

ARTICLE

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COLLECTED WORKS OF DR. ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

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The Kalasamalocana programme of the Kalakosa Division of the IGNCA relates to publications on critical writings on different facets of the arts and aesthetics. While one part of the series concentrates on works of eminent scholars who have dealt with the fundamental concepts, identified perennial sources and created bridges of communication by juxtaposing diverse traditions; the other part deals with revision and re-arranged editions and translations of a select number of eminent authors and their works. The most important part of this programme is to bring out the Collected Works of Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, reorganised thematically and with the author's authentic revisions, edited by eminent scholars, in about 30 volumes.

Through his writings, Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) revealed himself as a great art critic, philosopher and historian of our time. In the words of his wife, Dona Luisa, "The extraordinary production in art history, aesthetic theory, social criticism, comparative religion, symbolism and metaphysics of this man is astounding. He had intellectual powers with which few men of his generation could compare". Besides being an enlightening influence in the West, he was also instrumental in the East's awakening to the beauty of its own tradition.

Coomaraswamy's publications comprise many voluminous books, and a very large range of pamphlets, articles, critical reviews, translations and letters published in different countries. Indeed, a glance at the list of his writings would make one wonder whether one is looking through the Catalogue of a Library or the works of a single individual. Out of this corpus, 12 books have already been published by IGNCA. They are :

1. Selected letters of Ananda Coomaraswamy, Edited by Alvin Moore, Jr; and Rama P. Coomaraswamy (1988). The letters included in the volume, published for the first time, reveal the being of this uncompromising man, who believed in no theories or ideologies, political or philosophic issues. Combining scientific precision with his own sensitivity, Coomaraswamy addresses himself to the discipline of history, philosophy, arts and crafts.

2. What is Civilisation (1989): The essays comprising the volume ask fundamental questions, which are both piercing and incisive. In one unbroken sweep, a vast spectrum of Western and Eastern Civilisations is covered.

3. Time and Eternity (1990): Coomaraswamy propounds that though we live in Time, our deliverance lies in Eternity. All religions make this distinction between what is merely "everlasting" or "perpetual" and what is eternal.

4. Essays in Early Indian Architecture, Edited by Michael W. Meister (1992): Coomaraswamy's

probing analysis of texts and sculpted reliefs in order to reconstruct the extraordinary wooden architecture of early India was not only an act of great scholarship, but also a foundation on which further histories of India's exceptional architectural tradition have all been constructed.

5. Spiritual Authority and Temporal: Power in the Indian Theory of Government, Edited by Keshavaram N. Iengar and Rama P. Coomaraswamy (1993): The Indian theory of Government is expounded on the basis of the textual sources. The welfare of the community depends upon the obedience and loyalties of the subjects to the dual control of the King and Priest, that of the King to the Priest, and that of all to the principle of an Eternal Law-Dharma-as King of Kings.

6. Yaksas: Essays in the Water Cosmology, Edited by Paul Schroeder (1993): The origin of the Yaksas is examined in the context of Vedic, Brahmanical and Upanisadic literature, along with the non-Aryan and pre-Aryan preoccupation with the concept. Dealing with the interpretation levels of artistic motif, Coomaraswamy delved deeper to unfold the water cosmology.

7. Thirty Songs From the Punjab and Kashmir, Edited by Prem Lata Sharma (1994): The songs were recorded by Mrs. Alice Coomaraswamy, with Introduction and translation by Ananda Coomaraswamy. She had studied Indian classical music from Ustad Abdul Rahim of Kapurthala, and later she transcribed the thirty songs learnt by her in staff notations.

8. Vidyapati Padavali (1994): Vidyapati Thakur's wreath of songs on the theme of courtship of God and Soul under the names of Radha and Krishna, was translated by Coomaraswamy and Arun Sen, from original Maithili. The spiritual significance lies in Radha depicted as a village girl in love play with divinity and Krishna, not a historical figures, but infinity incarnate, the principle of unity and totality.

9. Essays in Architectural Theory, Edited by Michael W. Meister (1995). This volume presents in consecutive form the essays that best represent Coomaraswamy's rapidly developing thinking on the hermeneutics of architecture, - its "why" not "how".

10. The Transformation of Nature in Art, Edited by Kapila Vatsyayan (1995): In this volume, Coomaraswamy attempts to explain the theory behind medieval European and Asiatic art, especially art in India. The first principle of his theories is that art does not exist for its own sake; it exists as a means to some religious conditions or experience.

11. Hinduism and Buddhism, Edited by Keshavaram N. Iengar and Rama P. Coomaraswamy (1999): The two essays are authoritative expositions of the teachings of these religions as understood by those who practised them rather than as understood by scholars and comparative religionists who studied and reviewed them from without.

12. The Perception of the Vedas, Edited by Vidya Nivas Misra (2000): Coomaraswamy's studies of the Vedas and Upanishads, published in a variety of American, European and Indian Journals, have been arranged in this volume in relations to some aspect or the other of Vedic text as one integrated perception.

The following books are already in the press in advanced stages of publication, and are expected to be published between March 31 and June 30, 2001.

1. **Essays on Jaina Art**, Edited by Richard Cohen.
2. **Essays on Geology and Mineralogy**, Edited by A. Ranganathan and K. Srinivasa Rao.
3. **Bibliography of Ananda Coomaraswamy**, Compiled by James Crouch.
4. **Elements of Buddhist Iconography**, Edited by Krishna Deva.
5. **Essays on Music**, Edited by Prem Lata Sharma.

Necessary material for the following volumes has been collected and after careful editing, press copies will be prepared.

- 1. Essays on Swadeshi.**
- 2. Essays on Education.**
- 3. Essays on Women.**
- 4. Mirror of Gesture : Abhinaya Darpan of Nadikesvara.**

Other titles are also being identified and relevant material being collected for publication. Lastly, two unpublished manuscripts have been given to us by his son Dr. Rama P. Coomaraswamy, which after careful editing will also be published. They are :

- 1. The Early Iconography of Sagittarius and**
- 2. Concerning Sphinxes.**