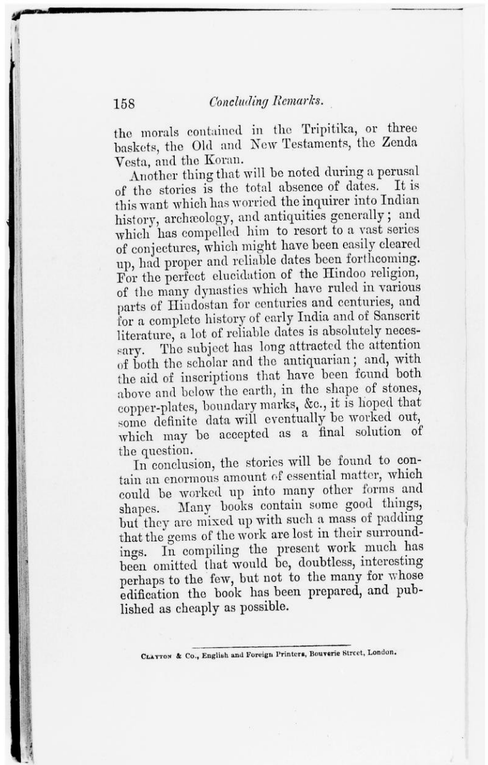
Lewis Koch, notes from the stone-paved path : meditations on north India. 2003

LEWIS KOCH

Notes from the Stone-Paved Path: Meditations on North India

Lewis Koch. Notes from the Stone-Paved Path



158 *Concluding Remarks.*

the morals contained in the Tripitika, or three baskets, the Old and New Testaments, the Zenda Vesta, and the Koran.

Another thing that will be noted during a perusal of the stories is the total absence of dates. It is this want which has worried the inquirer into Indian history, archæology, and antiquities generally; and which has compelled him to resort to a vast series of conjectures, which might have been easily cleared up, had proper and reliable dates been forthcoming. For the perfect elucidation of the Hindoo religion, of the many dynasties which have ruled in various parts of Hindostan for centuries and centuries, and for a complete history of early India and of Sanscrit literature, a lot of reliable dates is absolutely necessary. The subject has long attracted the attention of both the scholar and the antiquarian; and, with the aid of inscriptions that have been found both above and below the earth, in the shape of stones, copper-plates, boundary marks, &c., it is hoped that some definite data will eventually be worked out, which may be accepted as a final solution of the question.

In conclusion, the stories will be found to contain an enormous amount of essential matter, which could be worked up into many other forms and shapes. Many books contain some good things, but they are mixed up with such a mass of padding that the gems of the work are lost in their surroundings. In compiling the present work much has been omitted that would be, doubtless, interesting perhaps to the few, but not to the many for whose edification the book has been prepared, and published as cheaply as possible.

CLAYTON & Co., English and Foreign Printers, Bouverie Street, London.

Forster Fitzgerald Arbutnot. *Early ideas. A group of Hindoo stories.* 1881. Page 158.

Lewis Koch. Notes from the Stone-Paved Path: Meditations on North India

An exhibit in the Department of Special Collections
Memorial Library, University of Wisconsin–Madison
September 22 – November 7, 2003

Photograph and text diptychs by Lewis Koch
Books from Memorial Library

Foreword by Joseph W. Elder
Afterword by Vinay Dharwadker

Parallel Press • University of Wisconsin–Madison Libraries

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Thus shall ye think of all this fleeting:

a star at dawn, a bubble in a stream,

A flash of lightning in a summer cloud,

A flickering lamp, a phantom, and a dream.

from *The Diamond Sutra*

PREFACE

ROBIN E. RIDER
Curator of Special Collections

We in the Department of Special Collections are pleased to honor the 32nd Annual Conference on South Asia, organized by the Center for South Asia, University of Wisconsin–Madison, with an exhibit that showcases the work of photographer Lewis Koch, "Notes from the Stone-Paved Path: Meditations on North India." In this project Koch has paired photographs he made in the north of India in 1995–96 with pages photographed from books pertaining to this region among the holdings of Memorial Library.

This keepsake features a selection of Koch's striking photograph-pairs, along with a bibliography of the books in question, some fifty in the full project. The books themselves speak to themes ranging from agricultural economics and autobiography to sociology and visual studies, and reflect sensibilities from the mid–19th century to scholarship of the late 20th century. A larger set of Koch's photographic diptychs, matched with books from Memorial Library, is on display in the Department of Special Collections, 976 Memorial Library, September 22 – November 7, 2003.

Many thanks are due to Lewis Koch for making his imaginative project available to a larger audience through the exhibit and this keepsake, and to Larry Ashmun and Geraldine Laudati of the General Library System for initiating the Library's involvement. We join with them in thanking Vinay Dharwadker, director of the Center for South Asia, and Joseph Elder, professor of languages and cultures of Asia and of sociology, University of Wisconsin–Madison, for enriching this keepsake with their essays, and the Center for South Asia and the General Library System for supporting the publication of this keepsake. It is a pleasure as well to thank Don Johnson of Library Communications and Jill Rosenshield of Special Collections for their valuable assistance in producing the keepsake and the exhibit. ⋄

FOREWORD

A Brief Meditation on *Notes from the Stone-Paved Path*

JOSEPH W. ELDER
Professor of Sociology and
of Languages and Cultures of Asia
University of Wisconsin–Madison
July 2003

Any representations of India are, in an ultimate sense, reflections of the representor. India is so complex, ancient, unitary, variegated, assimilating, reinterpreting, and innovating that anyone attempting to depict it understands it only through tiny, episodic, ultimately subjective glimpses. As Lewis Koch himself states, "Each impression, each image, each page of text is, by definition, a highly edited, subjective view of a real place or idea." So there is nothing especially unusual about the subjectivity of Koch's photography and the project as a whole. What is impressive, however, are the form and contents of his subjectivity.

The subjectivity of this work takes its form in brilliantly printed black-and-white photographs, in the passages he has selected from a wide range of written sources dealing with India, and in the essential and subtle process of pairing these two elements.

All of the images in the exhibition were made by Koch in northern India. Several of them are from Dharamsala and vicinity in the foothills of the Himalayas where he lived and worked for nearly a year in the Tibetan Buddhist community there. The subjects of his photographs are often strikingly common: soda bottles hanging in a refreshment stall, roadside advertisements, a pan of boiled milk in a sweets stand, scraps of posters on a many-layered signboard, the carcass of an animal behind protective netting in a butcher shop, a painted '7th Up' soda sign, a string draped over a nearly-invisible wire, a concrete drainage pipe in an open field, a room in a medical clinic featuring a portrait of Gandhi.

A few of the subjects are at familiar India tourist sites: the iron pillar at New Delhi's Qtab Minar, the famous temples at Khajuraho (with a man sleeping in the foreground), the giant astronomical structures at New Delhi's Jantar Mantar outdoor observatory, the Taj Mahal in Agra (so shrouded in mist as to be almost invisible), Tibetan prayer flags, and a monk in Dharamsala.

