

インド中世主義

—アーナンダ・ケンティッシュ・クーマラスワミと芸術思想—

Indian Medievalism

—Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy's Vision of Arts and Crafts—

シェイク愛仁香

SHAIKH Anika

要旨

アーナンダ・ケンティッシュ・クーマラスワミ（1877～1947）は、20世紀前半のインド芸術において重要な人物である。セイロン人の父とイギリス人の母を持ち、幼児期に父親を亡くすと、母親によってイギリスで育てられた。彼は、自身のバックグラウンドより、インドの芸術に関心を持ち、特にその手工芸の美に魅せられると、その数多くの著書を生み出した。当時イギリスの植民地であったインドの伝統芸術や職人の技術は、ヨーロッパの商業主義や機械の台頭により、喪失の危機にある。アーツアンドクラフツ運動の思想を持つ彼は、産業革命によって手仕事が脅かされることを嘆き、ヨーロッパ中世主義の立場からインドの芸術を眼差した。ヒンドゥー教や仏教芸術の繁栄した時代を理想とし、それはムガル芸術に対する批判的視点へと繋がる。彼の唱えた理念は、まさに東西の思想の融合を図るものであった。本論文では、クーマラスワミの思想に影響を与えた、初期のイギリス側の物語に焦点を置き、彼がいかにインド芸術に新たな価値を見出したのか考察していく。

●キーワード：インド (India) / 中世主義 (medievalism) / 手工芸 (handcraft)

1 Introduction

Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy (1877–1947) is an important figure to discuss in the field of art in India in the early 20th century. He had a British mother and a Ceylonese father and was born in Colombo, Ceylon. After his father passed away while he was young, he was raised in Britain by his mother. He majored in geography at the University of London and earned a doctoral degree. However, when he went to Ceylon for a geography survey after graduation from 1902 to 1906, he was lost for his words when he witnessed the harsh situation of the colony. He afterwards positively participated in the activities to improve Ceylonese conditions. Especially, his interest turned toward the arts and crafts in India and Ceylon. In that time, the traditional craftsman and vernacular art were in danger of being lost by the introduction of the European commercialism and machines. He mourned over how industrialism ruined the ideal presence of art by hand and dedicated to a lot of books on art philosophy of India through his life. For his career as an art scholar, he took part in the United

Provinces Exhibition held in Allahabad from 1910 to 1911. Plus, in 1917, he accepted the offer from a scholar at the Harvard University and became a curator of Indian art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Minoru Kasai categorized the life of Coomaraswamy into three phases: ①before he moved to Boston when he was understanding the traditional art in India, ②after he moved to Boston taking in charge of Indian art division at Boston Museum and ③between 1934 and 1947 that he concentrated on philosophy and metaphysical of Indian art¹⁾. Most of the research on him have been conducted by focusing on art philosophy from his later works, and the earlier time in Britain is scarcely mentioned. Although even in Japan Coomaraswamy makes a subject, they often place him in the Oriental sphere and tend to deal with the connection with the folk-arts movement. However, to deepen his theory, the influence from John Ruskin, William Morris and their followers from the Arts and Crafts movement cannot be avoided as following their spirits he developed his art vision of India. Moreover, he

was actually close to Charles Robert Ashbee, a member of the movement. Through the relationship with him, his position to connect the East and the West from the aspect of arts and crafts was established. To examine this British side of story, the first period according to Kasai is going to be centered on in this paper.

The art vision of Coomaraswamy is a fusion of European theory and Indian philosophy. Just like following the tendency among the British activists those days of finding utopia in the Middle Ages, called medievalism, he also fancied for the past. His medievalism was special in that it was directed toward the Indian art and its craftsman. Based on the desirable conditions of medieval period in Europe, he sought for the ideal for India. He found that the religiousness of Hindu and Buddhism was building the foundation of the country and regarded the 7th and 8th century of India as a golden age. This notion led to the appreciation for Hindu and Buddhist art and critical comments on Mughal art; with this perspective, he lastly reached to 'an art for love's sake'. To understand his standpoint as a medievalist, it is necessary to see his early works when the influences from British medievalism were noticeable, as later he tended to be more philosophical developing the ideology about art in India and exploring for the meanings of the world.

The Arts and Crafts Movement: A Study of Its Sources, Ideals and Influences on Design Theory by Gilliam Naylor well described the flow of art and design theory among the art philosophers and the history of the Arts and Crafts movement. This helped to spot the position of Coomaraswamy who was in a transitional period in a field of art history. Moreover, to search for the relation with Ashbee and the life in Campden, I used *C.R. Ashbee: Architect, Designer & Romantic Socialist* by Alan Crawford, which gave detailed information of their story. Alice Chandler in her book *A Dream Order: The Mediaeval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century English Literature* fully explained the characteristics of medievalism in Britain especially in the 19th century. Her study of the past ideal seen from Ruskin and Morris was useful when I saw the medievalism in the works by Coomaraswamy. By comparing for the similarities in what she described and how he presented India, the influence of European

medievalism on Coomaraswamy would be disclosed, and at the same time, the Indian philosophy becomes evident in his theory.

Based on the literature above, I hope to explore for how with the British medievalism Coomaraswamy produced a new value in the arts and crafts in India, which I call 'Indian medievalism'. To achieve this, firstly I am going to discuss how his medievalism was established by looking into his thought of arts and crafts gained through Ruskin or Morris and the relation with Ashbee to straighten his vision for the past. Secondly, the main perspective of his Indian medievalism should be made clear by comparing for Europeans. At last, I research the Mughal criticism as an outcome of the Indian medievalism to pursue his ideal form of art. Through these chapters, the fusion of the European and Indian theory by him is going to be revealed.

