



The 'Effeminate' Buddha, the Yogic Male Body, and the Ecologies of Art History in Colonial India

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Introduction

In a 1953 essay published in the American journal *Art News*, the art historian Stella Kramrisch (1896–1993) proposed that it was the practice of breathing that allowed the 'carnal' or the material body in Indian sculpture to dissolve into the non-physical 'subtle' body of transcendental metaphysics.¹ Emphasizing the role of yogic breathing in shaping the subtle body (*sukmasarira*) in Indian sculpture, Kramrisch wrote: 'The figures of Indian art are modeled on breath. Breath dilates the chest, and is felt to carry the pulsations of life through the body, their vessel, to fingertips and toes. This inner awareness was given permanent shape in art, for it was tested and practiced daily in the discipline of yoga.'² Foreshadowing the emergent countercultures of transcendental meditation, Allen Ginsberg, and the Beat Generation that would soon unsettle the dreariness of the 1950s, Kramrisch thus brought the psychosomatic non-European male body into mainstream American art writing.

Certainly, Kramrisch was not alone in imagining an affective relationship between the domain of image-making and yoga as an embodied physical philosophy of the body. As early as 1926, the German Indologist Henrich Zimmer (1890–1943) had presented artistic forms in India as projections of an inner *yantra*. The sacred image is a *yantra* and nothing but a *yantra*, Zimmer had asserted.³ The purported association between yogic practices and representational conventions engendered a new discourse on Indian art, one that led to a strategic palimpsest between sculptures of the Buddha and the transcendent yogic body.⁴ This imagined intimacy between yoga and Buddhist sculpture, in turn, allowed art historians such as Kramrisch to bring asceticism and aestheticism into a singular discursive field to articulate an idealist iteration of colonized India's civilizational value.

While scholars have carefully analyzed the nationalist imperatives of this early twentieth-century art history, this essay engages with the male body.⁵ Without doubt, the body mattered. But to what extent did anxieties about the colonized male body impact art history's constructions of embodiment, corporeality, and the body politic? That the figure of the 'effeminate' native male, caricatured in colonial discourse vis-à-vis the 'virile' Englishman, had given rise to late nineteenth-century assertions of an autochthonous masculine virility is, by now, well known. Scholars have demarcated the ways in which Victorian ideals of masculinity produced an imagination of the native male as effeminate. In turn, this ideation conditioned British imperialist discourses.⁶ Indigenous responses to colonial aspersions of effeminacy led to the subsequent development of a new range of body cultures including martial arts,

**Detail from Nandalal Bose,
The Temptation of Buddha,
c. 1910 (plate 7).**

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athletics, and gymnastics that were anticipated to revitalize the Indian male body.⁷ India's art history, as we know it today, had thus been formulated under the shadow of the Hindu monk Swami Vivekananda's (1863–1902) celebrated credo of beef, biceps, and the *Bhagavadgītā* as a response to the loss of masculinity under British rule.⁸

Yet, emerging from within the labyrinth of colonial archaeology and museology, art history offered an entirely different response to the emasculating politics of colonialism. Rather than the hyper-masculine modern subject of Enlightenment rationality capable of ordering the world as a reflection of his phallogocentric self, early twentieth-century nationalist art history cast the male body as a demasculinized site standing in for potent fantasies of a nature-centred aesthetics of the body. Indeed, the politics and aesthetics of demasculinization, this essay suggests, was articulated in opposition to the hegemonic hyper-masculinity advocated by both the regulatory mechanisms of the British empire and a larger nationalist body culture in colonial India. The mythography of the modern male body was thus not merely an invention of the colonial bureaucracy but was concurrently produced through tangible and performative material arrangements shaped through aesthetics, art writing, and sartorial cultures. Locating the imagined intimacy between yoga and the aesthetics of the sculpted body at the intersections of archaeology, art history, and art practices, this essay suggests that the resignification of the male body as both a sign and the site of a national life was the governing schema that defined early twentieth-century anti-colonial art history's disciplinary concerns.⁹

The 'Effeminate' Buddha

The idea that yogic breathing practices based on moving breath or *prana* along the internal channels of the body played a significant role in visualizing the idealized body in Indian sculpture was an elaboration of art history's early mediations on the sculpted body. In a 1931 essay, *Die figurale Plastik der Guptazeit*, followed by the more celebrated 1933 monograph *Indian Sculpture*, Stella Kramrisch, for instance, had proposed that the movement from the corporeal physicality of second- and third-century Buddhist sculpture to the more sensuous ethereality, the 'soft ... delicate ... dream-like enchantment',¹⁰ of fifth-century sculpture was a result of ascetic yogic practices (plate 1). Describing a 476/477 CE sandstone sculpture of the Buddha as a 'supple, delicate vessel of rarified, superhuman bliss',¹¹ Kramrisch compared the late fifth-century body typology that had evolved in the Sarnath region in north India to earlier Buddhist images, for instance a c. 384 CE sculpture from the site of Bodhgaya currently in the Indian Museum, Kolkata (plate 2). The taut corporeality of early Buddhist sculpture was, Kramrisch argued, superseded in the late fifth century with a new physical form that gave life breath or *prana* to the Buddha's body.

When read in relation to the late nineteenth-century history of Buddhist art history, the origins of which lay in colonial archaeology and Indology, the ingenuity of Kramrisch's argument becomes palpable. Indeed, the French archaeologist Alfred C. A. Foucher's (1865–1952) now infamous study on Buddhist sculpture from the Gandhara region in northwest Pakistan and Afghanistan provides us with an apposite entry to the male body in the colonial archive.¹² Foucher's oft-cited description of a second-century schist sculpture of the Buddha, photographed by the archaeologist in 1897 in a British Army officers' mess in Mardan in northwest Pakistan, had led to much debate (plate 3).¹³ The essay, first presented as a lecture at the Musée Guimet in Paris, had claimed a Hellenic origin for the Buddha image.¹⁴ Describing the sculpture, Foucher wrote: 'Look at it at leisure. Without doubt you will appreciate its dreamy, and even somewhat effeminate, beauty; but at the same time you cannot fail to be

I Standing Buddha from Sarnath, 476/477 CE. Sandstone, 200 cm (height). Sarnath: Archaeological Museum. Photo: Frederick M. Asher.



struck by its Hellenic character.¹⁵ Much ink has been spilt debating Foucher's contentious claim.¹⁶

It is nevertheless worth noting that the 'effeminate beauty' of the Gandhara Buddha was, according to Foucher, a result of 'native contribution' that led to a 'kind of compromise, a hybrid work'.¹⁷ For Foucher, it was native contribution, the hand of the Indian artist, that had then led to the effeminization of the Buddha image as a distortion of the ideal Hellenic male body. Iterated at a time when eugenics, medicine, and muscular Christianity had carefully inscribed the native male body as weak and effete, Foucher's imperious reading of Buddhist sculpture from the Gandhara region mapped the corporeal and the theological onto the colonized male body. Foucher continued: 'You take the body of a monk, and surmount it with the head of a king ... These are the two necessary and sufficing ingredients of this curious synthesis.'¹⁸ The head, then, was the Greek contribution, surmounted upon the purported effeminate body of a Buddhist monk.

Although disparaging, Foucher's claims do not appear incongruous when situated within the larger intellectual milieu of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Indology and colonial archaeology. Indeed, only two years before the archaeologist's lecture in Paris, the British art administrator George C. M. Birdwood (1832–1917) had notoriously declared that 'a boiled suet pudding would serve equally well' as a symbol of the Buddha's 'purity and serenity of soul'.¹⁹ Birdwood's now legendary outburst at a Royal Society of Arts meeting in London was in response to a photograph of an eighth-century Amoghasiddhi Buddha from Borobudur in Indonesia being discussed by the British scholar-ideologue Ernest B. Havell (1861–1934) at the meeting (plate 4). Birdwood's comment met with an onslaught of debate and outrage. Within a month, thirteen prominent British artists, architects, and critics including Walter Crane, William Rothenstein, Emery Walker, and William R. Lethaby would send a letter of protest to *The Times* stating that the 'Buddha type of sacred figure was one of the greatest artistic inspirations in the world'.²⁰

The photograph of the late eighth-century Amoghasiddhi Buddha that lay at the centre of the 1910 debate had been first published in E. B. Havell's 1908 *Indian Sculpture and Painting*.²¹ For Havell, the sculpture was an exemplary illustration of the idealized yogic body. Describing the sculpture, the scholar, who by this time had established his sympathies for the Indian nationalist movement, polemically stated: 'The subject, according to European ideas, hardly seems one to lend itself to a high aesthetic ideal. Yet how beautiful it is when the spiritual, rather than the physical, becomes the type which the artist brings into view.'²² Even though Havell acknowledged that the 'principles of Yoga philosophy were not, of course, part of

