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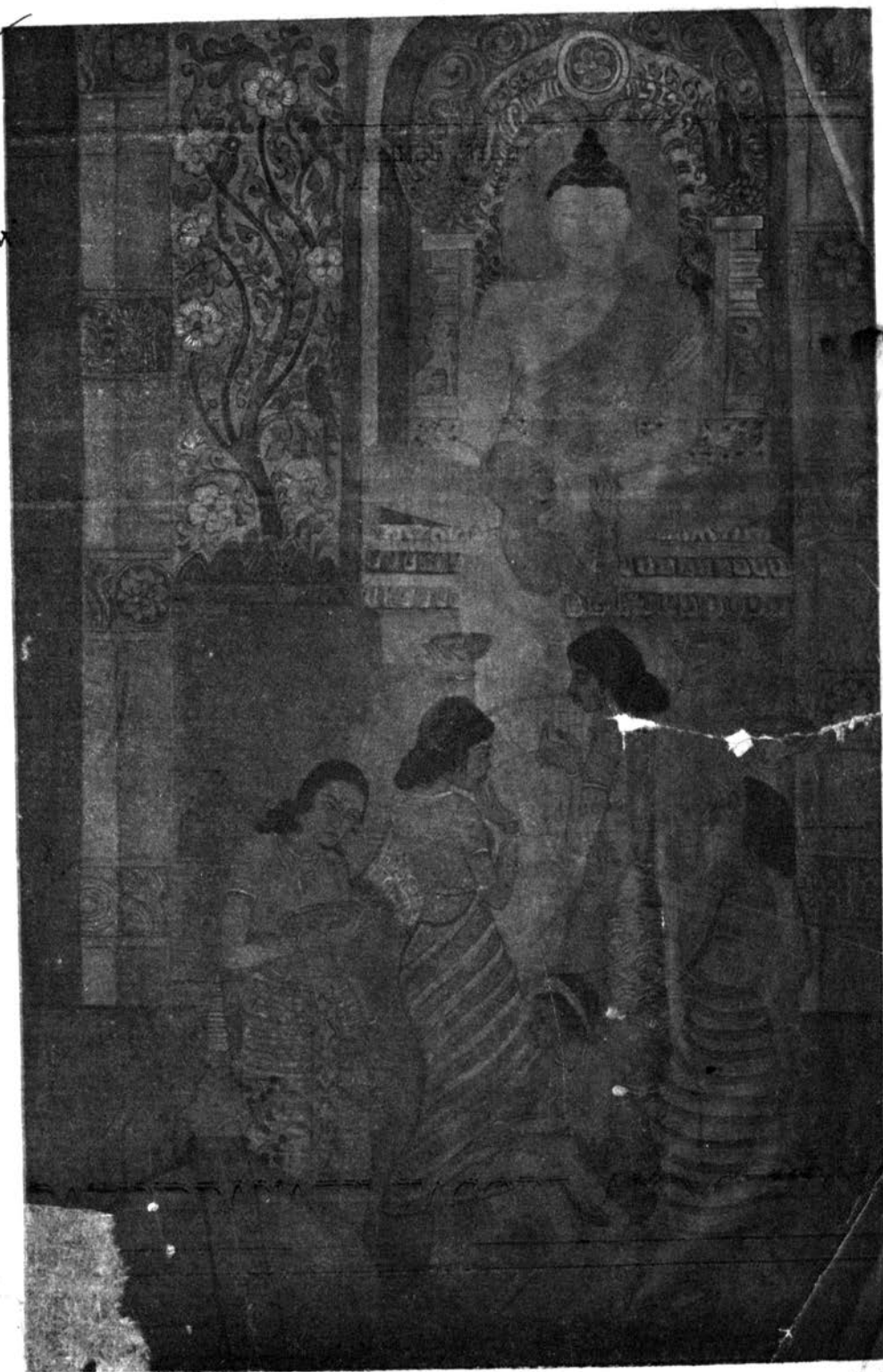
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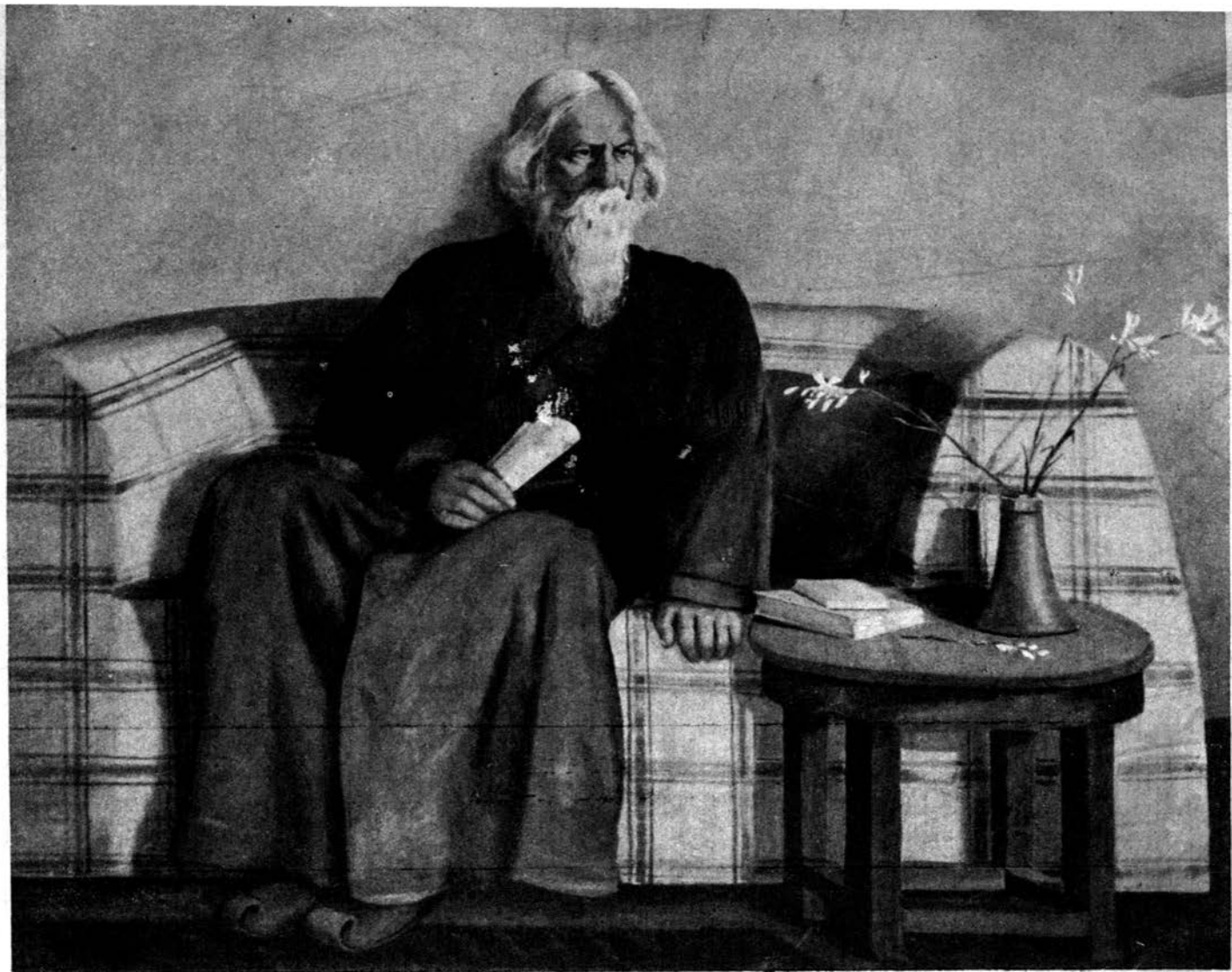
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RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND CEYLON



THE DEVOTEE
Artist Pratima Devi

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THE PORTRAIT.