2 Coomaraswamy and his Ideas of Art Developed in Britain

To Explore the thoughts of Coomaraswamy, it is inevitable to investigate the influence he came under in Britain. When his interest turned toward the Indian art, he was so in despair since it was about to disappear under the British rule. This was his turning point to become related to the theory of Ruskin, Morris and other following activists from the Arts and Crafts movement, from which he developed his idea of arts and crafts in India. He criticized the commercialism and industrialism the British brought, by which the vernacular handcrafts were being deteriorated in the same way as those in his homeland. He believed that it was not machines or profits, but the traditional craftsmen that needed to be put priority on for the protection. In this sense, it is reasonable to think of his idea by making a reference to the Arts and Crafts movement. Moreover, Ashbee, an architect, designer and socialist who is one of the most important activists of the Arts and Craft movement about the same age as Coomaraswamy is important to mention for he acted as an intermediary for the movement and Coomaraswamy, the West and the East. They shared the same vision and ideal in medieval time, which could be observed

from their life together in Campden.

In this chapter I am going to discuss the origin of the medieval vision of Coomaraswamy from the British side. To examine his approach to Indian art, it is essential to organize his thoughts on industrialism and commercialism in consequence of British intrusion to see the awareness of Ruskin, Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement. As a direct influence in his own time, Ashbee is going to be important and their life in Campden helps to deepen the beginning of Coomaraswamy as a thinker of Indian art.

2.1 The Decline of the Indian Arts and Crafts

Coomaraswamy is not outstanding in the aspect of the Arts and Crafts movement; however, looking through his ideas and friendly relations with Ashbee, he is not far apart from it. Rather, he could be considered as one of the followers of Ruskin and Morris. He surely absorbed the vision from them like Ashbee and made it into a new version by applying to the Indian art. From his background, it should be noted that Coomaraswamy especially mentioned the arts and crafts in Ceylon as he thought Sinhalese culture was a key to understand India. He explained its importance, saying “India without Ceylon is incomplete, for in many ways, Ceylon is a more perfect window through which to gaze on India’s past, than any that can be found in India herself”²⁾. It is because Ceylon still kept the condition he called ‘mediaeval’ even to his days, even though he was at the same time worried about losing it soon. The cause of degrading the quality of craftsmen in India was led by the rise of machines and its progress which became enhanced by commercialism. Coomaraswamy made his idea clear in his writings:

A less direct, but equally sure and certain, cause of the decline of the arts has been the growth of commercialism, —that system of production under which the work of European machines and machine-like men has in the East driven the village weaver from his loom, the craftsman from his tools, the ploughman from his songs, and has divorced art from

labour.³⁾

In the aspect of commercialism, the attitude of seeking for the profits from the products was accelerated by the introduction of machinery for they brought efficiency and simplification in a process of making. This view is the basis of the Arts and Craft movement in that the problem of design is placed in a frame of society, but in the time of Coomaraswamy, the destruction of art became more certain than the 19th century. In the case of India, it was about to meet the same fate as the West. Although relying on machines could lessen the work of craftsman and simplified their operations, as for Coomaraswamy, ‘life’ of the craftsman was indispensable while producing art, and they needed to take time and effort to pursue beauty in a daily level. As he insisted “cheap work, cheap men”⁴⁾, it was more important to turn not to the profits or easiness but to the craftsmen themselves.

Moreover, Coomaraswamy emphasizes machines cannot increase human happiness or human techniques, saying “It appears, therefore, that it is absolutely essential that mechanical production should in the future be, not as I am willing to believe that civilization is not much better than a failure; for it is not much good being more ingenious than our forefathers if we cannot be either happy or better”⁵⁾. He was critical about the dependence upon machinery which could easily lead to a decay of the skill of craftsman and quality of products, but also accepted the impossibility of eliminating machines in the modern society. This is related to the idea of Morris. He showed hatred toward inhumanity of machines but at the same time he accepted the fact. Their solutions were in common; humans should not be dominated or dependent on machines but operate them. Besides, how to abolish machines was not important for Coomaraswamy but how to regulate them had a point. He put more priority on humanity itself than any other things.

Those modern problems tended to arouse the feeling of nostalgia. Like Ruskin saw the Gothic architecture as magnificent and worshiped the medieval time, Coomaraswamy too found ideal from the past

when the craftsmen were trusting their own hands and the art was rooted in their daily lives. The relation with Ashbee built up his viewpoint in the frame of the Arts and Crafts movement stronger.

2.2 Medieval Vision Shared with Ashbee

Following the idea by Ruskin or Morris, Ashbee was seeking for the beauty in art by hand and considered that the Arts and Crafts movement showed a standard for job or life and a protection of the standard for the creators or creation. He spent his early days as a designer in the East End, an area connected to people from working class. Shocked at poverty and labour condition, there he founded the Guild and School of Handicraft at Toynbee Hall in 1888 to offer an education to be craftsmen for the working people and to give them job opportunities. The Essex House Press was also established in 1898 by taking over two presses belonged to Morris and hired a few craftsmen from the Kelmscott Press. Thinking of the indispensability of nature and handcraft, in 1902 Ashbee moved his Guild from London to Chipping Campden where became important for Coomaraswamy too.

It was Ruskin who advocated that human happiness was related to art and the talented needed to be firmly protected by providing places and furnishing with the tools, which could help the maintenance of the standards of quality and the rise of employment rate. What could make this environment all come true was the revival of the mediaeval guild. Ashbee came over this idea and put into practice. From the notion of Morris as a socialist who knew that the situation of commercial demand could never produce an ideal ground for the art, Ashbee also considered the art by relating to socialism. For his idea, the interaction of art and society could solve each problem and improve the harsh situation for handcraft. Against mass production and capitalism, he aimed at seeking for humanity and craftsmanship in the community. However, the Guild fell into a decline due to financial problem. It was the glorious time for Ashbee and his guild when Coomaraswamy began to stay.

