The Art of Nicholas Roerich

By Prof. Shanti Prasad Varma, M.A.

Art is the expression of life. Those dreamy moments which we devote to the realisation of this eternal life are the only moments in which we truly live'. They alone are the symbol of utmost wakefulness. We do not live by merely keeping our eyelids widely apart. The mind which does not resound to the sweet twitter of a bird, the heart which does not leap with joy at the smile of a flower, the soul which does not see its reflection in the twinkle of the stars, and does not move with the mad waves of the ocean, cannot be a proper vehicle of life. Those who really live have in their eyes the glamour of the eternity of life .in their emotions a sensitiveness to the sorrow of the whole creation, in their soul a great rapture .in their love an infinite expanse. They are the persons who can find companians in the snow-clad mountain-peaks and who can share their feelings with the withering leaves of autumn. They alone can create art.

The name of Nicholas Roerich is highly reputed as one of those few personalities who have been able to pitch their tents at the Everest heights of art. This great artist, poet, thinker, and researcher is spending his sixties in the final sadhana of life in the Kulu district of the Himalayan valleys.

The duality of the world he has left long behind him .Time and space lose dividing lines at those heights of art which he has attained ,and thus make it difficult for us to place him in the conventional grades of painters. He has so completely harmonized himself with the unity of life in its diversity that it has become impossible to trace behind his colours the influence of country or creed .Born in a Russian village and learning the rudiments of his art in St Petersburg and Paris, he has today imprinted his name on the rocks of the whole world .More than three thousand of his paintings are adorning the various art galleries in all the continents ,an honour never attained by any other painter. A sky-scarper of forty-nine storeys has been specially raised in New York for the exhibition of his works. The 'Kalabhavan'

of Rai Krishnadas at Benares is also fortunate in possessing a dozen of his best creations.

The art of Nicholas Roerich is universal. It bears upon it neither the imprint of East nor of West. Roerich has been a ceaseless traveller and has drawn his paintings in various countries, in different surroundings; and at all places he has dipped his brush deep into the soul of the atmosphere. This has been the key to his success. The expressive colours and the surprising originality which he has exhibited in his works on the Himalayas are incomparable. He has completely merged his personality in the snowy expanse of the Himalayas.

He is famous as a wizard in colours. The touch of his brush, the depth of his colours and the clear vagueness of his outlines bring with them a tempest of emotions, but what appeals to me most in the paintings of Nicholas Roerich is his symbolism, There is a school in the West which confuses painting with photography. It places Satyam above both Sivam and Sundram. But true art does not lie in merely dipping your brush in the colour-box and sketching what is seen by the physical eye alone. A Japanese writer of the 18th century considered it a great fault of the Western pictures that they dived too deeply into the realities, and called these pictures mere groups of words.

It is one of Roerich's special virtues to give fitting names to his paintings. The artist finds it difficult to name his latest offspring. What he paints in the tempest of his feelings is sometimes incomprehensible to himself in 'saner' moments. But Nicholas Roerich is an artist who never slumbers, who has made the art the expression not of his madness but of his sanity. Wa Whatever he creates with the strength of his genius out of the waves of the emotions belongs as much to him as the child to its mother. He may play with it and fondle it. He may kiss and cajole it. He gives a simple easy name to his creation at the mere mention of which the whole picture stands at your beck and call, naked in all its beauty.

'Remembrance' is one of these small colour poems. In the distance, the blue peaks of the Himalayas with all the rapture of Nature in their limbs stand smiling

A man with an air of self-confidence in his expression is riding a white steed. In the corner, two woman stand looking wistfully at him . Their hearts seem to spring into the gleam of their eyes and ask, 'Will you remember?' The artist has so arranged things that the question reverberates through the whole atmosphere . The traveller looks back , but the horse will not stop. And then, who can remember this small hut in the wide range of mountains? It will fade from the traveller's vision in a moment. Then gradually, these high cliffs too will fall, back, because the traveller has to move on . Then, in another world, will the traveller who has not stopped and is still moving be able to remember all this? Who x can tell?

