

Roerichana*

By Prof. AMIYA CHAKRAVARTY

Nicholas Roerich's name has become a tradition: it is a name which indicates a pervasive way of mind, in art, literature, and in the realm of meditation. When a personality becomes the centre and the symbol for a philosophy of life, and draws around it kindred spirits from all the world over, the reviewer must stand aside and merely direct others to testimonies that record direct experiences initiated.

"*Zelta Gramata*" is a record of such testimonies; it contains a harvest of appreciation from scholars, artists, critics and from other distinguished men of many countries and continents. The wealth of friendly tributes collected "in dedication of fifty years of creative activity of Nicholas Roerich", is further enhanced by association with the First Baltic Congress of Roerich Societies held in Riga on October 10th, 1937. Then again, there is the wholly unexpected joy of finding several reproductions in colour from the paintings of Roerich himself; this graceful volume takes you from pages of thought to visions of entrancing loveliness.

Having myself made the pilgrimage to the mountain on which *Urusvati* is built, I can recommend Conlan's book with particular warmth of gratitude. With much knowledge and spiritual sensitiveness the author introduces you to "A Master of the Mountains", and succeeds in the difficult task of interpreting the many-sided unity of Roerich's genius. The formative period of a mind destined to move men is always of surpassing interest and yet it is often denied insightful study: this short account, however, manages to give a very satisfying glimpse into Roerich's early period. We are told of Roerich's excavating zeal, when at the age of fourteen he began digging up some tumuli on his father's estate near—as it was then—St. Petersburg. His preoccupation with the Past and early observations on remote Neolithic consciousness, and on various aspects of "primitive" mind and culture are of unique interest. After this it is not difficult to understand that Roerich inspired one of the greatest of modern composers—Stravinsky—to produce that landmark of music "*Le Sacre du Printemps*" (The Rite of Spring) in which a panoramic parallel to some of Roerich's great

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Tibetan pictures can be found. Mysterious figures move with flute and drum and cymbal; in different media the coloured clouds, witnessing mountains, vast silences and zones of feeling are set against an inward glow. Roerich having struck upon tangible Eastern mysticism has drawn from living sources in a manner denied to Stravinsky. But that is by the way. Scriabine's music, the author thinks, is nearer to Roerich's art, and there are affinities as one would expect, with a whole realm of creative spirits. Conlan shows Roerich in the context of a questing culture—and this is important—a rich European urge, which thriving on indigenous roots contacted varied tendencies and threw up the Russian Ballet, Diaghilew; the arts of Matisse and Picasso;.....Roerich's paintings. A friend of Gorky (both of them were spiritually allied to the great drive of new Soviet civilization) Roerich combines Russian culture with something intrinsically Eastern—or is it a case of essential continuity? and the road of fate leads to such canvases as "The Command of Rigden Jyepo" one of the guide-posts in Roerich's art. Readers must make that pilgrimage and I hope some of them will be led, as the reviewer was, to follow the easier path to the Roerich hermitage along the Kulu valley, past Katrain, to the corner of Naggar where the seer sits rapt in reverie facing the everlasting snowy wall of the Himalayas.

A voice of Jagore.