Chapter V

ANANDA COOMARASWAMY (1877-1947)

Introduction

Ananda Coomaraswamy is a profound scholar of the twentieth century. He has contributed laudably to modern Indian aesthetic thought. Coomaraswamy observes that in Indian philosophy, there is an effort to convey the rhythmic character of the world-process. The significance of this rhythmic character is that there is harmony all around the world-process. The interplay of the opposites of subject and object, self and not-self, unity and Diversity, life and Death constitute the whole of sensational existence. It seems, as if because of the understanding of the cosmic rhythm, Indian mind is capable of keeping its balance when confronted with these pairs of opposites. This cosmic rhythm, thus enable the Indian mind to see the underlying principle of beauty. This principle of beauty bestows unity upon life and because of this, Indian people feel no difficulty to face with "the eternal becoming, the endless procession of antithesis". In Indian philosophy, this recognition of the unity of all life is the highest good and the uttermost freedom. "The heart and essence of Indian experience", Coomaraswamy says, "is to be found in a constant intuition of the unity of all life, and the instinctive, ineradicable conviction that the recognition of this unity is the highest good and the uttermost freedom."
He thus tries to give an aesthetic orientation to all.

In the study of the traditional culture of India, Coomaraswamy considers not only the achievement of the Hindus, but also the contributions of Buddhism and Islam. He recognises the importance of the Buddhistic and Islamic elements in Indian culture, not only in music but also in religious thought.

To have the clear conception of Coomaraswamy's aesthetic thought I have taken here for discussion his comment of the all-round excellence of the arts and crafts of India, his aesthetic orientation to all, his aesthetic outlook as a true cosmopolitan, his exposition of the perennial philosophy, his purpose to show the power of the Indian soul and all the riches it holds, his exposition of the aesthetic implications of perennial philosophy, his idea of the intimate bond of beauty and morality - aesthetics and ethics, aesthetic significance of his, "The Dance of Shiva".

**Art as a hieratic aesthetic script of man's spiritual and contemplative experience:**

Indian thought takes a comprehensive view of art. The Indian artist is free to take any aspect of the whole creation for his field. The principal aim of the artist is to produce a work which has a flavour (rasa). The work of the artist is full of 'rasa' when it satisfies the craving for order, harmony, balance, rhythm and pattern. Indian aesthetic theory has
recognised all the aspects of art. It recognises the appeal of the medium, the artistic qualities of brightness, sweetness and vigour. According to Indian aesthetic theory, the values of art can be determined both as primary and as auxiliary or secondary. The primary value of art is 'rasanubhava' alone. Referring to the outstanding characteristics of the art of India in the Gupta period and its classical quality, Coomaraswamy writes, "In this period, individual men of letters, the nine gems of Vikramaditya's court attain to fame. Painting is an accomplishment of kings and queens and there are indications here and in the erotic literature that secular painting was regarded like music and poetry, as a source of the experience of rasa."²

Through some signs or symbols, art communicates what it wants to express. Everyone agrees that somehow, in some peculiar, unique way feelings find expression in art. That peculiar, unique way is the way of signs or symbols or forms. In art, feelings come in their own. So the artistic experience, frees us from the desire of worldly possessions. Art in a sense frees us from pity and fear, also from triumph and envy and even from the burden of every other emotion.* So art is a conscious transformation of a feeling. The time the

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²"Art liberates man from his passions in giving him something else to do with them than to gratify them, - to make them the object of his contemplation." (The Theory of Beauty, by Carrit, p. 70).
artist desires to transform the matter of feeling into art, a form, the intellectual component of art is imposed upon the matter. In reference to this, Coomaraswamy states, "art is the embodiment in material of a pre-conceived form." In another place, Coomaraswamy expresses his view as, "Art is a means of communication by signs or symbols." The symbol is to be in some form.

Thus, art being a vehicle of the forms of thought, has been enriching culture, religion, philosophy and literature from the very beginning in India. Coomaraswamy's notion of symbolism is linguistic. The language of art presents a universal appeal to ideas. So, Coomaraswamy's symbolism is "a language and a precise form of thought, a hieratic and a metaphysical language and not a language determined by somatic or psychological categories. Its function is in the analogical correspondence of all orders of reality and states of being on levels of reference." This correspondence of all orders of reality, i.e., the attempt of making a compact whole, is the expression of aesthetic thought of the artist.

Artistic creation in India is looked upon as the revelation of a higher reality, of a principle hidden under the appearance of forms. The artist must thus seek to perceive the inner reality of things. He sometimes achieves this by intuition but more helpful is the method of mental concentration. This method of mental concentration is the method of yoga. This
yoga makes us overlook the distinction between the subject and object. Such mental concentration enables us to achieve harmony or unity of consciousness. Methods of yoga thus assume a great importance in art and that art itself can be considered one of the essential form of yoga. Coomaraswamy expresses this as, "mental concentration carried so far as the overlooking of all distinction between the subject and the object of contemplation, a means of achieving harmony or unity of consciousness."  

Art is rhetoric. Whatever gives effectiveness to truth is rhetoric. A work of art is made to be effective and so art is rhetoric. Artists are said to be more sensitive or more highly perceptive than others. The musician is sensitive to the harmony and dissonance of sound, the dancer to rhythm and gesture, and the painter to colour. Things which are unnoticed by ordinary people, are perceived by the artist and ordinary people realise these facts through works of art. Coomaraswamy expresses it as, "an essential quality in Indian art is often spoken of as truth to nature; the development of this truth we describe as progress, the loss of it as decadence, but it must not be confused with the assimilation of the symbol to natural appearance. It is in this way that a nation's art reveals the various stages of its spiritual history."  

Art has preserved the discoveries of thought and the impact of mind as manifested during the long course of our
The Vedic period is truly the period of the great march of Indian culture on its onward path. The Devas and Asuras engaged in an eternal conflict represent a symbol of Vedic thought. As Coomaraswamy interprets it: "The angels and the Titans represent the heavenly powers of light and the subtlety of darkness." All religions and arts of the Indian soil have accepted these motifs as vehicle of valuable ideas. Coomaraswamy presents explanations of some of these great symbols of thought and life, which also are virtually the symbols of art. The study of symbols is essential for a clear appraisal of the significance of Indian art motifs. The Purna-kumbha (Full vase), Kalpa Vriksha (Wish-Fulfilling Tree), Kamadhenu (cow of plenty), Svastika, Chakra, Surya, Naga-Garuda and the Daivasuram are some of the great motifs that have been clearly formulated in the Vedas.

Throughout our art history, they serve as the vehicles of thought and of decoration. They constitute the basic vocabulary of Indian art and literature.

In 'Yakshas', Coomaraswamy expresses, "In early Indian art, so far cult images are concerned, one iconographic type stands out predominant. That is the standing figure with the right hand raised, the left on the hip. Sometimes, the right hand holds a flower, or chauri, or weapon; sometimes the left grasps the robe, or holds a flask, but the position of the arms is constant. Stylistically, the type is massive and
The early images of Yakshas and Yakshis, the cult images of other deities, such as Shiva and Buddha are of this type.*

The Dharmachakra and the Triratmess are other symbols prominently figured on the Ayagapattas. Coomaraswamy in his paper on the meaning of kha and other words denoting zero, has shown that the axle point of the wheel represents the ultimate reality, the "rock of ages", serving as the central point of the great wheel of creation. This wheel known as Dharmachakra symbolises the two-fold cosmic forces of rest and motion. The centre of the wheel is firm, devoid of changes, but its circumference is the rallying plane of infinite forces whirling and moving under the governance of a central fixation based on the navel of the wheel. The wheel is thus the most appropriate symbol to express the harmony and synthesis between the two creative forces and conditions, one of which is referred to in the Vedas as aprhita, hidden and the other Joyaman, manifested. The perfect Dharmachakra, forming the central figure on the Ayagapatta, represents in a beautiful manner, the above two aspects.

*Stone-specimens of the Pre-Kushana sculpture as well as a large number of terracottas are in the Mathura Museum. They confirm the stylistic and iconographic peculiarities of the old art. These clay moulded objects are of supreme artistic merit, they match the stone sculptures. The technique of these terracottas is stylistic and almost always accomplished. In some cases, the figure is endowed with real grace." (Studies in Indian Art, by V.S. Agarwala, pp. 130, 131).
Coomaraswamy expresses art as a "figure of thought". According to him, a work of art is not an art-object which may be valuable for its own sake. Also it becomes evident that works of art or symbols of art are means of communicating supersensuous truths or forms. "The form is in the work of art as its 'content', but we shall miss it if we consider only the aesthetic surfaces and our own sensitive reactions to them." Aesthetic surfaces are not terminal values in art. Beauty is not inherent in form or matter; it belongs only to spirit and can only be apprehended by spiritual vision.

The true aim of the artist is not to extract beauty from nature, but to reveal life within life, the noumena within phenomena, the Reality within unreality, and the soul within matter. When that is revealed, beauty reveals itself. So all nature is beautiful to us, if only we can realise the Divine idea within it. Coomaraswamy states, "Earlier Indian art is, so to speak, a product of nature, rather than of artifice, and characterized by naturalism and simplicity."

