



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 K. 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.

(Selected from Eric Gill's "Autobiography")

To

Sri THILLAIAMBALAM MUTTUCUMARU

B. A. (Hons) London

My Revered Teacher

to

whom

I

owe

MY INTRODUCTION TO
ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

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29 MAR 1972
Perpustakaan Negara
Malaysia



*Lord of the Dance, man among men is he
Striving and meditating inwardly,
To break his bonds he sets his own force free,
Through pain he seeks to rouse the fear of God,
Through conquering dance his own self is
down-trod.*

— Rabindranath Tagore.



* A NEW PLANET IN MY KEN *



INTRODUCTION
TO

Ananda
Coomaraswamy

"Please, Sir, tell me still more," said the son.

"Be it so, my child," the father replied.

— Chandogya Upanishad.

How many of you have heard of Ananda Coomaraswamy, a *Kalu-yogi*? It is a name of which every one, particularly Indian and Ceylonese, should be proud. Most of us have hardly heard of him or read any of his books or writings. It is only a name to some.

More than forty five years ago, as a young boy of twelve, I first heard of Ananda Coomaraswamy. To our little home in Kuala Lumpur, in Malaysia, my father brought one evening a new, red-covered book. It was the "History of Jaffna" in Tamil by the late Mr. A. Moototambipillai. All that I could remember my father telling me to do was to look at the pictures of the distinguished † Ponnambalam brothers and that of their illustrious cousin

Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy. Years rolled by. I had forgotten the last mentioned name, not having heard anything further. Soon we came to Ceylon. I had seen and talked to the illustrious brothers Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan and Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam and heard of their eldest brother Ponnambalam Coomaraswamy. Their greatness and the services these distinguished brothers had rendered stirred me. All these three brothers have written an honourable page in the story of Lanka's history.

Months later at a concert given at Nallur, Jaffna, Ceylon, I witnessed an Indian dance performed by a youths' organisation in honour of the visit of Mrs. Margaret E. Cousins to Jaffna. My teacher, Professor. T. Muttucumaru, asked me if I had read any of the writings of Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy. He went on to speak of his writings with the enthusiasm of a disciple. I could only recall the photograph in the red book which my father had brought home. Nor did I know of him and my answer to my teacher seated by my side was in the negative.

The account I had heard of Ananda Coomaraswamy from my teacher had the effect of my reading his † "Essays in National Idealism" which I had borrowed from a friend. I liked especially the references in his writings dealing with the cultural connections between India and Ceylon. That was all. I made no further attempt to read his books except perhaps some of his contributions that appeared in some magazines. Several years have passed since my return to Malaya from Ceylon. Many years of teaching in Malayan schools found me pursuing studies in Malaysian history, folklore and place-names resulting in a few publications on Malaysian history and culture. And then the Japanese came here. It was 1942 when the Japanese occupied Malaysia. I wish to recall one incident which occurred in a railway train. I was travelling from Kuala Lumpur to Seremban. A Japanese officer was aboard the train. We sat facing each other. He had rows of military decorations on his coat and a sword by his side. And he was reading.

I had sufficient knowledge of Japanese to read the title set down in Katakana characters—*Shiva no Ondori*. (The Dance of Shiva) § by Ananda Coomaraswamy. Ah, Ananda Coomaraswamy I thought to myself and recalled the photograph in the red book and the concert at Jaffna. Here was a foreigner reading a book written by a fellow countryman of mine. Thoughts rushed. I wished to speak. I desired to see the book and the photographs which I noticed the book contained. We travelled a few miles without each other saying a word. Rain soon began to pour down rendering the reading of the book a bit difficult for him. The officer had observed that I had been anxious to say something or other. He offered me a cigarette which I had to decline. Now was my best chance I thought and with my smattering knowledge of Japanese I told him that I wished to see the book which I said had been written by a distinguished Ceylonese who was then in America. He handed me his book and as I was having a glance at the pages he opened his bag and showed me two more books, one on "Gandhiji and Nehruji" and the other the "Gospel of Buddha and Buddhism" by Ananda Coomaraswamy.

All these books were in Japanese but the illustrations indicated to me the contents of the books. He soon flooded me with very many questions about Coomaraswamy which I could not answer satisfactorily owing to my poor knowledge of Japanese and a lack of complete knowledge regarding Coomaraswamy. The train stopped. With a *Sayonara* to this officer I returned home. I was filled with shame at my ignorance of Coomaraswamy and his writings. I decided to make amends and began in real earnest to read the books of Coomaraswamy. Thus began my introduction to Coomaraswamy. Coomaraswamy became a "new planet in my ken."

Many evenings in our homes, during the Japanese occupation, when prayers were over, we read the "Dance of Shiva" and Coomaraswamy's interpretations, thoughts and ideas. The celestial God was in the distance yet not so very far distant. A noble pile

of interpretations, thoughts and ideas. We entered into the spirit of his writings repeatedly thrilled with India's deepest doctrines. We looked up to Coomaraswamy and read again his beautiful message and offered gratitude to him. And yet of all that we learned from Coomaraswamy there was one thing, perhaps the best that we certainly had not learnt from other Ceylonese—the love of India and our heritage.

Our children who had been to English schools discontinued their English studies. Japanese was taught in the former English and Tamil schools. Here too our women came to our rescue. They soon realised that our children had to be taught the Tamil language, literature, and music. They spent some of their evenings in teaching Tamil to their children. Our children learnt cradle tales, folklore and riddles. Mr. S. Shivapathasundaram's "Saiva Botham" was read. Tamil readers by Sri-la-Sri Arumuga Navalar were in great demand. Now truly did I realise the words of Ananda Coomaraswamy when he wrote of Indian women in his "Dance of Shiva":

"Even in recent times in families where men have received an English education unrelated to Indian life and thought, the inheritance of Indian modes of feeling rests in the main with women; for a definite philosophy of life is bound up with household ritual and traditional etiquette and finds expression equally in folk-tales and cradle-song and popular poetry and these *puranic* and epic stories which constitute the Bible literature of India. Under these conditions it is often the case that Indian women, with all their faults of sentimentality and ignorance, have remained the guardians of a spiritual culture which is of greater worth than the efficiency and information of the educated."

The "Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists", a work begun by Sister Nivedita and on her death finally completed by Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, was an eye-point to some Indian children in Malaysia, most of whom had no knowledge of the stories embodied in the book. The *Ramayana*, in Ananda Coomaraswamy's words "the best tales of chivalry and truth and the love of

creatures that ever was written", was something new to them. Stories of the Mahabharata, of Krishna, Buddha, Shiva, other stories from the Puranas, Epics and Vedas created in these children a love for Indian ideals. Coomaraswamy through this book of his created a spiritual and national environment for these Indian children, born and bred in Malaysia in disturbed times. These epics contained everything these children needed. They stirred their fancy and embedded their heritage.

The spiritual aspect of the lives of some of us was at its low ebb in December, 1941. Then we were ushered into experiences that were unique. Our material resources, our services and influences had vanished. We were alone with God and Man once again bowed down to Him and rediscovered the realities of life. In the moulding of these thoughts Ananda Coomaraswamy's writings greatly influenced me. Simplicity, humility and piety were reborn. Man as man became valuable.