[the] Buddha's philosophy',²³ he nevertheless argued for an Indian conceptualization of the spiritual body through meditative practices based on yogic breathing. In rendering this body, Havell suggested, Indian artists ignored male 'bodily strength' and 'perfections of form'.²⁴ Thus, it was only through expurgating the male body of a masculinity that had become framed through colonial superlatives of the flawless European body, itself imagined through fictive homologies with classical Greco-Roman sculpture, could Indian artists achieve an idealized body type.²⁵

The photograph of the Amoghasiddhi Buddha reproduced in *Indian Sculpture and Painting* further heightened the metaphysical essence that the figure was seen to embody. Masking the architectural setting of the Borobudur stupa, the unidentified photographer set the sculpture against a black backdrop. Freed from the physical limitations of the archaeological site, the meditative figure provoked the viewer-reader to engage with the image as an act of introspective contemplation. Unlike the direct frontal images of sculptures in situ that routinely circulated through the Archaeological Survey of India's reports and tomes, the decontextualized modernist photograph allowed Havell to re-contextualize the image through frames of aesthetics and introvert spirituality.²⁶ Perhaps in keeping with this aim, lighting too was carefully manipulated. A shadow falls over the abdomen, while the



2 Seated Buddha from Bodhgaya, c. 384 CE. Sandstone, 117.5 cm (height). Kolkata: Indian Museum. Photo: Author

3 Alfred C. A. Foucher, *Buddha in the Guides' Mess, Mardan, 1897*. Plate XI from Alfred C. A. Foucher, *The Beginnings of Buddhist Art and Other Essays in Indian and Central-Asian Archaeology*, Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1917.



contemplative face with downcast eyes, the sinuous shoulders, and legs crossed in a yogic posture are emphasized, accentuating the meditating stance of the image. The resultant effect underscored the gracefulness of an allegedly unmasculine body. This unmasculine body was, of course, but another form of thinking about masculinity, one that was, however, articulated in opposition to colonial hegemonies of the hyper-masculine male body.

To emphasize his argument on the relationship between nationalism, yoga, and the unmasculine male body, Havell contrasted the Borobudur image with a photograph of a realistic sculpture of Swami Bhaskarananda Saraswati (1833–99), a Varanasi-based ascetic (plate 5). Labelling the photograph a ‘decadent modern statuette’, Havell juxtaposed the portrait of the emaciated yogi, with his protruding ribs and gaunt body, to the sensuous physicality of the Borobudur Buddha. Although both photographs were composed using similar imaging techniques including a masked background and dramatic lighting, the differences in psychological and moral signification were vast. For the so-called ‘decadent modern statuette’ bore a stark formal similarity to first- and second-century Gandhara sculptures of the emaciated Siddhartha, fasting before he achieved enlightenment (plate 6). This visual analogy was certainly intentional, one that would not be missed by contemporaneous readers familiar with the history of Buddhist art in the subcontinent.

4 Amoghasiddhi Buddha from the Borobudur Stupa, c. eighth century CE. Plate II from Ernest B. Havell, *Indian Sculpture and Painting Illustrated by Typical Masterpieces, with an Explanation of their Motives and Ideals*, London: John Murray, 1908.



Astutely offsetting images from the past and the present, Havell thus conjured a direct equivalence between academic realism learnt under nineteenth-century colonial rule and the purported realism of first- and second-century Gandhara sculpture produced under the guidance of the illusory Greco-Roman artist. In both cases, the overt emphasis on outwardness, an attempt to visualize the male body realistically, led to an inadequacy that was ultimately overcome by the Indian artist, or so Havell claimed, through a spiritual demasculinization, that is through imagining the male body as idealized without its virile strength and attendant conceptions of bodily form. Havell's 1911 *Ideals of Indian Art* further advanced this interpretation through the lens of nationalism, transcendentalism, and gender.

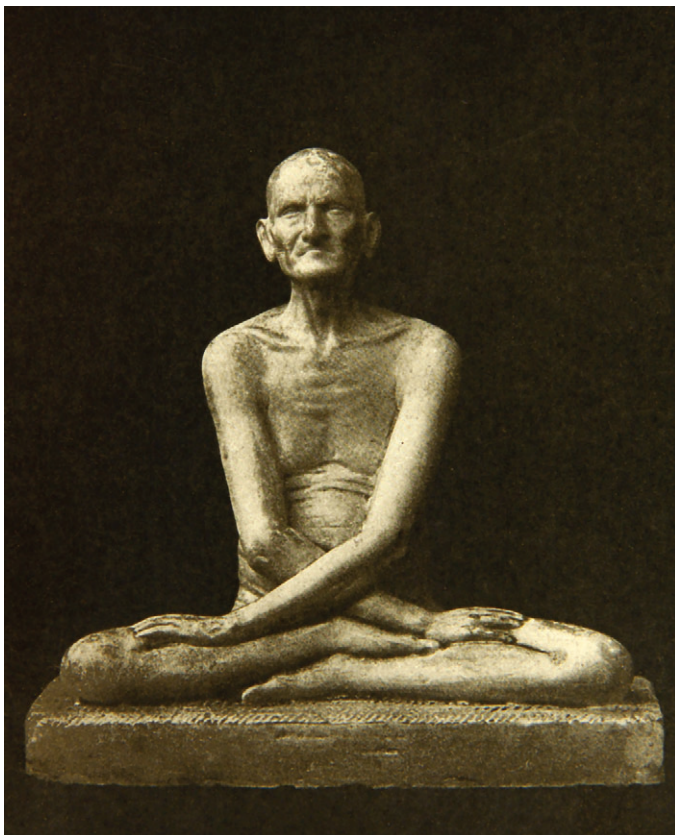
It is in *Ideals of Indian Art* that one sees Havell's generic theorization on the male body coming to fruition. As Havell noted:

It is upon spiritual beauty that the Indian artist is always insisting . . . It would be more exact to say that, in the images of Buddha, . . . Indian artists were aiming at a divine type which combined all the physical perfections of male and female, and transcended them both. The broad shoulders and lion-like body were derived from masculine characteristics, and the rounded limbs, smooth skin without veins, the joints with the bones hardly showing, represented those of the other sex.²⁷

That the text was published shortly after Foucher's lecture on the *gréco-bouddhique* art of the Gandhara region is worth noting. Foucher's imperialist collocation of the Gandhara Buddha with a purported Indic hybrid effeminacy that compromised an otherwise perfect Hellenic male body had already entrenched itself within Orientalist debates on Indian art. Adopting Foucher's vocabulary, Havell's text, however, deftly undermined the authority of colonial discourse through repetition. While colonial orchestration of the native male body as effete and nonthreatening had allowed for a production of both racial and racist difference, Havell displaced the colonizer's intention and authority by articulating an identical argument that inverted the terms of reference. For Havell, the perfection or the 'spiritual beauty' of the Buddha's body emerged through an exemplary conjoining of male and female physiognomies. This hybrid effeminacy, to use Foucher's vocabulary, then became the hallmark of Indian art. Havell's text thus appropriated colonial discourse to circuitously rearticulate it as a critique of the very text that it appropriated.

5 Sculpture of Swami Bhaskarananda Saraswati, c. nineteenth century CE. Plate I from Ernest B. Havell, *Indian Sculpture and Painting Illustrated by Typical Masterpieces, with an Explanation of their Motives and Ideals*, London: John Murray, 1908.

6 Fasting Siddhartha (Sakyamuni Buddha) from Sikri, c. second to third century CE. Grey schist, 84 cm (height). Lahore: Lahore Museum. Photo: Visual Resources Center, History of Art Department, University of California, Berkeley.



The Perfection of Demasculinization

Early twentieth-century art history's production of the demasculinized male body was both discursive and performative. While the search for properly masculine bodies in wide-ranging and disparate fields such as sports, psychiatry, and gymnastics arose from an internalization of the anxieties about the virility of the native body, E. B. Havell adopted an entirely different approach as the Principal of the Government School of Art, Calcutta (now Kolkata).²⁸ In the late 1890s, he began experimenting with the indigenization of the art school's curriculum. Along with discarding the plaster casts of Greco-Roman sculpture customarily used in drawing classes, Havell introduced a new art pedagogy based on yogic meditative practices.²⁹ Describing his new approach to pedagogy, Havell wrote in 1908: 'He [the student-artist] will sit down for an hour, a day, or a week, and create the picture in his own mind until he is ready to transfer it to paper or canvas. If he uses a model, he does so to create the mind-image, never in its realisation. A habit of intense mental concentration is required of the student artist from an early stage.'³⁰ This attempt to instruct students to draw through introvert mental visualization was, for Havell, closely analogous to earlier Hindu and Buddhist ritualized meditation.