Considering he also longed for the revival of guild like Ashbee and investigated its elements in India, the environment of Campden was what he was seeking for to expand his career as an art scholar of Indian Art.

Initially, Ashbee was involved with Fred Partridge who was a jeweller from Birmingham Municipal School of Art and came to Campden to teach for the guild in 1902. His sister, Ethel Mairet was a weaver and well acquainted with the handcrafts. She was a wife of Coomaraswamy and Partridge his brother-in-law. The presence of guild fascinated Coomaraswamy and he decided to move there with his wife, and the relationship with Ashbee came up to the surface. The Norman Chapel, a residence for Mr. and Mrs. Coomaraswamy was actually designed by Ashbee. This building showed the bond between them filled with their dreams for the past.

The Norman Chapel was ruined in 1903, but Ashbee restored it into a new housing. The nave and chancel arch were surviving, and some addition in the 14th or 15th century was made to make the building a residence. The nave became a music room in response to the request of Coomaraswamy and most of the ceiling was kept as it was. Above the nave was a library with a dais curtained with Morris textiles. To maintain the condition of the house as possible, he treated a sensitive improvement and rebuilt or buttressed the unstable walls. Although the first plan costed too high and was turned down by Coomaraswamy, the final plan was not that large-scale but still praiseworthy. According to Alan Crawford, the work was described as admiring: "... Ashbee's executed scheme for the Norman Chapel was a triumphant demonstration of the value of the Society's¹ approach when applied to buildings of some size and architectural character"⁶). The Norman Chapel was not merely a house but more meaningful, since it proved that the protection of the old buildings was successful and valuable one. Crawford continues:

It was gentle and civilized in a modern way:
you could sit on the terrace by some of its

1 SPAB, short for The Society for the Protection of the Ancient Buildings

oldest stones and be sheltered from the wind. Yet much of its magic lay in its great age; it had on it what Ruskin called 'the golden stain of time', and the sense of tradition, of a building adapting itself to changing uses and yet somehow staying the same. And perhaps what fascinated Ashbee most was the simple fact that long ago it had been a church and was one no longer, and so bore witness to the story of men's shifting beliefs. Like Chelsea, it stirred his historical imagination, as his curious novel Peckover showed.⁷

As is evident, Ashbee intentionally left the old essence the chapel already had to realize a fusion of past and present, mediaeval and modern. This is well related to his worship for the medieval time, and he was totally satisfied with how his work turned out. More importantly, the Norman Chapel proved that both Ashbee and Coomaraswamy shared the same preference in design since he was the most 'sympathetic' client to him⁸. In 1907 the chapel completed and Coomaraswamy and his wife moved in. The house was soon furnished with the oriental ornaments. They participated in the circle of Ashbee, and a social life in Campden became flourishing. According to Crawford, "There had been magic of an architectural kind in the Norman Chapel when Ashbee has finished restoring it; the Coomaraswamys added another kind of magic of their own"⁹. The Norman Chapel became a symbol for the friendship of Ashby and Coomaraswamy and for their dream of the Middle Ages.

As a neighbor and friend, Ashbee involved in the publication of Coomaraswamy. After he moved his residence to Campden, he started publishing his books on arts and crafts in India. He took over one of the presses Ashbee owned, and his work, *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, was printed in 1907. There, the Caslon type was applied which showed his enthusiasm for Morris and Coomaraswamy kindly mentioned in the book:

It is of interest to record, in connection with

the arts and crafts aspect of the questions just discussed, that this book has been printed by hand, upon the press used by William Morris for printing the Kelmscott Chaucer. The printings, carried on in the Norman Chapel at Broaden Campden, has occupied some fifteen months. I cannot help seeing in these very facts an illustration of the way in which the East and the West may together be united in an endeavor to restore that true Art of Living which has for so long been neglected by humanity.¹⁰

The admiration for Morris and the dream for linking the East and the West through arts and crafts that Coomaraswamy put in the book was well written above. Ashbee was the one who made this possible. He was a crucial figure playing a part in connecting the vision of Coomaraswamy in India to the Arts and Crafts movement. When Ashbee took charge of the foreword for his work, *The Indian Craftsman*, he asserted that "In the profoundly interesting address of the English artists in 1878, which bore the names of Morris, Burn-Jones, Millais, Edwin Arnold, Walter Crane and others, there is an appeal to the Government on behalf of Indian Arts and Crafts against the effects of English commercialism upon the production of Indian craftsmanship"¹¹. By mentioning the stream of art movement with significant names, he put India as an extension of the sphere and supported what Coomaraswamy tried to do. Plus, he was sympathetic to the idea of Coomaraswamy and agreed with India and Ceylon he described to him as similar to the conditions seen in Medieval Europe. Apparently, both shared the same vision of the art and the taste for the past.

Though, in 1910 when their marriage failed, Ethel was only in Campden while Coomaraswamy remained in India. They gave up the Norman Chapel and removed the oriental furnishings in the house, and the building was ready for the next owner. In 1911, Ashbee and his wife moved in as he always wanted to make this building on his own. The relation between Coomaraswamy and Ashbee is hard to know afterwards. However his

experience and time with Ashbee in Campden would convince his medievalism and inspiration for the further career for Coomaraswamy.

Consequently, the thought of Coomaraswamy on the Indian arts and crafts by hand soon missed by the commercialism and machines was based on the idea of Ruskin, Morris and their followers. The European influence degraded the skill of Indian craftsmen and their production, which resulted in the nostalgia for the Middle Ages. Ashbee played a crucial role in the early days of Coomaraswamy as contemporary with him. Their life in Campden tells their relationship as a fellow for each other dreaming for the past and demonstrating their visions. The Norman Chapel indeed embodied their positions as medievalists. Ashbee was helping Coomaraswamy by connecting his position to the Arts and Crafts movement. Indian Medievalism is going to be expanded in the succeeding chapter.