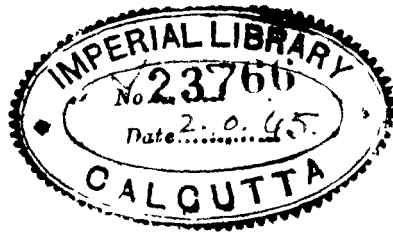
Artist—Sjt. Delip Das Gupta

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

AND

CEYLON

*A statement prepared by the Calcutta Art Society on the occasion
of the presentation of Poet Tagore's Portrait to the Government
of Ceylon through Sir D. B. Jayatilaka, K.B.E., M.A. (Oxon),
Bar-at-Law*



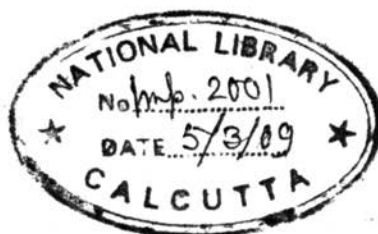
EDITED BY
Dr. KALIDAS NAG

PRICE -/8/-

Published by Sjt. PRANABESHCHANDRA SINHA,
Hony. Secretary, Calcutta Art Society,
13A, Russa Road, Kalighat, Calcutta.

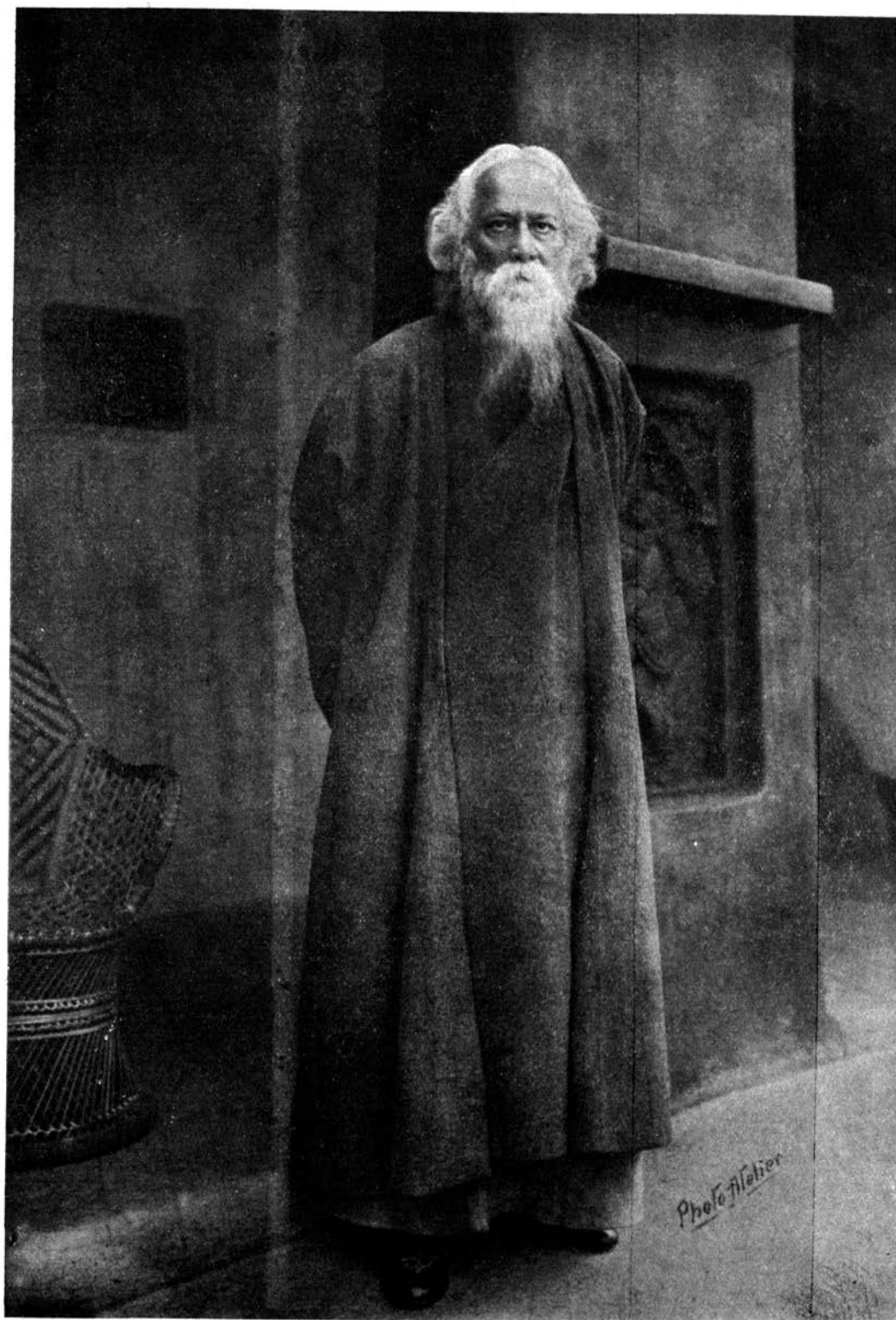
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120/2, Upper Circular Road, Calcutta.



RABINDRANATH TAGORE

This is probably the last standing pose, given by the Poet in March, 1941

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MY MESSAGE

RATHINDRANATH TAGORE

In sending my message of felicitations to the Calcutta Art Society I have much pleasure in recalling what my father said in course of his historic visit to Ceylon. "The spirit of India," he said, "once visited Lanka. The best moral ideals, the deepest spiritual philosophy that had been produced in that land travelled across the barriers of mountains and seas, consecrating this beautiful land. But centuries passed by and she became alienated from India, and to-day India's gifts lie disassociated from their sacred source. As a poet, it is my mission to restore that ancient association of mind through my efforts, that speak through a direct language of art. My father described himself at the time as the builder of a bridge to span the differences between the two peoples. It is significant therefore that the Calcutta Art Society should have decided to help in the revival of the cultural fellowship between India and her island neighbour through the presentation of a portrait of my father's to the Government of Ceylon.

It is no less significant that Sir Baron Jayatilaka who extended a cordial reception to my father on his arrival in Colombo, should be the representative of his country at this function also, and receive the portrait on Ceylon's behalf.