The rejection of nineteenth-century European art pedagogy premised on copying Greco-Roman male nudes also needs to be read in conversation with concurrent debates in Paris, London, and Calcutta on the alleged Hellenic origin of the Buddha image. The male body as a site of political struggle lay at the heart of the debate, linking cultural production to struggles over subjectivity, agency, and power. Paradoxically, this struggle entailed a strategic embracing of the colonizer's aspersions in order to challenge the core definition of European hyper-masculinity. The colonizer's claim of the effeminacy of the native male body was thus rewritten by nationalist ideologues to make visible the purported demasculinized asceticism intrinsic to Buddhist sculpture. It is thus not surprising that Havell summarily hurled the plaster casts of Greco-Roman statuary into a pond adjacent to the school's premises in 1904. At the same time, the Bengali artist Abanindranath Tagore (1871–1951) – who would later emerge as the doyen of the 'Indian style' Bengal School of art – was inducted as the new Vice Principal to 'orientalize' the art school's curriculum.

After joining the Government School of Art in 1905, Tagore too started publishing extensively, further disseminating Havell's views on a new indigenous art pedagogy. Tagore's 1909 *Bharat Shilpa* (*Indian Art*), published within a year of Havell's *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, is seen by scholars, for instance Tapati Guha-Thakurta, as an emblematic treatise that attributed to Indian art a range of spiritual and transcendental characteristics.³¹ Certainly Tagore's writings from this period were a powerful manifesto of early twentieth-century spiritual nationalist art. In retrospect, *Bharat Shilpa* also emerges as a text internal to the anxieties and debates surrounding the male body politic that unfolded in colonial Calcutta in the backdrop of accumulative disquiet over the 1905 partition of Bengal under George N. Curzon, the Governor-General of India.³² Tagore's text, yet again, used the image of the meditating Buddha – an image that had appeared in Havell's *Indian Sculpture and Painting* as an expression of the 'divine ideal' and would become the site of contestation during the Royal Society of Arts debacle in the following year – as an exemplary alternative to the musculature of Greco-Roman anatomy.

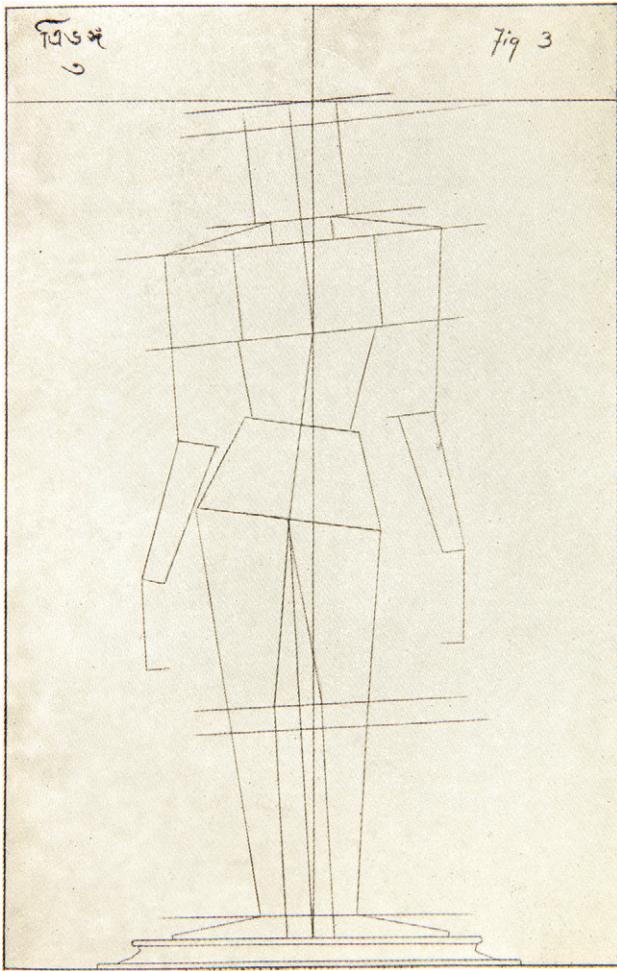
Tagore's vision of an idealized male body found a ready audience in his students, including Nandalal Bose (1882–1966) who would later become the Principal of Kala Bhavan, the art school established by the Nobel laureate and poet Rabindranath

7 Nandalal Bose, *The Temptation of Buddha*, c. 1910. Watercolour on paper, original dimensions unknown. Frontispiece from Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1916.



Tagore (1861–1941) in rural Santiniketan in 1922. It is in Bose's delicate gouaches from this period that we find the strongest imprint of his teacher's philosophy. *The Temptation of Buddha*, a watercolour of the emaciated Siddhartha before he achieved enlightenment, thus shows the graceful body of a young man deep in meditation (plate 7). The elongated face, rounded shoulders, a soft flowing body, and slender arms of the young Siddhartha in Bose's painting was, indeed, a far cry from the skeletal body of the emaciated Buddha in Gandhara sculpture or even Havell's 'decadent modern statuette' of the Varanasi-based ascetic Bhaskarananda Saraswati.

Bose's paintings from this period have become important in recent scholarship to chart the production of an 'androgynous male body ... around which male desire, female bodies and a romanticized notion of art coalesced'.³³ Yet, the political vicissitudes of Bose's 'androgynous' male body was not just a product of nationalist art practice. Rather, art making, art history, archaeology and museology, along with



8 Nandalal Bose or K. Venkatappa, *Tribhanga*, c. 1913. Drawing on paper, original dimensions unknown. Figure 3 from Abanindranath Tagore, *Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy*, Calcutta: Indian Society of Oriental Art, 1914.

art pedagogy, were brought together in a close bind in fin de siècle Calcutta. Certainly, one senses in the artist's delineation of the emaciated Siddhartha a trace of the body type that had emerged in late fifth-century Sarnath, especially in the graceful rendering of the rounded shoulders and arms (see *plate 1*). The painting, I propose, anticipated a new turn in nationalist art history that would soon demarcate fifth-century sculptures from Sarnath as the primary locus of an Indian classicism.³⁴ Indeed, the painting would be prominently foregrounded as the frontispiece in Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's 1916 *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, a text that had merged art and metaphysics to establish a spiritualist genealogy of Indian nationalism.³⁵ I will return to the art historian and aesthete Ananda Coomaraswamy's interjections later in the essay. Let me first further amplify the discursive triangulation of art making, art history, and pedagogy that I suggest shaped the invention of the demasculinized male body.

Over the next few years, Bose's teacher, Abanindranath Tagore, published a series of books, essays, and articles that demarcated a domain of Indian art that encompassed a transcendent aesthetic, with yogic meditation as its most distinctive characteristic. Tagore's 1914 *Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy*, an English translation of a Bengali essay published in the nationalist journal *Prabasi* in 1913, thus examined

precolonial indigenous conventions of visualizing the body as an alternative to European academic realism.³⁶ The essay, illustrated by the artists Nandalal Bose and K. Venkatappa (1887–1962), focused on texts such as the *Śukranītisāra*, a treatise on moral kingship, and the *Pratimālakṣaṇa*, a tract on iconographic conventions, to formulate a germane theory of picturing the body (*plate 8*).

Tagore had selected his texts carefully. Based on earlier Sanskrit sources, the seventeenth-century *Śukranītisāra*, for instance, provided an analogy between the body of the monarch and the body of the divine.³⁷ One could contend that the seventeenth-century text had aligned the 'body natural', that is the mortal body of the king, and the 'body politic', the mystical body of the god, to generate an ethical moral royal body.³⁸ While the implications of the seventeenth-century merging of the political and the theological is beyond the scope of this essay, Tagore's interpolations on the *Śukranītisāra* become noteworthy when read alongside the conflicts over the native male body in colonial India. It is no coincidence that Tagore turned to a precolonial philosophy of corporeality, one that was premised on conjoining the theological and the political, to visualize the male body in early twentieth-century Calcutta. The palimpsest of the body of the god and the body of the king in the *Śukranītisāra* was founded on the monarch's divine sovereignty. In turn, when reformulated through a creative appropriation of the *Śukranītisāra*'s political, moral, and theological configurations, the early twentieth-century transcendent male body became synonymous with the claim for national sovereignty. The *Śukranītisāra*'s suggestion of 'contemplative vision' (*yoga dhyana*), rather than 'direct observation' (*pratyakṣa*), as



9 Standing Buddha from Sarnath, c. fifth century CE. Sandstone, 127 cm (height). New Delhi: National Museum. Photo: Author.

fundamental to image-making practices allowed Tagore to push the colonized native body against its discursive limits.³⁹ This then was the politics of early twentieth-century nationalist art history that challenged the European hyper-masculine body through appropriating the colonizer's logic of the native male as both effeminate and untouched by modern body mappings.

