

KARMA-YOGI ROERICH

By A.Y. Haldar

The triumph of the age is science which brought to this world a power both creative and destructive. Similarly art shaped earthly substance into an aesthetic force thus elevating humanity for better understanding and completeness in their life. Therefore two things are to be considered in life: one, which touches the Infinite - Thuma - through feeling and perception (abstract) and the other earthly materials, which could be touched through our senses (concrete). Cosmic interplay of these two dynamic and static force is to be found everywhere in this Universe. None can separate them or could think separately. There are men (though extremely rare) who could be found like Dr. N. de Roerich whose mission is to bring harmony. His work is dynamic and through that he has proved himself to be a true worker (A Karma-Yogi), a seer. His one and only message is work (Karma) which brings rhythmic harmony and inspires us to live a richer life.

We therefore pay him our warmest congratulations on the celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the academicianship and the 50th Anniversary of his artistic, scientific and literary activities and also on the opening of a new painting section in the Museum in Latvia.

I therefore request all my friends to join me in calling him Karma-Yogi Roerich - "Roerich, the true worker and inspirer of the age."

The National Museum in Peking thus greets the Master: "We have ordinarily looked up to you, Sir, on account of your Occidental and Oriental learning, your reputation being exalted with the T'aishan, and the Constellation of the 'Great Bear.' In speaking of antiquities you have much knowledge, and your eyes can cover a period of five thousand years. You have visited the most remote places, your travels cover ninety thousand li. Among Connoisseurs you are a most renowned artist, having the ability to depict sounds and shadows, and are reputed to possess much ability and skill. Although the objects of antiquity in quantity are comparable to the sea, you, Sir, are among the Initiate, and know and appreciate them all."

The voice of Mongolia expresses its greetings: "Such great universal personalities as Roerich are walking the path of the Bodhisattvas of the highest order as absolute lights of the century. In this age, the age of egotism, their great deeds will bring limitless results to those countries which these lofty personages have passed. Therefore, our country considers the visit of Professor Roerich to our country as a great honor and joy."

Greeting Professor Roerich in the name of the seven million inhabitants of New York, the Mayor of the city said:

"For the city of New York, it is a great honor to welcome Professor Roerich once again to America. It is especially fitting, that you, who have and ever before you the cause of International Peace, should return to a city which is so symbolic of this unity of all nations. New York has more Italians than Rome, more Irish than Dublin, more Jews than Palestine, and innumerable other nationalities, all of whom are subscribing to the united life and government of this metropolis. And hence, you truly belong to this city as a messenger of unity among men. It is a great thing for humanity that you have performed this Mission of Good Will, that you have brought to the remote peoples of the world the understanding of peace, the message of brotherhood. And I know of no one who has accomplished more in this regard than you who have been able through vast efforts in this cause of good will among men, to bring about greater brotherhood and finer understanding among the nations of the Earth."

Art is a universal language and yet when we look at the art of Roerich we get the language of his own which he himself discovered and never tried to diverge from it. But there is no contradiction in the above. A distinctive style or individuality is only the expression of the universal through the personal medium. Roerich's style or technique, however, does not chain his work to a groove, but brings out his inner urge and emotion to a ~~xxx~~ perpetually forceful spontaneity. The spirit that pervades his work is dynamic. This accounts for the simultaneous plentitude of his creation as much as for his loyalty to the method that he has made all his own.

Roerich, as is well known, is a Russian who has adopted India as his home. But in a sense he never left his own fatherland. Every manner of his expression conveys the ideal of Russian art. He is always true to the tradition of his country and its soil, and it is for this truthfulness that he commands respect from all over the world. One should not forget that Roerich is one of the foremost archaeologists and scholars of his country and whatever knowledge he stored by his ^{re}searches came out in art-form through his subconscious mind. He may be painting the Himalaya, or a waterfall of Ceylon or any Indian subject of his choice, he invariably proves himself to be a great Russian soul expressing his ideals through his own individual language. His paintings "Koupora", "Unkrada", "Saint Sergius", "Sister Beatria", "The Messenger" are his typical works. Their great merit will always make of them the permanent art treasures of the world. Through their singularity we get a glimpse of his great soul.

