for the world, and that its preservation and

organic progress were of cardinal importance. He was therefore most anxious that the world should share his experience and knowledge of it and retrieve the values it stood for. Of a Rajput painting ("The Bride") he wrote:

This picture is of most delicate and romantic loveliness and purity. There is a haunting charm in the gentle shyness of the bride as she is led by a friend, perhaps an elder wife, to the bridal chamber. We may almost feel the wild beating of her heart and feel the tremulous touch of her red-stained fingers.....The white marble building glistens in the moonlight. The whole picture bears the spell of that strange serenity and recollectedness, that so distinguish the old life of India, and survive so little in the life of non-rhythmic haste and hideousness into which it is so quickly changing. Perhaps it would not be possible to overvalue an art that brings us so clear a message of calm and peace as do these romantic and religious Hindu paintings—a message from the time which we, taking an external view, sometimes think of as less peaceful and less civilized than our own."

Of Kangra paintings he said that their charm was "all-compelling and almost personal, like the grace of an individual woman." Who is there who has not had at one time or other a glimpse of like beauty in human life, and who will deny that its disappearance will be a grievous blow to mankind? Dr. Coomaraswamy was not a mere accomplished critic of art; he was its most sensitive and accurate interpreter—an interpreter of life itself.

Dr. Coomaraswamy challenged the view of European writers that the Buddha image was a creation of the Greek Gandharan school, and ascribed its origin to the early art of Mathura. He said: "The sculptors of Mathura, on the other hand, had at their

command not only the visual image of the 'Great Person' as defined in the Pali texts, but also the tradition of the standing types of the colossal Yaksas of the latter centuries B.C., and for the seated figure also a tradition of which the beginning must have antedated the Siva types of the Indus Valley culture of the third millennium B.C. The Buddha image came into being because a need had been felt for it, and not because a need had been felt for 'art.'" In discerning the truth and bringing it forward Dr. Coomaraswamy has done inestimable service to Indian and world art and culture. It is a familiar Western practice, born of racial bias and a false sense of prestige, to decry Indian achievement or to see European influences in it, without the least consideration that this results in falsifying things. Numerous instances of such bias exist, but one coming from a distinguished person and remarkable for its subtlety, may be cited. Describing Ajanta paintings, Sir John Marshall said: "How much would the world not give for such samples of the painting of Classic Greece?" This sort of outlook is "rooted in something deeper than itself, a whole cultural training, natural or acquired temperament and fundamental attitude towards existence, and it measures, if the immeasurable can be measured, the the width of the gulf which till recently separated the oriental and the western mind and most of all the European and Indian way of seeing things."—(Sri Aurobindo Ghose). Other instances are mostly crude and blatantly arrogant; and it was against such prejudices that Dr. Coomaraswamy combatted all his life, not as a partisan but to establish the truth and to restore intellectual honesty. Had it not been for his defence the whole history of Indian art would have

been falsified and a great injury done to Indian culture.

About folk-art Dr. Coomaraswamy in his letter to me from Boston dated October 6, 1935, referred to at the commencement, made the following important observation:

“These folk arts preserve symbolic material that is very ancient and of deep significance—even though this may have been partly forgotten nowadays. The folk art is not really *primitive* or naive in the anthropological sense, but preserves the *primordial* symbolism of the metaphysical tradition—mixed, of course, in some cases with more modern elements.”

This dispels many misconceptions and shows the high value of folk art. It becomes apparent that anthropologists and archaeologists as only such are not competent to explain art, and that the art interpreter is required to possess, among many other things, a knowledge of both anthropology and archaeology.

It was Dr. Coomaraswamy who first pointed out the supreme beauty of that great sculpture—Nataraja, the Dancing Siva of the Dravidian South, in his cosmic Tandava dance. It was an eye-opener to the famous sculpture Rodin. Dr. Coomaraswamy drew attention to “the strangely lovely” Prajnaparamita from Java, now in the Rijks Museum, Leiden. This goddess combines the most extraordinary female physical beauty and grace with spirituality and serenity of an order that will perhaps never again be achieved in art. None realised so fully and described so adequately the majesty and grandeur of that sublime sculpture—the Buddha at Anuradhapura. The work of a Gupta sculptor, here the Master’s living presence can almost be felt. Who knew of these until Dr. Coomaraswamy explained what they were? Rajput painting may have



MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Oct. 6. 1935

Dear Mr. Sitholey,

You are quite at liberty to use the illustrations from my Mediaeval South Indian art, with due acknowledgement.

I might call your attention to my articles on the Old Indian Vina (harp) in Journal American Oriental Society, Vols. 50 and 51. I am very glad you are writing on these subjects.

Folk art is very important. You doubtless know A. N. Tagore's book, Banglar Vrata which has excellent illustrations. There is room for many more books of the same kind. There folk arts preserve symbolic material that is very ancient and of deep significance — even though this may have been partly forgotten nowadays. The folk art is not really primitive or naive in the anthropological sense, but preserves the primordial symbolism of the metaphysical tradition — mixed, of course, in some cases with more modern elements. Please let me know when your book on folk art is published.

Yours very sincerely

R. Govindaraswamy.

A letter to Sri B. S. Sitholey



been known, but the understanding we have of it now is owing to him.

By making extensive collections at considerable cost and great personal sacrifice, Dr. Coomaraswamy rescued from oblivion, and possible destruction, many a work of art without which the world would definitely have been the poorer.

Among his many notable achievements, his vindication of Indian images with many arms, and his rational explanation of the erotic element in Indian art, may be mentioned. Prejudiced critics had already seized on these two factors to pour contempt on Indian art by calling it monstrous, lewd, and barbarous; and to-day, leaving out the lesser fry, the almost berserker rage against Indian sculpture of such an otherwise able person as Ruskin seems to be pathological. Dr. Coomaraswamy has finally settled these controversial matters by explaining their metaphysical basis and inevitableness. No critic, unless he wishes to expose his ignorance and make himself ridiculous, can now take his stand on the kind of criticism of Indian art which had become fashionable with European writers.

What Dr. Coomaraswamy perceived of that difficult art, Indian music, had not been dreamt of by anybody else at any time; as such, it was a unique example of profound insight and the completest understanding. He observes:

“This music is essentially impersonal: it reflects an emotion and an experience which are deeper and wider and older than the emotion or wisdom of any single individual. Its sorrow is without tears, its joy without exultation and it is passionate without any loss of serenity.”

Music is practically as old as humanity, yet even the subtlest thinkers did not realize that it was imper-

sonal, that its sorrow, joy and passion were, in the nature of things, of a different quality from that felt by an individual, and that notwithstanding these everyone sees in it his own thought before him. This perception is by itself sufficient to place Dr. Coomaraswamy among the greatest thinkers of all time. Its profundity is difficult to realize ordinarily, for experience of a lifetime is needed to understand the implications. And it opens up unconceived psychological and metaphysical vistas. Such achievement is beyond the capacity of mere critics or ordinary intellectuals.

Dr. Coomaraswamy collected and translated a number of songs from Rajputana, Panjab and Kashmir. He pointed out that representing poetry of a very high order, they furnished themes to which only Indian music could do justice, and that such songs needed to be preserved.

It is said that in modern times India has produced only three or four exponents of philosophy possessing the widest outlook. Dr. Coomaraswamy, being one of them, had an advantage over the others in being a scientist, and with his wider interests and accomplishments he was certainly comparatively the better equipped. Moreover, his approach was also through channels which the others did not avail of. And, as usual with him, he left the mark of his erudition and wisdom on whatever he undertook.

He espoused the cause of Indian freedom and, happily, lived to see India become independent. His fight was many sided and not in the manner of the politician, his aim being to secure not only political freedom but intellectual, moral and cultural freedom as well, so that Indians may be truly Indian and worthy to inherit the



**Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy  
amongst the Great Men of  
India.**



magnificent and noble culture of India. His remarkable modesty and self-effacement prevented his becoming known except to a restricted circle, the circle of thinking men who count. But he was a greater patriot than many advertised ones, working sincerely, unostentatiously, with faith and wisdom and sustained endeavour. He was among the chief makers of India.

Indian art and culture owe so heavy a debt to Dr. Coomaraswamy that it is impossible to repay it. He was a pathfinder and more: he has said practically the last word on many aspects of Indian art. Since the West began to feel the weight of his interpretations, supported by fact and text and incontrovertible logic, a lush crop of self-styled authorities on Indian art has sprung up both in India and elsewhere, distinguished more for plagiarism and preoccupation with minor details than for insight and understanding. Dr. Coomaraswamy's writings, and Mr. E. B. Havell's on architecture, will continue to be the only trustworthy guides for the understanding of Indian art.