Tagore's authorial self-representation thus ironically proceeded from the structures of colonial power to expand its frameworks in ways that challenged the very structures it was born of. His own interpolations in *Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy* were centred on specific body postures discussed in the Sanskrit treatises. Writing on the *tribhanga*, the triple-bent posture widely used in Indian sculpture, Tagore noted:

Thus the figure is inclined in a zig-zag or curve like the stems of a lotus or like an ascending flame. . . . This is the usual attitude of all yugal figures, or of divine couples. This bending attitude, or the seeking poise of the male and female figure may however be occasionally reversed, so that the figures lean away from each other, the male assuming the female bhanga and the female assuming the pose of a male figure.⁴⁰

Emphasizing the possibility of fluid mutability in the gendered divine body, that is the reversibility of the markers of gender in sculptures depicting divine beings, Tagore laid out a theory that could account for the Buddha's effeminate body.

Indeed, unlike earlier depictions of the Buddha's body, one of the key features of late fifth-century Buddhist sculptures from Sarnath was the deployment of the triple-bent or the *tribhanga* posture (plate 9). Consequently, Tagore's interpolations on the relationship between gender and iconometric systems in precolonial aesthetic theories led him to claim the Sarnath Buddha as an embodiment of the purported demasculinized male body. In direct contrast to the larger nationalist public debate that presented the effeminate male body as a product and effect of colonialism, Tagore posited a *longue durée* history that valorized demasculinization as an affirmative site of indigenous utopianism. A creative reading of precolonial political theologies enunciated in texts such as the *Śukranītisāra* then engendered a privileged vocabulary that sanctioned Tagore, among others, to liberate the colonized body from the prison house of European scientificism and secular rationality that had shaped the modern male body.⁴¹

The illustration of the *tribhanga*, described in *Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy* as a 'literal rendering of the approved formulae'⁴² of the *Śukranītisāra*, shows a futuristic pedestalled body (see plate 8). With a distinctive inclining of the hip and the neck to one side, the figure, nonetheless, depicts a characteristic pose commonly employed for the representation of the female body in premodern Indian sculpture. Yet, in this particular drawing, the figure's gender becomes difficult to determine. By draining the body of its gender, of both its masculinity and femininity, the drawing by Tagore's students gave visual form to the pedagogue's elaborations on the demasculinized body.

While the use of the *tribhanga* in rendering the body of the Buddha in fifth-century sculpture from Sarnath would receive significant attention in later art history, early interlocutions by artists, aesthetes, and critics such as Tagore allow us to rethink the many histories of turn-of-the-century nationalist masculinities.⁴³ In the past, scholars have highlighted the emergence of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century aggressive nationalist physical cultures as a response to colonial accusations of the effeminacy of the Indian male body.⁴⁴ Although artists and pedagogues such as Tagore, Bose, and Havell did not condemn the bellicose masculinity postulated by contemporaneous nationalism, they undoubtedly attempted to rewrite the

demasculinized body as a national allegory. It is these contending claims to the male body as national allegory – one framed through belligerent hyper-masculinisms and the other through metaphysical demasculinization – that obfuscates customary histories of the gendered arena of nationalist ferment.⁴⁵

The Ecologies of Transubstantiation

A c. 1920 relief print by Nandalal Bose depicting the Tagore studio perhaps best illustrates the vectors that transformed the demasculinized male body into a valorized site of a nationalist self (plate 10). Based on a sketch from 1910 that is now lost, the print shows members of the Tagore family, including the artist's mentor Abanindranath, reading and smoking. Bose portrayed himself in the foreground working on a painting. On the far left, the art historian, geologist, and aesthete Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1877–1947) can be seen reclining on a low divan. Travelling frequently to India between 1907 and 1913, Coomaraswamy did, indeed, spend long periods with the Tagores in Calcutta. Situated at the heart of the alleged black town, the Tagore residence had, by this time, become a nodal point where intellectuals, mostly with anti-imperial leanings, gathered to debate the possibility of the re-emergence of a sovereign Asia through aesthetic self-expression.

It was here that the Japanese aesthete Kakuzo Okakura (1862–1913) completed his first major work in 1903, which outlined his ambitious mission for the spiritual reawakening of Asia in opposition to European political and cultural hegemony.⁴⁶ Coomaraswamy, who was then living in England, also sought out the Tagores shortly after his arrival in Calcutta in 1907. In 1910, he organized an exhibition for the Indian Society of Oriental Art, an art society established in Calcutta by the Tagores and a group of British enthusiasts of Indian art.⁴⁷ Bose's sketch from the same year depicted the Tagores and Coomaraswamy languidly reposing in the inner chambers of the Tagore house. Paintings and statuettes arranged on a shelf in the background suggest a space where art making and *adda*, the quintessential Bengali form of sociability, blended into each other.

A 'serpentine'⁴⁸ Coomaraswamy reaches out to a painting by Bose. Sprawled on a low divan, the aesthete with his gold earrings, bracelets, graceful fingers, flowing hair, and shawl is the paradigmatic image of the languid feminized Oriental male created from within the web of colonial governance. As early as 1763, Robert Orme, a British historian who had spent time in India, had deliberated on 'the general effeminacy of character which is visible in all the Indians throughout the empire'.⁴⁹ By the nineteenth century, James Mill, the influential historian of British India, had declared that the 'feminine softness' of Indian men could be attributed to centuries of Oriental despotism while Thomas B. Macaulay, a member of the Supreme Council of the Governor-General of India, unequivocally stated that the 'physical organization' of Bengali men was 'feeble even to effeminacy. He lives in a constant vapour bath. His pursuits are sedentary, his limbs delicate, his movements languid.'⁵⁰

At the same time, indigenous male sartorial cultures, especially the attire of the Indian elite, was marked in colonial British writing as 'giving them ... an air of effeminacy'.⁵¹ Writing on the Westernization of the Indian male wardrobe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Emma Tarlo thus notes that the adoption of European styles was an attempt to circumnavigate colonial denunciations of contemporaneous male clothing cultures.⁵² The biosocial pathologies of European Indology, British history-writing, and the colonial bureaucracy thus led to imperial formulations that sought to mark both the native male body and the clothes that embellished it as a site to be colonized. In turn, an internalization of colonial



10 Nandalal Bose, *The Studio of Abanindranath Tagore Depicted around 1909–1910 at Jorasanko, Calcutta, c. 1920*. Relief print, 24.13 × 29.2 cm. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts (66.968). Photo: © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

accusations led to new reactive nationalist body practices of gymnastics, dietary reform, and the formation of secret societies such as the Calcutta-based Anusilan Samiti (literally Culture Society, established in 1902) to develop new masculinist cultures.⁵³ At the same time, the widespread adoption of European shirts with collar and cuffs led to the establishment of British tailoring firms catering to elite Bengali men in the city.⁵⁴

In sharp contrast to this 'redemptive pedagogy of manliness',⁵⁵ Coomaraswamy and the Tagores strategically performed the colonial stereotype of the effeminate native male. In 1905, Coomaraswamy, for instance, had condemned the adoption of European clothes in early twentieth-century Sri Lanka as indicative of the 'destruction of national character'⁵⁶ under colonial rule. A seven-page essay published by the aesthete, appropriately titled *Borrowed Plumes*, led to the formation of the Ceylon Social Reform Society, an organization devoted to the preservation and revival of traditional arts and crafts, in the very next year. Photographs of Coomaraswamy from this period operate as transcripts of this cunning self-orientalizing (plate 11). Unlike earlier portraits that depict the aesthete in well-tailored Western suits, most photographs of Coomaraswamy from 1907 onwards characteristically show him in indigenous clothes.⁵⁷ Kurtas (a loose upper garment), embroidered shawls, elaborate turbans, and gold jewellery appear to have dominated the scholar's wardrobe and sartorial self-fashioning. In illustrating a group of 'effeminate' aesthetes and artists garbed in native clothes in the interior spaces of the Tagore household, Bose's 1920 print was thus certainly not off the mark.