We lived in a world darkened with the shadow of human folly and wickedness. All around us was discouragement but we sought refuge in the things that would not pass away—in the eternal values of life. Religion was our sheet anchor. God had always given us his demonstration of love. It was at a time like this that we saw the meaning of pain and suffering. The hymns we sang, the visits to the temples were the endeavours we made. We raised our hats as we walked past the temples and churches. People attended the special *poojahs* that were performed on special occasions such as the *Hindu New Year's Day*, *Chitra Pooranai*, *Adi Amavasai*, *Navaratri*, *Deepavali*, *Avani Gnayiru*, *Vilakeedu* and *Maha Sivaratri*.

Most of our sisters did good work in their homes educating their children on the fundamentals of religion. Vivekananda, Ramakrishna, Andrews, Gandhi and Tagore were taken out from our bookshelves and we found solace in their writings. Pages from the old "Harijan" files gave each morning an answer to the problem we had to face each day. Gandhiji's writings were a solace. When we read Ananda Coomaraswamy's

writings we discovered truths so profound that we bent our knees before him and sought for more from him. The experience I have gathered after reading his books has been of no mean order. In spite of all that has been done for Indian studies we were unable to understand many aspects of Indian Art and philosophy. Coomaraswamy made us to be much in advance of those Indians and Ceylonese to whom he has been a closed book. The supreme interest in his writings lies in what he explains of our heritage, that has been shaped in the course of several thousand years. ¶ Never will a reader turn un-Indian in foreign lands after a perusal of his writings. When we were boys the study of India meant the study of a country where stress was laid upon fights and dynastic figures rather than upon the evolution of the religious and social institutions and the religious ideals of India. We did not study India in the light of her living cultural tradition. This was the B.C. era of Indian art—Before Coomaraswamy. For such a study one must sit at the feet of Coomaraswamy. He has rightly taught us to believe that the key to new conquests lies always in taking up earnestly our connections with the past and the man or woman unaware of his or her heritage has no future. For my own part, I cannot help thinking that Coomaraswamy has contributed in a vast measure towards the growth of traditional movements in India, the crowning point of which has now been achieved. He laid the germ of a powerful movement that developed in later years towards securing the advance that India and Ceylon have made. His writings have built up a consciousness of national life. As a sincere patriot he took an active interest in the welfare of India and played an important role in the national regeneration of his country. His contribution to the awakening of India is very great. Though he lived for more than 30 years in America far away from India he was Indian to the very marrow of his bones and lived every minute for the cause of Indian Art and Thought, in fact he lived for the realisation of the Self. Like a true nation builder he revealed a vision of India to her sons and daughters. In the sphere of art he waved aside

the curtains that for years had obscured the great artistic heritage of India. Now that the bonds of the East have been broken, it is all to his credit that a proper appreciation of Eastern art is being made. Swami Vivekananda, the Poet Tagore and Ananda Coomaraswamy form a great triad. * These great men have performed the task of interpreting Eastern culture to the synthetic civilization of the West in the realms of religion, poetry and art. † Great personalities like Mahatma Gandhi, Aurobindo Ghose and Ananda Coomaraswamy have met with deep understanding and appreciation in the West.

As soon as World War II concluded and it was possible to communicate with the outside world, I began to correspond with *Kalayogi* Coomaraswamy. His letters are great gifts which I treasure. Today an artist's sketch of Ananda Coomaraswamy is on my table. Several of his rare books, some autographed by him, are on my bookshelf. A biographical extract from a "Who's Who" is on my table and my own library has been named "Ananda Coomaraswamy Home Library". There is my youngest boy Ananda, who received *Gurudev's* blessings, keeping company with the other children Gandhi, Jawaharlal and Rabin-dra, to remind me of Ananda Coomaraswamy who became my own *GURUDEV* and from whom I have had the good fortune to have had his love in abundant measure. And finally it is *Gurudev* Ananda Coomaraswamy who (as the Poet Rabindranath Tagore declared in *Gitanjali*)

"made me known to friends whom I knew not, given me seats in homes not my own, brought the distant near, and made a brother of the stranger."



Your sincerely
A. K. Coomaraswamy

DR. ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY
(Editor of "Ceylon National Review" 1903-1905)

THE PONNAMBALAM BROTHERS

(Distinguished Cousins of Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy).



*The Hon. Mr. Ponnambalam
Coomaraswamy.*



*The Hon. Sir Ponnambalam
Ramanathan, Kt., K.C., C.M.G.*



*The Hon. Sir Ponnambalam
Arunachalam, Kt.*

FOOTNOTES

† Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan was a patriotic Ceylonese, a great educationist, scholar and politician. Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam was a scholar, public servant and pioneer in the struggle for freedom. He was the first Ceylonese to conceive self-government and independence for Ceylon. To the agitation started by him Ceylon owed its independence today. The statues of the late Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan and the late Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam were garlanded on February 4th, 1948—the birthday of Ceylon's Independence—in commemoration of their initial and historic contribution to the fight for freedom, at the House of Representatives, Colombo, Ceylon. After Cambridge he entered the Civil Service which in Ceylon was a jealously guarded European preserve. He had a brilliant career in the Civil Service, and was a man of extraordinarily keen intellect. Known as the "Father of the Ceylon National Congress" he also worked for the establishment of the Ceylon University. Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam died early in January, 1924, while returning to Ceylon after a pilgrimage, at Madura, of pneumonia, which he apparently contracted from a chill caught while bathing in the Ganges.

"Ponnambalam Arunachalam was the youngest of three remarkable brothers all of whom entered the Legislative Council and occupied an important place in the public life of the country. Ponnambalam Coomaraswamy, an independent thinker and a courageous and enthusiastic leader died in 1906, after a career, which would have brought lasting honour on his family had it produced no other great man, but Ramanathan after him and Arunachalam, the youngest were to add more lustre to the family. Born on the 14th September, 1853, Arunachalam was the scion of an ancient family. Coomaraswamy Mudaliyar, Sir Arunachalam's maternal grandfather, was the first Tamil Member of the Legislative Council. His mother's brother was Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy well known in the salons of Paris and London in the sixties as the friend of Disraeli who immortalised him as "Kusinara" in his unfinished novel. He was for many years the Unofficial leader of the Legislative Council. It was under the eye of such a man that the three Ponnambalams grew to maturity. Little wonder then that they have made history in Ceylon. Arunachalam with his brothers before him attended the Colombo Academy, the present Royal College. Suffice it to say that he was the most brilliant student of his time."

—Col. Josiah Wedgwood (Introduction to "Studies and Translations—Philosophical & Religious" by Sir P. Arunachalam).

"One day I was greeted by a grave looking figure, in *chaddur* and *dhoti*, who spoke my name. He was Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, a cousin of Coomaraswamy—he had been told I was painting at Benares, whither he had come as a pilgrim. A Tamil, and a practising Hindu, he was an old Cambridge graduate, a friend of Edward Carpenter, of Lowes Dickinson. I found him to be a man of wide culture and of quiet charm; and though he was at first surprised at meeting some of my *sanyasi* friends, he quickly

approved of my choice of acquaintances. He joined me in my visits to Narasingh Sharma and together we learnt something of the tenets and practices of the Hatha Yoga."

— Sir William Rothenstein (*Men & Memories* — Page 244).

† **ESSAYS IN NATIONAL IDEALISM.** (Published by Ceylon Apothecaries, Colombo; G. A. Natesan, Madras; and Arthur Probsthain, London).

Maha Bharata; The Aims and Methods of Indian Art; Art and Yoga in India; The Influence of Modern Europe on Indian Art; Art of the East and of the West; The Influence of Greek and Indian Art; Education in India; Memory in Education; Christian Missions in India; Swadeshi; Indian Music; Music and Education in India; Gramophones— and why not?