I wish the Art Society's function all success and I hope that through such efforts the two countries will be drawn to each other, more and more, in days to come.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE ON CEYLON

(Extracts from Speeches)

“Visitors oftener than once came from Ceylon to Santiniketan and felt a desire to make some aspect of its culture known to their island. In consequence an invitation was accorded to me, I readily accepted because I owed it to my responsibility as an artist and a poet to communicate the delight of art far and wide” (*Ceylon Daily News*, 5-5-34).

Garlanded by Sir Baron Jayatilaka and welcomed by him. Tagore said :

“I know your island and her beauty, I have been here more than once and this time I have a special mission. I have brought some part of our culture which Santiniketan represents. I hope I will be able to please you. I hope my mission will be fulfilled. I have brought something from India, some aspect of the culture, some delight of her arts and I hope you will realise that it is of eternal value. With politics I am not concerned. My mission is spiritual delights, of art and beauty far and wide. I have not other gifts to offer you. I do not know sufficiently of your culture but I do hope you have a contribution to make to Indian culture. Politically you may have been apart from India but culturally you are part and parcel of India. You are really Indians. The blood that runs in your veins is the same as that of Indians. We want you to come to us and share our heritage” (*Ceylon Daily News*, 10-5-34).

“Even though separated by politics, Ceylon is one with India but she has forgotten India and is now imitating the West. My mission is to make Ceylonese remember their heritage and although tired and old, I thought it my duty to come here and see what I can do. I think I will be of some help in bringing them into contact with India—and in winning back their mind.

I thought it was my mission to come to Ceylon to spread this message of our Oriental culture to those who by some unfortunate external circumstance have forgotten their own past and who are ready to disown their richest inheritance” (*Ceylon Daily News*, 21-5-34).

I am sure you will have a revival. It is the highest expression of the

soul of a people. You have your new chapter in your political history. I am not pessimistic. I speak to you this evening as the poet of the young, and I am here to offer my unreasoning joy and hope for life's renewal. My own land of Bengal has passed through the same phase as you are now passing through. We have had our stages of uncertainty. But we had our renaissance and you will have yours.

When asked whether the national languages could become the vehicles of Ceylon's culture, he said : " There is no other way. However correctly we may write and speak the English language we do not belong to it any more than it belongs to us. Any hope of your people finding their soul in the adoption of a foreign language as the medium of their culture is a will-o-the-wisp.

The link between your island and Bengal goes back over many centuries. I have seen so many here whom I could easily mistake for Bengalees. I have seen children with their large and dreamy eyes so very much like our own. I carry away the hope that we have brought to you something which you not only appreciate but which you will not quickly forget and which will help you in your own revival. There is a feeling in the air, a desire to get back to your own culture, to rediscover your past heritage."

" BRIDGE-BUILDER "

" You know the epic Ramayana where it is described how Sita, the beloved wife of Ram Chandra, was abducted by the ten-headed giant Ravana and kept her concealed in this island, and that a bridge was built by his followers over the sea that separated India and Sinhala. I also have come as a messenger from the land of Ram Chandra to build to the best of my ability a bridge, not with stones and rocks but with expressions of beauty in poems, songs and dancing which are the best materials for the path of communication that may span the differences between two peoples.

The spirit of India once visited Lanka. The best moral ideals, the deepest spiritual philosophy that had been produced in that land travelled across the barriers of mountains and seas, consecrating this beautiful island. But centuries passed by and Ceylon became alienated from India, and to-day India's noble gifts lie disassociated from her sacred source. As a poet, it is my mission to restore that ancient association of mind through my efforts, that speak through a direct language of art." (Jaffna Central College) (12th June, 1934, *Ceylon Observer*, 13-6-34).

RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND CEYLON

Rabindranath's father, Maharshi Debendranath Tagore visited Ceylon in the sixties of the last century with his son Satyendranath Tagore (the first I. C. S.) and Keshab Chunder Sen, the great social reformer and orator. Sen naturally imbibed a profound respect for the Buddha and Buddhism and encouraged his brother, Krishna Vihari Sen (founder of the Albert Institute) to write essays on Buddhism. So Satyendranath Tagore also wrote many essays on Buddhist Religion and Philosophy.

In 1878-1880 while Rabindranath was a young student at the London University he must have met some Ceylonese friends who invited him to Ceylon later on; for we know definitely that he referred to his visits to Galle and Colombo. Between 1892-1895, while Tagore was editing the literary Journal "*Sādhana*," he invited articles on Buddhism, probably because he heard about the activities of Revd. Dharmapala who founded the Maha Bodhi Society (1891) with its Headquarters in Calcutta with the help of Mr. Narendranath Sen, a cousin of K. C. Sen. Dharmapala won the hearts of the Indians by helping the distressed in the Indian famine, ravaging the country between 1897-1900.

In 1901 Dharmapala met the Japanese art critic, Okakura, who visited the historic sites of Buddhism like Buddha Gayā, Nalanda, etc., in the company of Swami Vivekananda. Okakura inspired the new school of Indian painting led by A. N. Tagore (nephew of the poet) whose "*Buddha and Sujātā*" was highly praised and reproduced in colour by the editor of the *Studio*, London (1902). Since then the poet composed a series of brilliant poems on the glories of Buddhism and his painter-friends plied their brush in illustrating many lovely legends on Buddhism.

Sister Nivedita, the Irish disciple of Vivekananda, collaborated with A. Coomaraswamy (a Ceylonese scholar) "in bringing out their *Myths and Legends of Buddhism*," illustrated by the new school of painters. Gradually artists from abroad were drawn to India with a view to copying the famous frescoes of the Buddhist rock-cut temples of Ajanta, which had its offshoots in the frescoes of Sigiriya in Ceylon, also copied in oil-colour and presented to the Indian Museum, Calcutta.

Rabindranath started his school at Santiniketan in 1901 and arranged to have a special scholar competent to teach Buddhism and the Pali language; and Pandit Vidhu Sekhara Shastri began compiling his "Pali Reader" in Bengali, and also helping the son of the poet (Rathindranath) in translating the earliest life of the Buddha left by the Buddhist poet Asvaghosa (first century A.D.).

Dr. Rajendralala Mitra of the Asiatic Society of Bengal published many valuable books on Buddhism and he was very friendly with poet Tagore who wrote many inspiring ballads on Buddhistic themes and composed a few plays also based on Buddhist subjects.

Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Das was the pioneer in the study of Tibetan-Buddhism. He compiled a valuable Tibetan dictionary and also started the "Buddhist Text Society" in Calcutta like the Pali Text Society in London. His work was continued by Pandit Satis Chundra Vidyabhusan, who under the inspiration of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee visited Ceylon and published many books on Buddhism and finally gave his great work on Buddhist Logic based on Sanskrit and Tibetan Texts. Dr. Asutosh Mookerjee inaugurated the Post-Graduate Department and welcomed Burmese and Ceylonese students to the University of Calcutta from which many of them not forgetting our great old boy Sir Baron Jayatilaka graduated. Sir Asutosh also strongly supported Revd. Dharmapala in building the Maha Boddhi Vihara at the College Square (1919-20) when Dr. Tagore sent a fine message. About the same time Dr. Tagore got in touch with his friends of Ceylon and brought down to Santiniketan a very great scholar of Buddhist philosophy, Revd. D. Maha Sthavira, who lectured on the Abhidharma at Santiniketan while Revd. Siddhartha (of Ceylon) began his systematic lectures on Buddhism at the University of Calcutta, which incorporated Pali and Singalese into the syllabus of the University. The valuable texts and scriptures of the Southern school of Buddhism came to be presented to the University, to Dr. Tagore's school and to the Bengal Buddhist Association at Calcutta. Thus the cultural and spiritual collaboration between Ceylon and India was deepened through the activities of Revd. Dharmapala and Sir Asutosh Mookerjee and Dr. Tagore, all recognising the importance of Buddhism in the future history of Asia, as well as in the general history of human progress through its message of world peace.

