

Antonia Behan

VEGETARIANISM AND VEGETABLE DYES: THE CEYLON SOCIAL REFORM SOCIETY AND THE COOMARASWAMYS'S RECIPES FOR HUMANE LIVING.

This paper will address the relation between gastronomic culture and design culture. The Ceylon Social Reform Society, founded by A.K. Coomaraswamy in 1906, stated its three main goals in its manifesto: food reform, dress reform, and the encouragement of traditional rituals. The paper focuses on why the Society saw vegetarianism and the use of vegetable dyes in dress reform, as important and related issues. Focusing on their recipes and experiments in vegetarian cooking and vegetable dyeing, the paper will argue that these processes are both part of the Coomaraswamys philosophy of humane living, that “one should disdain to profit at the cost of inflicting sufferings on others.” The Coomaraswamys put forth their ideas and observations about the health and economic effects of synthetic dyes, Victorian clothing, and meat-based diets in periodicals both in Ceylon and abroad. For them, vegetarianism and vegetable dyes pointed to a pre-industrial way of life that was as important to preserve and recover in the West as in the East. Within this context, this paper will focus on the genre of the recipe, especially as it relates to processes and ways of making and knowing.

Biography:

Antonia Behan is a doctoral candidate in Design History at Bard Graduate Center in New York City. She received her MA from the Bard Graduate Center and BA from the University of Toronto, Canada. Her research focuses on the early twentieth century weaver and dyer Ethel Mairet, who, along with her first husband, Ananda Coomaraswamy, catalogued the decorative arts of Sri Lanka between 1903-7 and later became an influential textile educator in Britain until her death in 1952.

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