The emotional confusions are the hindrances to the vision of beauty. Art along with making men free from individuality releases him from all psychical including emotional confusions. True art transcends the narrow barriers of the individual and personal. All great art seek the universal in the particular, the ever-enduring in the transitory. In such state, beauty is revealed as beauty lies in unity. By
discovering beauty, Coomaraswamy states, we "momentarily recover the unity of our being released from individuality."  

Thus there is an effort of Indian art to express the spiritual origin of all earthly beauty and the Indian art is convinced that in this way the human mind will take in more and more of the perfect beauty of divinity.

Disinterested attention is needed in art experience. The central feature of the Vedanta view of art is disinterestedness of art-experience. Coomaraswamy is a keen supporter of the view of Vedanta. Disinterested attention helps the artist, in becoming free from individuality, and in recovering the unity of our being. The artist then will have the proper vision of beauty of his artistic creation. "A work of art is the result of creative activity. Here what is needed is just disinterestedness attention, no creation as ordinarily understood." 

Primitive art was a unity of the arts of poetry, music and dance and also of primitive myth and magic. At a later stage, pantheistic and panentheistic religion developed. The unity of nature and man underlying this pantheistic feeling runs right through Indian art. Coomaraswamy lays emphasis on this significant feature of early Indian art which has its roots in (1) Vedic myths, (2) organic myths of Saivism and Vaishnavism and (3) Buddhist and Jaina myths. Indian art has
continued to cultivate its art through the centuries with myths in some form or other.

Indian art is so conceived to fulfill a spiritual urge and to meet the religious needs of the people in a very real sense. Inspired by religion, art retains its purity. Coomaraswamy lays too much stress on religious art or angelic art and produces the impression that all art of India and the best of it is esoteric or religious art. Coomaraswamy considers art which is non-metaphysical as decadent art. In his words, "The fundamental characteristic of embodiment, determination or interpretation of the spiritual impulse, is, in fact, to be recognised in the rise of the theistic cults, with their doctrine and practice of devotion (bhakti), and here lay the immediate necessity, determining the development of a religious art." 14

The supreme problem of Indian art, which in all stages was linked with religion, is therefore related to the right interpretation of symbols. The number of Mother Goddesses together with their forms and names was an ever-evolving conception. The sports of Radha and Krishna was perfected as the arche-type of love symbolism. Radha as the human soul passes through all experiences in the quest for union with the Divine Purusha symbolised by Krishna. As Coomaraswamy interprets it: "In the Vaishnava devotional approach and its poetry human love is conceived as the means and symbol of all
union. Lovers represented are always Radha and Krishna typifying the eternal motif of Man and Woman and revealing in every day events their heavenly image. The whole land of Radha and Krishna is the land of our own experience where beauty and love are sublimated and transformed into the purest divine experience of the heart of the human soul.¹⁵

So far, there is a continuity of Indian cultural peculiarities. Such a thing as Indian is in the making since the chalcolithic Age.*

Coomaraswamy considers the Indian culture of the Gupta period as highly rich and organized compared to preceding culture. About Gupta period Coomaraswamy’s statement is as

*Coomaraswamy speaking about Indus valley Arts has said:
"These 'Indus Valley' terracottas may be dated roughly in the second or third millennium B.C. Then the learned critic speaks about the 'Pre-Mauryan terracottas'. The date of the finds he tentatively fixes to be from 1000 to 300 B.C."

Coming down to the Post-Mauryan age, the critic says, "Completely moulded plaques replace the modelled figure. The most characteristic type is a feminine divinity, fully clothed in a tunic and dhoti. The turbans are large. (Coomaraswamy - Archaic Indian Terracottas in Yahrhish Fuer Prehistoric and Ethnographischekunst, Leipzig).

Regarding the dates of the various antiquities that are being excavated in different parts of India, Coomaraswamy says, "a part of the remains at Mahenjodaro probably dates between 1000 and 400 B.C. and on the other hand, the minor antiquities from various Indian sites, as Basarh Taxila (Bhir Mound), Pataliputra and south Indian prehistoric sites go back at least to the fifth century B.C." (History of Indian and Indonesian Art, by Coomaraswamy, pp. 4-5).
follows:

"The sum of Indian culture in the Gupta period, already essentially Hindu, rather than Buddhist, is so rich, so fully organized, and so conscious."¹⁵

The succeeding period—the Gupta period represents culture even of more abundance and of fine elaboration. Early medieval sculpture has great dramatic force and freer movement than in the Gupta period. Sculptural production of eight century attracts much people. Even some aspires to regard this period as zenith of Indian art. Coomaraswamy is of the view that the true Indian conception of divinity in a superhuman, spiritualized body is expressed in the Brahmanical art of the eight and ninth centuries.*¹⁷

The Indian artists had achieved great skill by the time the Muhammadans came to India. Mahmud of Ghazni conquered Mathura and completely sucked it. But the conqueror himself realised the fact that Indian artists had already won marvellous skill. He admired the genius and paid tribute to them. The sight of the beautiful artistic creations of Mathura and the co-ordination maintained amongst the creations was so charming which moved Mahmud himself. "There are here" he wrote to a friend, "a thousand edifices, as firm as the faith of the

*"The monuments of the eighth century, particularly those of Elura, Elephanta and Mahabalipuram, are better known to modern students than any others, and some not without reason, has regarded this period as representing the zenith of Indian art." (Introduction to Indian Art, by Coomaraswamy, p. 40).
faithful, nor is it likely that this city has attained its present condition but at the expense of many millions of dinars, nor could such another be constructed under a period of two centuries.\textsuperscript{18}

Thus the origin of classical Indian art is to be traced from the interior of India itself rather than from outside. This we are seeing from the days of the so-called Indus valley civilization. Again, all the artistic peculiarities of the classical age are reflected in the literature of the day. Thus says, Coomaraswamy: "The tender humanism and the profound nature sympathies which are so conspicuous in the painting of Ajanta and the sculpture of Mamallapuram are recognizable equally in the works of poets Asvaghosa and Aryasura and dramatists like Kalidasa."\textsuperscript{19}

The iconography of Indian art of Christian era was not new, neither it was due to the influence of Christians. Rather it was the adaptation of the older iconography to new requirements. New and time-honoured forms were installed, but the base was already existing iconography. Coomaraswamy states, "what we see taking place in Indian art towards the beginning of the Christian era is not so much the creation of brand-new iconography as the adaptation of an older iconography to new requirements, and the giving of a new and deeper content to time-honoured forms."\textsuperscript{20}
It will be unjust to attribute incoherency and want of co-ordination to Indian art in general. It has been observed about in all the great monuments of India that every part of the whole is perfectly adjusted to its place and so balanced that aesthetic unity is always perfectly preserved. "In the words of Ferguson, Tajmahal is the combination of so many beauties, and the perfect manner in which each is subordinated to the other that makes up a whole, which the world cannot match and which never fails to impress even those who are most indifferent to the effects produced by architectural objects in general."21

Still there remains in India a native living tradition of art, deep-rooted in the ancient culture. However, under the impact of new education there emerges a new section of Indian society which feels proud in living in the Western mode, speaking in Western language and thinking in the western way. So long Indian art had been an integral part of the life of the people. But now to a section of the people, artistic creations have become the objects of contempt and ridicule. No art can thrive in this state of general apathy. As a result, all artistic traditions of the country were in a state of complete disintegration by the end of the nineteenth century. In this context, Coomaraswamy says, "Indian art has suffered more from philistines - of the Macaulay type - than from iconoclasts."22
About the end of the nineteenth century, however, the movement for national awareness also began. Certain amount of heart-searching was then with the Indian people.

It was at this juncture, an English Art teacher, Mr. E.B. Havell, and his colleague Abanindranath Tagore ventured to revive the traditional art of India. They were against the idea of copying the Greek and Roman models. Their attempt was on recapturing the great spiritual past of India. Coomaraswamy states, "In fact, there is no artist who can overlook tradition, and most original creative talents seek vitality wherever they can find it in the impulses of history. Even the most iconoclastic of the moderns, Picasso, owes so much of the beauty of his line to the classical art of Europe." 23

Everywhere, in every sphere, Britishers underestimated the Indian culture. Their intention was to curb completely, if possible, all the original talents of Indians. Coomaraswamy states, "As the British contempt for India's culture became intenser, this so-called 'national' art of India, which was mainly revivalist, pitted itself against Europe as a 'spiritual' art against the 'materialist' naturalism of the west." 24

So, what we find is this, art in India from the past till to-day has a spiritualistic outlook. Beauty, which is an "inevitable accident" of art, is also judged from that viewpoint.

"Inevitable accident" - Art reveals beauty of Nature, so beauty
Thus the art of the present day is a direct descendent of the ancient schools, whose traditions have been handed down with comment and expansion. The words of a song may have been composed at any date but the musical themes communicated orally from master to disciple are essentially ancient. Coomaraswamy thus considers art to be finally a hieratic aesthetic script of man's spiritual and contemplative experience.

Aesthetic orientation to all, the highest significance of it in the traditional way of life:

The former discussion has acquainted us with the splendid aesthetic orientation of Coomaraswamy to all the creative works of India and this is considered to be one of the great contributions of Coomaraswamy to modern Indian thought.