3 Coomaraswamy and Indian Medievalism

“The lotus to Indian art and for the Indian mystic, is all that the rose was to Medieval Europe”¹²⁾. When Coomaraswamy illustrated the features of Indian art in his works, he was seeking for the medieval elements by comparing for the Europeans. The medievalism was a prevailing movement and at the same time a philosophy of romanticizing the past which was referred to the time of joy, kindness and happiness. The feeling of nostalgia to the past was generated by a change in society and could trace back to the Elizabethan period. For the 19th century, Industrialization in specific was which made people fantasize the medieval time and motivated them to bring about the new movement. Like Ruskin and Morris turned their nostalgia to the condition of art and craftsman in the Middle Ages, Coomaraswamy was one of those dreamers who considered the medieval era as a golden period and aimed at the revival of the ideal in art. The striking difference of Coomaraswamy among them is that he especially applied this medievalism to India and seeking for the right for arts and crafts.

In fact, India was often associated with the past by the British. They often explained the country as ‘timeless’ or ‘Eden’, and this idea came from their idealization

toward the past. India was a perfect field to seek for a fragment of utopia. Though, as for Coomaraswamy, India was not merely a past but simultaneously contained a hope for the future. As his thought has a close connection to his high evaluations of Hindu and Buddhist period, to understand his standpoint as a medievalist is quite in need. With the European perspective toward past, he established Indian medievalism by assimilating the Indian philosophy. His viewpoint can be divided into two standpoints: religiousness and social structure of India. While what other British scholars saw in India was lingering Mughal memories, Coomaraswamy investigated into a deeper history of India, a country with various religions and thoughts. Plus, his idea of caste was maintained by replacing with the guild in the respect of social structure. I hope to discuss here how India had the desirable conditions that was enough to be called ‘medieval’ by linking with the European theory and how Coomaraswamy absorbed the Indian elements. With these features the fusion of Western and Eastern ideal could be observed.

3.1 Indian Art as Medieval Ideal

There was no wonder that Coomaraswamy saw beauty in the past, considering how he worshiped Morris and spent time with Ashbee in Britain. Like those medievalists feared the industrialism, free trade or machines degraded human nature, which was closely connected to art, Coomaraswamy was also afraid of India losing the medieval essence by the intrusion of the European influence and innovation. As noted in the former chapter, he was critical against commercialism and machines as the craftsmen were losing their skill for creating art. Inspired by the theory of the Arts and Crafts movement, he gave a new perspective in the field of Indian art. There were already a lot of appreciations for oriental art made; however, most importantly, unlike others he did not miss the detailed description of Indian religion and philosophy that framed the Indian society and art condition. Coomaraswamy saw that India was a nation where the art could make its best just like medieval Europe.

To begin with, it should be clarified that the

medievalism of Coomaraswamy in India is not toward the India of his time but the actual golden age for its art: "Not only for Indians, however; for this Indian art of the 7th or 8th century is not merely an Indian dream, but also a dream of humanity—humanity that sooner or later will acknowledge in the same words the significance of all great art"¹³⁾. It was the time Hinduism entered the Buddhist field with its culture sometimes fusing and sometimes replacing. These two deities are what Coomaraswamy believed to make the best for art. This is because the Mughal period is referred to modernity and the medievalism is supposed to be related to primitivity. This notion is going to be important when his critical position against Mughal period should be argued in the next chapter.

According to Alice Chandler, the imagination against the Middle Ages has its own feature by each century. Throughout every period, the past became appealing among people when the rapid transformation took place in politics and religion. When its change was becoming faster from the 18th century, their desire to rewind the time to the past became bigger than ever. This inclination lasted to the succeeding century and even to the day of Coomaraswamy. In her words what shaped medievalism in the 18th and 19th century is described as follows:

One is its naturalism—its identification with nature and the past and thus with simpler and truer modes of feeling and expression and nobler and more heroic codes of action. The other is its feudalism—its harmonious and stable structure which reconciled freedom and order by giving each man an allotted place in society and an allotted leader to follow. The bridge between these two aspects of medievalism is chivalry, which made the spontaneous generosity of the natural man the guiding principle of man in society and which compensated for human frailty by having the strong protect the weak.¹⁴⁾

From the quote above, seeking for naturalism and

feudalism which are connected by chivalry is the feature of the medievalism. All those elements are relevant to each other and any of which cannot be missed. For Coomaraswamy, India contained those conditions and was sufficient to compare with the European past under the Hindu and Buddhist art theory. In the respect of being natural, he persistently argued that fine art needed a great humanity. Due to Industrial Revolution, people were exploited to work in factories and lost their connection with others. The craftsmen in modern time were losing the natural order but taken over by the progress of machines which caused the unnatural work and ugly art. Ruskin also insisted of the necessity of naturalism as it could embrace the perfect imperfection created by man. Although Coomaraswamy didn't mention the definition of perfect art, he pointed out that the beauty of art cannot be separated from the daily life. To attain great humanity, the craftsman needed to seek for at the expense of life. The way people used to live was for him ideally natural without being dependent on machines and doing their works by themselves.

Against the lonely wage in the factory, Coomaraswamy turned his eyes on the feudalism too as an ideal system like other mediaevalists. By giving lands and lives, even a small society played an important role in offering a sense of belongingness and closeness. The king's craftsman could show their respect to the lands they lent and passed on from generation to generation. There were no landless craftsmen by feudalism, which he found appealing. Although feudality was not Morris was up for, Coomaraswamy admitted it was a crucial factor to the past of India. Feudalism led to avoid any free-trade and competition between the craftsmen, which was required for creating true beauty. Even he said, "Their greatest possible ambition was that I should buy them some small piece of land and reward them with it, as did the kings of old"¹⁵⁾. This effect of feudal system on Indian art could also be explained same as in caste in a sense of social structure, which would be explained later in this chapter.