Scholarship has, however, read the early twentieth-century adoption of indigenous fabric and the concurrent nationalist denouncement of cloth manufactured in British mills solely through the lens of political economies.⁵⁸ The *swadeshi* (of one's country) movement that erupted in Calcutta in 1905 was, scholars have noted, a rejoinder to both the 1905 partition of Bengal under Curzon and successive British economic policies that had devastated the region. Yet, the banality of this sartorial orientaling of the body, I suggest, also emerged from a strategic disavowal of the masculine regeneration that governed contemporaneous nationalist public discourse.⁵⁹ As a creative, indeed aesthetic, reworking of colonial allegations of the effeminate native body, Coomaraswamy thus unambiguously declared: 'Swadeshi must be something more than a political weapon. It must be a religious-artistic ideal.'⁶⁰

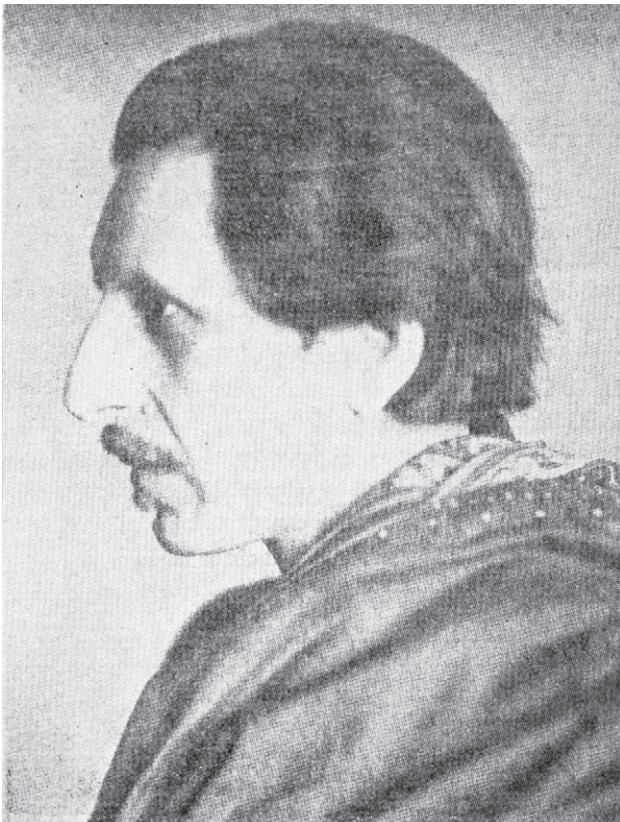
Art history followed. Ananda Coomaraswamy's critique of the Western preoccupation with Gandhara sculpture was first articulated in a lecture at the 1908 Oriental Congress in Copenhagen. Here, he argued for an independent evolution of an Indian artistic ideal.⁶¹ Positing a fundamental difference between the spirit of classical Greek art and 'true' Indian art, he maintained that the former sought the mimesis of nature whereas the latter sought its transcendence. Subsequently, in 1908, he published his first major text, *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, a book that engaged with the *Śukranīṭisāra* – the seventeenth-century treatise that would also form the core of Abanindranath Tagore's 1914 *Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy* – to suggest that the Indian artist's dexterity in visualizing the transcendent body was dependent on his yogic skills. In the following year, Coomaraswamy further explored the relationship between yoga and the idealized male body in Indian sculpture in an essay in *Orpheus*, a journal published by the Theosophical Society.⁶² His decision to publish in the Society's journal was certainly strategic. Established in 1875 in New York, the Theosophical Society had been responsible for internationally disseminating a distinct type of esotericism presented as

yoga.⁶³ Thus, the insertion of a discussion on aesthetic practices in the Society's journal allowed Coomaraswamy to present his proposition to a global audience.

Over the next few years, the aesthete systematically pursued this line of thought. His 1916 essay in *The Burlington Magazine*, for instance, began with the statement: 'Before, however, we speak of the Buddha images, we must refer to a phase of religious experience, which plays a great part in the development of Buddhism. This is the practice of Yoga.'⁶⁴ Unlike the 'stodgy', 'smug', and 'complacent'⁶⁵ male bodies in sculptures from the Gandhara region, figures of the meditating Buddha from sites such as Amaravati in central India and Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka provided Coomaraswamy with a felicitous link between the archetypal image of the seated *yogin* and the male body in Buddhist sculpture (plate 12). Since yoga was autochthonous to Indic cultures, the image of the Buddha too was of Indian origin, Coomaraswamy contended.

Much like Havell's manipulation of the illustrations that accompanied *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, the photograph of the c. fifth-century Samadhi (meditating or *dhyana*) Buddha from the Abhayagiriya monastery at Anuradhapura published in *The Burlington Magazine* makes visible the author's deployment of photography in

II Portrait of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 1916.
Frontispiece from *The Hindustanee Student: Official Monthly Organ of Hindustan Association of America*, 2: 7, April 1916.



highlighting the aestheticized male body.⁶⁶ The illustration was a cropped reproduction of a c. 1890 albumen print by the photographer William Louis Henry Skeen (1847–1903).⁶⁷ Trained at the London School of Photography, Skeen had established Skeen-Photo in Colombo, a successful commercial studio that published picture postcards based on the photographer's works (plate 13). Coomaraswamy, who would later become an advocate of pictorialists such as Alfred Stieglitz, carefully masked the adjacent archaeological debris that was clearly discernible in Skeen's postcard. This masking allowed Coomaraswamy to present the Buddha as the *yogin*, meditating in the midst of nature seated on what appeared to be a barely visible rock-strewn outcrop. Serenity, albeit fictitious, was thus produced.

Skeen's photograph, which Coomaraswamy adopted, however, showed the sculpture dexterously balanced on blocks of stone excavated at the monastic site. A young boy posed in front of the sculpture provided a sense of scale. A prescriptive technique of documenting archaeological monuments in colonial India, British draftsmen and photographers frequently used such isolated native figures as a diminutive scale guide. In Anuradhapura itself, the late nineteenth century had seen a series of colonial intercessions that had led to the clearing of forests, the building of new roads, and systematic archaeological excavations. Attempts had also been made to establish a local museum to preserve objects excavated at the site.⁶⁸ Skeen's photograph thus offered a view of the convergence among colonial expansion, the control over land and bodies, and the production of archaeological knowledge.

This landscape of colonial domination was completely elided in Coomaraswamy's appropriation. The aesthete meticulously cropped the photograph to remove all traces of archaeological interpolations, and, as an extension, all marks of colonial time and space. The image published in *The Burlington Magazine* consequently framed the space of the Abhayagiriya monastery at Anuradhapura as a site of pristine wilderness untouched

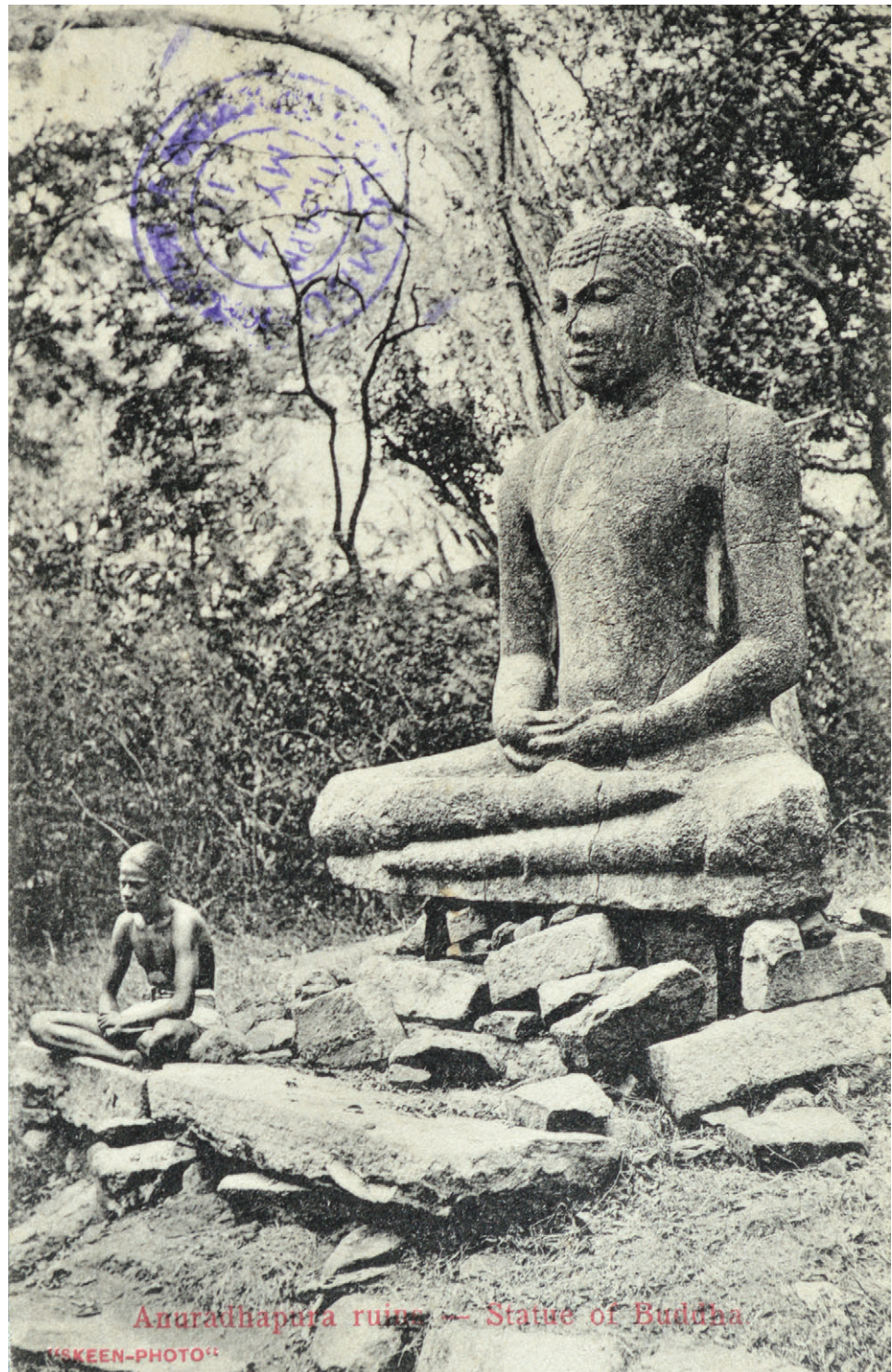
by colonialism. Certainly, it was common knowledge that ascetics lived away from society in mountains and forests. At the site of Anuradhapura, the establishment of forest groves and garden monasteries in the fourth and fifth centuries had led to the formation of a distinct Buddhist soteriology centred on merging the ascetic's body with nature.⁶⁹ The close cropping of Skeen's original photograph then enabled Coomaraswamy to highlight the contemplative wilderness of a fabled Anuradhapura and resituate the sensual textures of the body of the Buddha in allegorical space. In effect, an imagined intimacy was forged between unmapped uncolonized nature and the male body placed in it.

