

"TRUE COPY"

Dated 18- 8- 1959.

"Nicholas Roerich was one of the most sincere artists I have ever come across in modern times. His pictorial themes live to grow into a dynamic force which compells one to realise that all that is seen on the surface is not sufficient to know the real contents.

It needed a vision that could penetrate into the depths, to see, feel and understand the spirit of the message lying underneath.

Roerich dedicated his life in search of the mysteries unknown and he succeeded to achieve this end with perfect ease concealing tremendous struggle which appeared to be simple."

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## INTRODUCTION.

By

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NICHOLAS ROERICH is essentially a landscape painter, who has been vested with unlimited power to explore inaccessible channels for self expression through his chosen medium. This direct approach towards his achievements, (I mean paintings) without a ceremonial prologue, might sound too prosaically academical, therefore, unseemly. Nevertheless I would rather depend on the terms and facts, I am familiar with, and say what I intend to, than allow myself to exploit innocent words just to let loose a frenzy of emotion to a volcanic rapture. Such outburst of high tension of feeling in the form of appreciation soon gets lost in the sound of vocabularies, and gets exhausted before the intrinsic value of the painting is assessed. Thereby its message is deprived of its mission.

Before I plunge into the main issue, I would be wise if I analysed in general, different temperaments of the artist and their reactions on their creations. Every artistic creation has a message to give and that is primarily joy or Anandam. This joy cannot be subjected to a defined objective, unless the artist desires it to be so or obliged to respect the subject matter in preference to his conception of his pattern theme of a pictorial composition. When I have said different temperaments, I am expected to explain what I mean by that. Law of nature has provided three main qualities that act in the mind of <sup>the</sup> individual and they are Satya, Raja and Tama. If they were respectively explained it would be as follows:

Satya - is that quality, which exhibits absolute truth that lives to eternity radiating perpetual glow of the beautiful, harmony and love. An artist temperamentally - a Rajasic loves to be (that is the member of the second group) active in the pursuance of fullness of physical existence. The joy is out of matter, which does not imbibe anything beyond, whereas the Tamasic quality involves viciousness, cruelty and lust.

I have introduced the above temperaments of artist to establish my contention that all great works of art are not necessarily dependent of subject matter only, however lofty its



its ideal might be, whatever great morals the theme of the picture is supposed to support. The art in any form stands by its own merits, i.e., the execution, the sincerity of work and direct approach to the subject through proper channel. That is the medium.

If art stood only to preach high morals and uplift the human society to a desired degree as per the conviction of the Puritans, most of the masterpieces in literature, painting and sculpture of the world, should have by this time perished, because the merciless attacks of Puritans are more effectively destructive than onslaughts of time. But neither of the evil forces has been able to assert itself on the achievements of the masters; they are still the living sources of joy to the ~~p~~receptive mind, irrespective of the subject matter, as they were meant to function in their original conception. Many of these masterpieces, I may point out, are the result of a direct response of the artists' inner sex appeal, which manifested itself on many an occasion through mythological subject. Even Gods were dragged to perform the so called unholy act. But Art superimposed its existence; Rhythm and balance perfected the purpose of execution, a thing of beauty was made and left to live as a source of joy for ever. The above is the sublimation of lust to an artistic end.

Instances of cruelty as subject matter in art are not rare. The hunting scenes engraved and sculptured in Assyrian, Egyptian, Chinese and Indian pattern motifs are examples of art, which are in no way inferior to those of equal merits of execution that express the subject matter of a so-called higher sphere. The same argument may be applied to drama, where a scene of murder can be equally treated as high a form of art as in another scene, where a Sadhu<sup>u</sup> dedicating his life for an ethereal existence. Therefore, the vitality that breathes in a work of art depends for its life-force on the unalloyed devotion of the artist, who has acquired knowledge and knows the limitations of his medium.

Now coming back to Roerich, I would say he may be classed in the first group, i.e., he is an artist of Satya-guna. His landscapes particularly Himalayan scenes are not just the material facts as could be observed by physical vision. His art has greater reality, i.e., the reality born in the soul of the artist. To stand before a Roerich fills one with inspiration of awe, and commands one to bow before the serenity of the gorgeous mountains.

The upheaval of the earth that gave birth to this land of great unevenness begins to play the same tune of unrest in the mind. It begins to search the eternal truth that underlies the beautiful; the soul is violently disturbed to rise up to the occasion; then follows a silence of solemn gravity, peace is declared within. Here comes his greatness. He not only gets joy for himself but the truth in his art conveys its intensity of mission for an immediate response. I bow before the artist and his great works of art. May he be spared to spread the mission of the beautiful.