Distance and legend and propaganda have accustomed us to the belief that geniuses appeared only in bygone ages, but Nature knows of no such line of demarcation. The genius of Dr. Coomaraswamy will probably emerge superior to that of many a great one of the past. Future generations will realize the greatness of this illustrious Indian\* with a clarity and

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\*Born in Ceylon of an English lady, the wife of Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy, and educated in England, Dr. Coomaraswamy is regarded by some as a Ceylonese, by others as an Englishman, and not an Indian. This view is wrong. The people of Ceylon, apart from the aboriginals, are ethnically and culturally Indian, being the descendants of South Indians and inheriting the civilization and culture of India. Political divisions, the circumstance of history, cannot override fundamentals: Ceylon and Nepal are as much India as any part of the peninsula.

definition denied, owing to extreme nearness, to us. To understand and be one's Self is the highest man can aspire to; and Dr. Coomaraswamy by his own life-work dedicated to these ends which he succeeded in achieving, has brought about a thinning of the veil. The gratitude of mankind to this astonishingly versatile genius of exceptional calibre and humanistic outlook can never be adequate.

A distinguished Professor has expressed the wish that "if ever a Nobel Prize is instituted for Aesthetics, it should first go to Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy." I respectfully suggest that Dr. Coomaraswamy's merits were above the highest prize that could ever be instituted. He would have preferred, were it possible, to be unknown, living, as he will, in the hearts and minds of men by his solid achievement.

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### A TRIBUTE

*(Sri Gurdial Mallick, Bombay).*

My humble, but most heartfelt tribute to Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy is in silence, or at least in a solitary sentence:—God's wonderful rainbow-coloured creation stood dumb till the critic, in the divine form of man, witnessed it and made it unbosom and articulate itself in bewitching beauty.

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### A NEIGHBOR'S TRIBUTE

*(Mr. Henry Tweed Farmer, Needham, Mass., U.S.A.)*

At least once in every life-time we meet an unforgettable person. The one that I have in mind is my late neighbor Ananda Coomaraswamy. Our mutual interest in plants and gardening perhaps was a basis on which our acquaintance flourished. No plant or vine or flower was too insignificant for his care and



attention. Even the lowly weed was allowed to flourish if it had blossomed bravely for its symmetry and design. Any unusual or beautiful flower in his conservatory brought me an invitation to tea, to share its beauty.

Another mutual interest we shared was his young son. He was an appealing youngster of eight when we first met. Another, his dog a beautiful cocker spaniel. At one time the Doctor called me by telephone and an anxious voice asked me kindly not to feed his dog, who had not been well; at another time it was the small boy that should not have sweets. Naturally I was glad to co-operate with this kind and gentle soul, whose every thought was for the welfare of his household.

The doctor could not have accomplished the vast amount of work that he did had it not been for his wife. She smoothed the way, shielded him from petty annoyances, made him comfortable, drove him back and forth to the Museum, and in myriad ways made it possible for him to work without interruptions.

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## THE PHILOSOPHIA PERENNIS

*(Mr. Gerald Heard, California, U.S.A.)*

Those who are interested in Vedanta and the West are naturally always on the look-out for the rising of one more of those bridges which must, in this generation of birth-and-death, make possible a new understanding between men of good will in East and West. For, speaking as a Westerner—and it is a judgment with which an Oriental would doubtless agree—the

state of our Occidental culture today much resembles that critical path into which the older West found itself precipitated in the second century of the Christian era. Then, an Oriental religion, the last of many Oriental competitors for the prize of the Roman Empire, had begun to win converts in a surprising way. The Imperial Court was interested, a possible heir to the throne was found to be involved: neither patrician nor slave was safe from the contagion of the new faith. But faith without a frame of reference is always a wine without a bottle. As we know, the frame of reference for Christianity, the form in which that faith became the philosophy and culture known as Christendom, was found in Greek thought. With that amalgam the world in the West remains content until today. Now in our generation that system has reached exhaustion, no longer answering the intellectual questions of men nor giving a sanction to their propriety. Hence our crisis. And, once again, at the moment of crisis, out of the East has come a light and a faith—or perhaps we should say that, though the light is one, it has come and is coming to us like a rainbow a thing not only of hope but of many colors.

This brief note is to draw the attention of others similarly interested, who may not have come across this particular thinker, to the work of Dr. Coomaraswamy. For some time, thoughtful people have been gathering the articles of this writer. They reveal an immense scholarship which is not only thoroughly at home in our Western religious and philosophical thought but which shows its relevance and illumination through the Light from Asia. Dr. Coomaraswamy is the curator of Oriental Art at the Boston Museum

of Fine Art. He has, therefore, the entree to minds which would not otherwise listen to his words about religion—for culture can still command respect in our decadent West where cultus is despised. Dr. Coomaraswamy has used this approach to show us of the West that we cannot really understand art, still less hope to produce it. Until we understand that it can only spring from a profoundly religious point of view. In his searching essay, *Am I My Brother's Keeper?* which appeared in the magazine *Asia*, he points out that when we collect works of art we kill what we would preserve, like uneducated children tearing up wild flowers. And he points out that we ourselves really know this, for, until the smash came, the demand of the tourist was to find a place which he called "unspoilt"—viz., a place where his own "culture" had not yet penetrated. He adds that the words "to spoil" mean not only to ruin but also to loot.

But it is to an essay which has lately appeared in book form that the rest of these remarks must be devoted. This small booklet is called *Hinduism and Buddhism*. The point of view is that of the Hinayana school of philosophy. But the author, by taking that position, does not wish to oppose it to the Mahayana form.

The greater and the lesser vehicle can both travel along the noble eight fold path. What he is concerned to show is that Buddhism and Hinduism are not in conflict: the one is a development out of the massive foundation of the other. 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.

History does not repeat itself but it does recapitulate, and the themes sounded earlier are found in the vast orchestration of life coming back time and again with new and fuller harmonization. So is it with East and West in this matter of religion. Today we shall not repeat in any detail the great syncretistic effort of the second century. But, on a larger scale, we shall see another blending of East and West. The original element in this new blending will be, as Dr. Coomaraswamy has pointed out, not a borrowing, indeed not a real syncretism, but a recognition of a common thought manifesting its power under different forms. As he says, the great religions do not so much borrow from each other as all draw from a basic philosophy, a way of life, an apprehension of reality which has been there all the while but which we have forgotten. This realization that ignorance is our greatest mistake and fault is of course a thought which the East has stressed more than the West, but, if it is true, then what the East can do for the West is not so much to convert it, still less to make it adopt its forms, as to remind it of the truth which it knows but has forgotten and let drop to the back of its mind.

It is here that we return to the thought of such perennial teaching—that it is in the life lived, in the fruit of the tree of religion that its power to propaganda resides. Religions may appear because they are strange and subtle in their philosophy or rich and colorful in their rituals. They will only last if they can alter the quality of character. The practical man

makes that his test. It is also the test given by Christ and by Buddha. Dr. Coomaraswamy points out how this Eternal Gospel has a stark simplicity and a total demand. He quotes repeatedly that telling statement of Eckhart, as summing up all the truth: "The Kingdom of God belongs only to the thoroughly dead." The doctrine of being born again by dying to the self—the teaching of the story of the pearl of great price: that everything must be given for it—this to him is the perennial philosophy. It is always being overlaid and mistaken. So, when we have let it be lost, the East comes to us again to remind us that there is a commandment greater even than the commandment to love your neighbour—which we have thought to be the last word of morality. The first commandment comes first, not only because it is first by its very nature but because, unless it is practiced first, the second can never be fulfilled. Otherwise, our love for our neighbour will remain only a slogan and when we try to put it into practice we shall in fact start liquidating him—because, in the form in which he actually appears, we really detest him. The first commandment is, then, the guarantee, the only possible sanction for the second, the only possible power which can give "The Social Gospel" any virtue to redeem mankind. Some may say: "Why do we need yet another voice to tell us that, why do we require the same light thrown from another angle?" The fact remains that a new voice often awakes us when we are drowsing under the repetition of the truth spoken to us in familiar terms. Further, Hinduism is also teaching the West that, since "All roads lead to God" men have to find that road which suits best

their nature. Catholicism helps some, hinders others: Vedanta likewise. Here in Dr. Coomaraswamy's rendering of *Hinayana* is still another way of reaching the same goal.