Appreciation or study of the beautiful is called aesthetic. This beautiful may be natural or man-made. Sense of beauty is inherent in every individual. Aesthetic experience does not drop from heaven and is not possessed only by a heaven-sent genius. Each and every person may not express it. Some persons spontaneously reveal their aesthetic quest through different media. In some others' cases this quest remains

is a must of art-production. What comes on simultaneously may be termed as "inevitable accident". Beauty arises simultaneously from art-production, so beauty is here termed as "inevitable accident".
undeveloped. So to appreciate the beautiful, two things must be there - a work of art and the ability to appreciate it. Coomaraswamy says, "the conception of beauty and the adjective beautiful belong exclusively to aesthetic and should only be used in aesthetic judgement. We may speak of the presence or absence of beauty in a work of art when we judge it aesthetically. We may then call the work rasavant or otherwise."\(^{25}\)

Sometimes we may heartily approve a work of art which represents some form or activity. We even want to call a work of art beautiful if it attracts us by the tenderness of its colour, the sweetness of its sounds or the charm of its movement. But here we should not use the language of pure aesthetics. Pure aesthetic sense will emerge only when every part of the whole is perfectly adjusted to its place and so balanced that an unity is perfectly preserved. Coomaraswamy observes, "Beauty, in the profound words of Millet - does not arise from the subject of a work of art, but from the necessity that has been felt of representing that subject."\(^{26}\)

Naturally question arises - what, then, is Beauty? What is Rasa? How can we speak a work to be beautiful or rasavant? Some common quality must be there in the dissimilar works of art. First of all, an aesthetic intuition on the part of the poet or creator must be there. This aesthetic intuition endows the artist with the vision of beauty. This vision of beauty then is expressed by the artist through external medium. The
reproduction of the original aesthetic intuition is beauty. So, we find that aesthetic intuition is the common base to have beauty or rasa. Coomaraswamy explains, "There is an aesthetic intuition on the part of the original artist, the poet or creator; then (2) the internal expression of this intuition - the true creation or vision of beauty, (3) the indication of this by external signs for the purpose of communication, the technical activity, and finally, (4) the resulting stimulation of the critic or rasika to reproduction of the original intuition, or of some approximation to it."^27

In the works called beautiful, a fine correspondence of theme and expression, content and form is to be maintained. With reference to the object, then "more" or "less" beautiful will imply a greater or less correspondence between content and form. But this idea of degree cannot be applied to the complete internal aesthetic activity. In the case of complete internal aesthetic activity, beauty is absolute and cannot have degrees. The vision of beauty is spontaneous, deliberate effort cannot be the cause of it.

It is true to say that the mere intention to create beauty without an object of devotion is certainly incomplete. To create beauty there must exist an object of devotion. The artist gets attached to the object, spontaneously reveals beauty out of it. This state of grace is not achieved in the pursuit of pleasure. The hedonists seek pleasure and they have their
reward and because of this they are in bondage of loveliness. But the artist is free in his pursuit of beauty. Different objects attract different artists. But a section of Indian philosophers is strictly of the opinion that an absolute Beauty (rasa) exists, as the absolute Goodness and absolute truth exist. So each beauty is an aspect of the Absolute. Coomaraswamy states, "as love is reality experienced by the lover, and truth is reality as experienced by the philosopher, so beauty is reality as experienced by the artist and these are three phases of the Absolute."  

The physical object of art is only a symbol that evokes an experience of an aesthetic shock. The material object when properly transformed into terms of the beautiful leads to an experience of Rasa. An uncarved stone conceals within itself the potentiality of peerless beauty. The artist only makes that beauty manifest at a particular point and transform the rough unhewn piece into a symbol that radiates joy and beauty. Thus the artist, in creating, endows an ordinary experience with depth and meaning and the highest degree of intensity of feeling. But the quality of beauty in a work of art is really quite independent of its theme as the sense of beauty is related to the artist himself. In the words of Coomaraswamy, "we sit down to paint a beautiful picture, or stand up to dance, we are surprised that the result is insipid and lacks conviction; the subject may be lovely, the dancer may be ravishing, but the picture and the dance are not rasavant. The theory of beauty
is a matter for philosophers and artists have to demonstrate it at their own risk."

Aesthetic experience is primarily a 'vision', an awareness or apprehension of a novel quality on its appreciative and creative side. In painting and sculpture, the aesthetic quality of a concrete object is intuited and contemplated. In fiction and poetic creation or music, the aesthetic quality apprehended is the product of creative imagination which constructs its objects. The perception of real objects and the perception of the same as aesthetic objects is distinguished by a qualitative difference. When nature is perceived aesthetically, it is not perceived as 'real', but as something other than the physical complex.

In all aesthetic experiences, the senses are involved directly or indirectly through memory. But the aesthetic quality as such is not produced by the senses but apprehended and contemplated through imagination. Aesthetic apprehension cannot of course be equated with contemplation. The words of a poem are heard and understood. But its aesthetic significance may still elude us. All of a sudden its beauty may capture us and fill us with rapture. This means that every aesthetic quality may not be disclosed immediately, but once the disclosure is made it cannot elude us.

Our responses to beauty and form and our creative imagination will be held to be as essential for the quality of
our lives and the level of our culture as are our reasoning powers. We will then become truly whole and remove the deep tensions between the rational and the non-rational, between reason and will, between reason and instincts.

The aesthetic in a wide sense can be attached to any experience that is meaningful and enriching. Whenever material is given shape, wherever movement possesses direction, wherever thought and action aim at ends and purposes, life has, as it were, form and colour and composition. The making of a vessel or garment, the framing of laws of constitutions can be creative just as is the moulding of a piece of clay into a sculpture, the writing of a poem, the composing of a figure.

In its most essential aspects, life has aesthetic qualities. Life is aesthetic when it is lived fully and deeply, free of narrow utility. It is also aesthetic when it is lived intensely and passionately yet with control and proportion. Life is aesthetic in the awareness of its creative potentialities, when it has style and unity. This unity is dynamic, imbued with tension and passion, yet integrated into a coherent whole.*

*In all Indian art there is a unity that underlies all its bewildering variety. Coomaraswamy declares that "just as through all Indian schools of thought there runs like a golden thread the fundamental idealism of the Upanishads - the Vedanta - so in all Indian art there is a unity that underlies all its bewildering variety. This unifying principle is here also idealism and this must of necessity have been so, for the synthesis of Indian thought is one, not many." (History of fine art in India and Ceylon, by V.S. Smith, p. 61).
Since art provides our aesthetic experience with the highest degree of intensity, it plays an all-important role in the aesthetic thought of man. We share the artist's sense of liberation and wholeness. "Arts" as Whitehead says, "gives an elation of feeling that is supernatural."

So art and the aesthetic become a source of the power to form, shape and enrich our experience and conduct. They produce a feeling of strength and vitality of heightened sensitivity and joy. In this aesthetic dimension, we find those regulative principles by means of which the unity and harmony of the human personality is achieved.

Beginning from the remotest times, aesthetic sense of Indians is getting exposed through artistic creations of some day-to-day usable things.

"The finest work in engraved steel is found in the weapons of Southern India. Good work, but more like Persian is found in Rajputana." 30

"Brass and to a less extent copper are widely used amongst Hindus for domestic utensils and ceremonial implements. The common form is the small water vessel known as the lota. The large South-Indian type used for fetching water, and carried on the hip is especially handsome, and often decorated with engraved designs. The ceremonial vessels (Pancpati, acmani, dhupdan and c) and lamps (dipam, arti and c) used in
temple and personal ritual are found in an endless variety of fine and sometimes elaborately decorated forms.**31

"Vessels and dishes of gold are naturally found only in royal use or as votive offerings; those of silver being more useful."**32

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* "So far other alloys are concerned, the most important of these is bidri, so called from Bidar in Haidarabad state. The colour is black, the basis of the alloy zinc, with additional metals lead, tin and copper. Boxes, huqqa bowls and trays and basins are made of it, and almost invariably decorated with silver encrustation."

"Applied decoration of metal - The principal forms are inlay and overlay one metal upon another. In inlay and incrustation (damascening, kaftgari) a groove is made and silver or gold were inserted, and then hammered down; or an area is excavated, and undercut at the edges, a thin plate of silver or gold in the required shape applied, and the edges hammered down, holding it fast. The best work was done in Punjab in connection with the decoration of weapons in the Sikh period."

"Jewellery is made and worn in quantity and great variety by all classes throughout India, the materials range from real flowers to base metal, silver and gold. Many, perhaps most, of the metal forms bear the names of, and approximate in form to floral prototypes." (History of Indian and Indonesian Art, by Coomaraswamy, p. 135).