The work of Nicholas belongs to that range of art where there is no division and classification, but where there is only an effort to realise the ultimate harmony. This has carried the artist so near to Nature. In his paintings, Nature does not serve the slavish purpose of decorating man's activities a or giving fuller expression to his feelings, but spreads with the fullest freedom of its own expanse. Men with all their pettiness do not even dare a look up at the high cliff, but pass on, with awe and reverence in their eyes. There is a painting named the 'Dowry of the Princess! The mountain peaks rise higher and higher. But the dowry of the princess, hiding all its grandeur in its small bosom, moves slowly on, and occupies hardly a tenth part of the whole picture. In the 'Audience' a man sits down in a corner and listens to the vast message of Nature. In 'Lord Buddha' and the 'Leader' Nature appears so much akin to man that the scattered mountain ranges give us an impression of human children at play.

Roerich has drawn his motifs largely from Nature but he does not so much enter into the form as into the spirit. His londscapes are not mere reflections of Nature. They are poems in colours. Emerson rightly expressed the true function of this type of art. In 'Landscape' he writes,' the painter should give the suggestion of a fairer creation than we know. The details, the prose of Nature, he should omit, and give us the spirit of splendour. He should know

that the landscape has beauty to the eye because it expresses the thought which is to him good, and this because the same power which sees through his eyes is seen in that spectacle and he will come to value the expression of Nature, and not Nature itself, and so exalts in his copy the features which please him. He will give the gloom of gloom and the sunshine of sunshine. These words can be literally applied to the paintings of Roerich.

Nicholas Roerich is a creative artist. His creations have enriched the richness of the world . He is not one of those millions of painters, who spend the wirk life-time in imitating higher artists. Roerich's technique of painting, his emotions and the method of their expression, are all his own. What he has attained in his successful life of thought and action, he has expressed with great fondness in his pictures. His pictures are not merely full of deep emotions, but also reflect the intensity of his thoughts. Behind each painting of Roerich there is a philosophy of life and an effort to solve problems which have been contusing us for ages.

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The life of Nicholas Roerich is itself the expression of a great * truth. His name has resounded from one corner of the world to another, but he has found the progressive realisation of life, not in the ball-rooms of Europe, nor in the sky-scrapers of New York, but in the 'Urusvati Institute' which he has established in the lap of the Himalayas. Humanity itself will one day get tired of this tumult of death and will seek its true life in the vast expanse of Nature.

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The small storms and tempests of our world do not reach the Himalayan heights of art. Our petty prejudices, the ties between man and man, selfishness and passion—all scatter themselves in the lower ranges and die down. On the heights the pink rays of the setting sun play hide and seek with the whiteness of snow. In this ocean of beauty the artist alone keeps himself above the thousand coils of irrepressible creative urge. The rest remains merged in beauty. Whatever is created out of this turmoil is the eternal possession of mankind.

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To create art is to enter into the inmost depths of life and to express its soul in beautiful colours. Nicholas Roerich does not think much of painting 'matter' as it appears to the naked eye, but he has entered deep into feelings and has been able to catch by his artistic eye a full glimpse of the eternal truth of life and has expressed that great truth in his art.

The paintings represent the deepest poetic emotions at their highest. It appears that the painter has filled his outlines with songs which have lost their voice into the faintness of the lines, and thus his creation is all poetry in colours. Einstein once wrote that he was never impressed by anything so much as by a painting of Roerich. To see one of his paintings is an education in the highest poetic culture.

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Nicholas Roerich, in spite of his birth in the West, is nearer to the soul of the East. The unity behind all life was perhaps never before understood so well by any body in the West. But let us acknowledge one thing. In the whole history of Indian painting, though the painters sat in the lap of Nature herself, they could never give such a predominance to her as we find in the works of Roerich. The Indian painter always measured the value of Nature in human coins. The Chinese and Japanese, who owe their inspiration in colours to India, seem to have been more moved by the vast infinity of Nature. Our painters could never paint Nature in her great seclusion.