Select Opinions: "The Indian National Movement appears to us to have a new phase, and the publication of the present volume from Dr. Coomaraswamy's pen marks a definite stage in the progress of the movement. . . . It is clear that a very important step has been taken to promote the cause of Indian Nationalism along Indian distinguished from Western lines by the publication of the work." — Dawn Magazine.

"One could hardly be prepared for the vigour of thought and masculine energy of English, by which they are marked. . . . Their author is a logical and uncompromising reactionary. . . . Yet we cannot deny the beauty and truths of the pure ideal as he so nobly and persistently holds it up before us. . . . We think what he has written to be of surpassing value." — Modern Review.

§ **THE DANCE OF SHIVA**—by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy; Fourteen Indian Essays. Foreword by Romain Rolland, New York, Sunrise Turn; 139 pp. (1917).

In his Foreword, Romain Rolland says: "In a series of essays which are apparently detached but all of which spring from the same central thought and coverage into one design, the vast and tranquil metaphysic of India is unfolded, her conception of the Universe, social organisation, perfect in its day and still capable of adaptation to the demands of modern times." The subjects envisaged are: What has India Contributed, Hindu View of Art, That Beauty is a State, Buddhist Primitives, The Dance of Shiva, Indian Images with Many Arms, Indian Music, Status of Indian Women, Sabaja, Intellectual Fraternity, Cosmopolitan View of Nietzsche, Young India, Individuality, Autonomy and Function.

F.W. Coburn writing in the BOSTON Sunday Herald Magazine (February 3rd 1924) pays the following tribute to the author, "Boston will be famous a century hence because here Ananda K. Coomaraswamy wrote among other works the text of his 'Catalogue of Indian Collections in the Museum of Fine Arts'. Another reason of course is the late Okakura Kakuzo, still another is John Singer Sargent. . . . The biggest thing in Art in America is the collection of art at the Boston Museum. The greatest literary figures whose names are associated with 20th century Boston may not unlikely by posterity thought to be the two distinguished Asiatics who temporarily resident here, have written

in beautiful and expressive English both popular and scholarly expositions of the story of the arts of their continent. *Today 'The Book of Tea' and 'The Dance of Shiva' look like possible candidates to become world classics.*"

William York Tindall in 'The Asian Legacy and American Life' (p. 187) says that D. H. Lawrence's, "devotion to Shiva may have been increased by Coomaraswamy's 'Dance of Shiva' which he read and liked." On page 175 of "D. H. Lawrence: Reminiscences and Correspondence" by Earl and Ascher Brewster (Martin Secker) Brewster states: Lawrence returned my copy of Coomaraswamy's *The Dance of Shiva*, saying: I enjoyed all the quotations from ancient scriptures. They always seem true to me." It is just possible that Lawrence refers elsewhere to Coomaraswamy—possibly in one of the pieces in "Phoenix", a posthumous collection of miscellaneous writings—but if so the references are only brief. There is definitely no extended comment. (I am indebted to Mr. Richard Aldington for this information—Author.

- || "At a time when most Indians abroad sacrificed their culture at the altar of the modern West, Coomaraswamy almost alone, was able to maintain the prestige of Indian culture as the source of all culture."

— Alain Danieolu in "Visvabharati"

Quarterly "Nov. 48-Jan. 49 p. 226.

- * Perhaps membership of this triad might embarrass Ananda Coomaraswamy — Author.
- ¶ Sir Aurobindo Ghose, a great modern Indian spiritualist and philosopher, held Ananda Coomaraswamy in the highest respect. When Mr. William Archer wrote a book attacking Indian civilisation, culture and art, Aurobindo was moved with indignation and wrote a series of essays contributed to a journal to expose the maliciousness and racial arrogance—so did Sir John Woodroffe in his 'Is India Civilized?'. At the outset Sri Aurobindo mentioned that Dr. Coomaraswamy's writings were a complete refutation of what Mr. Archer and people of his type, unfortunately too numerous, write to vilify India and the Indians, but that he had undertaken to write as he was expected as a spiritualist to defend Indian culture. As Aurobindo himself never had time or occasion to study Indian art, his rejoinder is obviously based on the writings of Coomaraswamy whose works he seems to have studied. The rejoinder was most effective and this was possible only because Aurobindo had the material from Coomaraswamy. Had it not been so, Aurobindo would not have been able to say all that he has said. That a great philosopher should be so dependent on another shows how great the other must have been. This is a great tribute to the genius of Coomaraswamy which defended Indian civilisation on the occasion and had been defending it all his life against the rancorous attacks of some Westerners.

A COOMARASWAMY CHRONICLE (1877-1947)

The following brief chronicle has been compiled to give some idea of the important dates in DR. ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY'S career. I am indebted to Miss Betty Baker, Provost's Secretary, University College, London, and Mr. W. A. Sibly, of Wycliffe College, Springfield, England for much of the information of Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's career at the University College, London, and Wycliffe College, Springfield, England.



Some dates in Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's career

(A convenient chronological summary is given.)

1863. Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy, first Hindu to be called to the English Bar; Author of *Arichandra*, a Tamil Drama translated into English and dedicated to Queen Victoria (London, Smith, Elder & Co., 65 Cornhill).

1874. *Dathavamsa*: or the history of the tooth-relic of Gotama Buddha; the Pali text and its translation into English, with notes by Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy.
Sutta Nipata or Dialogues and discourses of Gotama Buddha, translated from Pali, with introduction and notes by Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy. (Trubner & Co., 57-59 Ludgate Hill, London).
1875. Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy married Elizabeth Clay Beeby, daughter of Mr. William John Beeby of Kent.
1877. Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy was born at "Rehinsland", Kollupitya, Colombo, Ceylon. (August 22nd).
1879. Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy died in Colombo, Ceylon at the age of 46, (4th May) on the day he was expected to sail for England. At the age of two Ananda Coomaraswamy went to England with his mother Lady Coomaraswamy.
1889. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy joined Wycliffe College, Springfield, England, at the age of twelve where he remained for more than six years.
1890. Distinguished contemporaries at Wycliffe College, were Mr. Somerville Hastings M.S., F.R.C.S., M.P. the late F.L. Daniels of Lightfoill, Stroud, Agnes Robertson, now Mrs. A. Arbor, F.R.S. of 52, Huntingon Road, Cambridge.
1892. House Monitor at Wycliffe College.
1893. Prefect and Curator of the Field Club, Wycliffe College.
1894. Passed the Matriculation examination of London University in the first class, presenting himself for examination at the earliest age allowed, (15th March).
1895. Contributed to the April issue of Wycliffe College "Star" on the Geology of Doverow Hill, a three page article. Head prefect of Wycliffe College.
 On June 4th he moved in the Literary Society the best debate of the session "That the slaughter of animals for food is neither necessary, beneficial nor right".

Left Wycliffe College probably for a visit to Ceylon.

1897. Rejoined Wycliffe College. Played for the 1st Association XI and was commended for his skill as centre-half. Completed Senior, London Matriculation and Inter Arts at Wycliffe College.

1897-1900. At University College, London, with lodgings in Brookfield, 39 West Hill, Highgate, N, London. Home town Guildford. In his first session at College he won the Jews Commemoration Scholarship, the Elementary Mechanics Prize, the Silver Medal in Junior Zoology and the Gold Medal in General Botany.

