

1

Speech by Mr. V. Balu, Chairman of the Public Relations Society of India, Bangalore Chapter, on the occasion of the special meeting of the Chapter addressed by the world-renowned artist Svetoslav Roerich.

Final corrected copy-

Dr. Svetoslav Roerich, distinguished citizens of Bangalore, Members of the Public Relations Society of India and my good friends,

This morning, a few persons asked me why it is necessary to have an organization called the PUBLIC RELATIONS SOCIETY OF INDIA, to have collectively a large number of Public Relations Officers, when individually much public relations is being done very well. In this connection, I could tell you that once all Public Relations Officers of the world had a meeting and they thought of a brilliant idea. They said they would fix a certain date on which they would all meet and at a particular moment, agreed to by all, they would all shout "Boo" and these shouts uniting from all parts of the world would make a tremendous noise the like of which people would not have heard before. The officers met and at the appointed time each thought that if he does not shout, it wouldn't matter since the other persons would be saying "boo" and so ultimately this moment passed to be one of the most silent moment in all history! This explains the importance of the collective approach besides the individual.

The Public Relations Society of India has besides its Bangalore unit, branches in Calcutta, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bombay, Cochin and Madras. The idea is to explain and emphasise the content and meaning of Public Relations for national progress on various fronts. In fact, Public Relations is one field which encompasses ever so many things. Take the field of art. Public Relations has a lot to do with art and through art we can promote public relations. For this reason we thought we could approach a leader in the field of art like Dr. Svetoslav Roerich to speak to the Public Relations Society of India. When I say leader, I am reminded of what has been said so very beautifully, and this being international women's year, I thought I might repeat it for your benefit. One in every thousand women is a true leader of men, the other 999 are just followers of women! (laughter). Joking apart, we have in Svetoslav Roerich a very great personality and a leader in the field of art. Just as he is sitting with us here,

millions of people are waiting in queues for hours on end to see 190 of his masterpieces at the Hermitage in Leningrad. These milling crowds are experiencing ecstasy of a strange kind, which we gather from reports that are continuously pouring in. ... It is a matter of pride, privilege and pleasure to us that such a great painter and a person who is so much being appreciated even at this very moment in Russia is now in flesh and blood with us in Bangalore to speak to us and tell us about the inter-reactions between art and public relations. I have had the privilege of reading several reports about his exhibition as well as about the Centenary of Prof. Nicholas Roerich, the revered father of Svetoslav Roerich. This coincided with the 70th Birthday of Svetoslav Roerich and these twin events resulted in stirring the emotions of the people of Russia very greatly. The people of India have responded with equal enthusiasm and emotion. We have all followed with great interest the Nicholas Roerich Centenary Celebrations and the Svetoslav Roerich's exhibitions which by popular request are being moved over to several autonomous Republics of Russia who are most anxious to have them.

I do not know whether I can say it but in Sanskrit they have a saying which means that the son of a great pundit is a zero. But then here we have an instance of the son surpassing, if not equalling his great father in many respects. It is a matter of pride for us in Bangalore that such a great son of the arts is with us and that he has so kindly agreed to spare some of his valuable time to give us this talk. I know from my own personal experience that time is very valuable for Svetoslav Roerich because this very time which is available to him is being made timeless and is being used by him to conquer all barriers transcend all artificial divisions and produce timeless masterpieces. We realize Svetoslav Roerich the value of your coming here because we know it means the sacrifice of your valuable time. If at all you have shown us anything through this, it is the value of the tiny little minute which is so precious to all of us that we cannot afford to waste it. Please think of the 190 compositions which are being admired even this minute by the people in Russia, each composition representing so much of time made timeless.

I am very happy on behalf of the Public Relations Society of India and on my own behalf that Dr.Svetoslav Roerich has very kindly consented to go over here, but before I request Dr.Svetoslav Roerich to speak to us I must say a few words about the gracious lady by his side, Madame Devika Rani, to whom we owe a lot. This is not just because it is the international women's year for the Indian concept is different and we have given even our country the name of Bharata Matha. Madame Devika Rani has been more than a mere conscience keeper of her husband. It will interest you to know that the crowds in Russia which visited the exhibitions of Svetoslav, after admiring his masterpieces, made it a point to go to her in all humility and say, "Devika ... we are grateful to you for looking after this great man." I am sure you will all give her a hand (Applause). While the normal saying is that behind every great man there is a woman, in the case of the Roerichs, I can confidently say that behind the great man there is an equally great woman. (Applause).

I have now great pleasure in requesting Svetoslav Roerich to address us.

Bangalore,
Friday, April 4, 1975.