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## MY GURU

(*Sri Mukandi Lal, B.A., (Oxon), Bareilly, India*)

My *Guru*, Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy came on the scene when he was needed most. India had been aroused from its political slumber by Lord Curzon's partitioning Bengal. A nation wide agitation was set on foot by Surrendranath Banerji and other patriots. We the students, then at schools and colleges, were stirred; and participated in the Swadesi movement. I had become a blind lover of every thing Indian, good or bad, simply because it was Indian. I bought heaps of oleograph reproductions (imported from Germany) of Ravi Varma's paintings of Indian Gods and Goddesses and heroes and heroines and scenes from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharat*. I collected them and decorated the walls of my room because they were *Indian pictures*. But the appreciation of true Indian art, at the time, was at the lowest ebb, as pointed out by Sir William Rothenstein: "*Indian Fine art has waited long and patiently at the turnstile of the house of fame.....certain aspects of the art of India repelled the western mind.....The elephant headed Ganesh, the many armed Durga, the three headed Brahma, the monkey Gods and the incarnation of Siva and Vishnu seemed to*

*outrage all accepted canons of beauty. The familiar forms represented on many of the temples appeared ugly and sexual compared with classical and medieval figures in European churches to which Englishmen were accustomed.....*” Sir William added “*Nor do Indians themselves understand the nobility of their own artistic inheritance, or the obligations this great legacy imposes on them.*” This was so because in the words of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh “we had been cut off by a mercenary and soulless education from all our ancient roots of culture and tradition; it was corrected only by the stress of imagination, emotion and spiritual delicacy, submerged but not yet destroyed in the temperament of the people. At this time, the first decade of the twentieth century, Mr. E. B. Havell the Principal of the Government Art School, Calcutta and Sri Abanindranath Tagore demonstrated to the world what a great heritage India had. Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy had come under the influence of Burne-Jones and John Ruskin who were then leading a revolt against Cubism, Impressionism and Realism in modern art in England. Burne-Jones said, “Impressionists do not make beauty, they do not make design, they do not make idea, they do not make anything but atmosphere.” John Ruskin said, “The object of art must be either to please or to exalt; one is a petty reason, the other a noble one.”

Dr. Coomaraswamy's four years stay in Ceylon from 1903 to 1906 as Director of Mineralogical Survey, gave him an opportunity to study the arts and crafts of India and Ceylon. He paid visits to South India and Calcutta to see Mr. Havell and the Tagore brothers. He resigned from the service of the Ceylon Govern-

ment and went back to England to complete his works *History of Mediaeval Sinhalese Art* and *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*. He made up his mind to devote his life to the revival, regeneration, and interpretation of Indian art. He had seen from close quarters India's struggle for Freedom and he soon published a pamphlet *The Deeper Meaning of the Struggle* in November 1907. It was such patriotic sentiments and feelings of my *Guru* which attracted me first to him; and I longed to meet him. I remember distinctly having read one article or speech of his in the *Ceylon National Review* in which he had condemned the westernisation of India. He also started writing to the *Modern Review* which had been started just about this time (in 1907) by Ramananda Chatterji at Allahabad.

I had read all what Dr. Coomaraswamy had written before I met him in the autumn of 1908 at the house of my class-mate and closest friend Sriprakasa.\* We were both students at the Banaras Hindu College, the nucleus of the present Banaras (Hindu) University. Dr. Coomaraswamy had come to Banaras from Calcutta after seeing the Tagore brothers. He stayed, at Banaras, with Dr. Bhagwan Das, the greatest living savant and scholar of India, father of Sriprakasa. I seized upon this opportunity and daily sat at my *Guru's* feet to learn of the mysteries of Indian art—its ideals, its beauty, and its greatness. Dr. Coomaraswamy convinced me that the "Indian Art" of Ravi Varma which I was then admiring

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\* Sriprakasa and I were again together in England in 1913 and 1914. He was High Commissioner for India in Pakistan, Governor of Assam; and is now a Cabinet Minister in India.





—Sketch by Sri Nandalal Bose.

**“Studio of Dr. Abanindranath Tagore in Jorasanko, Calcutta.”**

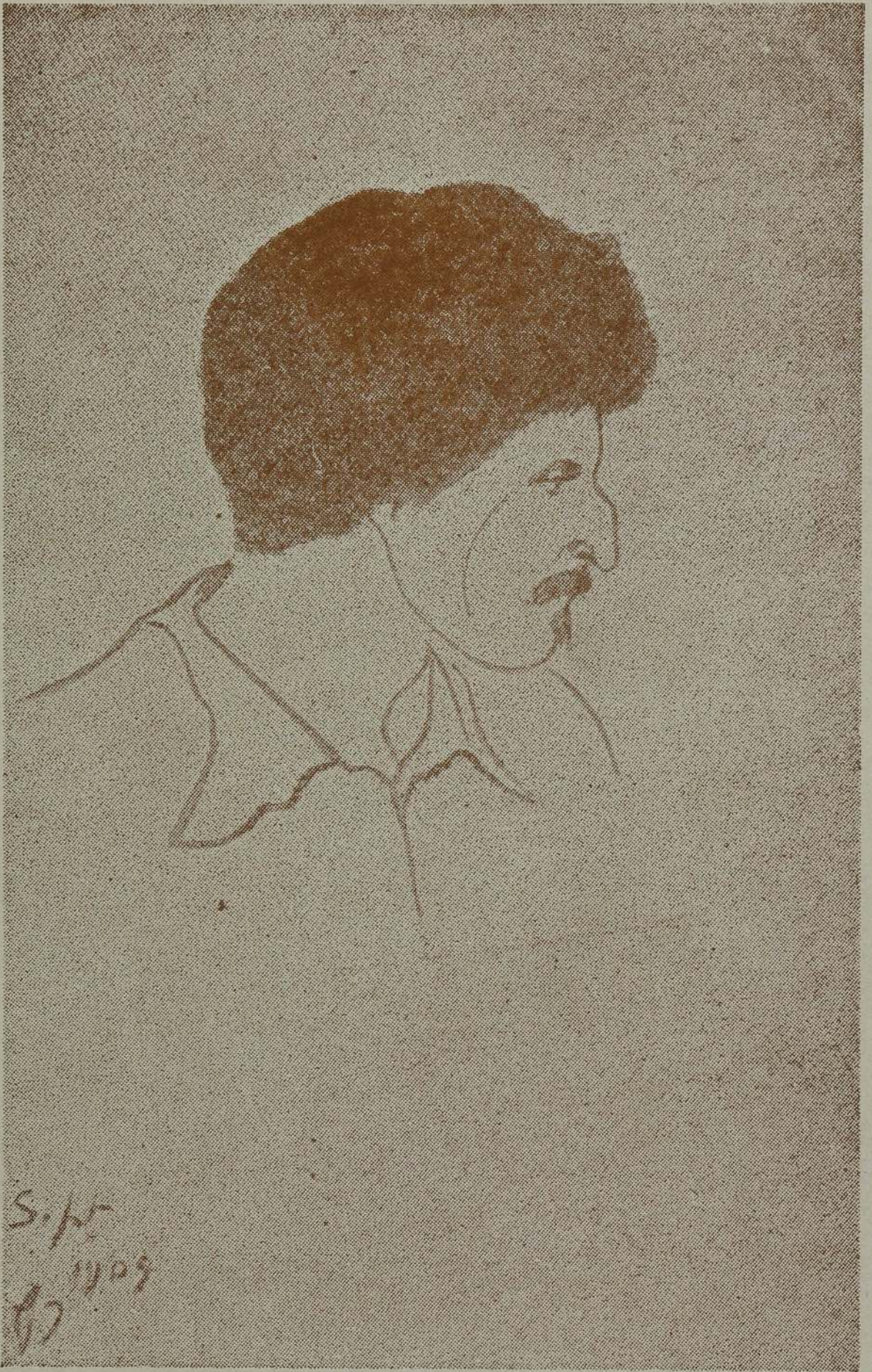
[The time of the sketch dates back to a mid-day of about 1910 or 1911, when Sri Nandalal Bose was busy in a discussion on Art with Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. The three other figures are the three well-renowned brothers Sri Samarendranath Tagore, Sri Gaganendranath Tagore and Dr. Abanindranath Tagore.]