1898. Passed the London Inter Science with Honours in Botany.

1899. Won the prize in Advanced Botany and was apparently disqualified by his age from winning scholarships both in Botany and Geology in 1900 when he took his B.Sc. degree with first class Honours. Some of Dr. Coomaraswamy's contemporaries in the Botany, Geology and Zoology Departments were George Barger, Emma E. Hart, and Marion A. Taylor, B.A. From 1897-1904 the following were the Professors :-

Botany: Professor F. W. Oliver, M.A., LL.D., D.Sc., F.R.S.

Geology: Rev. T. G. Bonney, D.Sc., F.R.S. until 1901. Professor E. J. Garwood, M.A., D.Sc., F.R.S. from 1901.

Zoology: Professor W. F. R. Weldon, M.A., F.R.S. until 1898.

Professor E. A. Minchin, M.A. from 1898.

1900. B.Sc. London, First Class Honours in Geology and Botany.

1903. Fellow of University College, London.
Director of Mineralogical Survey, Ceylon, (1903-1906).

Discovered *thorianite*, a cubical mineral of high specific gravity.

1904. Elected a Fellow of the London University.
1905. Founded Ceylon Social Reform Society and President, Ceylon Social Reform Society (1905-1909). Mr. and Mrs. A. K. C. visited Trincomalee. Was presented with an address by the public to which he replied at a public function (12th July). Formed Kandy branch of Ceylon Social Reform Society (13th December).
1906. Lecture at Calcutta (February) under the chairmanship of Babu Sir Surendranath Banerjee on Indo-Ceylon cultural relations.

A pioneer in the Ceylon University Movement along with his cousins Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam and Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan. Edited "Ceylon National Review", organ of the Ceylon Social Reform Society (1906-1911) preaching the value and beauty of the indigenous culture of Ceylon.

President, Ceylon Social Reform Society. Delivered Address "Anglicisation of the East" (April 17th).

Visited Jaffna (28th May). The title of *Vidya-Vinodan* (Patron of Learning) was conferred upon Dr. Coomaraswamy by the Jaffna Tamil Sangam at the hall of the Saiva Prakasa Vidyasalai, Jaffna (10th June). Formed Jaffna Branch of Ceylon Social Reform Society (9th June). Public reception at the Jaffna Hindu College by Tamils of Jaffna (14th June). Delivered a series of interesting lectures on Geology in the Colombo Museum Library (19th December).

Farewell by Ceylon Social Reform Society at King's Court, Colombo. (24th December).

Left Ceylon on his termination of his appointment as Director of Mineralogical Survey, Ceylon. Proceeded to India for a three month tour (28th December).

Obtained his D.Sc. degree in Geology as an external student of the London University, the first Ceylonese to

do so. For his thesis Dr. Coomaraswamy submitted a number of pamphlets, the collective title of which was, "Contributions to the Geology of Ceylon" (28th May). Farewell interview to the *Times of Ceylon* representative (28th December).

Joined (?) the Theosophical Society, India, of which Mrs. Annie Besant became President in 1907.

1908.

Participated in *Partition Day* in London (16th October). The following special cablegram reached Calcutta about the Partition Day celebration in London :-

"A great demonstration was made by Indians in London on the 16th for Partition Day celebration. Bande Maturam was sung by them in Caxton Hall. The meeting was presided over by Mr. Lala Lajpat Rai. Speeches were delivered by the President, Bepin Chandra Pal, Mr. Khaparde, Mr. Kumaraswami and others. Great enthusiasm prevailed."

Participated at a London protest meeting, with Sri Marchiojee Bhowragree in the chair to protest against Gandhiji's imprisonment in South Africa, others present included Lala Lajpat Rai, Sarvarkar and Bepin Chandra Pal (18 October).

The following appeared in the *Hindu*, Madras: -

The following cable message was received by the *Times of India* from Indians in South Africa :-

"Gandhi has been sentenced to two months' imprisonment. Sorabjee and Ajam have been twice imprisoned and twice deported. Deportation has been exchanged for imprisonment. On their rightly returning they were sentenced to six months' imprisonment. Fifty-eight others who were deported were on re-entering sentenced to three months' imprisonment. The sentences include hard labour. All beseech India to resent such treatment in public meetings, all over the country. Gandhi and others are breaking stones on the roads."

1909.

Stayed in Calcutta as the guest of the Poet Tagore and Dr. A. N. Tagore who founded the new school of Indian

Painting. Delivered illustrated lectures at the National Council of Education (presided over by Sir D. P. Sarvadichary), at the Y.M.C.A. (presided over by Mr Hirendra Nath Dutt) and at the Indian Society of Oriental Art (presided over by Sister Nivedita). These lectures in the words of Sri O. C. Ganguly "created a new sensation not only by the expositor's eloquence and erudition, but by a new insight that he revealed for a correct understanding of the values of Indian National Art."

At the Ceylon Dinner, London proposed the toast of "The Ceylon Student" in a very thought-provoking speech (19th December).

1910. Made an extended tour in Northern India collecting an enormous quantity of the finest specimens of Indian Paintings and Drawings. Assigns a definite place to Parhari Painting in Indian Art.

In charge of the Art Section of the United Provinces Exhibits in Allahabad, India (1910-1911). "On Mughal and Rajput Painting"--a lecture at the Indian Society of Oriental Art, Calcutta. Gave a brilliant lead to the Swadeshi movement in India by his lectures and writings. Read a paper on "Swadeshi, True and False" at the 5th Annual Industrial Conference, Allahabad. Assisted to found the India Society, London, the present Royal India, Pakistan and Ceylon Society (1910-1911). The Society had as its first President Dr. Rhys Davis, a famous Pali scholar. Dr. Coomaraswamy was a member of the original Executive Committee, with Dr. Arne Mrs. Cleather, Walter Crane, Havell and Lady Heerington. The Chairman was Mr. William Rothenstein. "Domestic Handicraft and Culture"--a paper read before the Association of Teachers of Domestic Science, London. (May).

"On the Study of Indian Art", a lecture at the Royal Asiatic Society, London.

1911. Visited Kashmir (May-June) where he collected and translated Folk Songs from the Punjab and Kashmir and carried on his researches in Rajput and Himalayan (Parhari) school in Kashmir.
Chairman, Annual Ceylon Dinner, London, and delivered Presidential Speech, "Education in Ceylon" (December).
1912. Visited Santiniketan, India, where he made a short stay with the Poet Rabindranath Tagore.
- 1913-1914. Was associate editor of *Isis* (an International Review devoted to the History of Science and Civilisation for India.) Several of his publications were reviewed or listed in *Isis*.
1914. At a reception to Gandhiji at Hotel Cecil in London, Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, Mr. M. A. Jinnah and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu paid glowing tributes to the "hero of the South African Struggle" (August 8th).
1917. Keeper of Indian Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. (1917-1921). At a meeting of the Trustees of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts held on April 26th, Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy was appointed Keeper of Indian Art at the Museum for three years. He took up duties at the Museum in October.
1919. Romain Rolland, in co-operation with a number of European intellectuals, issued a Declaration of the Independence of the Mind, to which Rabindranath Tagore, along with the only other easterner, Ananda Coomaraswamy became a signatory.
1920. On a trip round the world. Was travelling for the purpose of study and had visited Japan, Cambodia and Java and was now on his way to India from where he returned to America. Visited Japan. Also visited Raffles Museum, Singapore. (December 1920 according to Report of Director, Raffles Museum).
1921. Arrived in Ceylon in the course of a world tour (15th February).