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But Roerich does not believe that to seek eternal peace we have to flee physically from the madding crowd. He has himself dreamt the best visions of art in the busiest streets of the world, and given them form and colour. Roerich thinks that, by drawing the horizons of beauty round us, we can attain those heights where there is no place for the smaller things of life. At one place he writes: 'In beauty we unite. Let us repeat these words not on snowy heights but in the tumult of the towns. And taking this to be the sole truth, with a joyful smile, we welcome the future.'

The pictures of Roerich are even more optimistic than his life. In Rai Krishna's collection, there is a painting named 'Kalki.' 'Kalki' stands as a symbol of optimism, but the feelings which have been given voice by Roerich in that painting, where this incarnation of hope appears in the clouds above the Himalayas, are too deep for our expression. 'The Sign of Maitreya' also paints the future Messiah of the world in the same vivid colours. But the artist in Roerich has not lost sight of the hard facts of life in the golden dreams of his optimism. 'The Unspilt Cup' is another of his immortal works. A man is descending from the Himalayan peaks full of snow and glaciers. He holds in his hand the cup of eternal life. The path is steep. There is danger of its contents being spilt. There is always that danger. Who is there among us who has carried his cup through the steep path without spilling a drop?

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A Summer Night

The night is cool; the oppressive glare of day
Has left no trace on earth; a landward breeze
Freshening and blowing through the spring-decked trees
Echoes the ceaseless roar of a troubled bay.
The young Moon with the monsoon clouds at play
Sends forth a dreamy gaze; a distant flute
Is marred by the barking of a haunted brute;
Forces of darkness hold the world in sway.
A thousand thought-forms racing through the mind,
Feelings of hope and fear, of joy and woe
That rise and fall like waves tossed by the wind—
Where are they shaped? Towards what goal their flow?
Nothing affects the Soul's eternal sky
That watches in silence all this passing by.

ANILBARAN ROY

The

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[No. 3

A Thought for the Week

The true University of these days is a Collection of Books.

CARLYLE.

BOOKS

In our first issue this year we published a list of quotations about books by famous men. This was intended as a stimulant especially to students of the first year to realize that through books the wisdom of all ages and countries lies waiting for them.

Modern education centres round books. Since the invention of printing five hundred years ago the book has become the chief means of distributing ideas and information. To be a "well-read" man has become the sine qua non of a real gentleman. Here in the college we have a library well-stocked with interesting books of all kinds which can act as an open sesame to all branches of knowledge, and we are constantly improving both the quantity and quality of books.

However, a very false notion is current that if one has read a large number of books by famous authors, from the Sufi poets to Winston Churchill and Rabindranath Tagore one is an educated, and therefore superior man in every way to those who have not accomplished this feat.

We have already said that to be well-read is the mark of a cultured man, but in itself it does not make a cultured man. The whole thing is not a question of quantity but of quality. One may have read a lac of volumes and yet be completely lacking in real knowledge and common sense. Like all things, one only gets as much out of reading as one puts into it. To read intelligently is a real art, and like all arts one that has to be learnt. One may read words without understanding them (How many people read always with a dictionary beside them?), one may use eloquent words in writing and write badly in spite of, often because of them.

Some ten years ago a brilliant little book was published in Europe by a Frenchman called the Abbe Dimnet ("Abbay Dimnay"). It was called "The Art of Reading" and had an enormous sale,

especially in America, which shows how much comparatively well-educated people felt the need of lessons in how to read. In this book the author suggests the formation of certain habits, such as cutting out interesting bits from newspapers as an essential part of good reading. It is natural that France, a country world famous for its delicious food should be the one to produce a book which is a real guide to how to make good food for the mind with the materials now available everywhere in the form of books. Everyone who wants to learn should read this book.

Too many undergraduates are inclined to look on lectures as the essential part of their college work and to fail to realize that the real place of learning is the quietness of one's study where one may read, think without disturbance. Or if one is not lucky enough to have a room to oneself at home, still there are the fields and paths, the shady trees and sweet-sounding streams to offer each and every man a place of refuge from the madding crowd. It may interest some to know that often first class students at Oxford and Cambridge rarely attend lectures. Their work is all done by their own fireside or by that of their tutor or supervisor of studies.