was not really Indian. He pointed out the vulgarity of Ravi Varma's art and of the harmonium, both of which had found places in almost all homes of educated Indians. Ravi Varma's *Art* was setting up false non-Indian and vulgar unartistic ideals before the people just as the harmonium was killing and vulgarising Indian music. He convinced me that Ravi Varma's art was not really Indian and national art. Models for gods and goddesses and heroes and heroines painted by Ravi Varma were common men and women who found themselves, in situations for which they lacked dignity and divinity. His pictures were such as any European could paint after a superficial study of Indian dresses and literature. He said Ravi Varma's gods and goddesses, in spite of their many arms, and extra heads were very human and that too not of noble type. He told me the ideal artist for India was Abanindranath Tagore who followed the ideals, aims and canons of Indian art and who was training a group of young Indians after the tradition of Indian art. I became a convert. I discarded Ravi Varma and installed Abanindranath as my hero and ideal artist. I wanted to see him and his paintings and how he painted real Indian pictures. My *Guru* gave me his second class return ticket to Calcutta (as he had made up his mind to go to seats of ancient art instead of to the home of Modern art). So as soon as I answered the last question paper for the intermediate examination I went to Calcutta to see the founder of the Modern School of Indian Painting with Dr. Coomaraswamy's letter of introduction. The Tagore brothers (Gaganendranath, Samnendranath and Abanendranath) lived jointly at their Jorasanko palatial houses off Chitpur Road surrounded by trea-

tures of Indian art. They put me up as their guest for ten days in the room adjoining their drawing room cum art-gallery. During my stay with the Tagore brothers at Jorasanko I read books on art such as *Ideals of Indian Art* by Havell which had just then been published. I looked at their marvellous collection of Indian art. I watched Abanendranath Tagore paint and train his early out-standing batch of pupils, Nand Lal Bose, Asit Kumar Haldar, Venktappa, Derburman, Roy Chaudhary, Chingtai, Surrendra Gangoly and Iswari Prasad. Since I paid frequent visits to this temple of art every year and then in the last one year (1912-13) I was in constant, almost daily, contact with the Tagore brothers. This personal contact was interrupted by my departure for England in July 1913. My introduction to the Bengal School was of great help to me—in the understanding and appreciation of Indian art. The elder Tagore—(Gagnendranath) made a portrait—sketch of my *Guru* (Dr. Coomaraswamy) and one of myself, and gave them to me. From Banaras Dr. Coomaraswamy went about India in search of Indian art treasures; and he also delivered lectures on Indian art and wrote articles to Indian periodicals. To encourage Indian craftsmen's guilds he offered a prize of Rs. 250/- for the best essay on the Guild of the weavers of Banaras. I studied their guilds' organisation and their work and wrote an essay, which won me his prize and was published in the *Modern Review*.

Having passed the Intermediate Examination with Sriprakasa from Banaras Hindu College I came to Allahabad, in 1909. Again for two years I was in close touch with Dr. Coomaraswamy. He was placed in charge of the Fine Art Section of the great



**Dr. Ananda. Coomaraswamy**  
(By the late Sri Gogendranath Tagore, September, 1909)



Allahabad "All India Exhibition of 1910." I assisted him at the Exhibition. I secured specimens of Garhwal School of Painting for the Exhibition; and I introduced to him Balak Ram (a great-great-grandson of Mola Ram). From Balak Ram he bought six pictures of Mola Ram's collection, which are now in the Boston Museum, and four of which are reproduced in *Rajput Painting Vol. II* (Plates LIV A, LVIII, LXV and LXXIV B).

He encouraged me to go on with the research in Garhwal School, on which I have now almost completed my work after 40 years study and research of this School and Mola Ram's art.\* I am dedicating my book on Garhwal School of Painting to my *Guru*

When I was learning all I could from my *Guru* Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and was assisting him in the work of the Exhibition, Sir William Rothenstein, the great Orientalist and artist came to Banaras. He was a great friend of my *Guru*. He asked me to go to Banaras to show the ghats, temples and the sadhus to Sir William Rothenstein. About my first meeting him at Banaras, Rothenstein writes in his "*Men and Memories 1900-1922*" p. 245:—

*"One day a youth from Allahabad, named Mukandi Lal, sought me out. He was a student from the University there who had been sent to look after me (by Dr. Coomaraswamy). He meant, he said, to devote his life to serving his country. Yet while he was speaking there arose a clamour—a tongawallah was trying to brow-beat some villagers he had brought*

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\* "Garhwal School of Paintings" is being published serially in the *Ruplekha* of Delhi, and will be republished, enlarged, in book form; and my "Study of Mola Ram's Art and Life" is all typed awaiting some enterprising publisher.

into the town. 'But can one devote oneself to a whole country?' I asked 'why not begin by helping these poor people who are being exploited.' Help them he did and was the happier for his action." I took Rothenstein to Saranath. I showed him the temples, streets and the ghats of Banaras. He used to paint the sadhus, the pilgrims, the ghats and the temples and I used to stand by and watch him paint. One afternoon while Sir William was drawing a sketch of a sadhu and I was standing by, Sri O. C. Gangoly came upon the scene and I introduced him to Sir William Rothenstein.

At Banaras, while I was acting as a guide to Rothenstein I met Justice Sir John Woodroffe of the Calcutta High Court. He was keenly interested in Indian culture and was studying the Tantric lore, on which subject he wrote some instructive and learned books. He was interested in my ideas on art and took keen interest in me ever since. Since whenever I went to Calcutta to see the Tagore brothers and stayed with them, I used to meet Sir John Woodroffe, Percy Brown (the successor of Mr. Havell, Principal of the Calcutta Art School) who used to come to see the Tagores frequently. I heard them discuss art. All this meant education in Indian art and culture for me. I saw much more of Sir John Woodroffe later during my stay at Calcutta, as a student of the City College for one year (1912-13).

While at Allahabad (1910-11) my *Guru* had started working on his monumental work—*Rajput Painting*. I used to help him in translating and interpreting old Hindi texts connected with and about the pictures he was writing about. During the early summer of 1911 after the exhibition was over



he went to Kashmir with his second wife, Ratan Devi (an English lady) who was then learning Indian music. He asked me to join him in Kashmir during my vacation. I spent May and June, two months, in Kashmir with him. This visit and stay with him in the house-boat at Srinagar provided me further opportunity, from close quarters, to learn all about Indian art. He continued his research in Rajput Art and Himalayan (Pahari) School, in Kashmir. I continued helping him in the work. After I left him in Kashmir he went about visiting the centres of Pahari art and collected further materials for his work on Rajput art. This visit of mine to Kashmir, in 1911, as a student (which I owed to my *Guru*) enabled me to see the people of Kashmir in their homes and their beautiful country. On my return I wrote a series of articles on *Kashmir and Kashmiris* in the *Modern Review* in 1912-1913, which may one day be published in book form. Apart from his research in Rajput Art and visit to centres of Indian art during his stay in India he delivered lectures on Indian art at colleges illustrated by lantern slides.

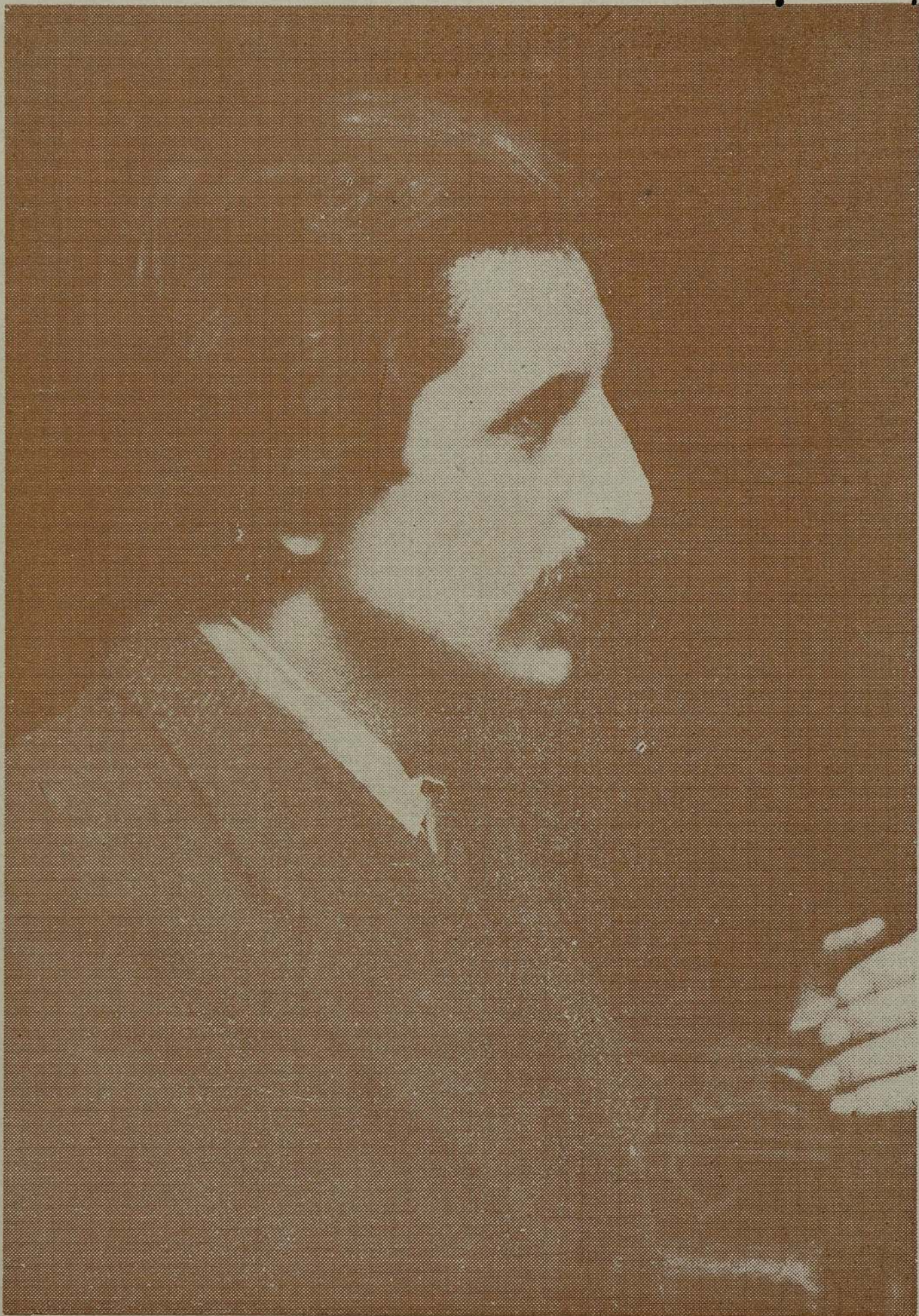
During my sojourn in England (September 1913 to March 1919) I saw quite a lot of him and often stayed with him in his country house and at his flat in London until he left for America in 1917. I continued helping him in the preparation of his *Rajput Paintings Vol. I and II*. He acknowledged my services in the *Rajput Art Vol. I* (text) in the following words "I also wish to acknowledge my debt to Mr. Mukandi Lal for constant assistance in the interpretation of Hindi texts." (Acknowledgment Vol. I). When in 1917 he went to the United States of America, I was