In 1921 when Dr. Tagore laid the foundation of the International University of the Visva-bharati, he made adequate provision not only for the study of the Southern school of Buddhism but also of the Northern school represented by innumerable texts in Sanskrit, Chinese,

Tibetan and Central Asian languages, which were studied by the eminent French *savant*, Prof. Sylvain Levi, who was invited by Dr. Tagore to act as the first Visiting Professor of the Visva-bharati.

In 1922 (October-November) Dr. Tagore spent about a month in Ceylon accompanied by Rev. C. F. Andrews. He got very encouraging reports from his disciple, Prof. Kāṇḍas Nag, who was invited to act as the Principal of the Mahinda College, Galle (1919-20) and so the poet visited Galle and delivered an inspiring address at the Mahinda College Hall, and also at different Cultural Associations of Colombo, where the then Governor, Sir Anton Betron, presided over the lecture by Dr. Tagore at the Y. M. C. A., Colombo. Tagore discussed his mission as an educationalist and lectured on his "Forest University." He found the Ceylonese youths rapidly losing their ancient culture and getting Westernised in their minds and manners; so he made an earnest appeal to the leaders, so that the entire educational system of Ceylon could be based on National lines, helping thereby the revival of the art and culture of historic Ceylon. He spent about a week in the beautiful hill station of Nur Eliya and returned to Santiniketan to encourage his students to take interest in Ceylon and her culture.

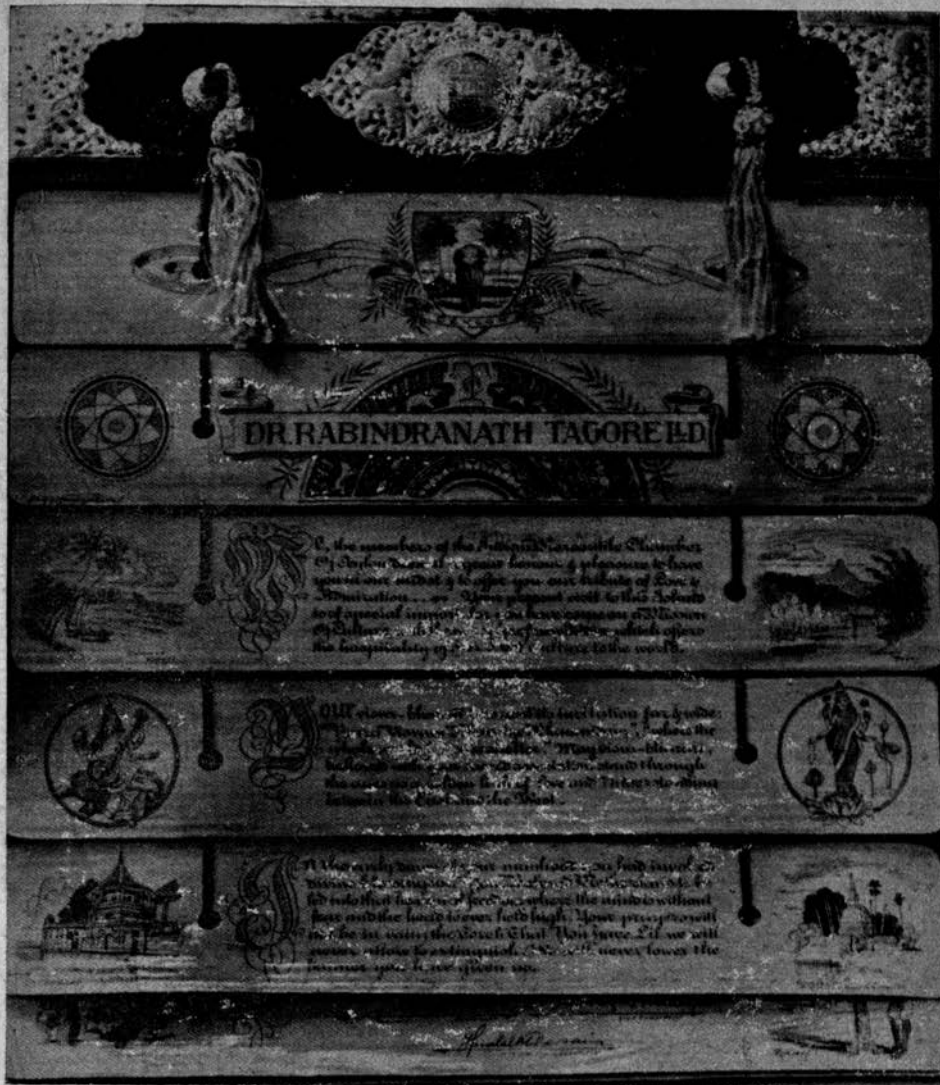
From Ceylon tour a very natural transition was towards Burma which belonged to the Southern school of Buddhism and Dr. Tagore visited Burma on his way to China in 1924 when he was invited by the Peking National University and other Cultural Societies of the Chinese Republic.

In 1927 Dr. Tagore visited Burma, Siam and Java discovering many important cultural links between India and Greater India, and he wrote a magnificent poem on the Buddhist Stūpa *Borobudar* in Java.

In 1927 the poet gave, for the first time, the dance interpretation of his Buddhist poem, *Pujarini* (renamed *Natir Puja*) in collaboration with the Girls students of his school. In 1928 celebrating his 67th birthday, the poet cancelled his programme of a tour to Europe and came instead to Ceylon. It was a short visit, spent mostly in Colombo where he stayed as a guest of his friend Dr. W. A. de Silva. Rev. C. F. Andrews was with him during this trip also. Again in 1929 he stopped in Colombo on his way to Canada where he was invited to lecture at the International Conference on Education, of Vancouver.

