

## MEETING MY MASTER

I believe that in every life there is an outstanding, striking event, which often completely changes one's life, leading it into new channels, hitherto undreamed of - almost as if one life definitely ended and a new one began from that moment on. That is what happened to me on the day of my meeting Prof. Nicholas Roerich.

The first exhibition of this internationally known artist was announced to be opened in New York, in the winter of 1921. Stories about this great artist and his successes in the European capitals, outside the boundaries of his own country - Russia, where he was justly acclaimed - were appearing in the daily press. Many names from the so-called "400" appeared as patrons in the exhibition catalogue.

I knew there would be a great crowd on the day of the opening, and hesitated, thinking perhaps I should go on the next day but, as if drawn by some powerful force, I decided to go. Later I read in the papers that the crowd had been estimated at about 10,000 people, but all I experienced when entering the halls of the gallery, was a vast, majestic world, with great mountains, azure skies, with clouds suggesting images not of this plane, and a singularly peaceful, harmonious, indescribably beautiful realm, all new to me. I stood before the "Treasure of the Angels", "Pagan Russia", "Ecstasy" - 3 huge canvasses of super-human beauty and serenity, such as only a master-mind, akin to Leonardo da Vinci, could conceive and project in color.

As far as I was concerned the crowds receded, disappeared; I was face to face with Infinity; with the first man, building his dwellings, worshipping divine forms and communing with God. Great spaces of cosmic significance, mountains, waterways, massive rocks, earthly and heavenly messengers, humble saints, heroes, peopled the world of Roerich which he in turn gave to man with that generosity which is the distinction of the truly great in art. I felt choked with tears filling my eyes, thoughts and emotions welling up in my heart. My hitherto secluded world was giving way to one of unearthly Beauty and Wisdom.

I was torn from my absorption in all this glory, by someone who insisted upon introducing me to the artist. I went, almost unwillingly, being now aware of the great crowds milling around, and thinking how tired and indifferent the artist must be, looking at thousands of faces, meeting people whom he would not remember immediately after. There he stood, of medium height, with most luminous blue eyes, beard shaped to a point, noble head, radiating some invisible benevolent force, and with a most penetrating look in his eyes, as if he could see deep into one's soul and find the very essence of it. Next to him stood his wife, E. I. Roerich, so strikingly beautiful that one caught one's breath. I was introduced, I heard the tremble of their voices, speaking to me with a smile, in our own tongue, and, to my amazement, as if in a dream, I listened to their invitation to come and visit them that same evening in the Hotel des Artistes. All the impressions of that afternoon, the tremendous impact of the great art, left me in a daze. I accepted the invitation, wondering why I was asked. Unknown to them, and yet to be privileged to visit the great artist and his equally great wife (I sensed that looking at her) I could hardly wait until that evening. When I entered the big studio and was received with the beautiful hospitality, justly natural to the Russian character, many other, not less amazing surprises awaited me - this great man and his wife received me, as if they knew me! Furthermore, they began to talk to me about their future plans, mission in the U.S., and what was to follow

afterwards, at the same time professing deep interest in my music and work of teaching. And, most astounding, our paths were to converge; the work of bringing art and knowledge to the Youth of America, was to tie me closer to them! The same evening thoughts were laid for common work - the foundation of the first of our institutions, founded by Prof. Roerich - Master School of United Arts. Many more of these cultural centers were to follow - Cor Ardens, Corona Mundi, and later Roerich Museum, Roerich Museum Press, numerous Roerich societies in all parts of the world, and others. That evening marked the beginning of my apprenticeship, which grew from then on into discipleship under Nicholas Roerich and closest cooperation with him and Mme Roerich.

But the deepest joy of that first evening of our meeting was the realization that I had found my Master. By the very first words he spoke, filled with profound wisdom, and telling me ever so simply and gently about Beauty and Labor, I recognized in him a noble Messenger sent to mankind - to impel their hearts and souls upward, to seek true knowledge and to be steadfast and fearless in that search.

His was the wisdom of both the earthly and heavenly planes, ever-compassionate, alleviating heartaches of those who came to him. He instilled in them indomitable courage and daring to battle life's obstacles. His was the pronouncement, "Blessed be the obstacles, through them we grow". He praised generously where even small progress was in evidence, thus prompting to still greater service. Joyously he welcomed a good soul, and grew silent when evil made itself known in his presence. And by this silence one grew to sense evil, when it approached him. A great builder, he brought people together for common work "for general good". Superhumanly patient, indefatigable in his creativeness which embraced such a vast sphere of human endeavors, he taught those near him to serve culture and love the joy of service - and through culture to battle for peace, for all men, for all times. He never belittled, but only magnified, finding in ever-so-small a consciousness a seed of good.

How can I say in so many words what he taught me? When I remember all those years of listening to his great wisdom; of learning in daily contact with him how to deal with others, in conflict and sorrow; how to forgive but not to compromise; how to feel joy, but also to perceive reality without closing one's eyes to it; how to love Beauty, accepting it as one of the highest expressions of the human spirit; how to cognize and revere the Great Teachers of humanity - I can only repeat that I was supremely happy and fortunate in finding my Master in this life. In humble gratitude I think of him as showing me the Path of Light and Knowledge, and my mission in life.

Divine Helpers of humanity, ever compassionate toward us, send us from time to time their envoys, who joyously perform this super-human act of sacrifice - to serve men and ward off, whenever possible, disasters caused by their unjust practices. Such an envoy was Nicholas Roerich, master to me and teacher to many. His pure and noble art is today to be found in museums and private collections in all parts of the world. His writings, translated in many languages, are eagerly sought by multitudes of seekers of Beauty and Wisdom. He combined the all-pervading knowledge of an ancient sage with the synthesis of a genius. A combined artist, philosopher, writer, scientist, discoverer and possessor of a vast realm of ideas whose profundity reach into the distant future.

To be close to Nicholas Roerich was like studying in several universities at the same time; like dipping into the well of the great past, into the history of man; and like, while vigilantly living in the present current of

evolution, yet striving for the supermundane knowledge, yearning to fathom the future of mankind. He knew this all, but he also helped others, who longed to learn, to lift the veil whenever possible.

He brought joy, health, harmony and peace to many who sought him, as he radiated all these forces. He gave untold spiritual wealth to many, thus making their lives immeasurably rich. He gave of himself and his great treasures of spirit untiringly, bringing greatest sacrifices with complete selflessness. He was a sower, not for himself but for humanity. Communing with the Higher Worlds, he never forsook the earth, serving the General Good.

He spoke of peace, creating the universally known Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace, because his very being radiated peace. He foresaw grave calamities before they descended upon humanity - 2 world wars - and he warned, with great sorrow in his heart, against a third universal disaster. Yet he sent messages of peace to all parts of the world, to purify the space, to help the growth of human consciousness. He was a builder, creating many majestic structures, visible and invisible. He scattered many benevolent milestones in the countries through which he passed. These blessed magnets remained and kindled many a noble striving in human hearts. His creativeness, his art, his thought - all were imbued with a holy fire. His was a cosmic consciousness.

My Master is ever-living. He taught me that there is no death, no ending - that there is Infinity. A rare privilege has been given me in this life: to meet a Great Soul, a Master, and to be allowed to become his disciple.

With inexpressible gratitude in my heart, I hope to follow in his steps. I know I will meet him again in ever-flowing Life.

Sina Fosdik

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