deprived of the privilege of personal touch with my *Guru* but he used to write to me occasionally. He again came to India in 1925-26 to collect paintings and sculptures for the Boston Museum. I met him at Lucknow where I was then attending the Session of the then U.P. Council (now Assembly) and of which I was elected Deputy President.

My discipleship continued as I read all he wrote on Indian art and followed his theories and expositions of Indian art; and communicated the same to others whenever I got an opportunity to do so by lecturing and writing on Indian art. His *Essays in National Idealism* and *Art and Swadesi* did much more for the revival and appreciation of Indian art than any other work on art. I had heard and read some of his lectures and essays collected in these books, during my discipleship and after. I was attracted to him by his love for things Indian. He influenced my life and way of living as nobody else did. My understanding and appreciation of Indian art is everlasting.

In the field of art if he had done no more than publish the *Rajput Art*, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, the *Transformation of Nature in Art* and the *Dance of Shiva* that in itself would have secured him the foremost place amongst the art critics and art historians of the world. If we Indians were to express our gratitude to him and show our appreciation of his work we would name our National Art Gallery or National Museum after him.

His first message to us was in a book which he issued (275 copies of 22 pages), printed in hand made paper, in 1908 May, from England, before



**Dr. Ananda. Coomaraswamy  
(about 1915).**



he came to India, under the caption of *Aims of Indian Art*. He gave me an autographed copy of this book. I completed its translation, (as I find it from an endorsement on the last page), into Hindi, at 1 a.m. on 30th December, 1917, in London, on the eve of his departure for the United States where his talents, ability and vast knowledge of Indian Art were appreciated.

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## MY REMINISCENCES

(*Dr. Bhagavan Das, Banaras*)

I am in my 83rd year. Memory has become slippery, especially as regards dates; though events stand out in vividly visualised scenes before the mind's eye. I believe I first saw Coomaraswamy in one of the houses standing on the grounds of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society, Banaras. We were introduced to each other. This was in October or November, 1910. He had read some of my books and expressed appreciation of them. He was interested in fine arts of all kinds, old pictures of Moghul School and Rajput School, Kashmir shawls, old bronzes etc., and wished to attend the Exhibition which was to take place in the winter of 1910-1911 in Allahabad. I invited him to stay with me. He came and stayed with me for some six weeks going to Allahabad often to visit the Exhibition, as did I also. I am not sure, but I think his wife was with him also, there. He came to Banaras again in 1916 I believe. He wanted very much to get a post in the Banaras Hindu University, as Professor of Indian Art and Culture.

But it was not possible to get him one. So he went back to U.S.A. where he had already been appointed as Curator of the Boston Museum. I cannot remember having seen him again. We exchanged letters infrequently and irregularly. He used to send me copies of his Museum *Bulletin* from time to time. He had carried away with him four pictures of Moghul and Rajasthan Schools, selected from a portfolio of these in the possession of my younger brother Shri Sitaram. He wished to purchase this outright, but my brother was not willing to part with them for they were an heirloom. Soon Coomaraswamy reproduced this in a book on Indian Art—of which he sent a copy to me—and returned the pictures. I now think that he did come to India once again, after Mahatma Gandhi's Non-co-operation movement began. He took away, as a present from me, many issues of the *Vedic Magazine* (a monthly issued by the Arya Samaj Gurukula of Kangri—now Kanakhal) in which a series of valuable articles on *The Philosophy of Indian Engineering* had been published by Shri K. V. Vaze of Nasik—an engineer who had retired from Government service. He sent me one or two small pamphlets afterwards, in which he referred to some of my books.

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## THE AMBASSADOR ABROAD

(*Sri Adris Banerji, Banaras Museum, Banaras, India*).

Far away from his native palmgroves where the surging surf of the Indian ocean thundered and spouted at the feet of Adam's peak Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy settled down. He was not to hear again the parrot chirp and the cuckoo sing amidst the graceful and tall cocoanut trees, with its eternal

nectar; and the Sinhalese maidens with their multi-coloured *saris* going to the *viharas* to worship the *tathagata*. He had lived and felt for them. His heart beats had pulsated at their lost horizon. He and his father had regretted the loss of rhythm, poise and colour in their lives and fought successfully for their resurrection. He purchased a small villa in a matter of fact ultra-modern Boston suburb and lived there the rest of his days. But neither distance nor environment, could deny to him the pleasures and pursuits of life, which he was determined to follow. There were fresh worlds to discover and new horizons to explore. Here, far away from the noisy throngs of the great American cities, the sage of Ceylon immersed himself in ancient Nordic myths like Volsund, Icelandic Eddas, the writings of Plato and Plotinus and works of the mediaeval European scholasticism like Meister Eckhart and Thomas Aquinas. With his insight and intuition he discovered the fundamental unity underlying all religions. His researches in Christian monastic philosophy won for him fresh laurels so beautifully summed up in his *Paths that lead to the same summit*.

In his life long meandering amidst literature,\* art, and philosophy of the nations Dr. Coomaraswamy

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\*A. K. Coomaraswamy received higher education in the University College, London; and curious as it may seem, in a scientific subject—Geology, in which he ultimately obtained a D.Sc. twice in this century, we have seen two great personalities trained in scientific subjects earning universal applause as a litterateur. The first of these was Coomaraswamy and the second is Pandit Jawharlal Nehru. While Dr. Coomaraswamy tapped the dammed up unfathomable waters of religion, philosophy, mythology, and art, Pandit Nehru brought about a new thought epoch in the writing of autobiography and approach in the writing of history as a dynamic process of thinking.

had like the ancient rishis become too well-versed in the Brahmanical *Vedas*, *Brahmanas*, *Upanishads*, *Vedanta* and *Puranas*; but like Max Muller and Rhys Davids had drunk deeply from the eternal springs of Buddhist *Vinaya*, *Nikayas*, *Tripitakas*, *Suttanta* and *Abhidhamma*. He had also become a master of the Jain canonical texts. Therefore after 1934, he devoted his energies to the interpretation of Vedic thought and symbolism. His *New Approach to the Vedas*, *Inverted Tree*, *Angels and Titans*, *The Vedic Doctrine of Silence*, were like new fountains that gushed out from an ancient spring. His interpretation of Vedic symbolism was most appreciated. Because, his work went to show that the Indian tradition is the essential truth, nevertheless, it was not an unique statement of the universal truth. His position was more that of an orthodox Hindu than that of a painstaking modern scholar. Just as the youthful Coomaraswamy, in a different age and different region of the earth, had striven for the resurrection of the Ceylonese life; in the well-earned dusk of a life spent in the pursuit of knowledge, he wanted to bring back to the Indians, maddened with gutter politics and striving for the poison fruit of the 'Industrial Revolution,' the courage of convictions based on their traditions, the *adhyatmic* basis of life, as well as the fact, that the truth of the oldest text could be demonstrated by the most vigorous modern methods.

One of the most charming feature of this great mind was the complete forgetfulness of his own greatness. Scholastic snobbery is a dangerous and vicious quality, but the seer of Indian renaissance in the West was completely free from it. The great Dr.



Coomaraswamy, with his flowing beard, shallow brown complexion, poring over the accumulated learning of the two hemispheres, knew no such complex. Young and old, could approach him, write to him and what is more criticize his theories. There was always a gracious understanding, sympathy and word of encouragement for all. To him every publication, be it a sumptuous volume, or a small contribution however meanly printed and whatever the standing of the writer, had some value. He would take his views as seriously as that of any Harvard or Cambridge Professor with an inter-national reputation.