"Ivory has been used for an enormous range of purposes, from sacred images to disc, but never more successfully than in the form of carved or pierced plaques applied to architectural and other woodwork. The whole shell or conch or chank (sanka), used as a trumpet, is often elaborately decorated with metal mountings, and may be decorated with engraved designs, filled with wax." (Ibid., pp. 136-137)

"Indian textiles are deservedly famous, and have been articles of export to Europe since the Roman period, and probably earlier." (Ibid., p. 137)

"The finest types of all Indian embroidery are perhaps those of Kathiawad, and of Bhuj in Koch, especially those carried out in chain stitch. The work is chiefly to skirts, cotis and the caps (natis) with a long back flap worn by children. In a well-known type, the skirt is covered with peacocks and flowers in alternating diagonals and there is
The classical Sanskrit theatre scarcely survives, unless in Malabar. But acting and dancing are alike in principle and practice, both consisting in the rhythmic presentation of formal gestures, accompanied by instrumental music and singing. Much of this technique survives in the religious folk plays, such as the yatras of Mathura and Peral; still more in the dramatic dances presented by devadasis in and on occasions of festivity. 33

"Indian literature of all kinds and at all periods, at any rate after the Maurya, makes incidental references to painting. It may be taken for granted that from a very early period, not only were sculptures and architectural details covered with thin plaster and coloured, but that the flat walls of temples and palaces were decorated within and without with pictures or with painted "wreaths and creepers". In the Epics we often hear of painted halls or chambers (Citra-sala) in palaces. A whole scene of Bhavabuti's Uttara-Rama-Carita, dating from the close of the Gupta period, is laid in such a gallery, where Rama and Sita are represented as viewing newly executed paintings of scenes from their own life, which awaken in Sita a longing to revisit the forests, creating in her a "latent impression" bhavana." 34

an elaborate floral border of lotus rosettes alternating with brilliant parrots, the ground is often a black or dark blue satin." (Ibid., p. 140).
"The Vedic Aryans were proficient in carpentry, building houses and racing chariots of wood; and in metal work, making vessels of ayas, presumably copper, for domestic and ritual use, and using gold jewellery. They wove, knew sewing and tanning, and made pottery. In all probability, the early Aryan art was 'decorative', or more accurately, abstract and symbolical art."^35

The above are the examples cited by Coomaraswamy wherein we find the display of aesthetic sense in the traditional way of life. Aesthetic sense is distinct mostly in cases of the ceremonial implements, in the walls of the temples with decorated statues of Gods and Goddesses. Even in domestic utensils, in jewellery, in embroidery, an attempt to imitate the nature is found as the designs therein are being borrowed from flowers, creepers etc. Religious folk plays, such as the yatras of Mathura and Bengal, dramatic dances presented by devadasis indicate the real aesthetic sense of the Indians.

Coomaraswamy's emergence as a true cosmopolitan:

Most of the aspects of ancient and medieval civilization are rooted in a fundamentally religious pattern of life and Coomaraswamy has much interest on those aspects. During the ancient and medieval period human civilization was almost the same in the west as well as in the east. Upto the European renaissance, there was no cleavage between the two hemispheres.
Coomaraswamy finds in Plato and the Orphic Mysteries, in Saint Augustine, Meister Eckhart and Thomas A. Kempis, the same spiritual impulse which is in the writings of Mahayana Buddhism, Chandidas and Tagore. Coomaraswamy asserts, "If we leave out the modernistic, individualistic philosophies of to-day, and consider only the great tradition of magnanimous philosophers, it will be found that the distinctions of East and West are comparable only to differences of dialect, while the essential spiritual language remains the same."

But after the renaissance the unity of world culture was interrupted. With the growth of industrialism a few centuries later, the entire picture changed completely. The west went away from its religious stand, while in the East - and particularly in India - life, thought and creativity went on very much as before. Coomaraswamy says, "A philosophy identical with Plato's is still a living force in the oriental village. Our peasants are thoroughly familiar with an eric literature of profound philosophical significance and a body of poetry and music of incalculable value." But at time, the modern West begins to influence upon the serene, self-sufficient pattern of life of the east. Coomaraswamy deplores this interruption as it seems to spoil the beauty of Indian life. Actually time appears when a section of Indians are badly influenced by the modern Western pattern of life. As a result, Indians lose the beauty and logic of life. "The beauty and logic of Indian life belong to a dying past. The nineteenth
century has degraded much and created nothing." The new system of education and the new pattern of society in the cities have led to the emergence of "a superficial nondescript human being deprived of all roots - a sort of intellectual Pariah."\(^\text{37}\)

Coomaraswamy thus vehemently criticises some of the aspects of Western as well as Eastern civilization. In spite of that he believes that there is a base of the unity of the human consciousness in East and West. In his later writings, particularly he emerges as a true cosmopolitan. Coomaraswamy is nourished by the culture both of Europe and Asia. This induces him to undertake the task of working for the union of Eastern and Western thought for the betterment of humanity. "Civilization", he says, "must henceforth be human rather than local or national, or else it cannot exist."\(^\text{38}\)

But Europe in her arrogance does not admit that she can have need of Asia, whom for centuries she has trampled under foot. It is not desired that Europeans are to accept an Asiatic faith blindly. If the Westerners search within their hearts, they will definitely feel what the soul of West needs today and that something is to be taken from Indian soul. Coomaraswamy says, "I do not suggest that Europeans should embrace an Asiatic faith, I would merely invite them to taste the delight of rhythmic philosophy, this deep, slow breath of thought. From it they would learn those virtues which above
all others the soul of Europe needs to-day, like a lamp in a windless place, that does not flicker."  

The western world is busy with the search of individual and social happiness. This kills in the shell the happiness which should actually be desired. A runaway horse sees only the binding road before him from between his blinkers. In the same way the average European cannot see beyond the boundaries of his individual life, or of the life of his class, country, or of his party. Within that narrow pale, he imprisons his own will.

There is no wish that Europe should become Asia. But she must not try to make Asia become Europe. She must learn to respect this colossal personality to which she herself is complementary. These two worlds of human beings are to overcome their differences. Allying their distinctive spirits, they may build up by their union the road of the future. This is a wish which Coomaraswamy expresses by setting the high idealism of Asia against the nationalism of young India,

"Nationalism does not suffice for the great idealists of young India. Patriotism is but a local interest. Great souls have greater destinies to fulfil, life, not merely, the life of India, demands our greater devotion. The happiness of the human race is of more import to us than any party triumph. The chosen people of the future can be no nation, no race, but an aristocracy of the whole world, in whom the vigour of European
The fact is that Coomaraswamy does not build any sharp contrast between East and West. "Can we point to any elemental experience or any ultimate goal", he asks, "which is not equally European and Asiatic? Who that has breathed the pure mountain air of the Upanishads, of Shankara and Kabir, of Rumi and Lao Tse and Jesus - to mention Asiatic prophets - can be alien to those who have sat at the feet of Plato, Kant, Tauter, Ruysbroeck Whiteman, Nietzsche or Blake?" 

Let us unite Europe and Asia, i.e., West and East for the accomplishment of a common task, for the achievement of human genius. To think of a common humanity throughout the world itself is charming and actually to have it is a great achievement which is not at all comparable to any other material achievements of the world. Unless a common nation, a common humanity is established throughout the world, never can there be real happiness in the world. Because conflict and chaos would be there amongst the rival groups, rival nations and these are great interruptions to the common welfare of the people as a whole. Therefore, Coomaraswamy is of the opinion that let us first unite East and West for the achievement of human genius, which would carry to the human being the real happiness and that would be the sign of real aesthetic thought. To have the real aesthetic delight, we are to obey the modern formula, i.e., - to take from each according to one's capacity
and to give to each according to one's needs.

India must wake up and realise that she can fulfil herself only by "retaining her Indianness." She has got a distinctive role. From the remotest time, India alone has taught that a pattern of life rooted in religion and philosophy can also be graceful, elegant, beautiful and satisfying in the highest degree. This is the distinctive role, which ever now India is to demonstrate to the people as it did previously. For this, to obey the time's demand Indians are to forsake the influences of modern West which make them blind and indifferent to their own glorious past culture and civilization. Philosophy has never been a merely intellectual exercise for India. It has always been regarded as "the key to the map of life". "If it be asked what riches India brings to aid the realization of a world civilization, then the answer must be found in her religion and her philosophy, and her constant application of abstract theory to practical life." 

The West must make use of this inner riches of India. She is to renounce its vanity and to admit that the East also has got something most valuable to offer to the West. The East too must get ready to accept the teachings of the West which the Indians are lacking and which is found to be beneficial for the welfare of the people as a whole. Such mental preparation for mutual adjustments is the most essential condition for the establishment of a 'civilization' which will
be humane rather than local or national. Coomaraswamy observes, "If either through ignorance or through contempt of Asia, constructive European thought omits to seek the cooperation of eastern philosophers, there will come a time when Europe will not be able to fight industrialism because the enemy will be entrenched in Asia." And he warns the East too: "If Asia be not with Europe, she will be against her and there may arise a terrible conflict."

Thus Coomaraswamy emerges as a true cosmopolitan. He exclaims that if in this way, a common society, a common nation comes in fact to exist, what can be more charming, more beautiful than this? No chaos, no conflict, no enmity, no rivalry, no jealousy will be there and such fine and serene mutual understanding is definitely beautiful itself.

Exposition of the Perennial philosophy - His purpose to show the power of the Indian soul and all the riches that it holds:

The concept of the philosophia perennis is very ancient. It is found in Plato and Pythagoras, in the Upanishads, in the writings of the Taoists in China and in many other texts of antiquity and of the Middle ages. Saint Augustine referred to it when he spoke of "Wisdom uncreate, whatever was and ever will be". In Aldous Huxley's book, 'The Perennial Philosophy', a remarkable convergence of views on the basic questions of Reality, knowledge and the nature and destiny of the human soul
is found. The book furnishes us with the views of Western as well as Eastern thinkers.