Furthermore, what made the Medieval Europe brilliant was a deep connection with the church and

people's faith, which could contribute to the chivalry. Chandler said "The medieval Catholic church was praised for performing a wealth to give alms and succor to the poor"¹⁶). The religious aspect gave a communal and close relationship among people, and their attitude of giving made the society better. Every modern factor including industrialism or urbanism gave a striking dichotomy: the poor and the rich. Without a religious community to help each other, the society would become far from all the naturalism or humanism. In this respect, the presence of faith in the Gods in India could easily be explained and the country could be called a perfect ground with various religions: Hindu, Buddhism, Islam and Sikh. Coomaraswamy always discussed his art philosophy in India by making a reference to the religious and spiritual field.

Religiousness in specific is essential for the medieval vision of Coomaraswamy. By tracing the Indian philosophy, he accepted the religious characteristic of Hindu art and worked on describing the Hindu Gods and searching for a reason of beauty. According to the Indian philosophical conception, the art is not created by the artists themselves but they receive the skill of Visvakarma and be concealed by him¹⁷. That is, the art belongs to the God and nature. By being connected to the God, the mentality of craftsmen gives inspiration in a spiritual level, so that the details caught by eyes are not considered to be reality of things. To make this happen is a growth of inwardness which is often described by a reference to yoga. As Coomaraswamy thought this kind of Indian faith was indispensable to art, he even gave a negative view against irreligion. The less religious the art becomes; the more individuality came up on the surface. Its purpose was to develop their mind enough to attain inspiration from the God. In this regard, the meaning of art in Europe shows difference in that the individuality has of value. Ruskin advanced architecture or craft expressed a personality of craftsman and reflected the humanity, which became the central pillar of the theory of the Arts and Crafts movement. On the contrary, in India, art is not for individual but made in faith in a daily basis. This is the reason Coomaraswamy has been often discussed in the frame of Orient and

connected with the folk-arts movement by Soetsu Yanagi in Japan.

Coomaraswamy was praising this anonymity in Hindu and Buddhist art, a crucial element in beauty in the mediaeval society of India, since the art meant to be altruistic without any selfishness of humans involved. The communal art also had the effect of removing subjectivity. Most famous and magnificent works of India from the old time were hard to trace the name of the artists as they only belonged to some group and were scarcely known. There was no need to add individuality for arts and crafts, so that they could be beautiful in a natural way like the beauty of trees or flowers. For the explanation of the Indian sculptures of Buddha, Coomaraswamy noted that facial expression was not made enough on purpose to remove the personality; "These have sometimes been described as expressionless because they do not reflect the individual peculiarities which make up expression as we commonly conceive it"¹⁸). It is body that gives the expression for the Indian sculpture. Avoiding the self-centered perspective and accepting the indifference or shift toward any human emotions could bring a way to be god-like, objectivity.

The Indian medievalism by Coomaraswamy made some differences from the European original, for the fundamental faith of the latter was Christianity in the first place. This distinction would make one aim of craftsman for art from another.

3.2 Caste as a Role of Guild

The features in past including naturalism, feudalism and chivalry all composed of the medieval guild. Coomaraswamy often used the word 'guild' to mean the craftsmanship in India in his works. As a position of a pivotal importance to bring the mediaeval Europe and India together, the replacement for the guild with another vernacular factor was required. As a matter of fact, to solve this demand, he presented the caste system in India. Caste formed the social structure of the country for how it was, and its topic was perhaps most difficult and at the same time primary subject to mention for it was deeply rooted in the culture. To him, this hierarchy

in the nation was a desirable form regarding the perspective of art and craftsman. This is one of the most remarkable statements of the medievalism in India he advocated. The essential points the caste structure brought to the consideration of the craftsmanship as the guild, according to Coomaraswamy, could be made clear in the aspect of community and heredity and payment.

As stated by Coomaraswamy, the caste and the guild shared some same features and meanings. It was a communal element caste possessed that he appreciated about. Just like the guild was a community, craftsman in India took the same shape by class division. Everyone is dependent on each other; therefore, a fixed group made it easier for the craftsman to build a bond of fellowship. He noted that caste 'represents a legal recognition of the nature division of society into the functional groups¹⁹⁾'. That is, caste provides the naturalism and the sense of belonging, which both shows humanity and are significant features for the medievalism. Although the feudalism was adduced to prove the function of the medieval time, it needs to be clarified that the caste was laying its foundation. He expressed caste as '*noblesse oblige*' and explained as follows:

Caste system is a system of *noblesse oblige*; each man is born to his ordained work, through which alone he can spiritually progress. This religious conception of a man's trade or profession as the heaven-ordained work of his caste, may best, be likened to the honour of medieval knighthood. For the priest, learning; for the king, excellence in kingcraft; for the craftsman, skill and faithfulness; for the servant, service.²⁰⁾

Since culture is closely connected to human life, he thought this system of being born to be skillful at a certain occupation in caste led the craftsman to be better in his field. To make this ordainment structure work was a heredity of job in the family of same caste. Holding a same position as a craftsman by inheritance in India could easily recall the apprentice system of guild. There the skill and tradition of craftsman were

passing on to the next generation mostly from father to son. In the mediaeval guild, on the contrary, it was descended from masters to man. The relationship between masters and man could be seen from what Ruskin, Morris and Ashbee were asking for to produce art too. About the importance of heredity in art is discussed by Coomaraswamy:

Thus during many centuries the artists of one district apply themselves to the interpretation of the same ideas; the origin of those ideas is more remote than any particular example. The great types are the fruit of communal rather than any particular example. The great types are the fruit of communal rather than individual thought. This communal thought, however, is not only popular thought, but that of the greatest and widest minds of successive generations seeking to impress their vision on a whole race.²¹⁾

The inherited skill was built up by all the experiences the tutor gained through his life. By taking over generation to generation either from father or master, the art could reflect humanity and its magnificence would be surpassed in a spiritual level. Moreover, as a community the guild did not allow any unqualified artist to participate so that the quality of material and design could be maintained²²⁾. Under such condition, heredity could make its best to pass on greatness to descendants. As a difference of Eastern 'disciple' from Western education of professor, Coomaraswamy emphasized: "...for in the East there is traditionally a peculiar relation of devotion between master and pupil, and it is thought that the master's secret, his real inward method, so to say, is best learnt by the pupil in devoted personal service..."²³⁾. Like he kept saying, art and humanity are inseparable and to teach art needs to contain the inwardness and spirituality the master acquired in his lifetime. It was imagination not scholasticism he asked for art. The merit of this hereditary system was that the position, purpose and value of the craftsman were all assured.