If one's studies are approached from the point of view an adventure rather than a drudgery and if one learns the art of reading, he will soon discover that books never fail one; they are the most faithful of friends and most generous of companions. To love good books is to learn to love one's fellow-men, for good literature is the expression of the noblest and most intimate of mankind's aspirations.

Indore Education Fund

An Education Loan Fund has been created in the Holkar State to enable talented young men of the State to qualify themselves for the higher-posts under Government. Rules regulating the grant of loans from this fund and the studies for which the loans are intended have just been published. It is stipulated that a candidate, after successfully completing the course, should serve Government if called upon to do. If, however, Government are unable to offer him employment within six months after completion of study, he will be free to seek employment elsewhere.

ART AND LITERATURE.

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(Continued from previous page.)

sits down in a corner and listens to the vast message of Nature. In 'Lord Buddha' and the 'Leader' Nature appears so much akin to man that the scattered mountain ranges give us an impression of human children at play.

Roerich has drawn his motifs largely from Nature but he does not so much enter into the form as into the spirit. His londscapes are not mere reflections of Nature. They are poems in colour. Emerson right'y expressed the true function of this type of art. 'In landscape,' he writes, 'the painter should give the suggestion of a fairer creation than we know. The details, the prose of Nature, he should omit, and give us the spirit of splendour. He should know that the landscape has beauty to the eye because it expresses the thought which is to him good, and this because the same power which sees through his eyes is seen in that spectacle; and he will come to value the expression of Nature, and not Nature itself, and so exalts in his copy the features which please him. He will give the gloom of gloom and the sunshine of sunshine.' These words can be literally applied to the paintings of Roerich.

Nicholas Roerich is a creative artist. His creations have enriched the richness of the world. He is not one of those millions of painters, who spend their life-time in imitating higher artists. Roerich's technique of painting, his emotions and the method of their expression, are all his own. What he has attained in his successful life of thought and action, he has expressed with great fondess in his pictures. His pictures are not merely full of deep emotions, but also reflect the intensity of his thoughts. Behind each painting of Roerich there is a philosphy of life and an effort to solve problems which have been confusing us for ages.

The path of Nicholas Roerich is one of peace and love. His subjects of creation are not the restless hours of tumultuous night when the bedewed lamp-posts look wistfully at the sottish crowd, but the snow-peaked cliffs of the Himalayas and the vastness of the sky. In the eternal solitude of life the art of Nicholas Roerich has reached its climax. He has portrayed women much better than men, because they are more akin to beauty and art, but his mountain ranges cannot be rivalled even by the portraiture of Kwan-thin, the Chinese goddess of grace.

The life of Nicholas Roerich itself is the expression of a great truth. His name has resounded from one corner of the world to another, but he has found the progressive realisation of life, not in the ball-rooms of Europe nor in the sky-scrapers of New York, but in the 'Uruswati Institute' which he has established in the lap of the Himalayas. Humanity itself will one day get tired of this tumult of death and will seek its true life in the vast expanse of Nature.

The pictures of Roerich are even more optimistic than his life. In Rai Krishna's collection,

there is a painting named 'Kalki.' 'Kalki' stands as a symbol of optimism, but the feelings which have been given voice by Roerich in that painting, where this incarnation of hope appears in the clouds above the Himalayas, are too deep for our 'The Sign of Maitreya' also paints expression. the future Messiah of the world in the same vivid colours. But the artist in Roerich has not lost sight of the hard facts of life in the golden dreams of his optimism. 'The Unspilt Cup' is another of his immortal works. A man is descending from the Himalayan peaks full of snow and glaciers. He holds in his hand the cup of eternal life. The path is steep. There is danger of its contents being spilt. There is always that danger. Who is there among us who has carried his cup through the steep path without spilling a drop?