Coomaraswamy is a defender of the static conception of philosophia perennis throughout his work. As a perennialist and Platonist, he believes in the Golden Age of India existed in the past. He considers this Golden Age as the proper model for contemporary philosophy and Art. In an essay entitled 'The Pertinence of philosophy', Coomaraswamy indicates some of the important features of the philosophia perennis. He distinguishes philosophy into two sects and uses two sets of terms in this context. He speaks of (I) "Wisdom about knowledge" and (II) 'first philosophy' or 'gnosis' to indicate the lower and the higher perspectives respectively.

"Wisdom about knowledge" is that wisdom which is based upon man's scientific, rational equipment. It is the wisdom of knowable and determinate things. So it has a limited scope, limited to the field of space and time, cause and effect. Within that limited scope, such wisdom is to be acquired. The complete process of acquiring wisdom must be systematic. Coomaraswamy speaks, "such wisdom must be systematic; and the system must be a closed system, limited to the field of space-time and cause-effect, for it is, by hypothesis about knowable and determinate things."46

Wisdom of this type can never establish certainties. It can only predict probability of success with varying degrees.
Corresponding to this philosophy, a type of religion arises which can only be described as 'natural religion'. This religion, according to Coomaraswamy, "has for its referent, of which the operation is seen everywhere, and yet is most refractory to analysis, namely 'life' or 'Energy'."\(^{47}\)

This natural religion may take the form of pantheism, polytheism, or even philosophical pluralism, but the animistic attitude is always there. It postulates a 'soul of the universe' or invokes the aid of the 'forces' to explain the universe of perceptible things and movements. Science, far from being an opponent of this animism, is actually its ally. Coomaraswamy contends, "Science differs from animism only in this respect - that while science assumes forces in the sense of blind wills, animism personifies these forces and endows them with a free will."\(^{48}\) They both deal with "types of presentation. They both seek knowledge of the being which things have in the mind of the knower, as principles, genera and species." They both seek to govern the movement of the will with respect to things known."\(^{49}\)

But there is a different and a higher kind of philosophy, it is 'Gnosis' revealed truth. It is metaphysical wisdom. It may justly be described as 'First philosophy', first in the valuational and not in the chronological order. This higher philosophy does not reject the lower. On the contrary, the 'human wisdom' is a partial exposition of the 'metaphysical
wisdom*. Coomaraswamy removes the impression of an unbridgeable gulf between the two disciplines and thus establishes harmony between the two. This harmony of unity bears aesthetic thought in it. Coomaraswamy states, "Although the two wisdoms are different in kind, there can be a coincidence, a reconciliation. Each is dependent on the other, although in different ways—the sciences depending on revealed truth for their formal correction, and revealed truth depending upon the sciences for its demonstration by analogy." 50

This higher philosophy thus covers the whole around of the lower and above; it deals with realities which are not bound by space and time tissue. Each moment of the 'now' is affirmed by this philosophy. It discerns in every man or in every being however minute it may be, the idea and trace of the ultimate Reality meaning thereby the affinity between man and the ultimate Reality. This creates harmonious atmosphere around, which itself is pleasing, so beautiful, and it is nothing but aesthetic. This higher philosophy, Coomaraswamy states, "treats confidently of realities which are not wholly contained in the time and space tissue. It affirms the actuality of a 'now' independent of flux. It is able to find in every microcosmic fact the trace and symbol of macrocosmic actuality." 51

In this first philosophy, there is an amicable meeting between Religion and Metaphysics. Each has got its scope but
at the same time one cannot be taken away absolutely from the
other as their relation is that of attribute and essence. From
this point of view also, a compactness is realized, where no
difference between religion and metaphysics is encouraged. So
naturally, this concept of whole is the outcome of aesthetic
thought. Coomaraswamy asserts, "Our first problem in
connection with the highest wisdom, considered as a doctrine
known by revelation - is to distinguish without dividing
religion from metaphysics. It is a distinction without a
difference, like that of attribute from essence."52

Coomaraswamy believes that in traditional Indian
thought this problem has been adequately solved. Religion and
Metaphysics have been harmonised. The 'wisdom about knowledge'
has been employed to prepare the human consciousness for
receiving the higher wisdom. This preparation has been made
to permeate all the aspects of actual life. It has not been
confined to isolated mental processes. Thus it is evident that
perennial philosophy provides the base for a unified harmonious
pattern of existence which is beautiful and so having the
aesthetic content in it.

Coomaraswamy contends that the science of the Self
(Adhyatmavidya) is the religion and philosophy of India and it
recognizes the unity of all life as the one essence and one
goal - and regards the realization of this unity as the highest
good, bliss, salvation, freedom, the final purpose of life.
This is for Hindu thinkers eternal life; the recognition here and now of all things in the self and the self in all. This inseparable unity of the material and spiritual world is made the foundation of the Indian culture and determines the whole character of her social ideals. Definitely this unity has a serene aesthetic idea behind it.

This exposition of the perennial philosophy is not original. But Coomaraswamy's attempt is to explore the power of the Indian soul through the perennial philosophy. Coomaraswamy's achievement is best expressed in Romain Rolland's words: "The purpose of Coomaraswamy's work is to show the power of the Indian soul, to show all the riches that it holds stored up. The vast and tranquil metaphysic of India is unfolded: her conception of the universe, her social organization... the magnificent revelation of her art. The whole vast soul of India proclaims from end to end of its crowded and well-ordered edifice the same domination of a sovereign synthesis."53

The essential contribution of India, then is simply her Indianness. Indians are convinced that the recognition of this unity is the highest good and the uttermost freedom which promotes aesthetic delight. For Coomaraswamy, "All that India can offer to the world proceeds from her philosophy. This philosophy is not, indeed, unknown to others - it is equally the gospel of Jesus and of Blake, Lao Tze and Rumi - but
nowhere else it has been made the essential basis of sociology and education. 54

Coomaraswamy is not of the opinion that all the ancient solutions are applicable to the special problems of modern Indians in modern conditions. Keeping the base in tact, the solution may be applicable with slight variations here and there, according to the necessity of the modern conditions. It is not difficult to keep the base as it is because always the Hindus, whether they belong to ancient or modern, try to grasp more firmly the fundamental meaning and purpose of life. Coomaraswamy says, "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. What I do suggest is that the Hindus grasped more firmly than others the fundamental meaning and purpose of life." 55

Even with all its imperfections, Hindu society as it survives will appear to many to be superior to any form of social organization attained on a large scale anywhere else. There is the evidence of a constant effort to understand the meaning and the ultimate purpose of life in Indian culture. Also there is purposive organization of society in harmony with that order, and with a view to the attainment of the purpose with the idea to create an aesthetic atmosphere with all. This is the most conspicuous special character of the Indian culture.
There is a close affinity between the Buddhist and the Hindu culture. We may gather the effect of the Buddhist teaching upon the character and policy from the statemanship of the great Buddhist Emperor Ashoka. From his multifarious activities, we may grasp the truth that in the orient, from ancient times, the aim of the activities of national Govt. is directed to secure the welfare and happiness of the people. His sacred majesty desires that all animate beings should have security, self-control, peace of mind and joyousness, which may make the life beautiful. This is nothing but the exposition of the religious philosophy which the king developed.

The 'Dharmashastra' of Manu and the 'Arthashastra' of Chanakya are perhaps the most remarkable sociological documents the world possesses. They set forth the picture of the ideal society, defined from the standpoint of law. With the help of these books, Manu and Chanakya accomplished in making religious philosophy the essential and intelligible basis of popular culture and national polity which then shows the path to be in harmony with others in society and this harmonious atmosphere is having the aesthetic content in it. Not in any other country except India, this idea was given effect.

The life of man is full of experiences. It seems as if these experiences constitute a curve and the curve comprises evolution - the Pravritti Marga and the Nivritti Marga. The pravritti marga is characterised by self-assertion, the nivritti
marga is characterised by self-realization. Self-assertion and self-realization both are necessary for the complete or well development of the life of a man. But self-realization is regarded as the essential purpose of life if we consider it as one whole. Coomaraswamy states, "The life or lives of man may be regarded as constituting a curve - an arch of time-experience, subtended by the duration of the individual will to life. The outward movement of this curve - Evolution, the path of pursuit - the Pravritti Margo - is characterised by self-assertion. The inward movement - Involution, the path of Return - the Nivritti Marga - is characterised by increasing self-realization. The religion of man on the outward path is the Religion of Time, the religion of those who return is the Religion of Eternity. If we consider life as one whole, certainly self-realization must be regarded as its essential purpose from the beginning." 56

But we cannot condemn the self-assertion of the ignorant as sin. It is an undeniable fact that self-assertion must be there beforehand to have self-realization later on. It is not sin, for the youth to have a wish and a thirst to fulfil that wish. To forbid the satisfaction of the thirst of the youth is not a cure, rather suppressed desires breed pestilence. As has already been observed that perennial philosophy provides harmonious pattern of existence, self-assertion and self-realization both are equally necessary for the harmonious
existence of life. So every desire has got its base, every life has got its value, every life has got its beginning and end. This beginning and end are the essence of the world process. So every individual ego is to be regarded to have reached a certain stage of its own cycle (gati). Coomaraswamy says, "Every individual life - mineral, vegetable, animal, human or personal God - has a beginning and an end and this creation and destruction, appearance and disappearance, are of the essence of the world-process and equally originate in the past, the present and the future. According to this view, then, every individual ego (jivatman) or separate expression of the general will to life (ichchha, trishna), must be regarded as having reached a certain stage of its own cycle (gati)." 57

The greatness of India is conveyed neither through any dogma nor through any book but through the idea that all knowledge and all truth are absolute and infinite. This is an established truth - which is not to be created, but endeavour is to be made to find it. This is the secret of the Indian greatness, herein lies the real beauty which promotes aesthetic thought. Coomaraswamy states: "What after all, is the secret of Indian greatness? Not a dogma or a book, but the great open secret that all knowledge and all truth are absolute and infinite, waiting, not to be created, but to be found." 58
There are a number of Europeans for whom European civilization no longer suffices. They have had to confess its insufficiencies and its limited arrogance. They want the help of the forty-century-old civilization of India and they believe that this civilization can give them proper answers to their griefs. The Germans, with their unhappy vitality, have been the first to ask of Asia that food which their starved spirit can no longer find in Europe. A few noble pioneers, like Count Kayserling, have popularised the wisdom of Asia. The German poet, as Hermann Hesse, and some others begin to appreciate the Eastern thought.