Visited Anuradhapura (18-21st February). Lectured at the Royal Asiatic Society, Colombo Branch, "On Indian Paintings" at which Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam presided (22nd February). Lectured to the pupils of Ananda College, Colombo (23rd February) on "Ancient Sinhalese Art" presided by the Vice-Principal Mr. C. V. Ranawaka. Visited Madras (1921 or 1923 ?).

1922. Keeper of Indian and Mohamman Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1922-1933).
1924. Founder and first President, Indian Cultural Centre, New York, for the promoting of India's culture and to fostering relations between India and U.S.A.
1925. Delivered a course of lectures on Indian Art at Columbia University, U.S.A.
1929. Gave a series of lectures for the Denver Art Museum under the auspices of the Cooke-Daniels Foundation at Museum's Chapel House Branch on March 4, 5, 6, 7, 12 and 13 on Indian, Indonesian and Far Eastern Art.
1932. Lecture on "Life in the Indus Valley, 3000 B.C." at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (March 22nd).
1933. Fellow for Research in Indian, Persian and Mohamman Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1933-1947). Gave a Spring semester course of lectures on Indian sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum, New York City.
1935. Gave a talk on "Understanding the Art of India" the third of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts series, broadcast from the university club studio of the International S.W.S. Wexal, Boston Mass: (January 13th).
1936. Made an Honorary Member of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute of Poona, India, in appreciation of

his services to Indian Art and Indology, with Rev. Father Heras S. J. in the chair (6th July).

Spoke on Sri Ramakrishna at the Ramakrishna Vivekananda Centre, New York on the 100th anniversary celebration of the birth of Sri Ramakrishna.

1938. First Honorary National President, National Committee for India's Freedom, Washington, D. C. Worked along with Dr. Syed Hossain, Dr. Krishnalal Shiridharni and Dr. Anup Singh for Indian freedom struggle in America. Represented the Boston Museum of Fine Arts at the meeting of the American Oriental Society at Yale University. Speaking before the Indo-European section, Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, Fellow for Research in Indian, Persian and Mohammadan Art, and a member of the Museum's department of Asiatic Art discussed "Nirukta: Hermencia" (10th April).
1941. Took an active interest in the *East and West Association*, New York, of which Pearl Buck was President.
1942. Lady Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy died at the age of 92 in England.
- An address to a large group of school teachers entitled "How to Teach about Other Peoples" sponsored by the New York School Board and the East and West Association.
1944. "Indian Culture and English Influence": an address to Indian students and their friends, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
1945. Assisted to found the "World Council on Higher Learning" in Washington along with the Founder-Director, the Hungarian scholar Dr. Felix Valye.
1946. Addressed the Kenyon College Conference on the Heritage of the English-speaking Peoples and their responsibility on the subject- "For what heritage and to whom are the English-speaking peoples responsible". (October).

1947. Took part in the "Near Eastern Culture and Society", Bicentennial Conference, Princeton University (March 25th-27th).

Princeton University in New Jersey celebrated in 1946 the second centenary of its birth. The celebrations began in 1946 and continued in 1947 in the form of a series of conferences or symposia covering the various fields of science or learning. For three days, March 25th to 27th, 1947 Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy took part in the proceedings of this conference on Near Eastern Culture and Society directed by Dr. Philip K. Hitti, Professor of Semitic Literature in Princeton.

Took major part in the India and Pakistan Independence Day celebrations at Harvard Club, Boston, (August 15th). Celebrated 70th Birthday.

Dinner held to celebrate the event at Boston.

Portrait unveiled at King George V Hall, Ceylon University by Sir Charles Collins, C.M.G. in Colombo.

Two Festschrifts "Art and Thought" edited by Sri K. B. Iyer and "Homage to Kala-Yogi Ananda Coomaraswamy" (2 Vols.) edited by Mr. S. Durai Raja Singam of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, published (August 22nd).

Died at Needham, Boston, Massachusetts (September 9th).



COMMEMORATION ADDRESS FOR THE LATE

DR. ANANDA COOMARASWAMY

By Dr. Reginald le May.

(Delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Royal India, Pakistan and Ceylon Society on May 1, 1952. Mr. C. E. P. Jayasuria presided in the unavoidable absence of H.H. the High Commissioner for Ceylon. Reproduced in *Art and Letters*, London.

Vol. 226, No. 2, 1952, page 87-93.)

I consider it a great honour to be invited by the Council of the Royal India, Pakistan and Ceylon Society to prepare and deliver to you this Commemoration Address on the late Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy. Though somewhat diffident of my competency to assess his merits in an adequate manner, I accepted the invitation to pay this tribute chiefly because he was not only a scholar but an idealistic art-lover after my own heart and, as you know, the two do not always or, indeed, often go together.

I met him once only and that was at Boston during my American tour in the autumn and winter of 1933. I had then just retired from my official service as Economic Adviser to the Siamese Government. I was contemplating going up to Cambridge to read for a Doctor's degree on the subject of "Buddhist Art in Siam." Naturally I discussed this project with him, and his advice as to sources of study, Indian and Sinhalese, proved most helpful when the time came to take up my residence at Cambridge. Two of his own works especially, "The History of Indian and Indonesian Art" and "The Origin of the Buddha Image," became my constant companions during my three years at the University. But I was also attracted by his personality, and I knew at once that I had found a kindred spirit.

Ananda Coomaraswamy was born at Kollupitya, Colombo, on August 22, 1877, and he died at Needham, Boston, Massachusetts, on September 9, 1947. He had thus just reached the allotted span of seventy years.

His father, Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy, was the first Hindu (he was a Tamil and not a Sinhalese) to be called to the English Bar in 1863. In 1875 he married Miss Elizabeth Clay Beeby, who

came from Kent in England, and he died in Colombo on May 4, 1879, at the early age of 46. Ananda was thus not yet two years old at the time of his father's death. In 1889, when he was twelve years old, he entered Wycliffe College in England, and he stayed there for six years, until 1895, by which time he had become head prefect and was already contributing to the school magazine on the subject of geology.

In 1897 he came back to Wycliffe College, played for the football eleven and completed his Senior, London Matriculation and Inter Arts while still there. In 1900 he took his B.Sc. at London University with first-class honours in geology and botany. In 1903, after becoming a Fellow of University College, London, he obtained his first appointment as Director of the Mineralogical Survey of Ceylon.

I am indebted for all these particulars of Ananda Coomaraswamy's early life to a schoolmaster in Kuantan, Malaya, Mr. Durai Raja Singam, who has taken immense pains to gather together all possible material for a biography. He has collected a full bibliography of Dr. Coomaraswamy's works as well as the most notable of the obituary notices published at the time of his death, and also a wide selection of what he has called "great thoughts" culled from his writings and speeches. I shall refer to these later. There is no doubt that Mr. Durai Raja Singam is a great admirer of the subject of this address, and much credit is due to him for the labour of love which he has performed. I may add that I have just received from Mr. Durai Raja Singam his memorial volume, entitled, *Homage to Ananda Coomaraswamy*.

Dr. Coomaraswamy remained three years in Ceylon, during which time he founded the Ceylon Social Reform Society and became an active worker in the Ceylon University Movement. In 1906 he obtained the degree of D.Sc. of London, and at the end of the year he proceeded to India on a three months' tour, during which he appears to have developed an intense interest in Indian art and literature, since it is from this formative period that he have up his career in geology and mineralogy and devoted himself to a study of the arts of India and South-eastern Asia.