After returning to the United States from his sojourn, Koch selected, rather intuitively yet deliberately, the passages he paired with his photographs from a wide variety of texts: using, for instance, a 19th-century travelers' guide, contemporary poetry and translations of Sanskrit poems, Tibetan Buddhist and sacred Indian teachings, Indian erotica, modern short stories, a passage written by Mahatma Gandhi, esoteric Hindu astronomy, works by contemporary India scholars, a page from E. F. Schumacher's *Small Is Beautiful*, movie scripts, autobiography.

The contents of Lewis Koch's representations of India come from the juxtapositions of his photographs and his texts. A luminous photograph of small frogs floating in the clear water of a stone tank is accompanied by a page from *The Secret Oral Teachings in Tibetan Buddhist Sects* describing the co-existence of two worlds: reality (the world we contact but cannot adequately describe) and mental formations set in motion by our assumptions (but never identical with them). A photograph of a boy-worker with welder's protective glasses is adjacent to a text by Mahatma Gandhi praising the spirituality of India's ancient villages and regretting the fact that today's workers have become automatons unable to feel the simple joy of their labor. Similarly, an arcane nighttime photograph of a city street with a four-wheel cart hauling a generator linked to lighted fluorescent tubes is paired with a passage from *Cradle of the Clouds*; in the novel, village elders conclude that since Buddha did not require gas and electricity, they do not require gas and electricity.

Further along in this nuanced sequence, a photograph of a string draped around a nearly-invisible wire is placed beside an excerpt from Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* in which the American poet asserts that "all things seen are real," and independent of any knowing individual. A passage in which the Dalai Lama suggests that if everyone were perfect, our existence would have no justification is paired with a photograph of a concrete drainage pipe (on which is scrawled, in English, "I Love you"). Then there is an intimate photograph of a man sleeping on the steps of a temple at Khajuraho accompanied by a page from an encyclopedia of Indian erotica indexing "unions," "vagina," "wives" and "women." A final example, the photograph of a stone path (from which the exhibition gets its name) traversing a Himalayan hillside is aligned with a discussion of quantum mechanics and its relation to Eastern and Western notions of ultimate, irreducible physical and conceptual patterns.

As an outsider who has specialized in studying India, I might be able to add tidbits of information for the benefit of others viewing this work. For example, the reason the man in the photograph at the Qtab Minar is trying to touch the tips of his fingers as his arms encircle the iron pillar is because that will bring him good luck (so he, and I, have

been told). The author of the text on effective poster-making, paired with the image of the '7th Up' soda sign, is Dr. Douglas Ensminger, director of the Ford Foundation in India during the years immediately following India's independence, one of the most influential Americans to have lived in India.

My first visit to India was as a fourteen-year-old boy with my family. When we departed, British Bombay harbor officials with sun helmets and khaki shorts supervised us as we boarded the Swedish ship *Gripsholm* for its month-long voyage to the United States. During my most recent visit to India last winter, I entered a roadside air-conditioned stall and electronically transferred funds from my bank account in Madison, Wisconsin, to that roadside stall in Madurai, India. Between those two visits, India has changed in ways too numerous to mention. So have my perceptions of India. So have I. Yet even for someone like myself who has studied India for fifty years and visited there so many times, Lewis Koch's pairings of photographs and texts produce joyful surprises and stimulate new possibilities of comparisons and connections. ⋄

LEWIS KOCH
Madison, Wisconsin
August 2003

INTRODUCTION

Quoting from a Larger Context

When I get to a new place . . . I want to learn what it is I didn't know I would see.
Barry Lopez, naturalist, writer

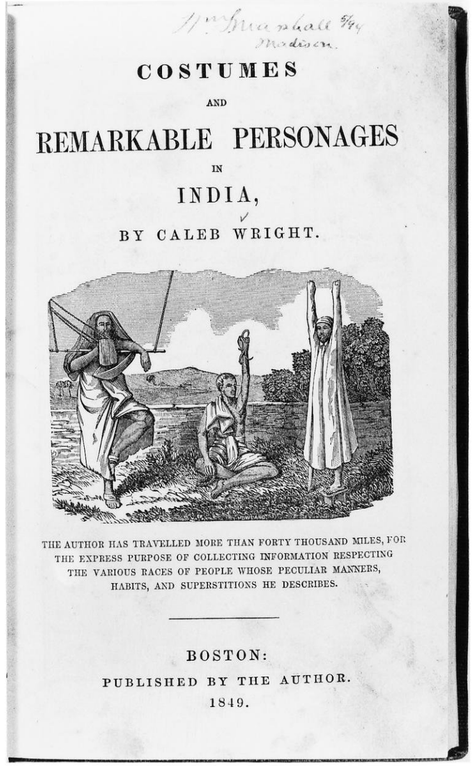
Memory is a fragmentary collection of experience. It is a singular assortment of interrelated, sometimes contradictory encounters with the everyday world. Photography helps piece together this disparate array. It vindicates experience. It acknowledges and interrogates reality. It is my paper memory.

To give form to that which is inherently intimate and incomplete, I try to find ways for photographs to work with other ideas, collaborating with a broader range of observation. In this recent body of work, disparate images from a sojourn in north India are paired with pages of text from diverse sources. By joining the two — photographs from the real world with photographs of book pages — I intend to initiate a dialogue. It is a contemplative approach, a meditation, one that aims beyond the specific qualities of visual insight or written word.

Our perceptions are conditional upon the information we have to apply to them. These photo-text pairs are presented as paths to further exploration. Just as I followed numerous trails during my wanderings in north India, these diptychs traverse a vast territory in pursuit of unfamiliar vistas (*to learn what it is I didn't know I would see*).

Each impression, each image, each page of text is, by definition, a highly edited, subjective view of a real place or idea. In this way, the book pages were retrieved in much the same manner as the photographs — through exploration, serendipity, revelation. Both quote from a much larger context.

Even though I was in India for nearly a year, and not as a tourist (I lived and worked in the Tibetan community, near Dharamsala), it is difficult, impossible really, to create any comprehensive statement about such a vast subject. It is easy for the outsider to focus on the constant jumble of activity in India, the colorful whirling of myriad cultures. Tibetan society is likewise prey to stereotypes of the ineffable, and laments of lost horizons. My photographs and their literary corollaries seek a quieter focus: to give voice to the elemental and obscure, to reveal a questioning affection for life at its most immediate and mundane. ⋄



COSTUMES

AND

REMARKABLE PERSONAGES

IN

INDIA,

BY CALEB WRIGHT.

THE AUTHOR HAS TRAVELLED MORE THAN FORTY THOUSAND MILES, FOR THE EXPRESS PURPOSE OF COLLECTING INFORMATION RESPECTING THE VARIOUS RACES OF PEOPLE WHOSE PECULIAR MANNERS, HABITS, AND SUPERSTITIONS HE DESCRIBES.

BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR.

1849.

Delhi, 1995.

Caleb Wright. *Costumes and remarkable personages in India.* 1849. Title page.

