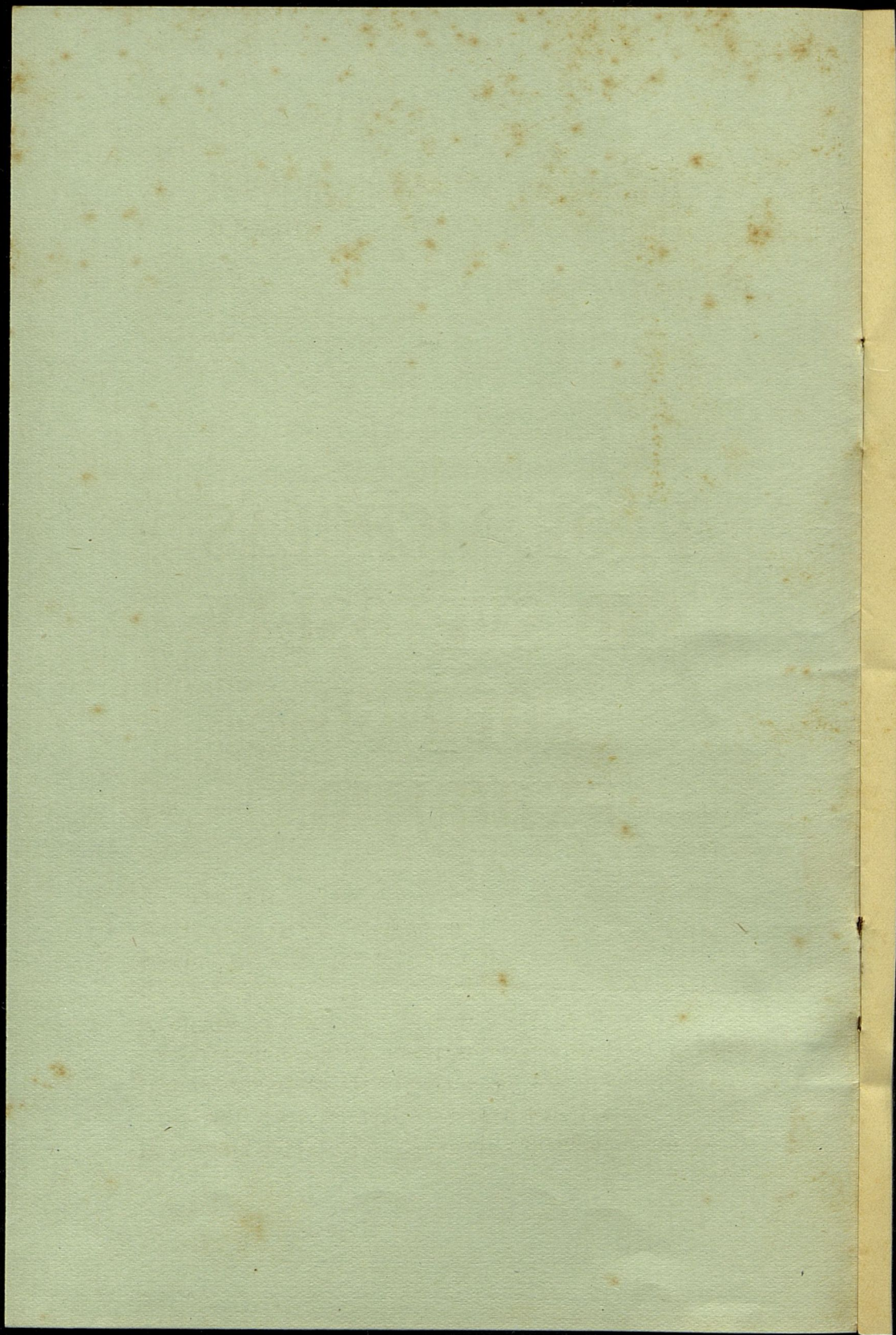


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**PROF. NICHOLAS
AND SVETOSLAV
ROERICH
EXHIBITION**



**THE ART OF PROFESSOR NICHOLAS
ROERICH AND SVETOSLAV ROERICH**
BY SHEIKH AHMED

"By the sign of beauty the locked gates may be opened."

—*Professor Nicholas Roerich.*

NICHOLAS ROERICH comes from an ancient and distinguished family of Russia. He studied at the Imperial Academy of Arts on the Neva, where he later became a professor. Nicholas Roerich is considered to be one of the prime initiators of the "Russian Renaissance," "which in music, painting and the ballet, was often Slavo-Oriental in character." After the Great War, on the outbreak of the Russian Revolution, the Roerich family left their home and took up their abode in Finland, Sweden, Paris and London, ultimately arriving in New York. In all these places Nicholas Roerich has left his mark in the form of cultural societies which are co-ordinated with the Master Institute in the city of New York.