In the West, cold, hard logic isolates the universal, shutting it off from the rest of life into a definite and distinct compartment of the spirit. India, on the other hand, endeavours to blend them into each other, so as to recreate in its fullest perfection the complete unity. The matching of opposites produces the true rhythm of life. Spiritual purity is not lost from allying itself with sensual joy. Beauty is in this matching of opposites and so aesthetic delight is enjoyed therein. According to Coomaraswamy, "there is no negation. All is harmonised. All the forces of life are grouped like a forest, whose thousand waving arms are led by Nataraja, the Master of the Dance. Every thing has its place, every being has its function, and all take part in the divine concert, their different voices, and their very dissonances,
creating, in the phrase of Heraclitus, a most beautiful harmony." Such beautiful harmony is the source of aesthetic experience.

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, philosophy is not regarded primarily as a mental gymnastic, but rather, and with deep religious conviction as our salvation (moksha) from the ignorance (avidya) which forever hides from our eyes the vision of reality. Philosophy is the key to the map of life, by which we set forth the meaning of life and the means of attaining its goal. It is no wonder, then that the Indians have pursued the study of philosophy with enthusiasm.

An exposition of the aesthetic implications of perennial philosophy, consistency in aesthetic approach:

When Coomaraswamy has applied the perennial philosophy to every field of life, his exposition of the aesthetic implications of this philosophy is particularly significant and authoritative. He has a life-long passion for art and is keen in dealing with questions related to art-creation and art-appreciation. This helps him in the exposition of the aesthetic implications of perennial philosophy.

Art for him is a kind of metaphysical statement. According to him, the ultimate aim of all art is to express the
element of divinity in man. A totally secular or non-religious art is not there. Whether in poetry or in other modes of art, viz., painting, sculpture etc. of the caves, tombs, monuments and idols of the holy places, some sort of religious fervor and simplicity are found signifying the spiritual beauty therein. There lies the aesthetic implications of perennial philosophy. The best general description of the paintings of India have been given by Lady Herringham: "The outline is in its final state firm, but modulated and realistic, and not often like the calligraphic sweeping curves of the Chinese and Japanese. The drawing is, on the whole, like medieval Italian drawing. The artists had a complete command of posture. Their knowledge of the types and positions, gestures and beauties of hands is amazing." They bear the impact of perennial thought. Their compactness and their simplicity imbue us with aesthetic consciousness. It seems as if through the compactness of these and other paintings, the painters try to find out the cosmic rhythm, as everywhere an idea of unity behind the diversities become explicit.

There is no absolute distinction between 'fine art' and 'useful art' or craft. He does not even admit that there is any barrier between 'classical' and 'folk' art. Individualistic egoism of the modern age exaggerates these distinctions. The true artist contributes through his skills to the maintenance of the "sovereign synthesis" in human life. Aesthetic consciousness definitely develops out of such
The true artist is humble, not proud, normal and balanced, and not moody or eccentric.

Coomaraswamy calls his own view of art 'normal' which is in search for authenticity, a meaningful living, spontaneous, homogeneous, traditional. The 'normal' view of art is related to the "whole man".61 "The whole man" he says, "is naturally a metaphysician."62 Here 'naturally' may be taken as "essentially". Coomaraswamy observes that the whole man comprehends the two aspects of self which he terms as 'two selves'. The two selves are the sentimental self and the 'intellectual self'. The two selves are simultaneous. But we do not recognise it. Coomaraswamy states the nature and function of the two selves in the following manner. "The soulful or sentimental self enjoys itself in the aesthetic surfaces of natural and artificial things, to which it is akin; the intellectual or spiritual self enjoys their order and is nourished by what in them is akin to it. The spirit is much rather fastidious than the sensitive entity."63

Thus we find that Coomaraswamy's concept of man is neither eccentric nor fashionable. It restores human dignity and the intellectual fraternity of philosophia perennis. Coomaraswamy's concept of 'whole man' as a metaphysician can never think of himself far away from the others. Rather, he thinks that he is in all - and all is in him. Beauty is there in this intellectual fraternity as this fraternity leads to
Coomaraswamy's aesthetic views follow logically from his metaphysical and religious assumptions. We may take it as a fact that the concept of beauty has originated with the philosopher and not with the artist. The artist is always in favour of accepting a particular subject and only then he can express his mind well. The artist is to go into the core of that subject, he is to be in love with the subject, otherwise his expression will be half-hearted. If his expression remains half-hearted, he will not be able to make others feel the beauty of his art-work. The beautiful in the strict aesthetic sense is not achieved there. "In all ages of creation the artist has been in love with his particular subject - when it is not so, we see that his work is not 'felt' - he has never set out to achieve the beautiful in the strict aesthetic sense."

It is believed that the external signs - poems, pictures, dances and so forth - are effective reminders. They possess significant form. The form is to be of the nature which may evoke aesthetic emotion in us. The form of art from which we extract beauty is nothing but God's reflection. So different forms or signs of art awakening aesthetic sense, are all reflections of one form, i.e., of Absolute Beauty. If a beauteous form we view, it is His reflection shining through.

It may rightly be insisted that God is the first artist. This of course does not mean that He created forms. But it must
be admitted that every natural object is an immediate realization of His being. As He is one and the same undivided all, i.e., Absolute Beauty, through the representation of His being He expresses His beauty. "This creative activity is comparable with aesthetic expression in its non-volitional character." 65

The bizarre condition of the Vedic Gods is no more in India. Instead, a centralized organization of the divinities get exposed. There is the Trimurti - Brahma, Siva and Vishnu above all. Here India is simply the office-master in Heaven of the divine hierarchy. His court is also patterned after the terrestrial court of an Indian potentate of the same age. Socio-economic condition of the time definitely had an influence in the mentality of the thinking people, and accordingly their ideology had been shaped. Hence the cultural patterns of the age are reflected in art as well. And the cultural patterns are the expositions of the philosophy of the time. Religion has been expressed in art too as we find in the depiction of the Vedic Gods not of course in bizarre condition but in refined condition, so that it may fulfil the demands of the religion of the time. Religion depicts the same spiritual experience, as philosophical experience. Indian philosophy has got close similarity to religion. Coomaraswamy says, Indian philosophy is "an intuition of reality and of identity. It was the state of the Hindu art of the time." 66
In the present age man has been alienated from the spirit from perfection and from tradition too. Coomaraswamy is shocked at this condition of man of the time. Whenever man is in estrangement from the spirit, from perfection and from tradition too, there is every chance of chaos amongst men. In this decadent period, the exploited and the oppressed people have no other way but to take refuge in mysticism. "So a varied art comes out and depicts the mystic and mysterious forces of the gods and the goddesses. This resulted in producing the mystic dance of Shiva in the image of dancing Nataraja, the destroying force of God in five-faced Shiva. The dance of Nataraja represents the cosmic activity of Shiva." It seems as if it is a warning to the people that as the universe stands or is destroyed at the will of God Shiva, none of us should think himself to be superior to others. The idea behind this is that all are equal. So a unity is to be maintained amongst diverse people and real beauty will be there where unity lies.

Again we find different Gods and Goddesses in mystic expression in literature and in art. We observe the power of God expressed in Goddess Sakti riding on a lion, the same power of God extending over traditional ten corners of the world in ten armed Goddess Durga riding on a lion, killing the anti-God Asura - a demon. The underneath feeling is this that for the safety of our being, we are to have the blessings of
the Goddess Sakti. So necessarily it implies a unity of diversities as we all are at the blessings of Sakti. Unity in diversities exhibits beauty and promotes aesthetic consciousness.

In this way, the religious thought of the age is represented in the cultural goods as art of the new religion. In India, as it has already been stated, religion and philosophy are akin to each other. During the feudal period, Buddhism in the form of Mahayana was closely attached to the popular Hinduism known as Pauranik Brahmanism. They are so close to each other that Mahayana was lost in present-day popular Hinduism. This approach of two cultures had its reflection in art. Coomaraswamy says, "The Buddha as supreme Person (Purusottama) of incalculable but infinite age, whose enlightenment dates from the beginning of the world, is thus from the standpoint of ontology and psychology as well as by verbal correspondences virtually identified with Brahma Prajapati who is the father of the world. The virtual identification of the Buddha with Brahma has also its equivalents in iconographic representation." 68

Thus it is observed that Art has preserved in visual documentation the discoveries of thought. The Vedic period initiates the great march of Indian culture on its outward path. It is essential to have the clear conception of the Vedic motifs. Coomaraswamy offers brilliant expositions of
some of these great symbols of thought and life, which also are virtually the symbols of art.