Alexandra David-Neel and Lama Yongden.
The secret oral teachings in Tibetan Buddhist sects.
1971. Page 16.

Near Baijnath, Himachal Pradesh, 1996.

were to be added that of outlines suggesting the shape of a tree. But again, how many times will not the mental activity, applied to the sensation of seeing a green spot, go astray ?—Dazzlement caused by the sun, mirages, can *cause us to see* not only green spots but trees and many other objects although these have no corresponding substance.

In short, what kind of information has been given to us by the fact of having seen a green spot ?—It has simply made us conscious of having felt a sensation. A sensation, nothing more, all the rest is interpretation. In the same way, all our perceptions, those to which we give names and assign form, colour, or no matter what attributes, are nothing but interpretations of a fugitive contact by one of our senses with a stimulus.

Thus we are led to contemplate the co-existence of two worlds : that of pure contact not coloured by the screen of "memories", and that created by the mental formations (the samskāras) : the interpretation.

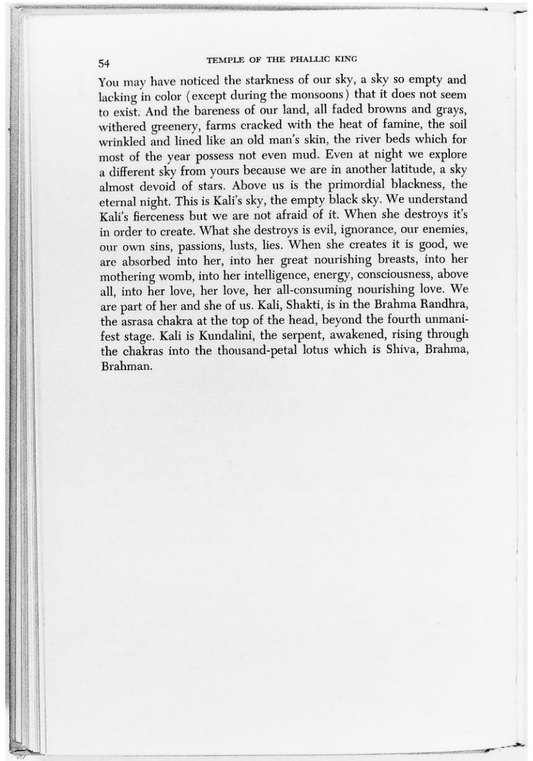
The first of these worlds represents Reality, and is indescribable ; we cannot think anything, cannot imagine anything about it without "interpreting" and thus destroying its character of Reality. Reality is inexpressible and inconceivable.

The second of these worlds is that of mental formations set in motion by the contact-stimulus. It is the world in which we live. To say that it is not *real* does not mean that it is devoid *of existence.*[1]

* * *

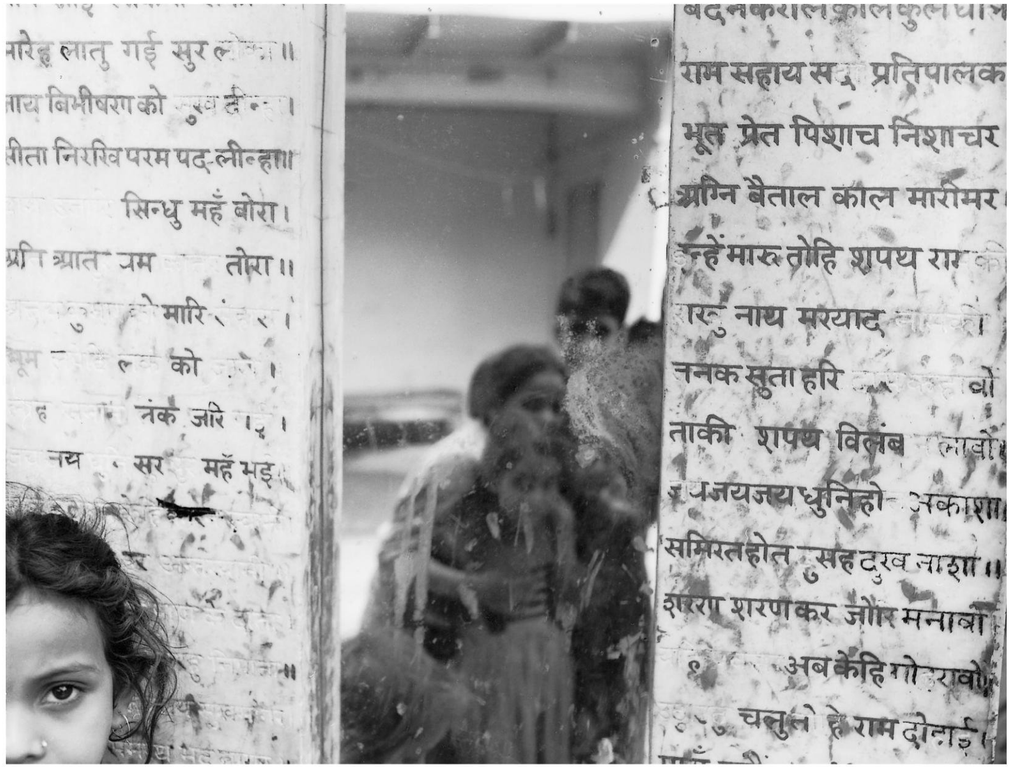
Pagal Baba. *Temple of the phallic king. The mind of India: Yogis, Swamis, Sufis, and Avataras.* 1973. Page 54.

Agra, Uttar Pradesh. 1995.



54 TEMPLE OF THE PHALLIC KING

You may have noticed the starkness of our sky, a sky so empty and lacking in color (except during the monsoons) that it does not seem to exist. And the bareness of our land, all faded browns and grays, withered greenery, farms cracked with the heat of famine, the soil wrinkled and lined like an old man's skin, the river beds which for most of the year possess not even mud. Even at night we explore a different sky from yours because we are in another latitude, a sky almost devoid of stars. Above us is the primordial blackness, the eternal night. This is Kali's sky, the empty black sky. We understand Kali's fierceness but we are not afraid of it. When she destroys it's in order to create. What she destroys is evil, ignorance, our enemies, our own sins, passions, lusts, lies. When she creates it is good, we are absorbed into her, into her great nourishing breasts, into her mothering womb, into her intelligence, energy, consciousness, above all, into her love, her love, her all-consuming nourishing love. We are part of her and she of us. Kali, Shakti, is in the Brahma Randhra, the asrasa chakra at the top of the head, beyond the fourth unmanifest stage. Kali is Kundalini, the serpent, awakened, rising through the chakras into the thousand-petal lotus which is Shiva, Brahma, Brahman.



97 All these phenomena related to beings
Are seen as fuel for the fire of consciousness,
They are consumed through being burned
By the light of true discrimination.

98 The reality is later ascertained
Of what was formerly imputed by ignorance;
When a thing is not found,
How can there be a non-thing?

99 Because the phenomena of forms are
Only names, space too is only a name;
Without the elements how could forms exist?
Therefore even 'name-only' does not exist.