Indian researches in those days were sharply divided in two camps over the question whether the lowest member of the Mauryan capitals were lotus or the Iranian Bell. In 1930 a select band of young Indians used to congregate in the room of the late R. P. Chanda in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, where the deceased gentleman, in spite of all his stern school masterly code was a great attraction. Amongst them was A. K. Mitra (now Dr. A. K. Mitra of the Department of Anthropology), who had accompanied Chanda to Sarnath, Mathura and Khiching excavations. While in training under him Dr. Mitra published a paper questioning Dr. Coomaraswamy's identifications of the base of the Capital as 'Lotus.' A copy was sent to the *savant* for his opinion. A lesser mortal would have probably taken to silence and contemptuous treatment of the publication. I have seen many Indian scholars having recourse to this method. Not so however the scholar of Boston — verily he was a '*gurudeva*' who sympathised with the daring of

this unknown fame. He published a long and patient contradiction of Dr. Mitra's contentions, and what is more presented him with all copies of his publications.

In 1930, I published a very short account of the beautiful Paramara Temples, at a place called Nema-war, in the Indore State and had the audacity to send him a copy. Months had elapsed and I myself had forgotten it, when one morning sitting in my Calcutta house, I was very much surprised to find an envelope from Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Opening it I found a letter in a few lines from the greatest authority on Indian Art and Architecture. "You have developed an undoubted insight into the real spirit of the subject. It is a pleasure to observe such hereditary aptitude for research." Since, till 1942, I have often corresponded with him on every conceivable subject, I only wish that the hooligans who burnt my father's library in Calcutta in 1946 had spared those letters.

Dr. Coomaraswamy had the intuition to catch the underlying significance of oriental design and sculpture. He was probably the first scholar to realise the fundamental unity underlying the aesthetics of the East. The result was his *Dance of Shiva, Visvakarma, History of Indian Art and Indonesian Art*. Particularly, in the last, his treatment of a varied subject which called for encyclopaedic knowledge, was so brief yet meticulous, but full of understanding of the contacts and reactions of the various schools of Indian sculpture on each other vis a vis sculpture in *Great India*, that one regrets the disappearance of the volume in the market.

## FROM "THE VEGETARIAN NEWS."

(Mr. Roy Walker, London).

"No biographical details" was the condition Dr. Coomaraswamy made for granting an interview to the writer of one of the last articles about him to appear in an English periodical, the *Aryan Path*, and because he consistently shunned publicity his name is probably unfamiliar to many of our readers. One of our most gifted artists, the late Eric Gill, said of him: "I believe that no other living writer has written the truth in matters of art and life and religion and piety with such wisdom and understanding." This tribute from a Roman Catholic sculptor to a Hindu interpreter of art need startle nobody. The son of a Hindu barrister and scholar and an English lady, and himself married to an Argentine scholar and linguist, Dr. Coomaraswamy was physically as well as spiritually a man in whom Eastern and Western spiritual traditions dwelt in living unity. He wrote of classical Oriental art and of the art and thought of Mediaeval Europe with equal insight, revealing and identity beneath the apparent diversities of time and place, and rehabilitating for modern understanding significances of which we had almost lost sight and knowledge.

At the age of seventy, Dr. Coomaraswamy was still working every day of the week from seven in the morning until ten at night, and was author of more than sixty books and monographs, some of which have been published in Britain by *Luzac*. They are miracles of concentrated exposition. Perhaps Dr. S. Chandrasekhar the interviewer—is right in saying they are "like terse mathematical formulas, far beyond the comprehension of even the intelligent lay reader" but

they are also the polar opposite of pedantry, for all their erudition they are “a living experience and not just an academic discipline”—which was Coomaraswamy’s own criterion of fruitful endeavour. Only as living experience, he taught, as knowledge in the fullest sense, can civilisation be understood.

As seen last year in Massachusetts, where he was for many years Curator of the Museum of Fine Arts, Coomaraswamy was “a slim and stately figure of six feet two inches, his crop of flowing white hair, clear olive complexion, prominent nose and short grey beard—a combination of Mahatma Gandhi and Bernard Shaw.” (Gandhi he judged “the man of the age—our age . . . . the only unpurchasable man in the world.”) Like Gandhi and Shaw, Coomaraswamy was a vegetarian on cultural grounds. A boarder at Wycliffe College, Gloucestershire from 1889 to 1895, in June of that year he proposed a motion in the school Debating Society: “that the slaughter of animals for food is neither necessary, beneficial, or right.” He afterwards entered University College, London, where he gained his D.Sc. After thirty years’ work in Boston—New England, it seems, still has its attraction for the Thoreaus of our own time—he planned to retire this year to India, “Perhaps at the foot of the Himalayas or in Tibet; some spot where I shall be least accessible.” In another way this purpose is not wholly unfulfilled. At his father’s desire, Coomaraswamy’s son left Wycliffe College a year ago and went with the Greek explorer and mystic, Marco Pallis, (author of *Peaks and Lamas* and also a vegetarian on spiritual grounds, Mr. Pallis was responsible for English editions of Coomaraswamy’s own books and translated kindred works into English) on a visit to Tibet.

We are aware that in printing these biographical details we should not have Coomaraswamy's approval; they are at best irrelevant, he would gently remind us, they divert attention from what is more important. If the association of English vegetarianism with Coomaraswamy is to be more than a sentimental reminiscence, or still worse a partisan claim to a man whose work we have failed to comprehend, some of us must return to the study of those invaluable books in which his concentrated wisdom still lives and works powerfully for good.

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## ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

(*Dr. Ranjee Shahani, London*).

B.A., D.LITT. (*Paris*)

I did not know Coomaraswamy personally, nor did I ever have occasion to exchange correspondence with him. But I have read many of his books, and have been impressed by them.

There are, to my mind, three Coomaraswamys: Coomaraswamy, the art critic; Coomaraswamy, the philosophic commentator; and Coomaraswamy, the humanist.

As an art critic, Coomaraswamy might well be called a pioneer; he was one of the first Asiatics to study and explain the arts and crafts of India and Ceylon. Whatever he has written on these topics is characterized by wide knowledge and good taste.

Coomaraswamy the philosophic commentator is excellent; he has dealt in a masterly fashion with Indian and European thought. And his book on Buddhism is fine, at once accurate and true.

The humanist in Coomaraswamy has always appealed to me. This man was no narrow-minded patriot or a partisan writer. He worshipped truth, beauty and goodness wherever he found them. Is this nothing? It is a great deal; here is revealed the spiritual fibre of a man, of any man. Coomaraswamy was both human and humane. It is not given to many of us to be more than that on this tormented planet of ours.

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## A RESEMBLANCE TO ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

*(Sri R. Mutu Ramalingam, Kuala Pilah, Malaya).*

In February 1921 when I was a student at Ananda College, Colombo, I had the privilege of meeting Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy when he paid what was probably his last visit to Ceylon. Seeing a note in the papers that he was on a brief visit to Ceylon after an extensive tour of the Far East two other students and I called at the Grand Oriental Hotel in order to pay our respects to this great savant who had achieved international reputation as an exponent of Oriental art.

He received us most cordially in the hotel lounge and after enquiring about Ananda College talked to us about America and the work he was doing there. Before we took leave of him we had persuaded him to address the senior students of the College at their weekly literary association meeting the following week.

On 22nd February 1921 Dr. Coomaraswamy lectured to the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch) at

the Colombo Museum on *Indian Paintings*. His cousin Sir P. Arunachalam presided at the meeting and paid an eloquent tribute to the lecturer saying, "Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy has won distinction as an apostle of culture and art, and has incidentally turned the tables on the Westerner by snatching one of the plums of the western world. Dr. Coomaraswamy's life should be an example and inspiration to our youth." He referred also to Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy's distinguished father Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy who was a well known figure in London Society in the seventies of the last century and to the latter's intimate friendship with Disraeli and Palmerston. It may not be out of place here to say that Disraeli has immortalised Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy in one of his novels in the character *Kusinara*.

The following day Dr. Coomaraswamy visited Ananda College and addressed the students on *Ancient Sinhalese Art*. He expressed his delight at the remarkable progress made by the College since his last visit to the Island and paid a tribute to its founders many of whom he had known intimately.

Dr. Coomaraswamy who was then in his 44th year had a strikingly handsome appearance and bore a close resemblance to Robert Louis Stevenson.

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## HOMAGE TO COOMARASWAMY

(Mr. Wesley E. Needham, West Haven, Conn., U.S.A.)