In 1934 Dr. Tagore visited Ceylon for the last time and he was received by Sir D. B. Jayatilaka who brought him in touch with the celebrities of Ceylon and they helped the students of Dr. Tagore's school raising some funds after demonstrations of their music and dances (12th to 20th May, 1934). An exhibition of his paintings was also

RABINDRANATH TAGORE IN CEYLON

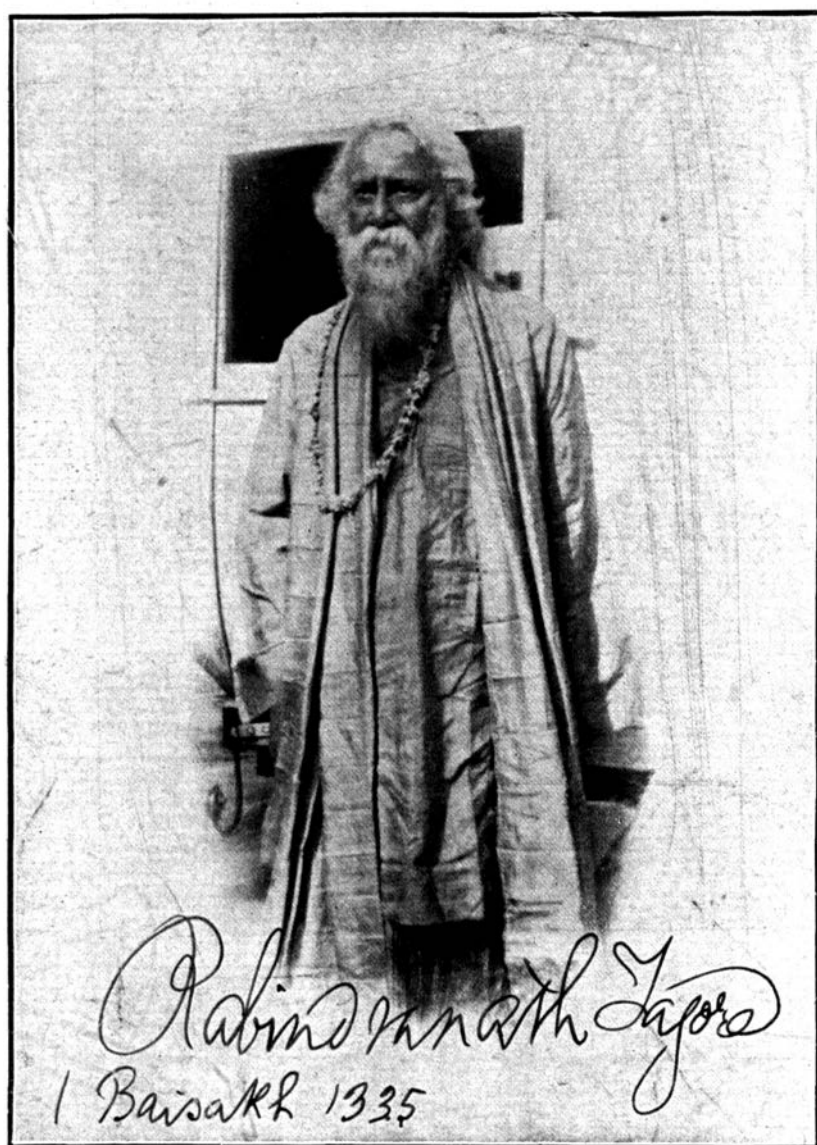


**Address written on the
Palm-leaves by the
Indian Chamber of Com-
merce, 11th May, 1934**



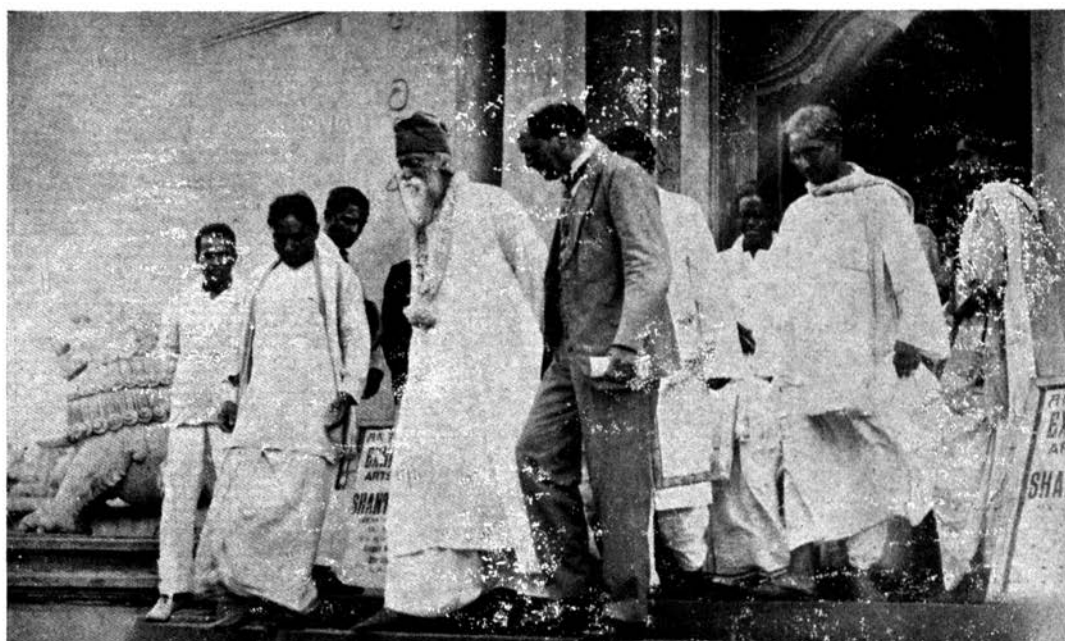
In the Rotary Club,
10th May 1934





Rabindranath Tagore
1 Baisakh 1335

THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE ART EXHIBITION



Sir G. Tyrrel, the Chief Secretary, Ceylon Government, opened it on the 11th May, 1934