100 Feelings, discriminations, factors of composition
And consciousnesses are to be considered
Like the elements and the self, thereby
The six constituents[14] are selfless.

Upper Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, 1995.

Nāgārjuna and Kaysang Gyatso, Seventh Dalai Lama. *The precious garland and the song of the four mindfulnesses.* 1975. Page 31.

Buzurg ibn Shahriyār. *The book of the marvels of India.* 1929. Page 144.

Ken River Gorge, Madhya Pradesh, 1996.

more dead than alive, one of the two men went off. 'Where are we?' I asked his fellow. 'The smoke you see over there', he said, 'comes from the mainland. My companion has gone to the village. You'll find there food, water, and clothing'. And thither we were presently taken. As for those who had stayed on the three ships, not a soul of them all was saved, but only those who had put out in the long-boat."

CV A truly astounding piece of information is that communicated to me by a sailor who had spent long years in India, and to whom, in his turn, it had been imparted by many travellers who had penetrated the centre of the country: as how, in the territory of High Cashmere, there is a place, called Ternarayin, where are shadowy gardens, watered by running streams, and where the Djinns hold their market. You can hear the sound of their voices, buying and selling, but their persons you cannot see. And thus it has gone on, since an immemorial age. "Do you know if the market is permanent", I asked the sailor, "or whether it only takes place at certain times?" "That I did not inquire", he replied.

A Note on Death

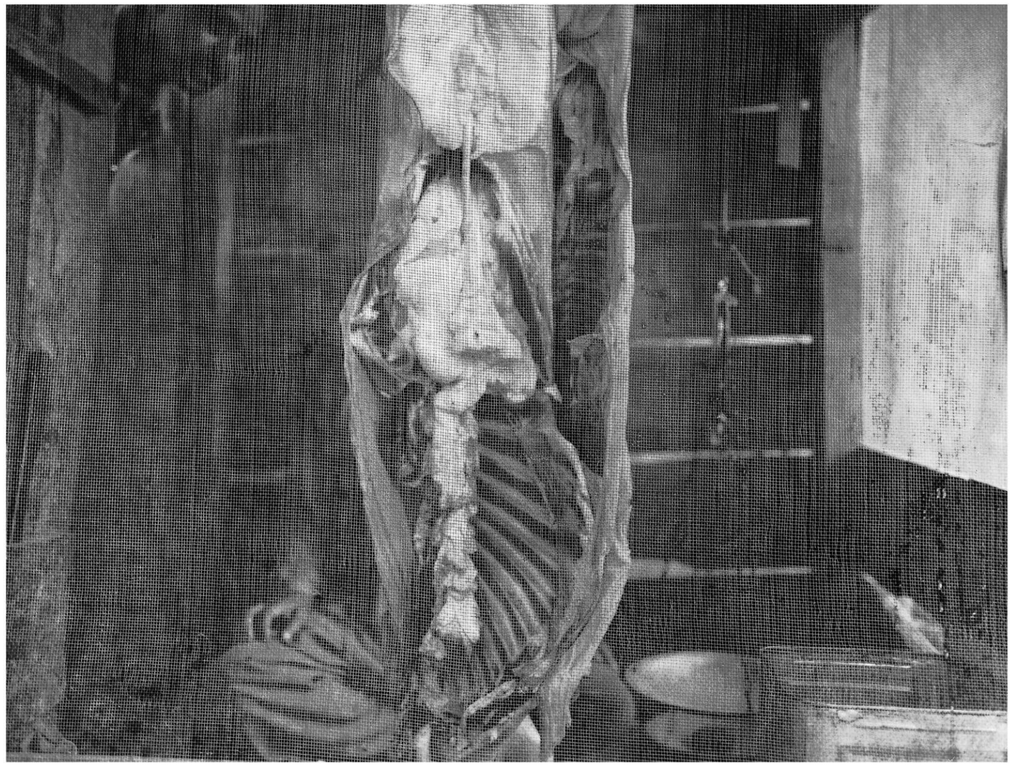
Death is not death when it is met in the leap
from logic on the rim of circular being
towards the far centre of the hourless deep
where time surrenders all hearing and seeing:
thus Jalaluddin Rumi, after
he sought the word from Shamas of Tabriz
circa 1260 AD. Laughter
welled among traditional certainties.
Rumi threw his books away, saying
"The sufi's learning is not literacy
and letters." The ulema's firm praying
and doctrines stood without complexity:
"Heretics wind in strange ways and turns,
lost to the yes and no of grave concerns."

Nothing happens without a negation
though this could come in positive wear.
Think how time renders concert as the sun
pairs opposites through the mortal year:
spring is the absence of winter's folding cold
when the sunlight proclaims departed snows;
autumn's sun bids the leaves farewell, and old
indigent trees abide the vanished rose.
The yes-no-yes of our dimdrawn lives
is all there is to the grandeur of history.
the negations with their positive drives
are not a mirror to the laws of mystery.
There is only then to unravel and know
the private heart of death before we go.

71

Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh, 1996.

Rakshat Puri. *In the chronicles. Poems.* 1978.
Page. 71.



refined palates, though the natives indulge in it, till they actually become ill.

MITTIE-WALLA.

The *Soottar* (carpenter) (p. 36.) employs only five tools, namely a hatchet, hammer, saw, gimblet, and knife, and with these, in a very awkward sitting posture, he not only makes the neatest furniture, but the prettiest boxes of Sandal-wood, inlaid with steel and ivory, in the most delicate and elegant patterns.

At his side is seated the *Moochee* (shoemaker) (p. 37.), manufacturing singularly formed pointed shoes, and it is remarkable that he generally works with his head uncovered.

A loud hammering indicates the workshop of the *Lohar* (smith and locksmith) (p. 38), who performs his hard labour in a similar, inconvenient sitting posture.

The *Seikelgar* (stone and glass grinder) (p. 39.)

Near Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, 1996.

Leopold von Orlich. *Travels in India, including Sinde and the Punjab.* 1845. Vol. I, page 35.

Hiroshi Ishihara, ed. *Markets and marketing in north India.* 1991. Page 156.

Agra, Uttar Pradesh, 1995.

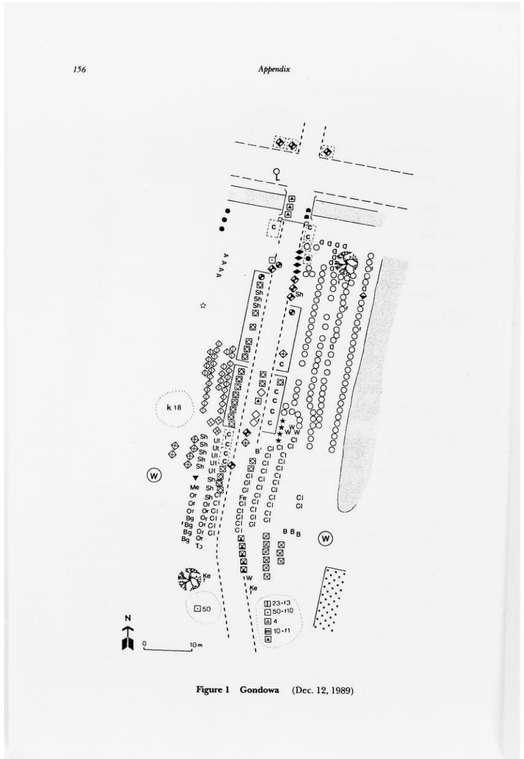


Figure 1 Gondowa (Dec. 12, 1989)

Fosco Maraini. *Secret Tibet.* 1956. Page 206.