The later Hindu view treats the practice of art as a form of yoga, and identifies aesthetic emotion with self-realization.

Terracotas and moulded bricks formed a very popular media of aesthetic expression during the Gupta and post-Gupta times. In the words of Coomaraswamy, "The Varaha Avatara of Udaygiri is of unsurpassed splendour and unabated energy; here Vishnu as the primal Boar raises the earth (goddess) from the cosmic waters at the initiation of a new cycle of creation."

At a particular time, the final redactions of the Epics and Puranas were done and along with them codifications and systematisation in the arts were tried to be maintained. These together led to an age of heightened aesthetic consciousness. That age was noted for its intense and creative activity. The period is thus one of culmination, of florescence, rather than of renaissance. The fact is that whenever men come to realise the real meaning of the teachings of philosophy of the religious book, he becomes humble, normal and balanced. Disinterestedness of the fruits of actions develops in such man. As a result, he has heightened aesthetic consciousness.

As an exponent of the cultural tradition of the East, and especially of India, Coomaraswamy adopts a consistently
aesthetic approach. Tagore also gave an aesthetic orientation to the study and interpretation of Indian thought and religion. But he wrote from the point of view of a poet rather than a scholar. Coomaraswamy does not allow his interpretation of aesthetics to be modified by his poetic fancy. Taking his stand firmly on original texts, he says: "We write from a strictly orthodox point of view ... endeavouring to speak with mathematical precision, but never employing words of our own or making any affirmation for which authority could not be cited by chapter and verse." 70

Coomaraswamy tries to express Indian philosophy through art. Already we have gone through his these sources and there we find Coomaraswamy to convey "the rhythmic character" of the world-process all throughout his work. The consistency of this idea is very much well maintained from the beginning to the end. This "cosmic rhythm" is above any antithesis or opposites as this cosmic rhythm itself is an unity comprising all the diversities within it. So the understanding of cosmic rhythm has enabled the Indian soul to keep its balance when confronted by 'pairs' of subject and object, self and not-self, unity and diversity, life and death. Beauty prevails in this unity of diversities. So Indian mind is never disturbed at the sight of opposites of pairs. "The interplay of the opposites constitutes the whole of sensational existence, the Eternal becoming." 71 This eternal becoming, this endless procession of
antithesis, presents no difficulty to the Indian mind, because it sees the underlying principle of beauty which bestows unity upon life.

Not only so, Indian mind sees the unity of all life as all lives are from the same source, i.e., the undivided all. The time, man comes to realise this unity, he sees nothing but beauty around him. This is the highest good and the uttermost freedom. "The heart and essence of Indian experience", Coomaraswamy says, "is to be found in a constant intuition of the unity of all life, and the instinctive, ineradicable conviction that the recognition of this unity is the highest good and the uttermost freedom."  

**Intimate bond of beauty and morality - aesthetics and ethics:**

Coomaraswamy has given a new dimension to the study of traditional philosophy and religion. This leads him to think of the Indian Nation too. He observes some short-comings or deficiencies in the already existing concept of nationalism. So he pleads for a re-examination of the concept of nationalism. Every country develops a sense of beauty of its own, it has got its own taste. Likewise, India has also a sense of beauty of its own, its beauty lies in unity. Coomaraswamy does not want to mean by unity only the unity of the Indian nation. Rather Coomaraswamy refers to the unity of all nations.
True patriotism is that which is concerned with the preservation and enrichment of a country's sense of beauty, its taste and grace. So it is our duty to make our lives and at the same time environment beautiful. This plays an important role in making us moral. Aesthetics and ethics may be said to be concerned with value or worth. Aesthetics considers the standard of beauty, or, worth for feeling; ethics considers the standard of goodness, i.e., value or worth from the point of view of action. The study of the Good is closely related to the study of the Beautiful. Coomaraswamy conceives that without beauty there can be no true morality, just as without morality there can be no true beauty. So Aesthetics and Ethics, i.e., goodness and beautiful both are indispensable for true patriotism of a nation. Referring to the prevailing slogans about patriotic duty he remarks: "Has it ever occured to you that it is as much your duty to make your lives and your environment beautiful as to make them moral - in fact that without beauty there can be no true morality, just as without morality, there can be no true beauty."

The one-sided approach of the moralist as well as the politician is to be corrected according to Coomaraswamy. Poets and artists, through their presentation, try to preserve and enrich the country's sense of duty and grace. Coomaraswamy points out that works of art bereft of morality or duty is meaningless as it has got nothing to contribute to the nation.
Hence such works of art should be discarded. He says, "The kingdom of heaven is within, not without; so also is the freedom of nations. It is the work of poets - poet, painter, sculptor, musician, 'artist' are all synonyms - to make their hearers free. It is they who establish the status of nations."74

There is closeness of the idea of Coomarswamy with that of Carrit. Carrit says, "we are to consider the educational approval of beauty in the earlier and in the Phaedrus. The thesis is that beauty and in particular the visible beauty of form and grace and the audible beauties of rhythm and melody, especially, if any of these be found in nature, dispose men towards right conduct."75 Thus Aesthetics develops moral nature in man.

The creation and appreciation of beauty are symptoms of highly developed morality. Both Kant and Ruskin are in support of this view. So also we find it in Coomaraswamy's statement. What we find is this that as Aesthetics develops moral nature in man so highly developed morality encourages the creation and appreciation of beauty.

During the time of Coomaraswamy, some political-minded men did not like his expression. But the pitiable change of our public life make even those people now grateful to men like Coomaraswamy for their steadfast advocacy of the aesthetic view of life and thought. The increasing debasement of taste, the
disappearance of graciousness from our public life disturb the minds of conscious people of the nation. Such considerate men have themselves now begun to admit the steadfast advocacy of the aesthetic view of life and thought.

"The Dance of Shiva":

In Coomaraswamy's thought, the dancing Shiva has been treated as the most exquisite symbol of his aesthetic view. In the figure of dancing Shiva, he finds "an image of reality, a key to the complex tissue of life, a theory of nature universal in its appeal to the philosopher, the lover, the poet, the artist of all ages and all countries." He discerns in this superb form "the great creative power of the rishi-artists of India — a power that could discover a mode of so expressive of fundamental rhythms, so profoundly significant and inevitable." Therefore, Shiva works as a teleological principle and serves various purposes of humanity.

Shiva with his braided locks may be termed as yogi having a spirit which is omniscient and omnipotent. He is our friend in distress, guide in our conflict, even though he is a destroyer; but actually he destroys fetters which bind each separate soul. He imprints courage in us. Thus he serves various purposes of humanity.
Amongst the greatest of the dances of Shiva is Nataraja, Lord of Dancers, or king of actors. The Nataraja type is one of the great creations of Indian art. The movement of the dancing figure is balanced. Though it fills all space, it seems to be at rest. This idea symbolises the unity and simultaneity of the five activities (Pancakrtya, viz., Production, Maintenance, Destruction, Embodiment and Release). Coomaraswamy states, "The movement of the dancing figure is so admirably balanced that while it fills all space, it seems nevertheless to be at rest, in the sense that a spinning top or a gyrostat is at rest; thus realising the unity and simultaneity of the five activities (Pancakrtya, viz., production, Maintenance, Destruction, Embodiment and Release) which the symbolism specifically designates."

Question naturally arises as to the ground of the origin of Siva's dance. It becomes evident from the image that the dance signifies the activities of God. Different activities of God are represented through the dances of Shiva. Of the various dances of Shiva, three are noteworthy.

The first is an evening dance in the Himalayas with a divine chorus. This divine chorus is described as follows in the Shiva Pradosha Stotra:

"Placing the Mother of the Three worlds upon a golden throne, studded with precious gems, Shulapani dances on the
heights of Kailasa, and all the gods gather round Him."

"Sarasvati plays on the Vina, Indra on the flute, Brahma holds the time-marking cymbals, Laksmi begins a song, Vishnu plays on a drum, and all the gods stand round about."

"Gandharvas, Yakshas, Patagás, Uragas, Siddhas, Sadhyas, Vidyadharas, Amaras, Apsarases, and all the beings dwelling in the three worlds assemble there to witness the celestial dance and hear music of the divine choir at the hour of twilight."

This evening dance is also referred to in the invocation preceding the katha-sarit sagara.

The pictures of the evening dance is shown as follows: The Shiva is two-handed here. The co-operation of the gods is clearly indicated in their position of chorus.