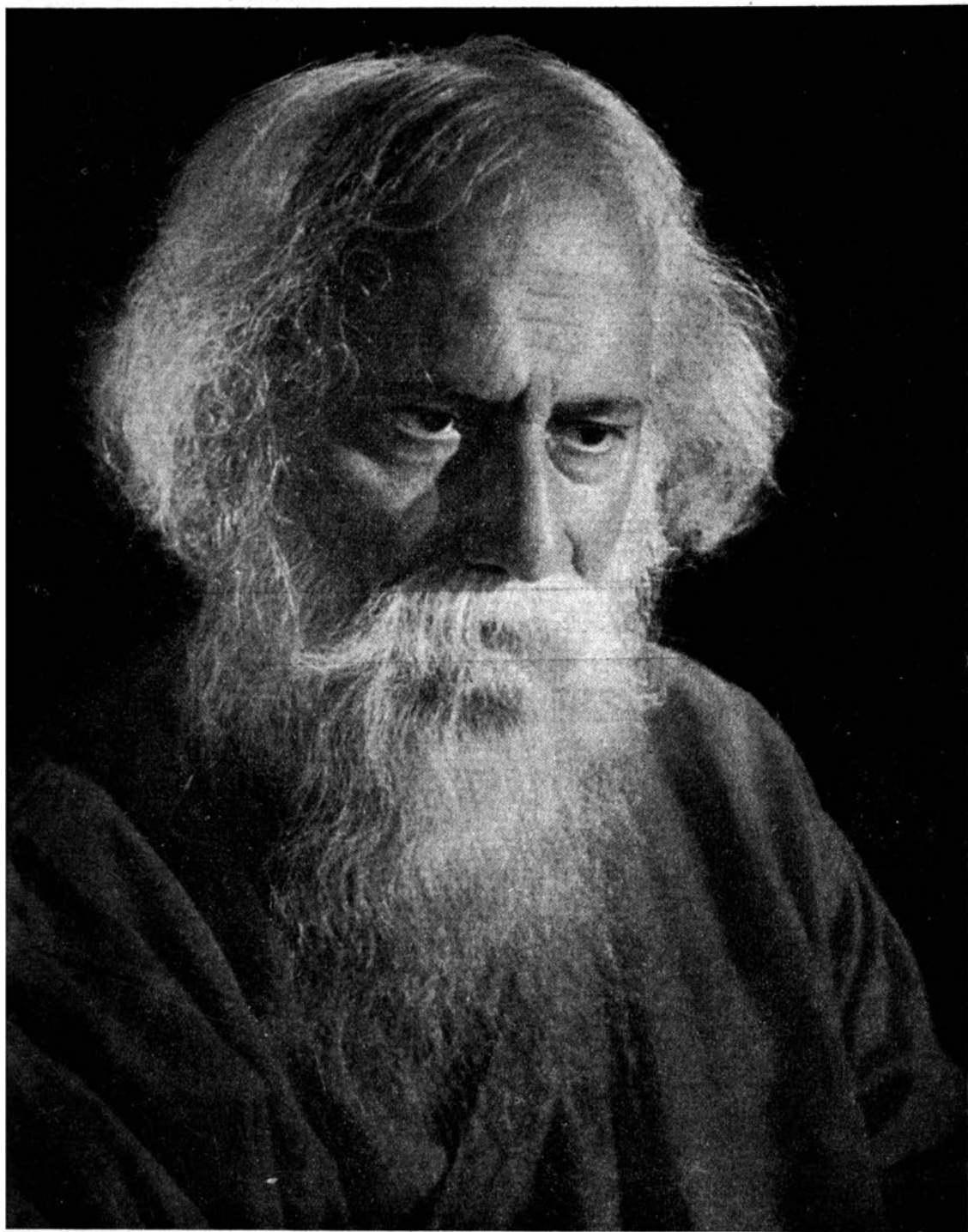


Shap Mochan (dance-drama) in the Royal Theatre, Colombo, 12th May, 1934

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held and Tagore was delighted to find that some of the pupils of his art-school had already served as teachers of drawing and painting at the Ananda College, Colombo, and other schools, initiating our Ceylonese friends into the traditions of the new school of Indian painting.

Mr. Ariam Williams, a Tamil-Ceylonese from Jaffna, served for many years as a teacher at Tagore's school and he also created interest locally. So a Singhalese gentleman of Panadura Beach (Horana) established a rural reconstruction centre and named it "Sripalli" in imitation of Tagore's Sriniketan. Dr. Tagore again visited Galle on 24th May and witnessed the folk-dance with masks at Matara. He also studied the famous Kandhyan dance (3rd June) on which he wrote a beautiful poem. He addressed the Indian community of Colombo on 27th May, and visited the sacred shrine and historic monuments of the ancient capital of Anuradhapura and finally sailed away from Ceylon after lecturing for the last few days in the different cultural organisations of the Tamil-Ceylonese of the North (10th to 15th June, 1934).

In 1935 Dr. Tagore sent a special message on the Sacred Vaisakh day celebrated by the Maha Boddhi Society and composed two solemn hymns to Lord Buddha tuned to the key of world peace, which was so dear to his heart, and we know that in September, 1936, the poet sent a moving message to the World Peace Congress of Brussels Conference which was, alas, probably the last Peace Conference before the tragedies of the Second World War in the East and the West. Ceylon also occupied a very tender corner of his heart as we can understand from the following story narrated by Dr. Kalidas Nag :

In 1919 when the Mahinda College invited Dr. Nag to join as their Principal, he felt very keenly the absence of a national anthem for Ceylon specially in view of the fact that in 1920 the Ceylonese planned to convene their first National Congress in Colombo. So Dr. Nag wrote to Dr. Tagore seeking his permission to modify, just a little, a line in the first stanza of the Indian national anthem "Jana-Gana": in the place of *Utkala* (Orissa) the word *Simhala* was substituted without disturbing the rhythm and with the permission of the Poet Composer, who thereby earned the gratitude of his Ceylonese friends, who began singing his song which was first printed in Singalese character in the Mahinda College Magazine from the Bengali MSS. of Prof. Kalidas Nag. Gradually the pictorial tradition of the Santiniketan school was also introduced to Ceylon by the talented artist, Manindra Bhusan Gupta, who served in the Ananda College for some time, training many Ceylonese artists. Finally, when Dr. Tagore brought his own party of dancers and musicians in 1934, they literally stormed the hearts of the public of Ceylon, who candidly admitted that it was a landmark

in their cultural history in the domain of music, painting and dancing, as we gather from the following suggestive comments by a Colombo paper on the Tagore show of 1934 :

“ Here in Ceylon, he has kindled a new enthusiasm, he has awakened a great yearning; he has held aloft a great idealism. It is not (this) generation that will thank him for his inspiration to Ceylon. Generations cannot measure the value of his services. It is not history that will record his achievements. Even history cannot give a niche to ‘an *impetus* that has opened our eyes to a vision of the joy and grandeur, our song and music, of our art and our culture ’.”

AN ACCOUNT OF DR. RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S VISIT TO CEYLON IN 1934

By DHAKSHINALANKA PUTRA

Dr. Rabindranath Tagore's visit to Ceylon in 1934 was a most memorable one. During his stay the cultural advancement of the island received a remarkable stimulus.

The poet arrived in Ceylon on May 9 on board the steamer *Inchanga*. He was accompanied by Mrs. Pratima Tagore, his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Mra Devi, the daughter of the Poet, Mr. Nandalal Bose, the renowned artist and 23 young students. Despite the very wet weather, the party were welcomed by a large crowd including the Mayor of Colombo and Sir D. B. Jayatilaka, who garlanded Dr. Tagore.

To a *Daily News* representative the Poet said, "I am not a politician : I do not want to reform the world. I have brought something from India, some aspect of her culture, some delight of her art, and I hope you will realise that it is of eternal value. . . . Politically you may have been apart from India, but culturally you are part and parcel of India. We want you to come to us and share our heritage."

During his stay in Colombo Dr. Tagore was the guest of the late Mrs. Helena Wijewardene at Sri Ramya, Kollupitiya.

On May 10, Dr. Tagore delivered an address on "The Ideals of an Indian University" at a Rotary Club Luncheon at the Grand Oriental Hotel at which he was the guest of honour. The burden of his address was that Universities should not be made into mechanical organisations for purposes of collecting knowledge and distributing it merely to equip students to earn a comfortable living. Through Universities an attempt should be made to disseminate the seeds of culture to the world. He dwelt on the evils of the hybrid culture that resulted when Easterners neglected their own heritage in order to obtain a superficial knowledge of Western learning.