Upper Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, 1995.

"A moment ago I had a jug, and now I have it no longer!
This negligible fact throws light
On the whole law of impermanence,
And shows us
What is the condition of man.
The jug, which was my only wealth,
At the moment when it broke
Became a lama
Preaching a marvellous sermon
On the necessary impermanence of things."

While Milarepa was composing this poem some hunters arrived at his cave, and were astonished at finding a human being in such a state.

"Whence comes the thinness of thy body, oh hermit, and this green colour?" they asked. They were full of pity for him, but Milarepa replied:

"In your eyes I may appear excessively wretched. You are unaware that no-one in the world is happier than I." He thereupon composed for the hunters "The Song of the Horse":

The horse that is my spirit flies like the wind . . .

Milarepa, always composing and singing and moving from cave to cave, eventually reached old age. Every word and action of his remained dramatic, even to the end. A famous scholar, who gave him hospitality during a journey, was offended at the slight worldly respect that the crazy old hermit paid him, and gave him poison to drink. The dialogue between the scholar, who had read all the learned treatises and counted for something in the world, and the naked hermit, who owned no books, illustrates Milarepa's supreme contempt of all worldly forms and conventions:

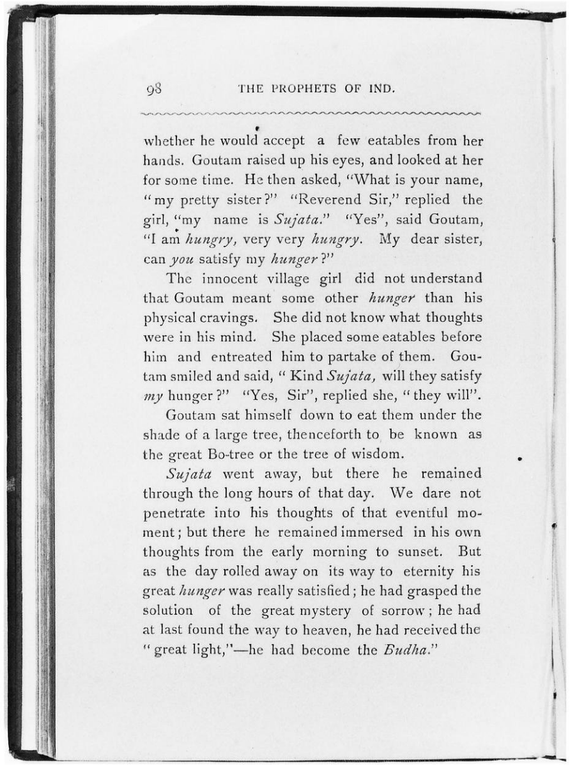
I have the superiority of indifference,
My audacity knows no obstacles.
Diseases, evil spirits, sins, wretchedness
Adorn the hermit who I am.

At last, surrounded by disciples, he abandoned "the cycle of transmigrations", murmuring his last thoughts:

Do if you like that which may seem sinful
But helps living beings,
Because that is truly pious work.

Manmatha Nath Dutt. *Gleanings from Indian classics.* 1894. Page 98.

Upper Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, 1995.



98 THE PROPHETS OF IND.

whether he would accept a few eatables from her hands. Goutam raised up his eyes, and looked at her for some time. He then asked, "What is your name, "my pretty sister?" "Reverend Sir," replied the girl, "my name is *Sujata*." "Yes", said Goutam, "I am *hungry*, very very *hungry*. My dear sister, can *you* satisfy my *hunger*?"

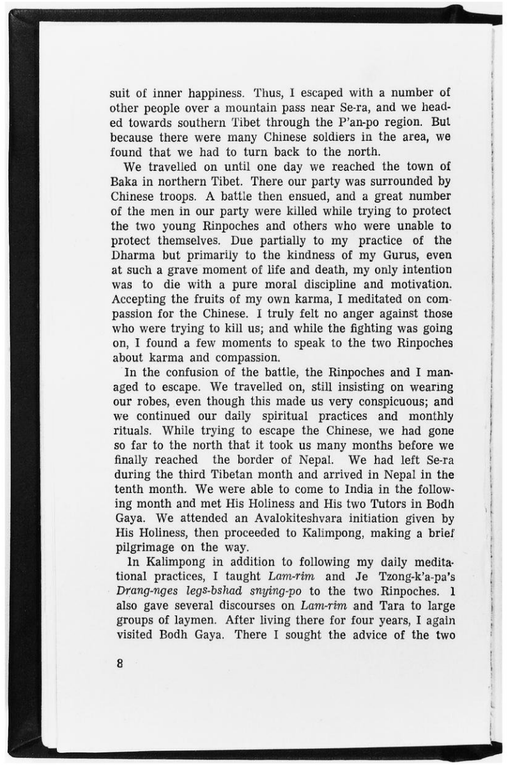
The innocent village girl did not understand that Goutam meant some other *hunger* than his physical cravings. She did not know what thoughts were in his mind. She placed some eatables before him and entreated him to partake of them. Goutam smiled and said, "Kind *Sujata*, will they satisfy *my* hunger?" "Yes, Sir", replied she, "they will".

Goutam sat himself down to eat them under the shade of a large tree, thenceforth to be known as the great Bo-tree or the tree of wisdom.

Sujata went away, but there he remained through the long hours of that day. We dare not penetrate into his thoughts of that eventful moment; but there he remained immersed in his own thoughts from the early morning to sunset. But as the day rolled away on its way to eternity his great *hunger* was really satisfied; he had grasped the solution of the great mystery of sorrow; he had at last found the way to heaven, he had received the "great light,"—he had become the *Budha*."

Ngawang Dhargyey. *Tibetan tradition of mental development. Oral teachings of Tibetan Lama Geshey Ngawang Dhargyey.* 1974. Page 8.

Upper Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, 1995.



suit of inner happiness. Thus, I escaped with a number of other people over a mountain pass near Se-ra, and we headed towards southern Tibet through the P'an-po region. But because there were many Chinese soldiers in the area, we found that we had to turn back to the north.

We travelled on until one day we reached the town of Baka in northern Tibet. There our party was surrounded by Chinese troops. A battle then ensued, and a great number of the men in our party were killed while trying to protect the two young Rinpoches and others who were unable to protect themselves. Due partially to my practice of the Dharma but primarily to the kindness of my Gurus, even at such a grave moment of life and death, my only intention was to die with a pure moral discipline and motivation. Accepting the fruits of my own karma, I meditated on compassion for the Chinese. I truly felt no anger against those who were trying to kill us; and while the fighting was going on, I found a few moments to speak to the two Rinpoches about karma and compassion.