Nicholas Roerich's ideas regarding art are also worth studying. He does not believe in art being for art's sake alone. This principle casts a bitter reflection of keeping ourselves aloof from the humdrum of everyday life. It gives flowing tresses and squint eyes and frock-coats to the artists. Roerich considers that art alone to be true which unites. His beliefs are that 'art alone will establish unity among mankind, and that 'it is for the enjoyment of each of us.' 'Each man,' he writes, 'can feel the joy of true art. The doors of its sacred expression should be open for all. The light of art will fill all hearts with a new love.'

In this period of Indian Renaissance, when art is undergoing the travail of a new birth, the existence of this universal poet of colour in our midst should be a matter of congratulation for us. The renascent painting of modern India has a surprising record of progress. The names of Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose and Kshitindra Nath Majumdar must cause pride to any country. We have been able to revive the memory of Ajanta, but as the famous art-critic O. C. Gangoly thinks, our modern art 'is hardly yet pulsating with the throb of modern aspirations.' A study of Roerich's art will lead our painters nearer to the soul of the world.

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Cholera Precautions

News has been received that there were 11 attacks and 11 deaths from Cholera in Ujjain on the night of 25th July. The Public Health Department of the Holkar State is taking every possible preventive step for the protection of the Holkar State in general and of Indore City in particular, The Director of Public Health has recommended to Government that the following measures should be adopted immediately:—

(a) that steps may be taken to make it known to every person who wants to purchase a Railway ticket at Ujjain Station for any station in Holkar State area, that such person will not be allowed to enter Holkar State without the required inoculation certificate as already notified.

Similarly the bus service stations in Ujjain District and in Ujjain town may inform and warn those who want tickets for Holkar State territory; and at Bus and at Railway stations in Holkar State territory those people who ask for return tickets from any place within the infected area may be warned.

(b) to go, if possible, one step further by requesting the Railway and bus authorities of Ujjain District and Ujjain City not to issue at all tickets for any place in Holkar State area, before having satisfied themselves that such person is in the possession of the required inoculation certificate.

GOVERNMENT SUBSIDY TO HELP INDUSTRY.

The Government of His Highness the Maharaja Holkar have sanctioned a five-year scheme, prepared jointly by the Director of Agriculture and the Registrar of Co-operative Societies, for the development of the poultry industry in the State.

The main features of the scheme are that two Demonstration Farms will be opened, one at Sendhwa and the other at Manpur. Each of the Farms will be supplied with a pen (12 hens of approved breed and 2 steed cocks) from the Simrole Central Breeding Farm for the purpose of breeding and for the production of pure types of eggs and births. The Farms will be supervised by the Veterinary Assistants, who will also do propaganda work in the villages.

It is also proposed to establish six Village Centres, four in Sendhwa Mahal and two in the Manpur Circle. These Centres will be in charge of promosing cultivators, who will be given a subsidy of Rs. 50 for setting up and running a small poultry house.

It is hoped that these measures will result in the formation of poultry societies on co-operative lines.

The entire expenditure for the working of the scheme will be met from the funds at the disposal of the Rural Uplift Board.

Hostel Notes

Although admissions have been made to the full capacity of the hostel and a few have had to be refused admission, some of those who have been admitted have not yet come to occupy their rooms. This is not right. Those who have secured admission are expected to come to live in the hostel immediately except those who are unable to do so for some unavoidable reasons in which case they should take leave from me. Those who have not yet come to their rooms (if there are still any at the time of the publication of these lines) shou'd meet me immediately; otherwise, they are liable to lose their rooms.

During this week elections of the office bearers of the various messing clubs have been held. The General Secretaries of the Shivaji, Maharashtra, and Santosh clubs are respectively H. G. Sharma IV yr. Arts, R. S. Wadhera, Final Law class and A. V. Kaweeshwar III yr. Arts, All these three are men with previous experience as General Secretary and their elections this year only go to show the confidence which they enjoy among their fellow-students. I have no doubt whatsoever that the clubs will be efficiently managed by them.