"Our study of alien modes of thought and feeling, if it is to be of any real use to us, must be inspired by other than curious motives or a desire to justify our own system. For the common civilization of the world we need a common will, a recognition of com-

mon problems, and to cooperate in their solution. At this moment, when the Western world is beginning to realize that it has failed to attain the fruit of life in a society based on competition and self-assertion, there lies a profound significance in the discovery of Asiatic thought, where it is affirmed with no uncertain voice that the fruit of life can only be attained in a society based on the conception of moral order and mutual responsibility." This might have been written just recently, but many students of Buddhism, and others who are familiar with the works of Dr. Coomaraswamy will recognize its source. Written thirty-five years ago, its significance is even more profound today to students of the history of political morality; equally so to those who study Asiatic culture, comparative religion, or the value of foreign missions. For anyone who doesn't know this reference, it is from the Preface of his book: *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, New York, 1916.

I have never had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Coomaraswamy; neither was I ever privileged to attend one of his lectures. As a person I did not know him; nevertheless, from his writings I have a vivid impression of him as a great humanist, scholar, philologist, interpreter of religious concepts and motives in art. The rich fruit of his extensive research program found expression in many books, essays, pamphlets, and articles (over 500 published titles). From the very beginning of my own studies in Buddhism and its influence on the art and culture of Asiatic countries, I have been guided by his hand in print. His book, quoted above was one of my earliest introductions to Buddhism, over twenty years ago. Years later (in 1944) when my interest had



become focused in the more restricted field of Tibetan language and its hybrid, Tantric-Buddhist literature; prompted by the publication of his *Elements of Buddhist Iconography*, Harvard, 1935, I ventured to write to him about my problems. I shall never forget the thrill of receiving his first letter; in part, a reply to my request for his opinion concerning the significance of two Tantric-Buddhist symbols; the *vajra* (sceptre) and *ghanta* (bell) held in the hands of *Vajradhara*, a popular image by which the Primordial Deity (or Cosmic Principle) of Mahayana Buddhism is traditionally represented.

In later correspondence, he supplied many valuable references to the significance of *mudras* (symbolic hand gestures); many of which were from his own writings, others from the most unlikely sources. He seemed to have read everything, and what is equally fabulous, to have an unfailing memory for the source of any reference. It was a privilege to lean on his colossal scholarship; easy to agree with his convictions, invariably substantiated by ancient textual authority. It is a pleasure to record my gratitude for his many favors.

Only once did we happen to differ. For many years Dr. Coomaraswamy has been collecting from the literature of the ancient world a giant web of evidence, each strand adding conviction that there exists a common ground of Truth in which all philosophies and all world-religions have their roots; the Perennial Philosophy. Certainly one of the foremost, if not the most distinguished exponent of this *Philosophia Perennis* in our generation, Dr. Coomaraswamy could be expected to appreciate the work of an earlier pioneer in this, his favorite field. At least

that is what I assumed when I sent him a leaflet which outlined the fundamental principles of the ancient Wisdom-Religion more generally known as Theosophy. In the generation preceding Dr. Coomaraswamy, Helena P. Blavatsky gathered together the result of a lifetime study and investigation into two thick volumes: *The Secret Doctrine; The Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy*, which she published in 1888 when Ananda Coomaraswamy was eleven years of age. Here in 1,535 pages was a stupendous mass of material culled from ancient texts, undeniable evidence of the substratum of Truth on which all religions and philosophies are based; the source from which they derive whatever Truth they contain. In reply, Dr. Coomaraswamy wrote: "I'm afraid I feel that Theosophy is for the most part a pseudo—or distorted *Philosophia Perennis*." Much as I disliked the one occasion of differing with him out of respect and admiration, nevertheless to agree merely to be agreeable would be indeed hypocritical. In a subsequent letter he wrote: "I agree that some have been led to Eastern thought through meeting with Theosophy, but the best of these have realized that they must go to the *sources themselves* sooner or later." I, for one, am completely satisfied that these sources exist; doubly certain, after becoming familiar with the writings of both H. P. Blavatsky and Dr. Coomaraswamy.

One day I was visiting the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston for the purpose of studying the collection of Tibetan Buddhist paintings. I expressed a desire to meet Dr. Coomaraswamy. The member of the museum staff who was showing me the collection, took me to the museum library which was near Dr. Coomara-

swamy's office and study, only to learn that he was in conference with a visitor. However, I did catch a glimpse of him, my first and last. I am grateful for that much.

He was a majestic, almost regal figure known to thousands of scholars, students and admirers, respected throughout the world of scholarship for his courageous independence of thought, and sincerity of purpose. His life was devoted to search for Truth; a philosopher with one foot on the ground, a mystic with one foot firmly planted in the clouds.

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### A. K. COOMARASWAMY

*(Dr. John Wild, Harvard University, U.S.A.)*

I became acquainted with the late Dr. Coomaraswamy about five years ago, and have read a number of his works on philosophy and aesthetics. I was deeply impressed by his extraordinary command of both Oriental and Western thought and by his efforts to reveal an underlying harmony between the deepest insights of both. I think that these efforts were on the whole successful and they have exerted a profound influence on my own reflections. He was a man of very broad learning and profound insight.

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### A. K. COOMARASWAMY

*(Dr. H. Goetz, Baroda, India).*

It is only after his death that we begin to realize what a great cultural pioneer the late Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy had been. For to-day, after two bloody world wars and under the threat of a third one, the horrors of which may surpass anything experienced before, it dawns on us that we have

reached one of the decisive turning points of history. The civilizations which had flourished during the last millennium, turn to their grave, in the East as well as in the West, and another world begins to emerge which knows nothing of the old barriers between the races of mankind. East and West meet and are bound to fuse under the new life conditions created by modern science. What of their past will survive, none of us can foretell. But that their best will contribute to shaping the ideas of tomorrow, is certain.

In bringing together their ideas and ideals, Coomaraswamy has been the most influential pioneer of our time. His scientific output has been amazing. However, this is not so important, and there have been other scholars who have done more to explore the cultural heritage of the East or of the West. But with this erudition he combined a sensitiveness and general culture which raised him above the collectors, commentators and interpreters, which permitted him to find the corresponding strains of thought and sentiment, thus not merely evoking an acquaintance, but creating a living connection between traditions which hitherto had seem incompatible.

This sensitiveness made his judgment of Indian art history, often based on quite insufficient evidence, so sure that it proves correct even in the light of the much more specified information available to us today, (except where his idiosyncrasies clouded his judgment.) His thorough acquaintance with Western art and philosophy permitted him to explain Indian art and philosophy in such terms that they could appear as the very logical conclusion—the Vedanta—of the ideals and hopes of Western thinkers and artists.

Havell had restored the self-esteem of Indian art, often in a one sided and crudely chauvinistic manner, but too often misunderstanding the themes and objects of art for art itself. Coomaraswamy succeeded in making Indian art entrancing also to those who loved the heritage of the Greeks, of the Christian Middle Ages, the Italian and Nordic Renaissance. Everywhere he broke new ground. His work on Rajput painting has opened a new chapter of Indian art history, i.e. that of living Hindu art subsequent to the Muslim conquest. His judgment of quality was infallible. Thus he not only gave an immense impulse to the modern rebirth of Indian art, but contributed also to the reorientation of Western art in the early decades of this century.

In his Western orientation he was a late follower of the Romantic school, of those who opposed the traditional classicism in the name of a return to the intensive religiosity and the mysticism of the Middle Ages. He became, indeed, himself an expert in the philosophy of Mediaeval Christianity. And this knowledge, a knowledge not only of the brain, but also of the heart, permitted him to interpret to our living understanding not only the classic philosophy of the East, but the symbolic language of all virginal stages of world experience. From their hitherto dominant rationalist interpretation, based on the late and degenerate institutional forms of the old religions, he worked back to that early stage when they had still been pregnant with meaning, not dead rites, but symbolic recreations of the living cosmos. Here he discovered living springs which might be able to restore the creative vitality of a world corroded by a sceptic rationalism. These springs are valid also in

our time, because they are not affected by the scientific interpretation of the cosmos, but refer to our personal relationship with it, because their symbols are not such of physics or chemistry but of our intuitive physical reaction to the sphere of our objective experience whatever this latter may be.

But this great discovery was also Coomaraswamy's one great failure. It made him an archaist who extolled the East against the West, the Middle Ages against the modern world. In one way he was right. The blind optimism of progress, the belief that technical inventions imply material progress, and material advance moral improvement and felicity, has since collapsed. Man needs bitter struggles and trials for his maturing and spiritual advancement. But not less it is true, that for the development of his capacities man needs freedom from an all devouring concern for his naked survival, hope and opportunity for creative activity. Coomaraswamy overlooked that the ideals which he cherished, could be possible only in a thinly populated world, and that even there misery and injustice had existed not less than in our own time, that the spiritual wisdom of the few had been paid with the dullness and superstition of the many. Thus he evoked an idealized Mediaeval world and an East such as had never existed, except as the vision of few extraordinary personalities, and contrasted one type of civilizations to another, extolling the young and condemning the late ones, and treating each of them as something permanent.