In the confusion of the battle, the Rinpoches and I managed to escape. We travelled on, still insisting on wearing our robes, even though this made us very conspicuous; and we continued our daily spiritual practices and monthly rituals. While trying to escape the Chinese, we had gone so far to the north that it took us many months before we finally reached the border of Nepal. We had left Se-ra during the third Tibetan month and arrived in Nepal in the tenth month. We were able to come to India in the following month and met His Holiness and His two Tutors in Bodh Gaya. We attended an Avalokiteshvara initiation given by His Holiness, then proceeded to Kalimpong, making a brief pilgrimage on the way.

In Kalimpong in addition to following my daily meditational practices, I taught *Lam-rim* and Je Tzong-k'a-pa's *Drang-nges legs-bshad snying-po* to the two Rinpoches. I also gave several discourses on *Lam-rim* and Tara to large groups of laymen. After living there for four years, I again visited Bodh Gaya. There I sought the advice of the two

8

PR. It is not necessary, if her mother-in-law has not asked for it and has started to treat her well. . .

S2. Serving her means to behave well with everybody without fighting.

S1. Serving? Do you mean to say that she is a servant? She gets married to serve the new people?

MO. She should be of a sweet nature and talk sweetly.

S1. With everyone.

PR. Do the educated girls adjust better than those who are not educated?

S2 : Educated girls are sometimes proud and are sometimes likely to be too silent, otherwise they will have to bear criticism from everybody. Educated girls, however, will point out that they are educated and so forth. . .

PR. That means if the uneducated do not adjust themselves, they will hear criticism from everybody.

S2. This is also true.

MO. The uneducated girls are weak. Those who do not study are weak. Everybody would say since she is uneducated what can she do. . .

BR. I have to add that Mikky did not commit any mistake in his marriage because from the first day on he appeared to be very good and nice.

IV. They seemed to like each other.

BR. Yes, they seemed to like each other. But later on when he came to know that his wife is selfish and suspicious, then he, too, tried to adjust to her. He beat her and when he was about to beat her. . .

IV. He controlled himself.

BR. It was because of his good behaviour. His gratitude was not like Vinod's. He was for love. He thought that he would teach her with love but he was not successful. Only when Radha died did she come to the right path.

PR. But what did Mikky do?

BR. Mikky tried his level best to bring her on the right path, which means he tried to give her all the things and comfort that she wanted. But then Shobha was still selfish. She thought that her husband is only there for her disposal, he couldn't even talk with another

Udaipur, Rajasthan, 1996.

Beatrix Pfleiderer and Lothar Lutze, ed.
The Hindi film. Agent and re-agent of cultural change.
1985. Page 163.

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Tonight I shall stay with you and listen to
the wind screaming when the dark slips away.
In the palm of my hand I will show you
the rivers that run every day: I will show you
memories that never go away, even when we stray
unnoticed, drifting in and out of lovetime.

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Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh, 1996.

Kamala Das and Pritish Nandy. *Tonight, this savage rite. The love poems of Kamala Das and Pritish Nandy.* 1979. Page 55.

Philip Kuberski. *The persistence of memory. Organism, myth, text.* 1992. Page 54.

Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, 1995.

> Just as language consists of discrete lexation-segmentation (*Nama-Rupa*) and ordered patternment, of which the latter has the more background character, less obvious but more infrangible and universal, so the physical world may be an aggregate of quasidiscrete entities (atoms, crystals, living organisms, planets, stars, etc.) not fully understandable as such, but rather emergent from a field of causes that is itself a manifold of pattern and order.

The periodic table and the alphabet are but artificial paradigms of this field. In process they are the available ground out of which words and meaning, atoms and matter arise—as in the gestalt shift prompted in our brains by a two-dimensional representation of a (three-dimensional) cube:

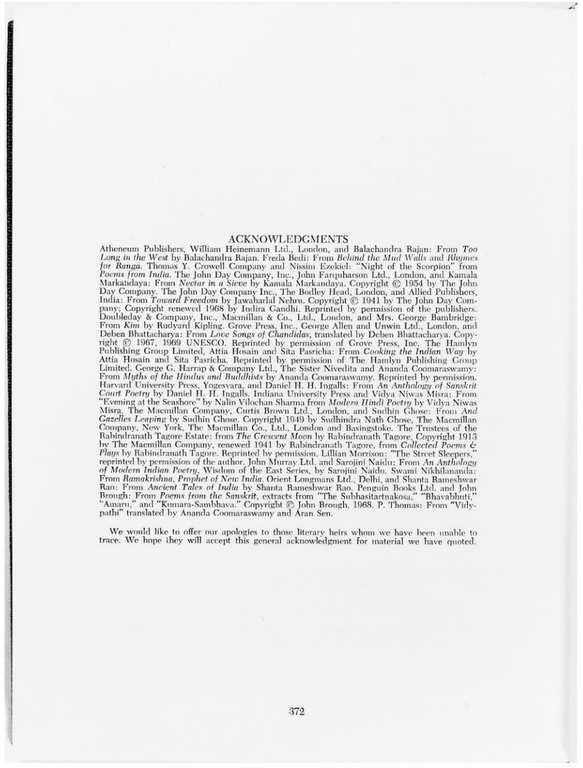
> As physics explores into the intra-atomic phenomena, the discrete physical forms and forces are more and more dissolved into relations of pure patternment. The PLACE of an apparent entity, an electron for example, becomes indefinite, interrupted: the entity appears and disappears from one structural position to another structural position, like a phoneme or any other patterned linguistic entity, and may be said to be NOWHERE in between positions.[20]

The meeting of East and West, the quantum leap, the phonemic leap, the gestalt shift from figure to ground, Schrödinger's "flash" of insight: these are all aspects of what Whorf calls a CAUSAL WORLD in which material, conscious, and semantic distinctions arise from the same field. Various Buddhist schools propounded atomic theories of relations and combinations, but finally concluded, unlike Western science until the twentieth century, that atoms were themselves not fundamental, which is to say that they were illusory. According to the first-century Buddhist teacher Asvaghosa, the material world can be reduced to atoms, but atoms "will also be subject to further division" and "all forms of material existence, whether gross or fine, are nothing but the shadow of particularization."[21]

Since the thirties, when Bohr and Schrödinger explored the ways in which quantum physics seemed to challenge the fundamental principles of Western logic and then evoked Taoist

Jon and Rumer Godden. *Shiva's pigeons. An experience of India.* Photographs by Stella Snead. 1972. Page 372.

Thural, Himachal Pradesh, 1996.



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We would like to offer our apologies to those literary heirs whom we have been unable to trace. We hope they will accept this general acknowledgment for material we have quoted.