Students of the hostel are reminded that according to the hostel rules it is compulsory that all light must be off by 11 P.M. and that the students should give the morning roll-call to Mr. S. B. Akolekar. These rules are made in the interests of the health of the hostellers and discipline requires that everybody must strictly conform to these rules.

The following students are nominated prefects of the various blocks. (1) East Block: B. M. Rawal, Final Law class; (2) Middle block: H. G. Sharma, IV yr. Arts; (3) Gambhir block: A. S. Khajanchi, IV yr. Arts and (4) West block: V. M. Bhatnagar, IV yr. Science. The prefects are requested to help me in all possible ways to see that the inmates of their blocks have a happy, comfortable and an orderly life. Block representatives of the students will be elected on Monday the 4th of August, 1941 at 1-15 P.M. in the Physics Lecture Room. All hostellers are requested to be present.

Mr. Akolekar has requested me to ask the students not to spoil the garden in front of the various blocks by walking over the young plants which are just beginning to sprout up. The garden will become attractive in due course when the plants have grown up and the lawns are made. Meanwhile nothing should be done to impede the development of the garden. I would also request the students to keep the surroundings of the blocks scrupulously cleam. The prefects and block representatives can help me a lot in this matter.

N. PADMANABHAN
Dean.

MEMBERS OF STUDENTS' COUNCIL 1941-42.

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- Miss Anklesaria. 6. G. B. Tiwari.
- B. K. Vaidya.
 B. V. Dube. 7. S. K. Kendurkar.
- 8. R. M. Varma.
- 4. R. K. Nadkar. 9. M. C. Kataria. 10. Ratanlal Parikh. S. K. Joshi.
- Senior Intermediate Arts.
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- S. S. Pathak. 7. C. E. Holkar.
- 3. P. D. Sharma.
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M.A. Final Economics.

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M.A. Previous English.

L. N. Bapat.

M.A. Final English.

M. W. Shidore.

M.A. Previous History.

D.A. Parmar.

M.A. Final History.

A. S. Manji.

M.Sc. Previous Chemistry. V. A. Moghe. M.Sc. Final Chemistry.

A. S. Mehta.

UMPIRE'S EXAMINATION

The Umpires' Sub-Committee of Central India Hockey Association have decided to hold an Umpires' Examination some time in Dec.-Jan. (the exact date will be notified later on), at Indore, in each of the following three ways:-

- 1. ORAL TEST. Candidates will be required to answer rapidly simple questions on the application of the Rules of the game of hockey.
- 2. PRACTICAL. Candidates will be required to umpire, at least in two games or matches of hockey before two examiners appointed for the purpose.
- 3. WRITTEN TEST. Candidates will be required to answer a question paper set for 3 hours.

HELP THE WAR FUND

The Prime Minister has warmly commended to the State the sale by the Central India Agency of stamps for the benefit of the war fund. These stamps are of two denominations, As. 2 & A. 1, and are on sale by members of the staff and by the college office.

Volunteers are urgently needed to sell these stamps. Every anna paid in means another nail in Hitler's coffin. Those who wish to volunteer will kindly give their names immediately to the College

> H. B. RICHARDSON Principal.

> > H. GHOSH.

CADET CORPS

A scheme for starting a Cadet Corps at Holkar College has just been sanctioned by Government. The required number of muzzle loaders with the necessary ammunition for the Training Corps will be supplied by the Military Department of the State. The scheme will come into effect from 1st October, 1941.

CHANGE OF RESIDENCE.

Students desiring to see me will please note that I have left my residence in Tukoganj and have come to stay in the southern half of the Old Principal's Bungalow. August 1, 1941.

ENGLISH SECTIONAL LIBRARY.

Till the end of the first term, the English Sectional Library will remain open from 10-30 to 11 a.m. on all Fridays. M. A. English students may take out books on other days by previous engagement. H. GHOSH.

LITERACY WORK.

Those students living in the hostel, who would be willing to undertake literacy work with the college servants should give their names immediately to me. N. PADMANABHAN.

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