It was, however, in his 1927 *Art Bulletin* essay on the origin of the Buddha image that Coomaraswamy lucidly denounced the colonialist tenor of earlier European art history that had posited the Gandhara region as the crucible where contact with the Hellenic world had led to the visualization of the Buddha's body.⁷⁰ While the Russian-born scholar Victor Goloubew, in a 1923 review of Foucher's text, had unambiguously asserted that images of the Buddha from central India preceded those from the Gandhara region, Coomaraswamy's 1927 essay pressed further to suggest that Foucher's argument, which, for the author, was characteristic

12 Manipulated reproduction of William Louis Henry Skeen's c. 1890 photograph of a Buddha from Anuradhapura, c. 1915. Plate II from Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 'Buddhist Primitives (Conclusion)', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 28: 156, March 1916. Photo: © The Burlington Magazine Publications Limited.



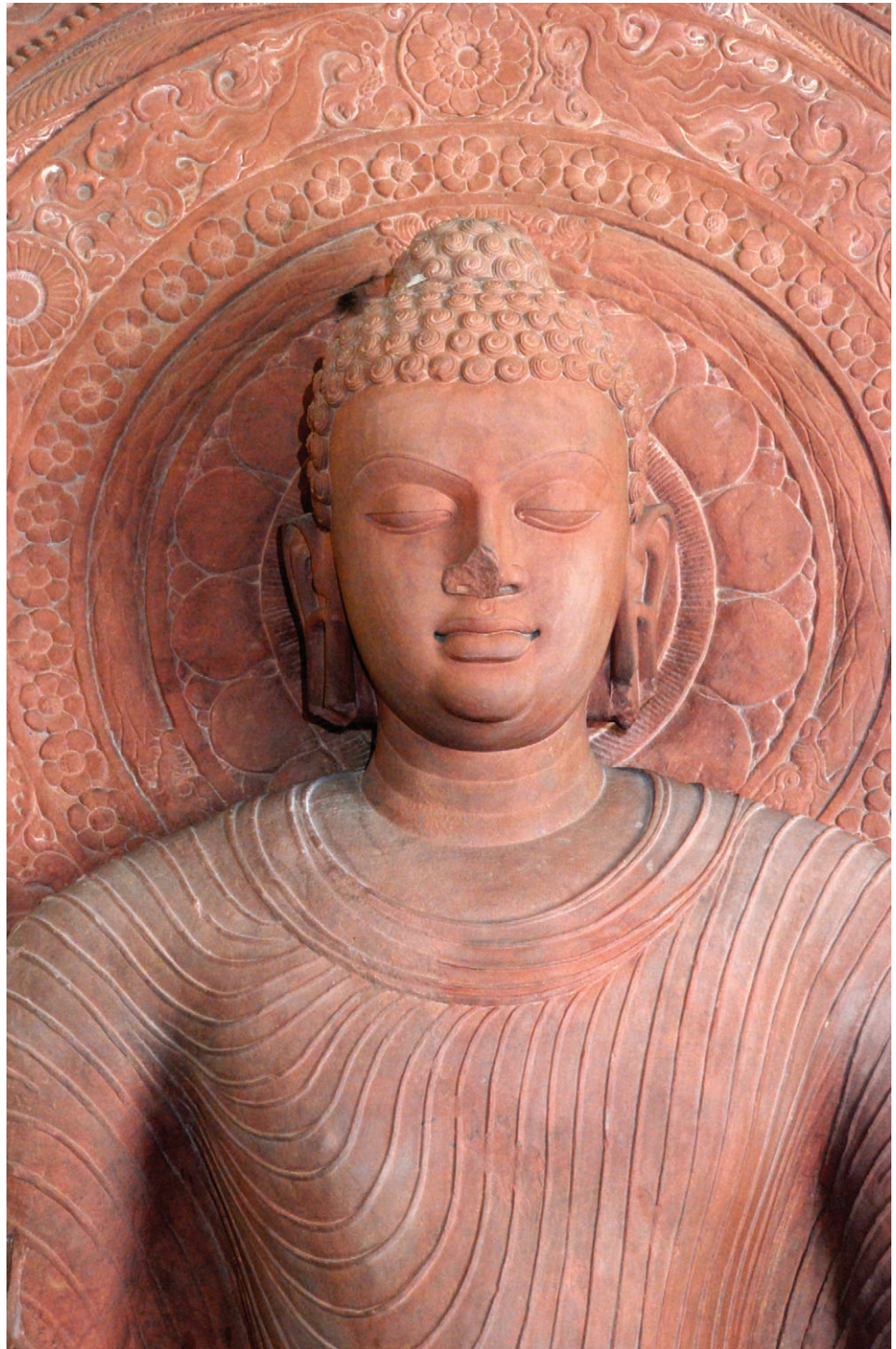
13 Skeen-Photo,
Anuradhapura Ruins – Statue
of Buddha, c. 1905. Postcard,
13.9 × 8.9 cm. Collection of
the author. Photo: Author.



of earlier European art history, had been motivated by a colonizing mentality.⁷¹ As Coomaraswamy put it:

This view was put forward, as M. Foucher himself admits, in a manner best calculated to flatter the prejudices of European students and to offend the susceptibilities of Indians: the creative genius of Greece had provided a model which had later been barbarized and degraded by races devoid of true artistic instincts, to whom nothing deserving the name of fine art could be credited.⁷²

14 Detail of standing Buddha from Jamalpur, Mathura, mid-fifth century CE. Sandstone, 220 cm (height). Mathura: Mathura Museum. Photo: Frederick M. Asher.



Yet again, the art historian brought together yoga and body cultures to assert an autochthonous national art, a purportedly pure expression of Indian intellect and creativity, in sculptures from sites such as Anuradhapura. In retrospect, the *Art Bulletin* essay marks a significant moment in the making of a nationalist art history.

The imagined equivalence between uncolonized nature and the aestheticized male body as symbolic artefact, however, received most careful attention in the writings of the Moravian-Austrian art historian Stella Kramrisch, who had completed her doctoral dissertation on early Buddhist sculpture at the University of Vienna in 1919. Methodologically, Kramrisch remained close to her mentor, Josef Strzygowski (1862–

1941), who had approached the symbolism of visual form through a metaphysical framework.⁷³ Thus, it is in the European disciplinarity of the Vienna School, within which one could place Kramrisch, that we also find its most persuasive anti-colonial strand. The Tagores had mediated Kramrisch's engagement with the nationalist circles in Calcutta after she was invited in 1921 to join Kala Bhavan, the art school established by the Tagores in Santiniketan. Although Stella Kramrisch delivered a series of lectures on European art from the Gothic to Dadaism immediately after arriving in Kala Bhavan, she joined the University of Calcutta in 1923 as the first professor of Indian art history at the request of Asutosh Mukherjee, the vice-chancellor of the university.