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AFTERWORD

How the Eye Forgets. On Looking at Lewis Koch's Pictures

VINAY DHARWADKER
Director, Center for South Asia
University of Wisconsin–Madison
August 2003

A picture is always cropped — it's suspended inside a Euclidean rectangle. For the photographer: the viewfinder, the aperture, the strip of film exposed, the piece of paper "rubbed with the chemicals of desire" (to borrow a phrase from A. K. Ramanujan's translation of a contemporary Kannada poem). No less for the painter: vellum, a block of clod-pressed watercolor paper, sanded and tinted sheets for pastel, primed canvas mounted on stretchers, even the roll of raw cotton-duck, are all made only in rectangular shapes. A square is too symmetrical. A square forgets the difference between height and width, between the vertical and the horizontal. A rectangle always recalls — and compels the viewer's eye to remember — that distinction between two essential dimensions.

So the photographer and the painter who wish to capture the world in their images are always caught inside the unbreakable illusion of realism, inside the unreality of their faithful representations. Breaking up the world into finite rectangles, these frames become fragments of Euclid's ancient imagination, pieces of visual artifice based upon the abstraction and ideality of geometry, but embodied in the "ineluctable" materiality of "the materials of art" (to echo James Joyce and T. S. Eliot).

But, of course, the picture never really ends at its intrusive, irrepressible borders. The sixteen-by-twenty black-and-white print (though it's really all gray), the canvas covered with *velaturas* and glazes, layer upon layer, even the apparently spontaneous and artless conté sketch laid down on a sheet of Canson in fifteen minutes, always go on. The trick that tricks the viewer's credulous eye is to move toward one of two extremes. One: to fill the material frame with so much texture, shape, movement, and energy that it makes the viewer's eye dance from point to point within the rectangular space, until the eye *forgets* — at least for the moment — the borders of the representation. A kind of transient amnesia, if you will, a short-term suspension of both belief and disbelief, that what it's looking at is merely a picture.

The other trick: the opposite. To empty out the rectangle of its worldly bustle, slowly and quietly, to simplify the world to a degree where the viewer's eye — the most vital and involuntary of human and non-human organs — forgets to dance, relinquishes its prized movement, and comes imperceptibly to rest, like the blackbird's eye in Wallace Stevens's poem, persuaded beyond persuasion to dwell upon a single, still object, captured in its simplicity, singularity, and serenity. That object — a stone slab in a temple, a piece of wrinkled cloth, an iron trident, a wizened human hand — warm to the eye but frozen between the vertical and the horizontal axes in movement's space, then reminds the eye that such a thing is nothing but itself, taken out of the world in multiple stages of selection, and suspended in a rectangle where it defines its own antithetical uniqueness.

• • •

The world is full of color. In my field of vision, even water refuses to be colorless. And, as any painter knows, white is never merely white. Or black, black. Working on the gesso ground on a canvas, I have to use a large palette of colors, applied in luminous layers, with increasing proportions of a mixture of dammar varnish, turpentine, stand oil, and cobalt drier, to produce the precise illusion of a white cloud behind a tree or a woman's glossy black hair. Like countless other photographers, Lewis Koch, too, has reduced this world of color to monochromatic rectangular stills, displayed on off-white walls with orchestrated lighting. Like the draftsman working with the velvet sheen of compressed charcoal on toothed paper, or in the soft and hard tonalities of graphite, the photographer is contained and defined by the materiality of his or her medium: the two dimensions of the *surface* of paper, which must create the appearance of a reality in three (or four) dimensions, captured in its roundness without distortion, without reduction.

Hence the paramount importance of *surfaces*. The exact texture of human skin, the minute graininess of stone, the absence of metallic luster on a piece of wrought iron. Especially, the contrast between human hands — the beautiful hardened hands of a peasant or laborer, not the soft manicured hands of a woman — seeking to clasp each other, or at least to touch, behind the man's back, on the smooth cylindrical surface of the Ashokan pillar in the great stone courtyard at the foot of the Qut'b Minar in Delhi. (My memory shifts for a moment to the images conjured up by the contemporary English painters Francis Bacon and Lucien Freud in their canvases of the 1970s, when, a little like — and a lot unlike — the American poet Wallace Stevens some forty years earlier, they sought to put down "unvarnished reality" within the rectangular confines of a picture, knowing full well that "things as they are / Are changed upon my blue guitar.") The painter's brush, the photographer's camera, are actually blue guitars. But the maker's

eye forgets that it may well be a musical — and not an optical — instrument, capable of being tuned with almost infinite precision. The harmony of shapes and sizes, textures and lines, of weights and edges and highlights, of shadows and middle tones, reflected lights and shadow accents, has no name that it can borrow from outside the universe of music.

• • •

And, though so utterly different, my eye cannot move over these images without a trace of the memory of Robert Mapplethorpe's surfaces scorched onto its retina. How can we *not* see that the true texture of human skin, the real enigma of the human face, the human quality of the light glistening in a subject's eye and upon his or her cheekbone, forehead, and chin *can only be represented faithfully in black and white*? Color must be the great illusion that reality thrusts upon our buzzing brain-cells. Hue and tint: the most transient, the most intrusive, the most dispensable? Even the classically trained portraitist in oil-on-canvas, an invention only of the early Renaissance in a Europe already colonizing the world, has to first envision his or her subject in black and white: the underpainting develops into a fully articulated picture in ivory black and lead white, upon which the eye and the brush then lay multiple glazes and half-pastes, translucent sheets of color that strive to *displace* the monochromatic essence of form and texture toward the rectangulated illusion of a slice of reality. Hence Mapplethorpe's insistence, in so many of his photographs, on a celebration of the black and white skin of all things human and natural. Color can only be a distraction, an addictive additive to that architecture of represented forms.

• • •

And also the simple, persistent idea in the work of the American painter R. B. Kitaj, raised in Ohio but long exiled in London, who got it exactly right: that there are many books inside a picture. A concept toward which Lewis Koch's coupling of image and text gravitates aptly and recurrently, linking different minds and moments in history, because the eye often forgets to read the lines scripted invisibly into the visible surfaces of otherwise inarticulate reality. As I looked at his images of the Qut'b Minar complex for the first time, I couldn't help but remember fragments of my own poems about Delhi and its local histories, written in expatriation as a young man in central Pennsylvania in the early 1980s. One in particular, a passage from "A Draft of Excavations," which appeared in *Sunday at the Lodi Gardens* (1994):

The dead
composed this city
stone by stone
designed their dreams
in blocks
and slabs
made metaphors
of mass and line
in marble granite sandstone
left us
a labyrinth
of plinths and lintels
falling like rocks
through time
their time our time
are stone
stone walls stone houses
contain the wind and sand
maintain
conspiracies of stone
by now the trees
have skins of flint
their leaves are flakes of quartz
the wind
is nothing but the breath
of falling arches pillars
domes
no hand
can push aside
these stones

• • •

On looking at Lewis Koch's impeccable prints — one morning in the offices of the Center for South Asia in Ingraham Hall, here in Madison, half a world away from the world he had captured in every tone of gray — I suddenly remembered that my eye had forgotten how much it still remembered, so that nothing alien in these peaceful pictures was alien, and yet everything familiar from my childhood and youth in India had been rendered alien through the curvature of his lens: fresh, new, smooth yet grainy, in black-and-white projections on my amnesiac retina. ⋄

This bibliography lists all the titles Lewis Koch has used in the full project "Notes from the Stone-Paved Path," not just those represented in this keepsake. Page numbers refer to the page Koch has chosen to pair with one of his photographs. Numbers in square brackets refer to pages in this publication. Unless indicated otherwise, all titles are held by Memorial Library, University of Wisconsin–Madison.