We all adore and venerate the infinity, but Roerich siezed it through his intuitive creation. Therefore we do not find any trace of intellectual rigidity. According to the Hindu views, he is Karma-purusha-Singham - the Lion of the workers. Karma - work without Rasa - love, is nothing but drudgery. In his case 'Karma' has culminated into Tapa - prayer and thus his spiritual self is ever longing for the eternal bliss which alone has inspired

In connection with the Golden Jubilee of Prof. Nicholas Roerich let us remember the inspiring address which the well-known American artist Leon Dabo delivered at a meeting arranged by the fellowship of Faith in New York:

"This universe is a universe of law and order; it is a universe of law and order and justice - and if man has lost the sense of spiritual guidance, it is because he has severed his connection with the creative forces. It is a universe spiritually guided and the Hierarchy are constantly sending Their messengers to this terrestrial globe of ours. They constantly send to us those, who like John the Precursor, act as Guides. This guidance is in three forms - the first form is that of creative art; the second form is that of formulative philosophy, the law; the third form is through the inventive forces, where the whole marvellous mechanism of evolution is revealed, and which combines all the three forms. One of these Messengers is Nicholas Roerich - priest, poet and artist - who as a result is also a philosopher, prophet and guide. One who like a Leonardo or John the Baptist, is sent providentially, as have been so many precursors, who by culture and beauty teach us to gain spiritual peace, and through love to destroy the blasphemy.

Nicholas Roerich has no home, no date, no Nation - he belongs to no Nation or epoch. So do the Persian miniatures, so do the great Chinese art works, or the Etruscan creations. They belong to all times and all Nations. For every artist, every poet, every philosopher is primarily a priest - his vocation is holy, holy, holy. He leads mankind and we follow his light. They are timeless, as is beauty. They have many facets all reflecting the Supreme. Nicholas Roerich is the present day representative of that divine inspiration - what matters, whether he is here or in India. What matters if one hears from him but a few times a year - I always knew Nicholas Roerich, and there is an eloquence in our silent communication that transcends all written words. He is a messenger from the Hierarchy itself, revealing that in Beauty all virtues are combined; no man with an evil thought can create, not unless he is seared by the fire until all the

generations of artists of the world throughout the ages. His soul clamoured for the world peace and invented "The Banner of Peace Movement" to preserve the spirit that motivates religion, art and education from the ravages of war. Alas ! before his Banner of Peace could flutter in the light, another world war ensued to ruin the world ! His sensitive sympathy for human sufferings had inspired him to work for world peace. That work has stopped for the time being, but the Divine Anandam will not let it die.

The great master Roerich will never grow old, as his work is the outcome of a perpetually youthful vigour and sublimity. We do not find any wilful obscurity or forced mysticism in his work, but the essential images are well composed and displayed to show the supremacy of spirit and soul. We are not satisfied by a work of art which is only representative. A simple narration is not the essential quality of a literary work; there should be the "Art of writing" which makes it distinctive from other writings such as press news etc., similarly, the art of painting gives something more than what a photographic representation could produce. Art indeed is a dumb language, but if it contains the required quality of spirit which is its essence, it could speak out many more things than are known. To express this spiritual quality is the greatest task for the artist; if he can perform successfully we call him a Seer and a prophet. Roerich has fulfilled that task more completely than most others. We therefore venerate the Spirit in appreciating Roerich's Art. We pray to God to add many more years to his beautiful life to fulfil the great mission he has set upon himself. My grateful thanks to Mr. K. P. Padamanabhan Tampi for asking me to write a preface in his famous brochure on Roerich.

Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti, Hari Om !

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Sd/ - Asit K. Haldar.