On May 11, Dr. Tagore was accorded a reception by the Indian Mercantile Chamber of Ceylon. The Poet spoke on the work at Shānti Niketan and on the needs of that institution, if it was to continue its function as a cultural oasis. "It is a matter of shame and sorrow to me," he declared in the course of his speech "to realise that those who are aliens to us have a better appreciation of the work which I am carrying on and of my personality than my own people in my mother-

land. . . . In the depth of my being I realise that man is one and I feel that this was my mission to offer to the whole world. I felt that I must offer this spiritual and cultural hospitality of India to the rest of the world. I have my "atithis" my guests from the great world to-day. Shānti Niketan is that guest house. They come as pilgrims from the most distant parts of the world and in the name of my motherland and for all of you and for all of us in India. I have to be true to our highest traditions which say that the guest is divine."

Within a few minute of Dr. Tagore's departure a sum of Rs. 684 was collected which was later presented to the Poet along with other contributions.

On the evening of May 12, the Shānti Niketan players presented the Bengali opera dance "Shap Mochan" (The Redemption) at the Regal Theatre, Colombo. It was a memorable scene both from the point of view of the vast crowd that thronged the theatre and scrambled for seats and from the point of view of the aesthetic treat which the audience enjoyed. At the first parting of the curtain, the Poet dressed in a saffron-coloured *dhoti* and long *baniyan*, with a scarf thrown, Bengali-wise, about his shoulders stood, slightly stooping, with his finger-tips touching in the eastern way of salutation. He was garlanded and he spoke a few words to the audience.

And then the performance began. "Who can forget the scene?" wrote one who was present—"the Shānti Niketan players against a plain, rose-coloured back cloth, dispensing with superfluous accoutrements and trapping in the style of the Greek drama, while the venerable poet-producer sat on a coloured divan by the foot-lights following keenly and occasionally beating time." Another correspondent wrote, "The play was presented with dance and song, very little dialogue and a pleasing blend of colours which did not clash. The gestures with the hands excelled those of the dances in Bali, Nepal and Travancore in grace and expression; the movements of the bodies were pliant, fluent and harmonious."

On May 14, an Exhibition of the Arts and Crafts of Shānti Niketan was opened at the Art Gallery, Colombo. The poet himself was present and the Exhibition was opened by Sir Graeme Tyrell, the Chief Secretary. Dr Tagore addressed those present on "The Ideals of Indian Art." A collection of pictures, wood-cuts, lino-cuts, etchings, leather work, lacquer work, metal work, hand-woven textiles and a quantity of literature on art were exhibited.

"The most notable exhibit is the collection of sketches and drawings by the great poet and teacher who honours Ceylon by a visit," wrote a critic. "They show the poet, philosopher and mystic devoting

moments of relaxation to exercises in composition and rhythmic line; they are creations of joyous activity in a hobby which pleased the poet; withal they please the beholder by a charm and attraction difficult to define."

On May 16, Dr. Tagore was accorded a civic reception by the Colombo Municipal Council. On the following day he delivered an inspiring address and also gave a recital of his poems at the Central Y. M. C. A. building in Colombo.

After the recital a group of students seated on the platform rendered songs in Bengali and later everyone joined in the singing of the Indian National Song, which was led by the poet himself.

During his stay Dr. Tagore gave an interview to *The Daily News* expressing his views on what could be done in Ceylon to quicken the artistic impulse of the people and to recreate a culture that was not merely a picking up of the crumbs that fell from the table of the West. The Poet discussed the language problem and sketched the development of the movement in Bengali, which came to grips with and gradually overcame a situation not unlike that which enervated the national soul of the Ceylonese people. Dr. Tagore revealed a shrewd and sympathetic knowledge of Ceylon's problems. "You may not be conscious of it," said he, "but I notice a distinct change in the attitude of the Ceylonese in general. There is a feeling in the air, a desire to get back to your own culture, to rediscover a past heritage. The last time I was here some of the talk I heard and the things I saw seemed so absurd, so artificial to me. Borrowed manners and codes of foreign etiquette made the people, especially the women, so unnatural. . . . But now I notice a definite change. You are at present in that uncertain stage through which we in Bengal had to pass. You cannot of course create genius to order, but you can invite it by creating the necessary environment and atmosphere. I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that I am sure, when the time is ripe, genius will not be wanting in Ceylon."

On May 17, Dr. Tagore was given a reception by the Indian community in Colombo at the Indian Club at Kollupitiya. In the course of the reception a cheque for Rs. 5,000 was handed to the poet as a present from the Indian community in Colombo. There was a musical entertainment, the items being contributed by a group of Shānti Niketan students. Before each song was sung, Dr. Tagore gave a translation of it in English.

During his stay in the Island, Dr. Tagore visited almost every important town including Galle, Matara, Kandy and Jaffna and the ancient city of Anuradhapura. At every place he was accorded an

enthusiastic reception. At Matara there was a display of indigenous dancing which the Poet greatly appreciated. The Shānti Niketan players staged "Shap Mochan" in that town. At Kandy a purse of Rs. 1,000 was presented to the distinguished visitor on behalf of the Central Province Indians.

On May 18, Dr. Tagore's troupe gave a final performance at the Regal Theatre, Colombo, a show that was specially meant for school children who had not been able to secure seats at previous performances.

Dr. Tagore left for India on June 19. Before his departure he sent a message to *The Daily News* thanking the people of Ceylon for their hospitality.

On Wesak Day, May 28, *The Daily News* printed a poem addressed "To the Buddha" which the Poet translated from the original Bengali during his stay in Ceylon and which he sent to *The Daily News* to commemorate the Wesak he was spending in the country :—

*The World to-day is wild with the delirium of hatred;
The Conflicts are cruel and unceasing,
Crooked are its paths, tangled its meshes of greed.
All creatures are crying in anguish for a manifestation of thine,
Oh thou of boundless life, save them, raise thine eternal voice
of hope,
Let love's lotus with its inexhaustible treasure of honey
Open its petals in thy light.
O Serene, O Free, in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness
Wipe away all dark stains from the heart of this earth.
Thou giver of immortal gifts, give us the power of dedication,
Claim from us our greed
And pride of self.
In the splendour of a new sun-rise of wisdom
Let the blind gain their sight, let life come to the souls that are dead
O Serene, O Free, in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness
Wipe away all dark stains from the heart of this earth.*

Speech of Sir D. B. Jayatilaka*(At the Presentation Ceremony, Calcutta University, 27th Feb., 1944.)*

Before I make any observations of mine on this auspicious occasion, I have great pleasure in submitting to you two messages which have been sent to me by telegram to be read at this meeting. One of them is from the Hon'ble Mr. C. W. W. Kannangara, Minister for Education, and the other from Dr. W. I. Jennings, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ceylon (printed below).

These messages express in fitting terms the thanks of the Government and the people of Ceylon for the gift of the portrait of the Poet of India's modern renaissance offered by the Calcutta Art Society. I have not, therefore, much to add beyond expressing my personal thanks to the Society for their generosity. I am indeed happy that I have been the medium for the offer of the gift and its acceptance by the Government of Ceylon. I rejoice in the hope that this portrait will result in revivifying the cultural relations that existed in bygone times between India—particularly Bengal—and Ceylon.