In 1910 he made an extended tour of Northern India and acquired a remarkable collection of the finest examples of Indian paintings and drawings. While in Calcutta he gave a brilliant lecture on "Mughal and Rajput Painting" at the Indian Society of Oriental Art. In 1911 he came to England and was one of the original founders of the India Society of London, which has now become, as we all know, and are proud to think, the Royal India, Pakistan and Ceylon Society. It would have given his especial pleasure to know that the last-named country has been incorporated in our title. Its first president was Dr. Rhys Davids, the famous Pali scholar, and Dr. Coomaraswamy was a member of the original Executive Committee. The chairman was Mr. (later Sir) William Rothenstein, whom I heard lecture shortly before the war on Indian art at the Royal Society of Arts. While in London he delivered a lecture on "The Study of Indian Art" to the Royal Asiatic Society, and as chairman at the Annual Ceylon Dinner he gave the presidential address on "Education in Ceylon."

It was quite clear by this time in what direction his mind and his great ability were tending, and the next five or six years, during which he found time for a visit to the poet Rabindranath Tagore at Santiniketan, were spent in study and writing on Indian art and religion, until in 1917 he was appointed Keeper of Indian Art at the Museum of Fine Arts at Boston. This was to be his home for the next thirty years, in fact until he died. In 1922 he became Keeper of Indian and Mohammedan Art, and in 1933 he was made Fellow for Research in Indian, Persian and Mohammedan Art: changes which only signified that the scope of his work and study was being continually enlarged. I feel on very sure ground in saying that it will be a long time before the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston finds such another scholar, philosopher and idealist in the field of Eastern Art, as the servant they have lost.

In 1930 he made a tour of the world during which he went as far as Japan, and in 1921 he spent some little time in his homeland, Ceylon, where he lectured on Indian paintings at the Colombo branch of the Royal Asiatic Society and on "Ancient

Sinhalese Art" at the Ananda College, Colombo. In 1924 he became the founder and first president of the Indian Cultural Centre, New York, for promoting a knowledge of Indian culture in the United States and thereby fostering good relations between the two countries.

Thereafter he gave many lectures in the United States, at Columbia University, at Denver and elsewhere on Indian, Indonesian and Far Eastern Art.

In 1936 he was made an honorary member of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute at Poona in recognition of his services to Indian art. In 1938 he became president of the National Committee for India's Freedom in Washington. Finally, in 1945, two years before his death, he assisted in founding the World Council on Higher Learning, also in Washington.

He lived to celebrate his seventieth birthday, and a dinner was held in Boston in his honour; while in Ceylon his portrait was unveiled by Sir Charles Collins in the King George V Hall of Ceylon University, which he had done so much to found.

Such briefly is the story of the principal stages in Dr. Coomaraswamy's career. I must now try and give you some idea of his vast output of literary creations. In the Introduction to his Bibliography Mr. Durai Raja Singam quotes Dr. Richard Ettinghausen of Washington as saying:

"There are few scholars anywhere in the world whose publications cover a wider range than those of Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy. His researches embrace philosophy, metaphysics, religion and iconography; Indian literature and art, Islamic art, medieval art, music, geology, and especially the place of art in society. More astounding than the sheer quantity of his publications are their extraordinary profundity and originality throughout his career, and their deep influence on the spiritually awakened, scholars and laymen alike, all over the world. There are, indeed, few scholars who, like him, are able to go straight to original sources, and at the same time have the ability and courage to hand on a clear-cut uncompromising message of what they have seen, heard and learned."

This is no mean praise, and I would like to add my own testimony and confirm that I believe every word of it to be true. I think the best thing for me to do is to give you an outline of his major works. This will enable you to judge both of the scope of his mind and of the type of subject which attracted him most.

In 1908 a small but important work appeared from the Essex House Press of Broad Campden entitled *The Aims of Indian Art*. This more or less announced what was to be the course of his life and the main subject of his studies. In 1910 Ganesh and Co. of Madras published his *Art and Swadeshi*, which brought to public notice another aspect and trend of his mind in the political field. This was followed in 1930 by *The Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, published by Foulis of Edinburgh and London; which may be called his first major contribution to our knowledge of Indian art.

Now we see yet another abiding interest of his, for in 1914, in collaboration with Sister Nivedita, he published, through Harraps, *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists*. This was a work of 400 pages with 32 illustrations and attracted much attention. Two years later, in 1916, again through Harraps, he followed with *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, a work of 370 pages with 40 plates, of which 8 were in colour by A. N. Tagore and N. L. Bose.

In 1918 appeared what to some Indians are thought to be his most attractive creations—namely, fourteen Indian essays on *The Dance of Siva*, published in New York by Sunwise Turn, and reprinted in 1948 by the Asia Publishing House of Bombay. Indeed, V. Subramanian, in his excellent obituary notice (published in *Swatantra* of November 17, 1951), says, "To all students of art and Hindu religion he is best known as the rediscoverer of the glory of the Nata-Raja image."

Now, it will be recalled that in 1917 he was appointed Keeper of Indian Art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. From now on naturally his main studies were devoted to the collections of that museum. In 1923 Parts I, II and III of the Catalogue of Indian

Art appeared. These were followed by Part IV in 1924, by Part V in 1927 and Part VI in 1930. These last two parts were concerned with Rajput and Mughal paintings.

Meanwhile, out of his unbounded energy, he found time to write in 1923 an *Introduction to Indian Art* in the Asia Library series of the Theosophical Publishing House, Madras; secondly, *Les Arts et l'Inde et de Ceylon*, published by Vromant of Paris in 1924; thirdly, another work in French, *Pour Comprendre l'Art Hindu*, issued by Bossard of Paris; fourthly, one of his most important works, *The History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, published in 1927 by Weyhe of New York, E. Goldston of London, and Karl Hiersemann of Leipzig; and fifthly, *Les Miniatures Orientales de la Collection Goloubev* at the Museum of Fine Arts in *Les Editions G. van Oest* of Paris, in 1929. In addition to these he issued in 1927, in the *American Art Bulletin*, his challenging thesis on "The Origin of the Buddha Image."

After 1930 he appears to have turned more and more to philosophy and mysticism, and in 1933 Luzac published for him *A New Approach to the Vedas: an Essay in Translation and Exegesis*. In 1934 the *Myths of the Hindu and Buddhists* was reprinted by Farrar and Rinehart of New York with 32 colour plates by Indian artists. In 1935 Harvard published his *Elements of Buddhist Iconography*, and in 1937 he gave a lecture at the Metropolitan Museum of New York on "Is Art a Superstition or a Way of Life?" This was followed by many other essays and writings on this theme of art, such as "The Christian and Oriental or True Philosophy of Art," a lecture given at Boston College, Newton, Mass., in March, 1939. In 1943 Luzac again published for him, this time *Why Exhibit Works of Art?*, and it is clear that his whole being and mind was trying to bring home to man the vital necessity for art in Life.

As I wish to show you something of the workings of his mind, I have little space for more in this part of my address, but I must add that in 1948, after his death, Cassells published *The Living Thoughts of Gotama the Buddha*. This was written in collaboration with I. B. Horner.