The second well-known dance of Shiva is called the Tandava. His tamasic nature is the source of this dance. It is performed in cemeteries and burning grounds. Here Shiva is found in ten-armed form and with this form He dances wildly with Devi. Troops of capering imps dance with them. Representations of this dance are common amongst ancient sculptures, as at Elora, Elephanta, and also Bhuvaneshwara. "Tandava is performed in cemeteries and burning-grounds, where Shiva, usually in ten-armed form, danced wildly with Devi, accompanied by troops of capering imps."
The third dance of Shiva is known as Nadanta dance. This dance of Nataraja is seen before the assembly (sabha) in the golden hall of Chidambaram or Tillai, the centre of the universe. The legend behind the dance is as follows:

"In the forest of Tarajan dwelt multitudes of heretical rishis, following of the mimamsa. Thither proceeded Shiva to confute them, accompanied by Vishnu disguised as a beautiful woman, and Ati-sheshan. The rishis were at first led to violent dispute amongst themselves, but their anger was soon directed against Shiva, and they endeavoured to destroy Him by means of incantations. A fierce tiger was created in sacrificial fires, and rushed upon Him; but smiling gently, He seized it and, with the nail of His little finger, stripped off its skin, and wrapped it about Himself like a silken cloth. Undiscouraged by failure, the sages renewed their offerings, and produced a monstrous serpent, which however, Shiva seized and wreathed about His neck like a garland. Then he began to dance, but there rushed upon Him a last monster in the shape of a malignant dwarf, Muyalaka. Upon him the God pressed the tip of His foot, and broke the creature's back, so that it writhed upon the ground, and so His last toe prostrate, Shiva resumed the dance, witnessed by gods and rishis."

The dance of Shiva in Chidambaram or Tillai forms the motif of the South Indian copper images of Shri Nataraja, the Lord of the Dance. The images represent Shiva dancing, having
four hands. One right hand holds a drum, the other is uplifted in the sign of assuring courage. One left hand holds fire, the other points down upon the demon, a dwarf holding a cobra; the left foot is raised. There is a lotus pedestal, from which springs an encircling glory (tiruvasi), fringed with flame, and touched within by the hands holding drum and fire.

Some of the peculiarities of the Nataraja images, of course, belong to the conception of Shiva generally, and not to the dance in particular. Such are the braided locks, as of a yogi. The drum also is a general attribute of Shiva, belonging to his character of yogi.

Heat is latent in firewood. Whenever, a burning match-stick or any burning material is put into it, the latent heat gets burnt into multiple flames. Shiva too is endowed with voluminous powers signifying his activities. He diffuses his power in mind and matter and these get exposed through dances. The Shaivas understand the meaning of Shiva's Nadanta dance in the following way:

"Our lord is the Dancer, who, like the heat latent in firewood, diffuses His power in mind and matter, and makes them dance in their turn."81 The dance in fact, represents His five activities (Pancakritya), viz., shristi (overlooking, creation, evolution), sthiti (preservation, support), samhara (destruction, evolution), Tirobhava (veiling, embodiment,
illusion, and also, giving rest), Anugraha (release, salvation and grace). These apparently considered, are the activities of the deities Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Maheshvara and Sadashiva. These five activities are the different phases of the cosmic activity as a whole.

So ultimately, the cosmic activity is the central motif of the dance. Creation arises from the drum: protection proceeds from the hand of hope: from fire proceeds destruction; the foot held aloft gives release. It will be observed that the fourth hand points to this lifted foot, the refuge of the soul.

Samhara is one of the activities of Shiva. As such Shiva is a destroyer. But what does He destroy? He destroys the heavens and earth at the close of a world-cycle, at the same time He destroys fetters that bind each separate soul.

The second well-known dance known as Tandava is performed in the burning ground. So it may be inferred that He loves the burning ground. Now, where and what is the burning ground? It is not the place where our earthly bodies are cremated, but the hearts of His lovers, laid waste and desolate. The place where the ego is destroyed signifies the state where illusion and deeds are burnt away: that is the crematorium, the burning ground where Shri Nataraja dances.

In other Tamil texts, the purpose of Shiva's dance is believed to be of securing both kinds of fruits, i.e., śāhām
and Param. $ham$ means reward in this world. Param means bliss in mukti. In 'Shiva-jnana Siddhiyan', Shiva's dance is explained as follows:

"For the purpose of securing both kinds of fruit to the countless souls, our lord, with actions five, dances his dance." 82

The deepest significance of Shiva's dance is felt when it is realised that it takes place within the heart and the self. Everywhere is God: that everywhere is the heart.

In 'Unmai Vilakkam', Shiva's dance is stated as follows: "The supreme Intelligence dances in the soul - for the purpose of removing our sins. By these means, our Father scatters the darkness of illusion (maya), burns the thread of causality (karma), stamps down evil (mala, anava, avidya), showers grace, and lovingly plunges the soul in the ocean of Bliss (ananda). They never see rebirths, who behold this mystic dance."

The conception of the world as the lord's pastime or amusement (lila) is also prominent in the Shaiva scriptures. The perpetual dance is His play according to Shaiva scriptures. According to Hindu view, God, the Absolute creates the universe. Creation is not a necessity to him. He longs the creation and thus creation has come into being. Creation is a play of the Absolute. The different things and beings of the creation are
imagined to be so many flowers and then the Absolute is amidst the beauty of the flowers. This Absolute is regarded as Shiva too. Being moved by beauty of the creation Shiva dances and dances. It seems as if Shiva considers this creation to be his own world, own life, own blossoming, his own ecstasy. There is change, there is flight and in this divine unceasing change Shiva goes on dancing assuring courage, good will, love to all. With free will, he can make everything delightful and joyful. The spontaneity of Shiva's dance is clearly expressed in Skryabin's poem of ecstasy. What Skryabin wrote is precisely what the Hindu imager moulded.*

* The spirit (Purusha) playing,
The spirit longing,
The spirit with fancy (yoga-maya) creating all,
Surrenders himself to the bliss (ananda) of love –
Amid the flowers of His creation (Prakrti), He lingers
Blinded by their beauty, He rushes, He frolics,
He dances, He whirls .... ...
He is all rapture, all bliss, in his play (lila)
Free, divine, in this love struggle.
In the marvellous grandeur of sheer aimlessness,
And in the union of counter-aspirations
In consciousness alone, in love alone,
The spirit learns the nature (svabhava) of His
divine being .... .. ..

O, my world, my life, my blossoming, my ecstasy!
Your every moment I create
By negation of all forms previously lived through:
I am eternal negation (neti, neti) .. ..
Enjoying this dance, choking in this whirlwind,
Into the domain of ecstasy, He takes swift flight.
Shiva dances not to please the eyes of mortals, but to maintain the life of the cosmos to give release to those who seek Him. Long ago, Coomaraswamy pointed out that the root idea behind all these dances is more or less the same, the manifestation of primal rhythmic energy.

Now, to summarise the whole interpretation we find that "The essential significance of Shiva's Dance is threefold. First, it is the image of His rhythmic play as the source of all movement within the cosmos, which is represented by the

In this unceasing change (samsara, nitya bhava),
in this flight, aimless, divine
The spirit comprehends Himself,
In the power of will, alone, free,
Ever-creating, all irradiating, all vivifying,
Divinely playing in the multiplicity of forms, He comprehends Himself ........
I already dwell in thee, O, my world,
Thy dream of me - 'twas I coming into existence .. ...
And thou art all - one wave of freedom and bliss .. ..
By a general conflagration (maha-pralaya) the universe (samsara) is embraced
The spirit is at the height of being, and He feels the tide unending
Of the divine power (Shakti of free will, He is all-daring): What menaced, now is excitement,
What terrified, is now delight .. ..
And the universe resounds with the Joyful cry I am.

(Romain Rolland ed., Dance of Shiva, pp. 91-92).
(From the translation by Lydia C. Pimenoff Noble, published in the Boston Symphony Orchestra Programme, October 29, 1917).
Arch. Secondly, the purpose of His dance is to release the countless souls of men from the snare of illusion. Thirdly, the place of the Dance, Chidambaram, the centre of the universe, is within the Heart."

It is not strange that the figure of Nataraja has commanded the adoration of many generations past. We are worshippers of Nataraja still.

In such beatific way, the dances of Shiva are represented. That in actions, in thought, aesthetic sense is to be sought so that the whole environment becomes beautiful. It appears as if Shiva Himself through His rhythmic play tries to release the countless souls of men from the snare of illusions and thereby endeavours to make the whole cosmos full of aesthetic delight.

**Conclusion**

In the present chapter, an attempt has been made to delineate aesthetic thought of Coomaraswamy. From the above discussion, we have found that Coomaraswamy's entire philosophy is centred in aesthetic experience. His attempt is to consider all from the viewpoint of aesthetics. He has viewed art to be spiritualistic. He considers art to be aesthetic script of man's spiritual and contemplative experience. In cases of the ceremonial implements, in the walls of the temples, even in domestic utensils, in jewellery, in embroidery, in religious
folk plays, such as the yatras of Mathura and Bengal, dramatic dances presented by devadasis - we find the display of aesthetic sense according to Coomaraswamy.

He believes that beauty will be in a common nation, if it comes in fact to exist, as unity will be there. Indian mind sees the unity of all life as all lives are from the same source, i.e., the undivided all. As soon as man comes to realise this unity, he sees nothing but beauty around him and Coomaraswamy considers it to be the highest good and the uttermost freedom.

The creation and appreciation of beauty are symptoms of highly developed morality. As aesthetics develops moral nature in man so highly developed morality encourages the creation and appreciation of beauty.

In the book, 'the Dance of Shiva', the dances of Shiva are represented in a beatific way. From these dances of Shiva, it seems as if in actions, in thought, aesthetic sense is to be sought so that the whole environment becomes beautiful. It is felt that Shiva Himself through his rhythmic play endeavours to make the whole cosmos full of aesthetic delight.

Thus Coomaraswamy attempts to give aesthetic orientation to all.
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