In different parts of the world, the Roerich cultural institutions are endeavouring to spread greater art appreciation among the general masses in the most constructive manner. The Roerich Museum in New York, which I had the privilege to visit on various occasions, along with other activities has undertaken the education of the younger generation. This institution co-operates with the New York public schools, libraries and other educational

centres to promote æsthetic appreciation through such cultural and artistic activities as exhibitions, lectures, concerts, artistic excursions, scholarships and by printing literature on important subjects. This Master Institute is also helping to uplift the level of craftsmanship by giving instruction to the younger generation in various handicrafts.

The most vital aspect of the work of Nicholas Roerich is the conviction that life can be made sublime through the application of art, and that a true spirit of international brotherhood can be infused throughout the world. To realise this objective he has brought under the Roerich Pact and Banner, people of divers lands and nationalities. In the collective spirit of twenty-five countries which collaborate with him in his aspirations, he foresees the dawn of a new era in which art will play an important role. "The Roerich Peace Pact and the Banner of Peace were created by him as a means of protecting the world's treasure of culture in war and peace and of creating a symbol around which the cultural forces of the world could gather in constant vigilance for the protection of man's genius in all times."

The understanding between the East and the West, which Rudyard Kipling deemed impossible is gradually being realised through the efforts of Nicholas Roerich. His personal background and racial patrimony which is as ancient as it is distinguished, makes him the right leader for the realisation of such stupendous work. On his paternal side the doughty warrior chieftain Rurik of Novgorod

founded the first Russian dynasty in the 9th century, and on his maternal side traces of Turkish ancestry provide him that foundation of heredity which in art as in everything else is so vitally essential. Along with this racial affinity with the orient, Nicholas Roerich had an intellectual and æsthetic unison with India through his belief which he shares with the old Rishi of this land, that the whole material universe is but an appearance and that the only thing ultimately real and lasting is spirit.

It was the desire to be in tune with the Infinite, which impelled him to take up his abode first beyond Darjeeling and then at Naggar in the Kulu Valley. Very much like the aspirants for spiritual experience, Nicholas Roerich has felt and depicted through his work and conveyed to others that enchantment of the Himalayas which only nearness and understanding can reveal. The majestic loneliness of these regions, their impressive beauty and fascinating colours which seem to change with the mood of the mountain are rendered with a profoundness born of spiritual insight. Under his brush the Himalayas have unfolded that inner charm which had been an age-long mystery. It is because these silent giants, these guardians of Mother India have found in this sage-artist a supremely sympathetic interpreter of their spirit. One feels that the very Spirit of these mighty mountains directs each tone, each colour and each stroke of his brush, making his creations eloquent of the inevitable forces of destiny.

SVETOSLAV ROERICH

"A man who wants to portray life must know it in all its manifold expressions."

—*Svetoslav Roerich.*

SVETOSLAV ROERICH the son of Prof. Nicholas Roerich was born in Petrograd in 1904. The outbreak of the Russian Revolution and the flight of the family from their home-land, provided him an opportunity of studying various countries and various people from quite a different angle. This developed in him a keen sense of co-ordination and perception which I feel has been a tremendous help in his work. From 1918-1920 he stayed in England studying art and later proceeded to America for further education. There most of his time was spent in New York and Boston. He joined the art classes of the Columbia University and then the School of Architecture at Harvard. At quite an early age, America and Europe recognised his skill and talent and the several exhibitions of his work held in both continents are expressions of their appreciation.

The Sesquicentennial Exposition of Philadelphia of 1926, awarded him a medal for a composition which was sent over there from India. Svetoslav Roerich had come to India with his parents in 1923. Here he divided his time between painting scenes of India and bold close-ups of the people against the mighty Himalayas. In these close-ups which breathe power and vitality, one sees that confidence of execution which is associated with the finest of portrait

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artists. I must mention here that before coming over to India, Svetoslav Roerich had specialised in portraiture. The portrait of his father painted in 1930 is unanimously acclaimed a work of outstanding merit, for he has presented Professor Nicholas Roerich not merely as his father, but a Master of the Mountains and the Torch-bearer of Beauty and Enlightenment.

The mysticism of Svetoslav Roerich, if we may call it so, is of a different order from that of his sire. This strong aspect of his work can be summed up as humanity, humanity and still more humanity. In his impressive compositions, he has depicted the inevitable struggle between the elements and humanity. The rugged mountaineers that gaze penetratingly at an observer from the pictures are presented as bold as their mountainous backgrounds. His landscapes with bright flowering trees, so typical of the Himalayas, present burgeoning beauty of rare charm.

Svetoslav Roerich has produced a great variety of work ranging from portraiture to huge panels depicting religious and mythical subjects. In them the motives are generally Eastern. In his work, the profound human significance is the result of a deep philosophical view. He believes that "A man who wants to portray life must know it in all its manifold expressions." This is because the essence of an object cannot be depicted by mere portrayal of its external appearance. His work is reproduced in various art magazines of Europe, America and India and forms part of many private collections and

public art galleries and museums in many parts of the world. Since 1936-37 his works have been shown at various art exhibitions and were greatly appreciated by many distinguished people, art critics and connoisseurs of India.