The portrait of the distinguished Poet, when it goes out to Ceylon, will not be welcomed as that of a stranger. On the contrary, it will be received by the people as the representation of an old and highly venerated friend who had visited the Island several times, creating on every occasion the deepest impression on them by his noble personality and his words of wisdom. His last and most important visit to Ceylon was in 1934. That visit lasted for a month, in the course of which he delivered in Colombo several inspiring addresses, mainly on the subjects of Education and Art, and made an extensive tour visiting almost all parts of the Island. There was an Exhibition of the Arts and Crafts of Santiniketan at the Art Gallery, Colombo. Among the exhibits there were a number of sketches and drawings by the Poet himself which were greatly admired. A group of students of Santiniketan who accompanied the Poet presented the play *Shap Mochan* to an enormous audience at one of the biggest Theatres of Colombo. These activities, combined with the Poet's addresses, contributed in no small measure to strengthen the existing movement for the revival of the ancient culture of the Island.

Dr. Jennings refers in his message to Santiniketan as an "International University." A few days ago I had the good fortune of paying a visit to Santiniketan, and to Sriniketan as well. This visit was to me a pilgrimage to a great temple dedicated to the worship of the Goddess of Learning. I saw the Institution at work; many hundreds of

young men and young women hailing from all parts of India were pursuing their studies, while scores of students, not a few from abroad—among them three Sinhalese—were carrying on research work in various departments of Arts and Science.

The architect who conceived, planned, and built this great edifice of learning has passed away; but the spirit of his noble ideals and practical wisdom is still there, encouraging and influencing a band of devoted workers to keep undimmed the flame which he lighted many years ago.

One feature of the Poet's life which naturally appeals to me most strongly is the love and reverence which he has always shown in his writings and speeches to the personality of the Lord Buddha and His Teachings. Year after year he contributed verses to the celebration of the birthday of the great Teacher. Here is one such *Vaisakha Purnima Song* :—

“ Remove the blackness of all sins,
Victory be to thee,
Sprinkle the world with the water
of Everlasting life,
Thou who art the fountain of peace,
of welfare, of holiness; of love.
Let the gloom of despair and all evil dreams vanish
With the radiance of the newly risen Sun of wisdom.
“ The day is dark with delusions
and the traveller is afraid,
He is distraught with doubts
at the intricacy of diverging paths.
Merciful, rescue him from the peril of pitfalls,
guide him into freedom from the meshes of tribulation,
Thou who art the fountain of peace,
of welfare, of holiness, of love.”

When the portrait of the great Poet, Thinker and Social Worker is hung up in the Library of the University of Ceylon, it will be a continuous source of inspiration to lofty aspirations and high endeavours of the youth of Ceylon for all time. It will also serve as a golden link in the chain that binds India and Ceylon in a bond of firm goodwill and permanent friendship.

Message from the Hon'ble the Minister for Education

The Government of Ceylon is very grateful to the Calcutta Art Society for its generous decision to present a portrait of Dr. Rabindranath Tagore to the people of Vijayan Lanka. The citizens of our country still cherish with affection vivid memories of the visit that the distinguished Poet paid to Ceylon, and of the deep impression that his words and his personality made on the whole race—a race that is proud to trace its connection to the ancient people that dwelt in the plains of Bengal. Tagore treated Lanka as a daughter of Bengal, and the emotions of the youth of this country were touched by the beautiful and musical prose with which he clothed lofty ideals of eternal value. We have followed with interest the part that Tagore played in the literary renaissance of Bengal. We have seen how his soul caught the flame of patriotism, not in great cities, but among the villagers dwellings near the sand flats of the Ganges and our countryside, that is peopled practically from the same stock as that from which his inspiration was derived reacts with equal intensity of feeling to the lyrics, the danceforms, the dramatic creations, and the noble worldwide messages that are expressed with exquisite felicity of diction in his later and deeper works. The Poet placed Ceylon under an obligation not merely by the cultural connection which he superimposed on an ancient historical connection, but by his clarion call to free ourselves from the inner bondage that narrows our idea of freedom. To set the spirit free and to give it wings to soar aloft and develop a largeness of vision which transcends the frontiers of race and creed, this we consider as fundamental to his conception of freedom. Hence of universal appeal is the prayer that he utters in his *Gitanjali*.

“ Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
 Where knowledge is free;
 Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by
 narrow domestic walls;
 Where words come out from the depth of truth;
 Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
 Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the
 dreary desert sand of dead habit;
 Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening
 thought and action—
 Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country
 awake.”

The people of Ceylon gratefully accept this portrait which they will always regard as one of their most treasured possessions, a shining symbol alike of the historical ties that bind our two peoples together, of the power of music and literature to create a new spirit among all races of the world.

Message from the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ceylon

Tagore was a welcome visitor to Ceylon. Indeed he may almost be said to have been a cultural ambassador. By stressing the importance of the revival of culture he made us conscious not only of our debt to India, but also of the importance of our own culture. He had more influence than anyone on the revival of the Arts in the Island. His University at Santiniketan was in every sense an International University. In it the culture of Ceylon found a place, and in it students from this Island were glad to study. His love of learning, his deep sense of poetry, and his feeling for literature make his light a beacon for the youth of Ceylon to follow. It will, therefore, be a privilege for the University of Ceylon to exhibit his portrait in the library that will be built after the war on the bank of the Mahaweli Ganga.

Acceptance Letter from the Government of Ceylon

A94/43.

Your No. C.R.P.F. by 42/43 of 27-11-43.

Representative of the Ceylon Government in India

The Board of Ministers at its meeting on 3rd January, 1944, agreed that the gift of the portrait of the late Dr. Rabindranath Tagore offered by the Calcutta Art Society be accepted and the thanks of the Island be conveyed to the Calcutta Art Society.

The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ceylon proposes to hang the portrait in the University Library at Peradeniya.

Colombo
17th January, 1944.

Sd. C. H. COLLINS.
For Chief Secretary.

**Statement of Pranabesh Ch. Sinha, Hony. Secretary,
Calcutta Art Society :—**

I beg, in conclusion, to accord our hearty thanks to Sir D. B. Jayatilaka and through him to the Minister of Education, Ceylon and to the Vice-Chancellor, University of Ceylon, for the very kind words they have spoken on the occasion of the presentation of Dr. Tagore's portrait. In this connection, I may be permitted to express the hope that the Government of Ceylon would kindly get the historic frescoes of Sigiriya (derived from the school of Buddhist frescoes of Ajanta) faithfully copied and present the same to the Museum of the University of Calcutta which ever encourages all plans of cultural co-operation between India and the nations abroad. Indian artists and scholars would get, I hope, a warm reception in Ceylon and foster the spirit of cultural fellowship which would produce, in due time, a new literature and a creative art. With this hope I again thank our sympathizers for their co-operation and the authorities of the Calcutta University for generously allowing us to enjoy the hospitality of the Darbhanga Hall which witnessed the presentation of Dr. Tagore's portrait to China and many such historic functions.

ERRATUM

In page 10, line 6, read "I must welcome them" after and



RABINDRANATH
Photo : Martin Hurlimann.



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