Besides, Coomaraswamy pointed out the way of

payment as an important fragment to maintain the communal and hereditary frame in caste. He praised the community of the Indian craftsman in that instead of money it was barter or personal service that were required for in return. Using the example of the craftsmen he worked in Kandy for weeks together, he explained that they did not ask for much money or even think of saving money but they knew they could receive some special gift after completing their works²⁴. It is related to chivalry, a charitable mind of religion. Same as feudalism, the guild was for eliminating competition and introducing money could simply cause a breakdown of synthesis. Interdependence is lacked in industrial and commercial world and like emphasized in Indian philosophy people need to live by depending on themselves. By applying money transaction and generating competition, Coomaraswamy was concerned with the exploitation of the craftsman which could cause the degradation of the skill and beauty. Removing anxiety of them was one of the main purposes of the guild to make beautiful pieces, and the craftsmen were not consumed.

In conclusion for this chapter, the condition of Indian art was enough to be considered in the sphere of medievalism in Europe for Coomaraswamy. He indicated that the humanity was cherished in India which led to naturalism, and feudalism assured the craftsmen of their jobs. In addition, chivalry associated with a faith in religion could make a significant basis of naturalism and feudalism. Religiousness of India was, however, different from Europe as it required subjectivity while the latter emphasized individuality. To develop those factors, for India, the caste system played a crucial role which reminded of the medieval guild, and he explained the similarities between them. The communal, hereditary and payment structure the caste built all composed of the features of the guild. The caste in India could easily make a desirable environment to reconstruct a medieval guild and to support his idea as a mediaevalist. With those medieval perspectives, Coomaraswamy saw the Indian art and its craftsman valuable especially at the time of Buddhism and Hinduism when the vernacular arts and crafts

were produced at their best, which became a criticism in the succeeding period: Mughal.

4 Mughal Criticism

Coomaraswamy considered the Middle period from the 7th to 8th century showed the flourishing time of India with the existence of great art. The European medieval essences in the Indian past discussed in the previous chapter was the very utopia he found. What he taught about the ideal in craftsman was not only for India, but it was 'a dream of humanity'²⁵. The presence of human life in Indian art composed of the philosophy of his later works and his words turned to not only for India or Britain but to the world. His passion for the medieval time is closely related to the religious environment in India: Buddhism and Hinduism. This resulted in his critical comments on Mughal period and its art, and this gave a fresh point of view to Britain for the Mughal reign was usually their preference. For comprehending the point of Coomaraswamy, it needs to cover how his medievalism ended to categorize the arts and crafts of India in a chronological order. In this chapter, I shall see how he made a contrast between his ideal and Mughal period to strengthen his argument on the golden time of India.

4.1 Critical Attitude toward Mughal Art

In the 19th century, the British usually tended to think kindly of the Mughal art over the Hindu art or Buddhist art, as Mughal taste was more fitted to Europeans. Even though Morris was attracted to the art of east and actually absorbed its elements into his design, it was always an Islamic color like the designs of Persian carpets he chose. Moreover, after the Indian Munity broke out in 1857, they were inclined to start looking into domestic art and the fusion of the vernacular and European became popular; for example, Indo-Saracenic style, an architectural form, was invented by mixing western and eastern elements. There, it was Mughal architecture they adopted. The Hindu elements were often despised, as its art was certainly different taste from European art and would have been difficult to understand the beauty. Ruskin too

was interested in the situation in India but could not see the real meaning of India. The harsh statement on Hindu art by Ruskin makes this European standpoint clearer than ever:

It is quite true that the art of India is delicate and refined. But it has one curious character distinguishing it from all other art of equal merit in design— It never represents a natural of fact. It either forms its compositions out of meaningless fragments of colour and flowings of line; or, if it represents any living creature, it represents that creature under some distorted and monstrous form. To all the facts and forms of nature it willfully oppose itself; it will not draw a man, but an eight-armed monster; it will not draw a flower, but only a spiral or a zigzag.²⁶⁾

Undoubtedly, the essence of Hindu art did not fascinate Ruskin and he even called the man, which is considered to mean the God, 'eight-armed monster'. This is because Ruskin or Morris did not visit India, and their observation was only limited to prejudice. In contrast to the strong view on Hindu art, Coomaraswamy found it beautiful and for him it was 'a natural of fact' which provided the answer for arts and desired humanity for the world. He succeeded the idea of how handcrafts should be from the 19th century; on the other hand, his attitude toward Indian art was fresh and new compared to the other pioneers in the field of Indian art in Britain. The medievalism and art philosophy of India he advocated were based on the Hindu and Buddhist elements. As against Mughal followers, his notion led to the criticism on the Mughal period and the thought of Islamic art as an undesirable form in the society. Mughal time contained modernity and was less religious than the India used to be and the presence of patron deteriorated the quality of craftsmen and their works.