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LEWIS KOCH, born 1949, New York City, lives in Madison, Wisconsin. For the past twenty-five years he has been working independently as an artist and documentary photographer. His personal work has been shown in solo exhibitions in London, New York City, Rotterdam, Brussels, Seoul, Chicago, Los Angeles and elsewhere, and in numerous group exhibitions. His work has also been presented in site-specific projects in garages and a series of billboards, and in art journals and artists' book and video collaborations. Photographs and assemblages by the artist are in permanent collections throughout the United States, Canada and Europe, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Maison Européenne de la Photographie (Paris), Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe (Hamburg), Museet for Fotokunst (Odense, Denmark), Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago) and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. As an artist-in-residence at the Fotografisk Center in Copenhagen, Koch created the web project, *Touchless Automatic Wonder* (2001), at *www.digitalroom.org*, which provides a comprehensive overview of his work in photography, installations and temporary public artworks.

JOSEPH W. ELDER's cumulative eight years of living in India have included two years teaching high-school English in Madurai, Tamilnadu, and eighteen months gathering dissertation materials while living with his family in tents beside an Uttar Pradesh village. Between 1986 and 1994 he was president of the New Delhi-based American Institute of Indian Studies. He is faculty coordinator for the University of Wisconsin's College-Year-in-India and College-Year-in-Nepal programs, and he has helped produce over twenty documentary films dealing with India.

VINAY DHARWADKER is the author of *Sunday at the Lodi Gardens* (Viking, 1994), and has recently completed his second collection, *Someone Else's Paradise: Poems 1971–2001*. Among the books he has edited or co-edited are *The Oxford Anthology of Modern Indian Poetry* (1994), *The Collected Poems of A. K. Ramanujan* (1995), and *The Collected Essays of A. K. Ramanujan* (1999), all published by Oxford University Press. He has also edited *Cosmopolitan Geographies: New Locations in Literature and Culture* (Routledge, 2001) for the English Institute, Harvard University; and his latest book, *Kabir: The Weaver's Songs*, will be published by Penguin Classics in fall 2003. He teaches South Asian literatures and serves as director of the Center for South Asia at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

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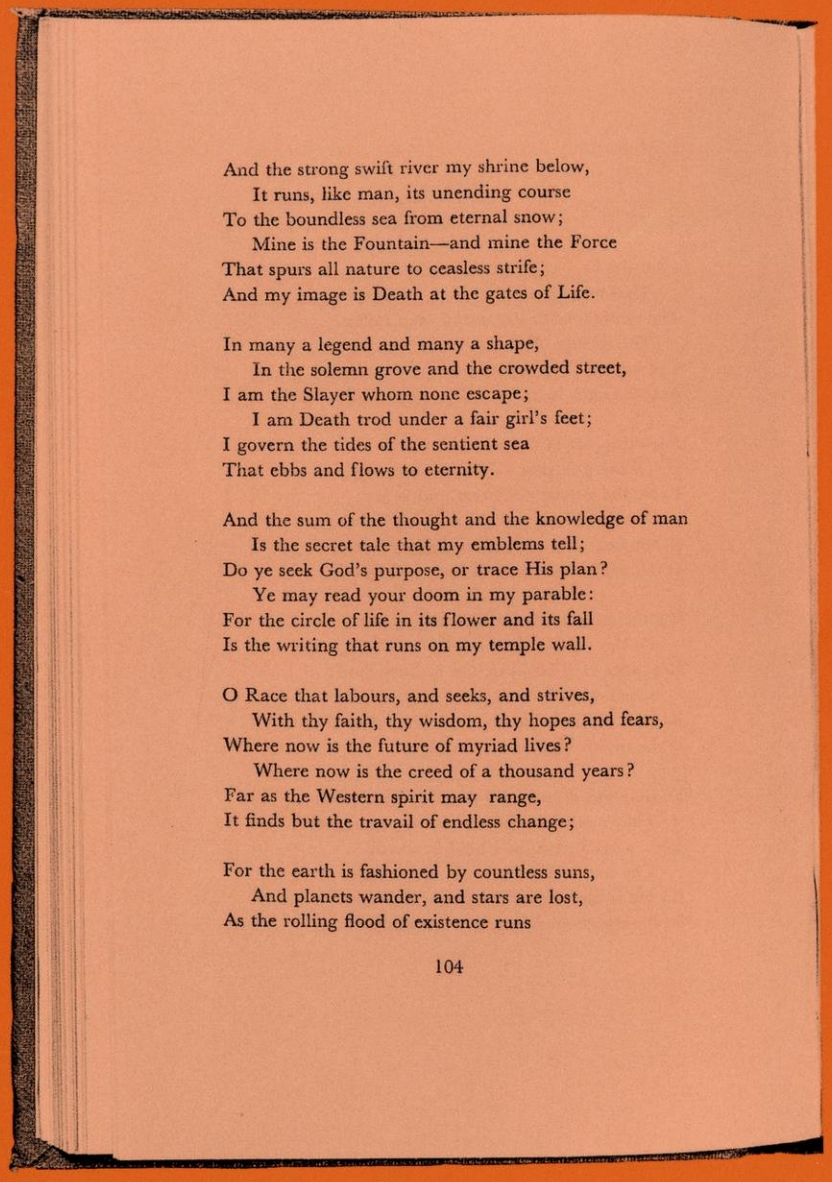
Lewis Koch



And the strong swift river my shrine below,
    It runs, like man, its unending course
To the boundless sea from eternal snow;
    Mine is the Fountain—and mine the Force
That spurs all nature to ceasless strife;
And my image is Death at the gates of Life.

In many a legend and many a shape,
    In the solemn grove and the crowded street,
I am the Slayer whom none escape;
    I am Death trod under a fair girl's feet;
I govern the tides of the sentient sea
That ebbs and flows to eternity.

And the sum of the thought and the knowledge of man
    Is the secret tale that my emblems tell;
Do ye seek God's purpose, or trace His plan?
    Ye may read your doom in my parable:
For the circle of life in its flower and its fall
Is the writing that runs on my temple wall.

O Race that labours, and seeks, and strives,
    With thy faith, thy wisdom, thy hopes and fears,
Where now is the future of myriad lives?
    Where now is the creed of a thousand years?
Far as the Western spirit may range,
It finds but the travail of endless change;

For the earth is fashioned by countless suns,
    And planets wander, and stars are lost,
As the rolling flood of existence runs

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