I have not seen or read this work, but I have an idea that it was the source of a question put to me by one of the audience after my lecture on "The Development of Buddhist Art in Burma" at the Royal Society of Arts in March, 1949. The questioner mentioned a work of Dr. Coomaraswamy and said that he gathered from it the idea that, in the latter's mind, the Buddha must be regarded more and more as a myth and not as a person. Did I agree with this view? I answered that every religion regarded its founder as a historic person it must do so but that it was entirely a question of the temperament of the individual whether he accepted this or not. No man could answer for his brother. I have mentioned this since it illustrates what I have already said, that the late Dr. Coomaraswamy seems to have turned more and more towards mysticism in his later years.

Of his sayings, I will deal first with those relating to his own homeland.

He wrote that the more he knew of Ceylon's culture, the more inseparable from India did it appear. Indian culture without Ceylon was incomplete, for in many ways Ceylon was a more perfect window through which to gaze on India's past than any that could be found in India itself.

On another occasion he stated that there was scarcely any part of Sinhalese life or religion or art which was quite comprehensible without reference to India. He considered that the greatness of their civilization dated from the wave of Indian influence which reached Ceylon through Asoka's missionaries. And finally: "The noblest of Indian epics, the love story of Rama and Sita, united India and Ceylon in the mind of every Indian; nor is this more so in the South than in the North." All this shows how inexorably the contacts between India and Ceylon drew him towards his life work: the study of Indian art and culture.

On Indian ideals and culture he is enthusiastic in his praise: "The more I know of India, the more wonderful and beautiful appear to be her past achievements. Indian culture is valid not so much because it is Indian as because it is culture. At the same time its special forms are adapted to a specifically Indian

nature and inheritance, and they are appropriate in the same way that a national dress is appropriate to those who have a right to wear it."

This shows that he was very intent in shedding the European side of his birth and upbringing, and yet at the same time he could write, as I have done myself, "As regards India, it has been said that 'East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.' This is a counsel of despair that can only have been born of the most profound disillusion and the deepest conviction of importance. I say, on the contrary, that human nature is an everlasting and unchanging principle."

Now, it is a common saying in England that "you cannot change human nature." It is so trite that it is true; but although you cannot change it you can develop it, so that it can shed all its outer trappings and prejudices vis-a-vis another country, if it has the will and energy to do so: since it is an equally obvious platitude that human nature is the the same in every country of the world. Only it is so overlaid with local habits and customs that it cannot shed them quickly enough "to understand the other fellow." If it were ever absolute truth that we could not change, i.e. develop, human nature, then the sooner we all cut our throats the better, since religion would have no sense behind it.

Ananda Coomaraswamy's last word on Indian culture is summed up in the following: "When I survey the life of India during the last 3,000 years, and bear in mind her literature, traditions and ideals, the teachings of her philosophy, and the work of her artists, the music of her sons and daughters, and the nobility of the religion they have evolved, and when from these elements I form a picture of an ideal India and an ideal earthly life, I confess that it is difficult for me to imagine a more powerful source of inspiration, a deeper well of truth to draw upon."

On religion he is a man after my own heart, and in these words he expresses my own belief—"As for myself, 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." Again he says: "At this time I should like to emphasize that I have never built up a philosophy of my own or wished to establish a new school of thought. I fully agree with Andre Gide that 'Toutes choses sont dites deja,' and what I have sought is to understand what has been said. Holding with Heraclitus that the WORD is common to all, and that WISDOM is to know the WILL, whereby all things are steered, I am convinced with Jeremias that the human cultures, in all their apparent diversity, are but dialects of one and the same language of the SPIRIT, and that there is a 'common universe of discourse transcending the difference of tongues.'"

To me the tragedy of the world is that each religion considers it necessary and is prepared to fight, even to the death, for its own particular brand, which it believes expresses the only absolute and ultimate truth; and here Dr. Coomaraswamy is treading on rather dangerous ground, since India is, and has been for many countries, a battleground of religious discord and, it must also be remembered, the only truly tolerant form of the Universal Truth which he is seeking, was eventually ejected.

After referring to the mutual lack of knowledge, perhaps intentional, between the different religions he, in another passage, says: "Our modern antipathy to religion, and our social reluctance to speak of God, are largely the result of what we have called the 'sentimentalizing' of religion, and the general endeavour to make of the great religious heroes, notably the Christ and the Buddha, the sort of man we can approve of and also, by an elimination of the marvellous features in their lives, the sort of men to whom we can attribute an historical reality and in whom we can therefore 'believe.' We are bewildered by the man who can say 'I know that my Redeemer liveth,' but who is far from being convinced that He ever lived."

I have dealt so far with Ceylon, Indian culture and religion. When we come to Indian art in particular there is one passage

in *The Aims of Indian Art* which I have quoted in my own work on *Buddhist Art in Siam*, since I feel it must give the clue to any student wishing to understand the significance of *form* in Eastern art: "It cannot be too clearly understood that the mere representation of nature is never the aim of Indian art. Probably no truly Indian sculpture has been wrought from a living model, or any religious painting copied from the life. Possibly no Hindu artist of the old school ever drew from nature at all. His store of memory pictures, his power of visualization, and his imagination were for his purpose finer means. For he desired to suggest the idea behind sensuous appearance, not to give the detail of the seeming reality; that was in truth but Maya, illusion . . . 'to mistake the Maya for reality were error indeed.'" And then he quoted that marvellous saying from the Bhagaved Gita, "Men of no understanding think of me, the unmanifest, as having manifestation, knowing not my Higher Being to be changeless, supreme."

Another of his most pregnant sayings, with which I profoundly agree, is that "Art contains in itself the deepest principles of life, and is the truest guide to the greatest art of all, the art of living. The true life, the ideal of Indian culture, is itself a unity and an art, because of its inspiration by one ruling passion, the desire to realize a spiritual inheritance. All things in India have been valued in the light of this desire."

Here is another example of his peculiarly Eastern attitude towards the aims of art: "The anonymity of the artist belongs to a type of culture dominated by the longing to be liberated from oneself. All the force of this philosophy is directed against the delusion 'I am the Doer.' 'I' in fact am *not* the 'Doeer' but the 'Instrument.' Human individuality is not an end but only a means." Further, "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."

In these passages that I have quoted it seems to me that he has summed up the great cleavage between East and West, which still unhappily exists and which I doubt if Kipling fully understood. It remains for us of the West who have grown to understand the East to do our utmost to interpret it to our fellow Western brethren.

I propose to deal with only one more aspect of my subject's character, and that is his attitude towards *swadeshi*, or "Freedom for India." It must have given him great satisfaction to know, before he died, that India had attained her freedom. In a warning to all Nationalists he says: "Learn not to waste the vital forces of the nation in a temporary political conflict, but understand that art will enable you to re-establish all your arts and industries on a surer basis. *Swadeshi* must be something more than a political weapon. It must be a religious artistic ideal."

Again, "True *Swadeshi* is a way of looking at life. It is essentially sincerity. Seek first this, learn once more the art of living, and you will find that our ancient civilization, industrial no less than spiritual, will re-arise from the ashes of our vulgarity and parasitism of today."

In a wistful reproach he said, "I have sought in vain for any expression in *Swadeshi* writings of a primary desire to make goods more useful or more beautiful than those imported, or to preserve for the country any art, *qua* art and not merely as an industry."

As concerns his attitude towards the West he says: "The inspiration of our nationalism must be not hatred or self-seeking, but love. The highest ideal of nationality is service; and it is because this service is impossible for us so long as we are politically and spiritually dominated by a Western civilization that we are bound to achieve our freedom." And finally, "It is for us to intellectualize and spiritualize the religious conceptions of the West, and to show that the true meaning of religious tolerance is not the refraining from persecution, but the real belief that different religious need not be mutually exclusive, and the conviction that they are all good roads leading to one end."