Coomaraswamy despised the Mughal period for the mess Islamic culture brought to India. His negativity toward the Mughal Art is clear in his work, *The Arts*

& *Crafts of India & Ceylon*, which was divided into two parts: the former the Hindu and Buddhist art, the latter the Mussulman art. The latter part apparently occupied not much than the former, as he knew the time of Hindu and Buddhist was his sphere. In *Indo Shisoushi (The Indian Philosophy)* by Sengaku Maeda, Mughal was described as the period of destruction²⁷⁾. The intrusion of Islam itself could trace back to the 8th century; however, there was no specific change brought to the nation. It was after 11th century that the Islam started pillage, incendiary fire and demolition. When the Mughal reign was established at Delhi in 1206, along with the Islamic faith, some new heterogeneous thought and culture intruded in the traditional Indian culture. A big change in the country could be observed then.

The condition of the craftsman in the Mughal period was different from the ideal time of Indian art. Firstly, the faith that used to base the society became no longer required in art. Coomaraswamy reproached the irreligion: "Needless to say that by irreligion I do not refer to the decline of one or another particular form of dogmatic belief, but to the prevalence of that superficial view of life which concentrates the attention solely upon outward things, and not at all upon things of the imagination, real things"²⁸⁾. He thought art needed to be deeply connected to the belief to make a spiritual growth, and irreligiousness deteriorated the arts and crafts. Indian art could be magnificent with faith and if it was not concerned with any respect for God, those kinds of art were not what he was seeking for. He described the situation of art in Mughal reign, saying "While the Persians after the 13th century, and the Mughals in India, were not troubled overmuch by orthodox scruples forbidding the representation of living things, it resulted from the old Islamic Puritanism that their art became entirely secular ever treated in Mughal art..."²⁹⁾. In this way, the Mughal society was not appealing for him. It was because of the feature of Islamic art; the Mussulman artists were not allowed to picture God in art unlike Buddhism or Hinduism. He often called its art as 'secular' lacking intimacy of naturalism but focusing on individuality.

In addition to the secularity, the presence of patron

made the Mughal art undesirable. While Hindu art was meant to be 'racial', Islamic art was more 'social'³⁰⁾. Coomaraswamy emphasized that the latter was not for the public or the king, but its brilliance depended entirely on court and individual patronage³¹⁾. In the theory of Hinduism, art belongs to nature and subjectivity of a community makes better art; therefore, the truth is that the growth in the Mughal art meant the dependence on the patron and excessive individuality, which could not give a spiritual growth of a craftsman like Hindu. For Coomaraswamy, nothing was more important than the meaning of art and the condition of craftsman. The Mughal structure changed the aims for them, and patronage and court obviously destroyed the foundation of the medieval-Europe-like society of India. In the preface of *The Arts & Crafts of India & Ceylon*, where he made a clear difference of Hindu or Buddhist art from Mughal, he emphasized the ideal of Hindu art as follows:

The Hindus have never believed in art for art's sake; their art, like that of mediaeval Europe, was an art for love's sake. They made no distinctions of sacred and profane. I am glad to think that they have never consciously sought for beauty; just as none of their social intuitions of life and death, rather than from the conscious wish to make beautiful pictures or songs. The absence of beauty from art, or happiness from life, is an unanswerable condemnation of any civilization in which they are lacking: yet neither beauty nor happiness is easily attainable if sought for as a primary end.³²⁾

As the aestheticism movement, considering art as separated from morality, utility or pleasure and pursuit for beauty as the only objective in life, became growing around the late 19th century, the motto was called 'art for art's sake'. For Coomaraswamy, the Mughal art also held the related aim. In fact, what he esteemed most for art was not merely seeking to create a beauty itself, but it should be made from the consciousness and inwardness gained through human life. From this, it is

clear that he did not only apply the medieval elements in Europe, on the other hand, he also understood the vernacular feature in art. Like other British medievalists, Coomaraswamy was always dreaming for the past in India when the art was prosperous in their best shape and certainly assimilating the British art theory; however, there was originality in his vision in that he put the Indianness and made a fusion of eastern and western art ideal.

Lastly, in this chapter, I saw how the nostalgia of Coomaraswamy for the Indian past gave a critical approach on the Mughal art. Mostly Islamic art was praised by the British side as a beauty and often fused with the European design; on the other hand, he was prominent and distinguished for that he preferred the Hindu and Buddhist art. It was because of the difference in purpose of producing art that made him think in that way. The craftsmen and their arts used to be linked with humanity in a spiritual sphere, but it changed in the Mughal period when art belonged to the patron and court. This shift made a huge difference in his ideal presence and meaning of art. It was 'art for love's sake' he found as a medievalist.

5 Conclusion

In this paper, the art vision of Coomaraswamy was questioned by focusing on his early days when the influence of Ruskin, Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement remained strongly in evidence. With his background, he showed his interest toward the arts and crafts in India and Ceylon. His critical position on European commercialism and machinery could see the spirit of Ruskin or Morris. Besides, what made his position clear in the field of the Arts and Crafts movement was the relationship with Ashbee. Even though the field was different in west or east, he warmly welcomed him into his fellows sharing the same perspective in the study of arts and crafts, which was symbolized by the Norman Chapel.

On the rebound of a change in society by the Industrialization Coomaraswamy also fancied for the Middle Ages. Like Ashbee established his guild, he looked for a lot of medieval fragments in Indian past.

According to Chandler's definition of the feature of medievalists, they were attracted to naturalism, feudalism and chivalry. With those elements, India had sufficient conditions to develop great humanity. Coomaraswamy asked the craftsman. Firstly, he developed his Indian medievalism by focusing on the religiousness. Faith as an essential part to support the medieval time when the church played an important role in chivalry could easily spot in India. Coomaraswamy considered Hinduism and Buddhism as the answer and the 7th and 8th century were the very medieval period of India. There, art belonged to nature and the God and to achieve the subjectivity, a craftsman should make a spiritual progress in daily life. This was the opposite to the idea by the Europeans who cherished individuality in art. Moreover, to make India the medieval ideal ground was the social structure, caste, which he explained by showing the similarities to the medieval guild. In the structure of caste, the craftsman could find their own community, and the traditional skill was passed on among the family like master and man in the guild, and there was no competition or money involved.