It was after reaching Calcutta that Kramrisch directly confronted the question of the 'effeminate' body of the Buddha through speculative frames of theology and metaphysics. Rejecting the master narrative of colonial art history, her 1933 *Indian Sculpture* thus juxtaposed the 'slenderness' of the late fifth-century Sarnath Buddha with the 'tough' body in early Buddhist sculpture. In this seminal text that would subsequently define the historiography of Buddhist art history, Kramrisch proceeded to read the male body as nature itself. The slender body in late fifth-century Buddhist figures, she proposed, was an effect of transubstantiation that resulted from the vegetal or the natural migrating into the male body to make the body its vessel. Noting that decorative devices such as lotus creepers that had adorned earlier Buddhist sculptures disappeared from compositions in the fifth century, Kramrisch wrote: 'The body becomes plant-like in swaying rhythm and plasticity; it is the vessel of the movement of the physical and of inner life. The human

body does not stand for physical appearance. It is the form of movement of life' (see plate 1).⁷⁴

Indeed, unlike earlier images of the Buddha from Mathura with elaborately ornamented nimbuses wreathed with radiating lotus petals, effusive floral scrolls, garlands, and rosettes, late fifth-century sculptures of the Buddha from Sarnath were relatively unembellished (plate 14). For Kramrisch, the decrease in botanical motifs in the fifth century was indicative of the male body absorbing the vegetal within its sinuous form. The body had become nature. Through a meticulous visual analysis of this transformation in Buddhist sculpture, Kramrisch then proceeded to demonstrate how the male body was reshaped in the late fifth century to make its plant life visible. Unlike earlier Buddhist sculptures, the slender 'tendrillike' body of the late fifth-century Sarnath Buddha was not, she argued, merely an image of a corporeal male being. Rather, as a visualization of an embodied philosophy of the movement of life, the body was the 'without when transferred into the within becomes identical there with the beyond'.⁷⁵ This new fifth-century body type was, for Kramrisch, a product of transubstantiation that occurred when the body of the divine metamorphosed into a representation of both physical body and inner life.

By the early fifth century, the process of transubstantiation had already commenced. Kramrisch noted that botanical motifs no longer appeared in fifth-century sculpture. Unlike the abundance of floral motifs

15 Detail of architectural lintel from Gadhwa near Allahabad, early fifth century CE. Sandstone, 31 × 180 × 28 cm. Lucknow: Lucknow State Museum. Photo: Author.





16 Abanindranath Tagore, *Mother India*, c. 1910. Chromolithograph by The Indian Press, Allahabad, 48.3 × 34.3 cm. Collection of the author. Photo: Author.

in Buddhist sculpture from Mathura, the lithesome male bodies depicted on an early fifth-century architectural lintel from Gadhwa, a site near Allahabad, were placed on an undecorated surface without any representation of flora (plate 15). This, for her, presented a sharp contrast from earlier depictions of the body. This transfigured body had emerged, Kramrisch claimed, because of an awareness of the corporeal modulations achieved through yogic breathing. Describing the male bodies in the Gadhwa relief as a visualization of subtle body or *sukshmasarira* practices, she wrote in *Indian Sculpture*: 'This distils the toughness of the body, so to speak, to the purest plastic essence. It is caught at a definite stage of inbreathing, and, with breath suspended, the shoulders expand, support and uphold the rest of the seemingly weightless body.'⁷⁶ It was, however, with the late fifth-century Sarnath Buddha that this process of visualizing embodied breathing came to its fullest realization.

Yet, the association between yoga and early Indian Buddhism, so evocatively affirmed by both Kramrisch and Ananda Coomaraswamy in the early twentieth century, had been a matter of vigorous debate in Indological circles in the late nineteenth century.⁷⁷ Recent scholarship has likewise suggested that the earliest datable evidence of the *sukshmasarira* practice – practices based on moving breath or *prana* along the internal channels of the body – appeared only in the seventh or the eighth century.⁷⁸ Indeed, the early Buddhist textual canon explicitly rejected yogic breathing. The *Mahāsaccakasutta*, *The Greater Discourse to Saccaka*, for instance, reports a debate between the Buddha and the ascetic Aggivessana on the merits of yogic breathing. In response to the ascetic's

praise of yogic exercises as a meaningful form of meditation, the Buddha states: 'Suppose I practice further the breathingless meditation. So I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears. While I did so, there was a violent burning in my body. . . . But although tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness was established, my body was overwrought and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving.'⁷⁹ The definite refutation of yogic breathing in the early Buddhist canon, along with empirical evidence indicating a later date for the emergence of subtle body practices in the subcontinent, suggests that Kramrisch's collocation of the vegetal Sarnath body type and yogic breathing was factually incorrect, an aspect in her writing that art historians such as Charles Fabri and Walter Spink would later describe as 'inaccuracies', 'idiosyncrasies', and 'splendid perversities'.⁸⁰

Yet, Kramrisch's imagination of the Buddha's body as nature itself had a specific and undeniably inventive resonance within the early twentieth-century intellectual milieu of Calcutta. Notably, Kramrisch's reappraisal of the late fifth-century Sarnath Buddha operated alongside a recognizable anti-colonial nationalist trope that had skilfully brought together the vegetal and the feminine as delineating generative potential. While the palimpsest of the female body and nature can certainly be traced back to the age of colonial exploration and the Enlightenment scientificism of figures

such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century anti-colonial nationalism had re-engaged the analogy between the feminine and nature to imagine the geo-body of the nation as Mother India, the bountiful mother.⁸¹

Although the conception of India as a female deity had materialized in Calcutta as early as 1866, it was the Bengali novelist Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838–94) who gave this new mother goddess visceral form in his celebrated 1875 hymn *Bande Mataram* (Hail to the Mother).⁸² The poet Rabindranath Tagore had sung the hymn at the 1896 annual session of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta, and it would soon emerge as the rallying call for Swadeshi politics. In turn, nature as mother found visual representation as *Mother India* in a 1905 gouache painting by the artist Abanindranath Tagore. The painting would not only be enlarged and carried in anti-colonial processions in Calcutta but was also mass reproduced and circulated as a lithograph (plate 16). The artist's imagination of the motherland as a female ascetic offering food, clothing, spiritual redemption, and education cogently arranged the natural and the feminine geo-body into a remarkable field of patriotic desire.

The transcendental male body – a male body that could achieve sovereignty through a nature-oriented practice of corporeal poetics – too had to be demasculinized. It is precisely this investment in the nationalist body politic that led Kramrisch to contend that the Sarnath Buddha's soft graceful proportions could have only been materialized through a bodily absorption of the feminine vegetal. This resignification of the male body as both a sign and a space of an imagined national sovereignty was, I thus suggest, the most audacious manoeuvre that animated anti-colonial art history in the early twentieth century.

'What, exactly, is involved in writing a history of masculinity?'⁸³

It would not be far-fetched to state that art-historical scholarship on gender in India has largely revolved around questions of the production, control, and representation of the female body.⁸⁴ The few intermittent studies that do focus on the male body have analyzed the visualization of the body in artistic practices or the mobilization of new masculinities by Hindu right-wing political forces.⁸⁵ In offering a deracinated account of masculinity, one that is neither an account of 'real' men nor of male bodies as efficacious bio-social beings, this essay, in contrast, suggests that gender is 'always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed'.⁸⁶ Rather than a speech-act by a sovereign subject, 'expressions of gender' or 'doing', Judith Butler reminds us, constitutively form the subject.⁸⁷ Gender is, indeed, performatively constituted.

As this essay has sought to highlight, an examination of the materially grounded practices of both living and imagining brings to the forefront fundamental questions about power as it was, and continues to be, reformulated through art history, archaeology, pedagogy, and art practices. The history of the male body in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century India is, consequently, fundamentally about the power of recognition positioned within a matrix of social, cultural, aesthetic, and political action. Revisiting Ananda Coomaraswamy and Stella Kramrisch's astute interpolations on the body of the Buddha then allows for a productive re-engagement with the multiple modes through which gender was 'done' in colonial India. The strategies of demasculinization as a mode of self-orientalizing that this essay delineates suggest that new hegemonies of Hindu remasculinization, as a form of the internalization of colonial effeminacy, was not the only method through which the male body was conceived in the early twentieth century. We may have overlooked the multiple, indeed fractured, fields in which the subject 'man' (like the subject 'woman') became a nomenclature populated by divergent desires, politics, and anxieties.