To the layman or to the critical outside spectator the enthusiasm of the idealist usually appears to be an overstatement of the case.

However this may be, I want all my hearers to share with me the conviction that Ananda Coomaraswamy was passionately sincere in all his words and works. In this address I have tried to give you, if only briefly, an insight into his mind, and I cannot find a better conclusion than an excerpt from a letter from Dr. S. Radakrishnan to Mr. Raja Singam:

"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." To that I say "Amen." and I salute with reverence the passing away of an idealist and a true scholar.

I would now ask you all to be kind enough to stand for a moment in his memory.

The above **COMMEMORATION ADDRESS** for the late Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy delivered by Dr. Reginald le May was attended by a large audience, and followed immediately after the Annual Meeting of the Royal India, Pakistan and Ceylon Society, London, held on May 1, 1952.

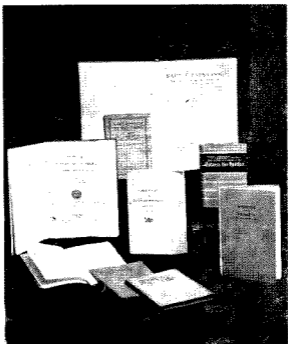
Mr. C. E. P. Jayasuria, the Ceylon Trade Commissioner presided in the enforced absence of the High Commissioner through illness who was also represented by his wife Mrs. Wijayarathne. Among those present were Lord Inchape, the President of the Society, Sir William Barton and Lady Ravensdale, a Vice Chairman, Madame Subandrio, the wife of the Indonesian Ambassador, Lord Pethwick Lawrence, a Vice-President Mr. Wijeyagonewardene, of the High Commissioner for Ceylon's office. Others included Sir Frank Brown (Hon Treasurer) Mr. Fredeuck Ritcher, O.B.E. (Hon Secretary) and the following members of the Council, Mr. Henry S. L. Polak, Mr. Powell Price, Dr. Arnold Bake, Mr. Lawson Reece, Mr. John Irwin, Mr. J. A. Milne (also of the Royal Society of Arts) and Mr. Elton of the British Council. The Ceylon people included Mrs. Casinader, the President of the Women of Ceylon Association in London.

THE WRITINGS OF

DR. ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

(Dr. Richard Ettinghausen, Washington)

There are few scholars anywhere in the world whose publications cover a wider range than those of Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, since many years a Fellow for Research in Indian, Persian, and Mohamadan Art in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. His researches embrace philosophy, metaphysics, religion, iconography, Indian Literature and Arts, Islamic Art, Mediaeval Art, Music, Geology, and especially, the place of art in society. His publications comprise many voluminous books and a very large range of pamphlets, articles, and critical reviews published not only in India, Ceylon, England and the United States, but also in France, Germany, Finland, Sweden, Portugal and Rumania. More astounding than the sheer quantity of his publications are their extraordinary profundity and originality throughout his career, and their deep influence on the spiritually awakened, scholars and laymen alike all over the world. There are, indeed, few scholars who, like him, are able to go straight to original sources and at the same time have the ability and courage to hand on a clear cut, uncompromising message of what they have seen, heard, and learned. Never has he had time for, or interest in, presenting personal ideas or novel theories, so constantly and tirelessly has he devoted his energies to the rediscovery of the truth and the restating of the principles by which cultures rise and fall.



"Books, in which we convey our being, I hope, we most of us regard our property. We sell ourselves and see to it that we put "ALL RIGHTS RESERVED" at the beginning. You will find all rights reserved at the beginning of our religious books by our respected teachers and theologians. But you will not find it at the beginning of Coomaraswamy's *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought?* Coomaraswamy's book is his being: he believes in the importance of his view. On the back of the title page it has "no rights reserved", it says that quotations may be made without permission. Why? Because Coomaraswamy performs an act of ministration; not an act of flattery. He is a minister, not an aesthetic. A man in earnest, not an admirer of goodies."

GEOFFREY GRIGSON,
B.B.C. Broadcast, 14-2-47.

GREAT THOUGHTS OF GURUDEV ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

(SOME SELECTIONS FROM HIS WRITINGS AND SPEECHES)
— *SELECTED AND ARRANGED*

[To the Reader,

Many do not have access to the published writings and speeches of Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. The need for a selection of his writings and speeches has therefore long been felt. There are also many who have known him in some field or other of his far-reaching activities who would like to have selected gems of thought from his writings and speeches. The present work is in response to these needs. These selections had its beginnings in 1946 and had the blessings of Gurudev Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. A typed copy of more than two-thirds of these selections were sent to him for his approval which he readily and kindly gave. Having now edited my book of tributes "Homage to Ananda Coomaraswamy" I now bring out these selections which cover in brief a wide range of subjects. As one progresses in their study one is often left with a thirst for a fuller and detailed account and one day a complete edition of Gurudev Coomaraswamy's works must be done.]

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Thirty years ago my father was the leading Tamil in Ceylon, and it will recur to most of you that he himself had become exceedingly westernized. At that time it was necessary both that we should in some measure adapt ourselves to a changed environment and also prove ourselves capable of equalling the attainments of Western men on their own lines. Had he lived, I cannot doubt that (like my cousins, Messrs. Arunachalam and Ramanathan, who also at one time trod the same path) he would have seen that we were liable to overshoot the mark and he would have been the first to preserve and protect the national ideals and Eastern traditions, with which our lives and those of our forefathers are inextricably bound up. It is therefore fitting that his son should carry on such work. Of my mother I may say that it was her hope that her marriage with my father would contribute to a better understanding and sympathy between English and Tamils for whom she felt great admiration and affection and I may say I am now working for a cause which has her fullest sympathy.

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I was not bred on Indian soil, yet now when I go about my friends in India, I often find they quarrel with me because I am much too Indian in my ways of thinking for their anglicised tastes.

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If I were not getting solid food out of scholarship, I would drop it tomorrow, and spend my days fishing and gardening!

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Every man holds dear his homeland. As for me, my love for India is my destiny. I feel for her what a child feels towards her parents.

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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.

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.

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Be yourself. Follow Mahatma Gandhi, Bharatan Kumarappa, D. V. Gundappa, Abdul 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.

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Nehru is the man of the hour and of the moment because we have been caught unawares and unprepared, and he speaks a language 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 be followed until mankind is tamed.

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We in the West want Gandhi's India and no other. Don't think that imitate 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.

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The more I know of Ceylon, the more inseparable from India does it appear, and indeed I regret sometimes that Ceylon and India are not at present under one administration. Ceylon is in the truest sense a part of India.

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Of the unity of the Indian peoples, Ceylon is economically, mentally and spiritually, a part; and with the culture and life of India, must Ceylon's own survive.

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Ceylon, from the standpoint of ethnology and culture, is an integral part of India.

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The more I know of India, the more wonderful and beautiful appear to be her past achievements. If then we would attain the liberty of spirit which is the true end of education, if we would recover our lost character of Orientals, we must turn to India and base our education Indian ideals.

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In the first place all Hindu art (Brahmanical and Mahayana Buddhist) is religious.

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Indian art and culture was a joint creation of the Dravidian and Aryan genius, a welding together of symbolic and representative, abstract and explicit, language and thought.

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In Asia all roads lead to India.