Considering those elements, Coomaraswamy came to think that India in Hindu and Buddhist time had so much in common with the medieval Europe in the aspect of arts and crafts in spite of some differences. This led to the Mughal criticism since it spoiled the ideal presence of arts and crafts of India by irreligion and patrons. It was the meaning of the craftsman that should be most treasured in art and the Mughal period changed its structure.

Throughout his idea, it is disclosed that Coomaraswamy had the European medieval ideal and dream for the revival of the guild; however, he at the same time understood the religious meaning and social structure of India. By applying religiousness and caste to the European medievalism, he explained the ideal shape of art. In short, his vision was not one-way; he invented a new value founded on the European medievalism with the Indian elements. By mixing the Western and Eastern thoughts he reached to the most ideal purpose of art, 'an art for love's sake'. This attempt laid its foundation for his further works on art

philosophy.

NOTES

- 1) Kasai p83.
- 2) Coomaraswamy, *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, p18.
- 3) *Ibid*, p6.
- 4) *Ibid*, p7.
- 5) *Ibid*.
- 6) Crawford, p265.
- 7) *Ibid*, p266-267.
- 8) *Ibid*, p264.
- 9) *Ibid*. 147.
- 10) Coomaraswamy, *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, pix.
- 11) Coomaraswamy, *The Indian Craftsman*, pvi.
- 12) Coomaraswamy, *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, p170.
- 13) Coomaraswamy, *The Arts & Crafts of India & Ceylon*, p59.
- 14) Chandler, 195.
- 15) Coomaraswamy, *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, p57.
- 16) Chandler, p6.
- 17) Coomaraswamy, *The Indian Craftsman*, p73.
- 18) Coomaraswamy, *The Arts & Crafts of India & Ceylon*, p19.
- 19) *Ibid*, p66.
- 20) *Ibid*, p67.
- 21) Coomaraswamy, *The Indian Craftsman*, p22.
- 22) *Ibid*, p97.
- 23) *Ibid*. p85-86.
- 24) Coomaraswamy, *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, p57.
- 25) Coomaraswamy, *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, p18.
- 26) The lecture by John Ruskin, *The Decorative Power of Conventional Art over Nations*, p11.
- 27) Maeda, p187.
- 28) Coomaraswamy, *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, pix.
- 29) Coomaraswamy, *The Indian Craftsman*, pvi.
- 30) Coomaraswamy, *The Arts & Crafts of India & Ceylon*, pvi.
- 31) *Ibid*, p228.
- 32) Coomaraswamy, *The Arts & Crafts of India & Ceylon*, pvii.

Reference

- Chandler, Alice. *A Dream of Order: the Mediaeval ideal in nineteenth-century English Literature*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970. Print.
- Coomaraswamy, Ananda K. *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art*, New York: Dover Publications, 1956. Print.
- Coomaraswamy, Ananda K. *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, New Delhi: Munshirm Manoharlal Pub Pvt Ltd, 2003. Print.
- Coomaraswamy, Ananda K. *Message of the East*, Vol.5, London: Forgotten Books, 2018. Print.
- Coomaraswamy, Ananda K. *The Arts & Crafts of India & Ceylon*: Alpha Editions, 2019. Print.
- Coomaraswamy, Ananda K. *The Dance of Siva: Fourteen Indian Essays*, New York: Sunwise Turn, 1924. Print.
- Coomaraswamy, Ananda K. *The Indian Craftsman*: Alpha Editions, 2020. Print.
- Coomaraswamy, Ananda K. *The Transformation of Nature in*

- Art*. Angelico Press, 2016. Print.
- Crawford, Alan. *C.R. Ashbee: Architect, Designer & Romantic Socialist*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005. Print.
- Inaga, Shigemi. "A · K · Coomaraswamy no Jiseki kara Asia wo Saikou Suru (Ge): Dhaka Art Summit DAS2018 ni Shoutai Sarete." *Aida* dai 240 gou, July 20, 2018: 26-35. Web. 16 August 2022 (<https://inagashigemi.jpn.org/uploads/pdf/aida241.pdf>)
- Inaga, Shigemi. "Honoo no Shiren: Han Shokuminchishugi Shisou no Oukan—A · K · Coomaraswamy to Yanagi Soetsu to no 'Aida' wo Tsunagumono." *Utsushi to Utsuroi: Bunka Denpa no Utsuwa to Shokuhenshi no Jissou*, Kachousha, 2019. Print.
- Kasai, Minoru. "A · K · Coomaraswamy no Touzai Shisou no Hikaku to Kiki Ishiki." *Hikaku Shisou Kenkyu* Tsugou 10, 1984: 81-89. Web. 16 August 2022. (https://www.jacp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/1983_10_hikaku_%2011_kasai.pdf)
- Maeda, Sengaku, Kyosho Hayashima, Naomichi Takasaki, and Minoru Hara. *Indo Shisoushi*; Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1982. Print.
- Miwa, Kanetani. *Nuno ga Tsukuru Shakai Kankei—Indo Shibori Zomefu to Musurimu Shokunin no Minzokushi*; Shibunkaku Shuppan, 2017. Print.
- Naylor, Gilliam. *The Arts and Crafts Movement: A Study of Its Sources, Ideals and Influences on Design Theory*. Trans. Yasuo Kawabata and Yasuko Suga. Tokyo: Misuzu Shobo, 2013. Print.
- Ruskin, John. "The Decorative Power of Conventional Art over Nation." *The Two Paths*. Kensington Museum, January 1858.
- Suga, Yasuko. *Igirisu no Shakai to Dezain: Morisu to Modanizumu no Seijigaku*, Sairyusha, 2005. Print.