And yet his own preoccupations with Eastern philosophy and history should have told him, that the cycle of life cannot be halted, that youth and maturity, birth and disintegration are integral, inevitable

aspects of life, that the rationalized technical civilization for the nations of hundred millions is as necessary as the primitive virginity for tribes of some thousands, that only the annihilation of those hundreds of millions could revert the cycle and that this cannot be desired by any moral being though it may come some day in the process of nature. We cannot criticize the working of the cosmos, we can merely try to accept it in its proper perspective. We can condemn the superficial self-satisfied philosophy of the "Age of Progress," but we cannot eliminate it as an integral aspect of world history.

But only during Coomaraswamy's last years such a broader life perspective has begun to dawn on us. He lived in a world which implicitly believed in the progress of the gadgets, or rejected it in a romantic archaism. And though he found a number of prominent companions in his spiritual venture, he had settled in the country where the cult of the gadget had reached its very apogee. This, and the bitter opposition which every pioneer encounters, drove him into a vehement reaction, a (one-sided) glorification not only of the Middle Ages, but of India and of the whole of Asia, an idealization which refused to see also the other side of life, that other darker side which is the necessary complement, indeed the stimulating background of all spiritual efforts. He had hoped to end his days in India, but died before these plans ripened. He had disapproved of modern Japan and Turkey. So he was spared the last disappointments, the cult of Mammon, party jobbery and black-marketeering which today in the land of his dreams are not a bit better than in the loathed U.S.A.; he was spared to witness the ghastly massacres of the parti-

tion of India, the victory of Communism in China and its rise all over Asia, perhaps even more disillusionments in store for all of us.

And yet, if this irrationalism has to qualify our posthumous appreciation of the critic of our age, it can only intensify our admiration for the man. It would be unfair to criticize Coomaraswamy that he did not yet realize all the implications even of his own message. He has to be judged in his setting. His failures were part of the party set-up in the cultural struggle of his life-time, of the romantic-archaistic ideology opposing the liberal-socialist technocratism. That he fell to it, was the natural reaction of a man who strove for holiness, and therefore dreamed of a promised spiritual land, as others dream of the earthly paradise of Zion or Moscow. But to yearn for a holy world steeped in the Divine, this can do only one who in his heart of hearts is a saint, a *rishi*. And Coomaraswamy's whole vision was immensely more than that of a museum curator, a scholar, an art critic, a philosopher, it was that of a seer and saint.

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### A. K. COOMARASWAMY

(*Dr. Reginald Le May, Ph.D., London.*)

All students of Eastern art and philosophy owe a great debt to the late Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, and I gladly add my small tribute to that paid by those who knew him more intimately.

I only met him once, in Boston in the fall of 1933, but I found in him immediately a kindred spirit, and when I returned to England in 1934 to take up the study of Buddhist Art at Cambridge, the works he had



already published were a source not only of great interest, but of a great value to me in my own studies.

His *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* was most helpful as a general guide, and *The Indian Origin of the Buddha Image* a fascinating contribution to a very controversial subject. I admired his handling of it immensely, and, though brought up in a very severe school where evidence is concerned, found myself in general agreement with him in the end.

His approach to any subject was that of an artist. I always remember his writing of the famous Borobodur in Java: "There is no nervous tension, no concentration of force to be compared with that which so impresses the observer at Angkor. Borobodur is like a ripe fruit matured in breathless air: the fulness of its forms is an expression of static wealth rather than the volume that denotes the outward radiation of power."

This is sufficient to show the beauty of his style and, at the same time, the clarity of his exposition.

No doubt there were scholars who did not agree with his views and conclusions, but he always made his reader think, and that is the first object of the true scholar.

I salute his memory with my homage and shall always remember him with gratitude.

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Omniscience and Providence are not of the past and future as such, but *tota simul, alzemale*, without division or sequence of cause and effect. Just as from the centre of a circle all parts of the circumference and all the radii are visible all at once, so the eternal "onsight" is neither a "hindsight" nor a "foresight," and in no way conflicts with determination (the orderly sequence of circumferential events) nor with freewill (centrifugal or centripetal motion). A further consequence is that there remains no opposition between the concerts of gradation and evolution: God is creating the whole world Now as much as he ever was or will be; and so, as Philo says, "there is an end of the notion that the universe came into being 'in six days.'" An end, too, of the modern opposition of science and religion; since experimental science is only concerned with serial events taking place in Time and does not pretend to deal with any kind of timeless experience whatever. On the other hand the philosopher cannot ignore Eternity, because it is the timeless point without which Time itself would be inconceivable in terms of past and future, just as Space apart from any undimensioned point would be meaningless in terms of here and there; and of two things, of which one gives its meaning to the other, the first must be the more real and more to be depended upon.

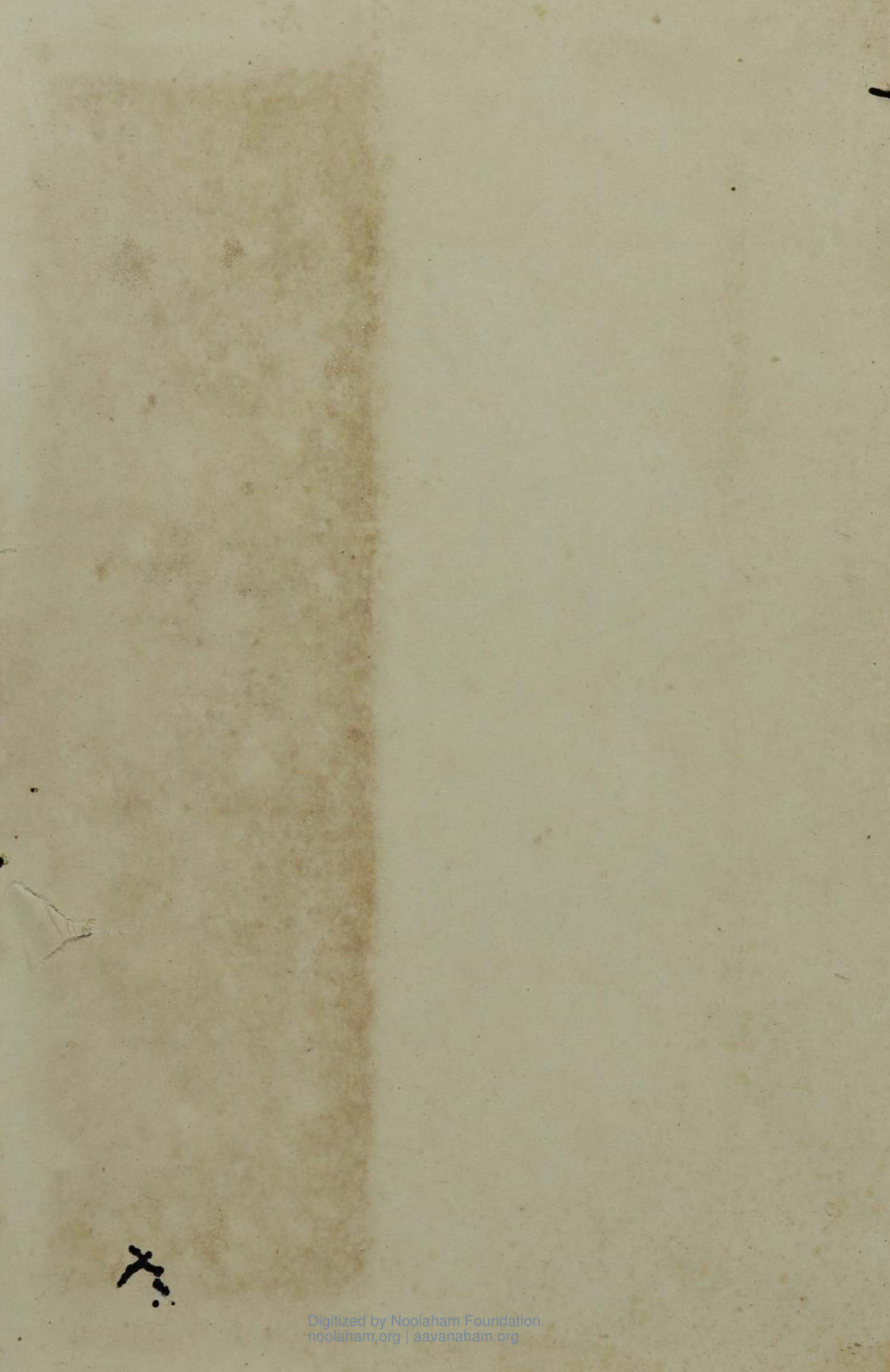
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