Notes

- 1 Stella Kramrisch, 'The subtle body of India', *Art News*, 52: 5, September 1953, 19–20.
- 2 Kramrisch, 'The subtle body', 19–20.
- 3 Heinrich R. Zimmer, *Kunstform und Yoga im indischen Kultbild*, Berlin, 1926, 31.
- 4 Although recent scholarship on the history of yoga in India has demarcated a rich arena of Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain body cultures that led to the development of diverse yogic practices, this essay argues that the imagined association between the male body in early Buddhist sculpture and the yogic body was a strategic palimpsest on part of early twentieth-century art history. For a recent engagement with the multivalent histories of yoga, see Debra Diamond, ed., *Yoga: The Art of Transformation*, Washington, DC, 2013. This essay was initially written for a conference organized in conjunction with the 2013 *Yoga* exhibition at the Sackler Gallery. I am grateful to Nancy Micklewright and Debra Diamond for the occasion to develop ideas presented here.
- 5 For an analysis of early twentieth-century nationalist art history, see Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, New Delhi, 2004.
- 6 Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Manchester, 1995; Indira Chowdhury, *The Frail Hero and the Virile History: Gender and the Politics of Culture in Colonial Bengal*, New Delhi, 1998.
- 7 For a history of hyper-masculine nationalisms in India, see Sikata Banerjee, *Make Me a Man! Masculinity, Hinduism, and Nationalism in India*, Albany, NY, 2005; and Joseph S. Alter, *The Wrestler's Body: Identity and Ideology in North India*, Berkeley, CA, 1992, among others.
- 8 Swami Vivekananda, 'Vedanta and its application to Indian life', *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati Memorial Edition vol. 3, Calcutta, 1962, 174.
- 9 Even as this essay argues for an 'Indian' art history, I have not attempted to enumerate art histories in a national framework. Rather, the narrative is set in colonial Calcutta and may well be designated the history of art history in a particular regional context. The tenor of art histories being written in other colonial cities in India, for instance in Bombay, may have had different imperatives. Nonetheless, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Calcutta, as Andrew Sartori and others have argued, was central to a historical configuration of modernity 'that produced Bengal's privilege as the historiographical center' of colonial India. Andrew Sartori, *Bengal in Global Concept History: Culturalism in the Age of Capital*, Chicago, IL, 2008, 9.
- 10 Stella Kramrisch, 'Die figurale Plastik der Guptazeit', *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, 5, 1931, 15–39. Alan Shapiro translated the essay into English with further revisions by Kramrisch. The notes in this essay refer to the 1983 reprint. Stella Kramrisch, 'Figural sculpture of the Gupta period', in Barbara S. Miller, ed., *Exploring India's Sacred Art: Selected Writings of Stella Kramrisch*, Philadelphia, PA 1983, 181–203. Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, London, 1933.
- 11 Kramrisch, 'Figural sculpture of the Gupta period', 192.
- 12 Alfred C. A. Foucher, *The Beginnings of Buddhist Art And Other Essays in Indian and Central-Asian Archaeology*, trans. L. A. Thomas and F. W. Thomas, Paris, 1917.
- 13 Alfred Foucher, 'L'origine grecque de l'image du Bouddha', *Annales du musée Guimet: Bibliothèque de vulgarisation*, XXXVII, 1913, 231–72. The essay was translated into English and published as Foucher, 'The Greek origin of the image of Buddha', *The Beginnings of Buddhist Art*, 111–38.
- 14 Although European scholars such as Gottlieb W. Leitner had already described Buddhist sculptures from Gandhara as 'Graeco-Buddhist' by the 1870s, it was Foucher who most strongly advocated the Hellenic origin of Gandhara Buddhist sculpture. See Gottlieb W. Leitner, 'Graeco-Buddhist sculpture', *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, 7: 13/14, January and April 1894, 186–9. Foucher's arguments were originally presented in Alfred C. A. Foucher, *L'Art gréco-bouddhique du Gandhâra: Études sur les Origines de l'Influence Classique dans l'Art Bouddhique de l'Inde et de l'Extrême-Orient*, Paris, 1905.
- 15 Foucher, 'The Greek origin', 119.
- 16 For recent reappraisals of the debate, see Stanley K. Abe, 'Inside the wonder house: Buddhist art and the West', in Donald S. Lopez Jr., ed., *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism*, Chicago, IL, 1995, 63–106; and Ashley Thompson, 'In the absence of the Buddha: "Aniconism" and the contentions of Buddhist art history', in Rebecca M. Brown and Deborah S. Hutton, eds, *A Companion to Asian Art and Architecture*, Malden, MA, 2011, 398–420.
- 17 Foucher, 'The Greek origin', 120.
- 18 Foucher, 'The Greek origin', 133.
- 19 Ernest B. Havell, 'Art administration in India', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, lvi/2985, 4 February 1910, 273–98.
- 20 Letter to *The Times*, 28 February 1910. Cited in Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art*, Oxford, 1977, 270.
- 21 Ernest B. Havell, *Indian Sculpture and Painting illustrated by Typical Masterpieces, with an Explanation of their Motives and Ideals*, London, 1908, Plate II.
- 22 Havell, *Indian Sculpture*, 28.
- 23 Havell, *Indian Sculpture*, 36.
- 24 Havell, *Indian Sculpture*, 25.
- 25 The late nineteenth-century European invention of a new idealized male body based on classical Greco-Roman sculpture is discussed in Tamar Garb, *Bodies of Modernity: Figure and Flesh in Fin-de-siècle France*, London, 1998, especially chapter two. Also see David J. Getsy, *Body Doubles: Sculpture in Britain, 1877–1905*, New Haven and London, 2004.
- 26 For the Archaeological Survey of India's deployment of photography, see essays in Maria A. Pelizzari, ed., *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture, and the Politics of Representation, 1850–1900*, New Haven, 2003.
- 27 Ernest B. Havell, *The Ideals of Indian Art*, London, 1911, 95–96.
- 28 For turn-of-the-century formulations on the male body, see essays in James H. Mill and Satadru Sen, eds, *Confronting the Body: The Politics of Physicality in Colonial and Post-colonial India*, London, 2004.
- 29 For Havell's use of yoga in art education, see Osman Jamal, 'The art and politics of Indianness: E. B. Havell', *Third Text*, 11: 39, 1997, 3–19; and Debashish Banerji, 'The Orientalism of E. B. Havell', *Third Text*, 16: 1, 2002, 41–56.
- 30 Ernest B. Havell, 'The New Indian School of Painting', *The Studio*, 44, July 1908, 107–214, 111.
- 31 Abanindranath Tagore, *Bharat Shilpa*, Calcutta, 1909. For a discussion on the text, see Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories*.
- 32 Niharika Dinkar writes: 'During the partition of Bengal in 1905 by Lord Curzon and the widespread anticolonial sentiment it raised, Bengalis themselves acknowledged such feelings of effeminacy as a sign of their inability to defend the land from the colonial aggressor. The *Hitavadi*, a popular Bengali daily, bemoaned: "We are degenerated creatures devoid of manliness. That is why Lord Curzon's despotism is flowing on in an uninterrupted discourse."' Niharika Dinkar, 'Masculine regeneration and the attenuated body in the early works of Nandalal Bose', *Oxford Art Journal*, 33: 2, June 2010, 167–88.
- 33 Dinkar, 'Masculine regeneration', 188.
- 34 For a discussion on the processes that led to the emergence of fifth-century sculpture as the locus of an Indian classicism, see Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories*; and Kavita Singh, 'The museum is national', in Geeti Sen, ed., *India: A National Culture?* New Delhi, 2003, 176–96.
- 35 Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, New York, 1916.
- 36 Abanindranath Tagore, 'Murti', *Prabasi*, December 1913. The text was translated into English by Sukumar Ray and published as Abanindranath Tagore, *Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy*, Calcutta, 1914.
- 37 Gustav Oppert, ed., *Śukranītisāra*, vol. 1, Madras, 1882.
- 38 Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, Princeton, NJ, 1957, provides a framework for thinking about the duality of the king's body in early modern South Asia.
- 39 For another early twentieth-century reading of the *Śukranītisāra*, see Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 'Aesthetic of the *Śukranītisāra*', *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, New York, 1934, 111–18.
- 40 Tagore, *Some Notes*, 14.
- 41 See Bradley Deane, *Masculinity and the New Imperialism: Rewriting Manhood in British Popular Literature, 1870–1914*, Cambridge, 2014, for a recent history of imperial British masculinities in a global frame.
- 42 Tagore, *Some Notes*, 3.
- 43 In the 1950s, scholars such as Benjamin Rowland would read the *tribhanga* as a sculptural adaptation of a dance pose. Benjamin Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*, London, 1953, 233. For a recent analysis of the 'feminization' of the fifth-century Sarnath Buddha, see Robert L. Brown, 'The feminization of the Sarnath Gupta-period Buddha images', *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, 16, 2002, 165–7.

- 44 See also John Rosselli, 'The self-image of effeteness: Physical education and nationalism in nineteenth-century Bengal', *Past & Present*, 86, February 1980, 121–48.
- 45 The question of the effeminate male body was certainly critical to body cultures in colonial Calcutta. In contrast, both imperial discourses and nationalist historiography presented the Afghan and the Sikh – that is, male bodies from north and northwestern India – as purportedly potent in brute strength. Although such masculine qualities apparently made Sikh men ideal soldiers in the British Army, they were, nonetheless, seen as lacking rationality, self-control, and prudence essential to a 'developed sense of masculinity'. Sikata Banerjee, *Make Me a Man*, 31.
- 46 Kakuzo Okakura, *The Ideals of the East with Special Reference to the Art of Japan*, London, 1903. For this history, see Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *The Making of a New 'Indian' Art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850–1920*, Cambridge, 1992.
- 47 N. Blount and Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Indian Society of Oriental Art. Catalogue of Ancient and Modern Pictures and Sculpture, Exhibited at the United Provinces Exhibition, 1910–11*, Calcutta, 1910.
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