

## THE ART OF SVETOSLAV ROERICH

By

Shakuntala Balu

Svetoslav Roerich, the great Russian artist, with his glowing face and flowing white beard, looks a saint, despite his western attire, his colourful raw-silk bush shirts notwithstanding.

For, art to him is religion, the universe sheer art and to create great art is to realise oneness with the universe. It is difficult to believe that even in this jet age, we have such a painter, who not only portrays but also writes, talks and breathes art. Yes! Svetoslav Roerich is a living legend, and fortunately for us lives in Bangalore, with his gracious wife, Devika Rani.

### Born with brush

It looks as though Svetoslav was born with a brush and palette in his hand, as the son of Prof. Nicholas Roerich. His father influenced his thinking deeply and helped to cast him in the same mould. It is amazing how identical are their thoughts, philosophy and views on many subjects. It is truly a "Himalayan" instance of a father and son dreaming the same dreams and working for the same cause of art, beauty and peace.

Maybe the mighty Himalayas has wrought this miracle, since Svetoslav was brought up in the folds of these mighty ranges, where his father, who could not resist the spiritual call of these divine mountains, came from far off Russia and settled down.

Svetoslav's career as a painter began at a very young age and the genius in him earned for him instantly world-wide recognition including the International Sesquicentennial Award of Philadelphia.

In fact, he had the rare privilege of being accorded equal recognition with his renowned father and they often exhibited their works together. There is great similarity in their work, yet the two are different, for they are two truly great artists and each one has expressed the soul of things in his own manner. Each work of art reflected the individual personality and the two have displayed their own inner vision, the beauty of their compositions uniting in this diversity.

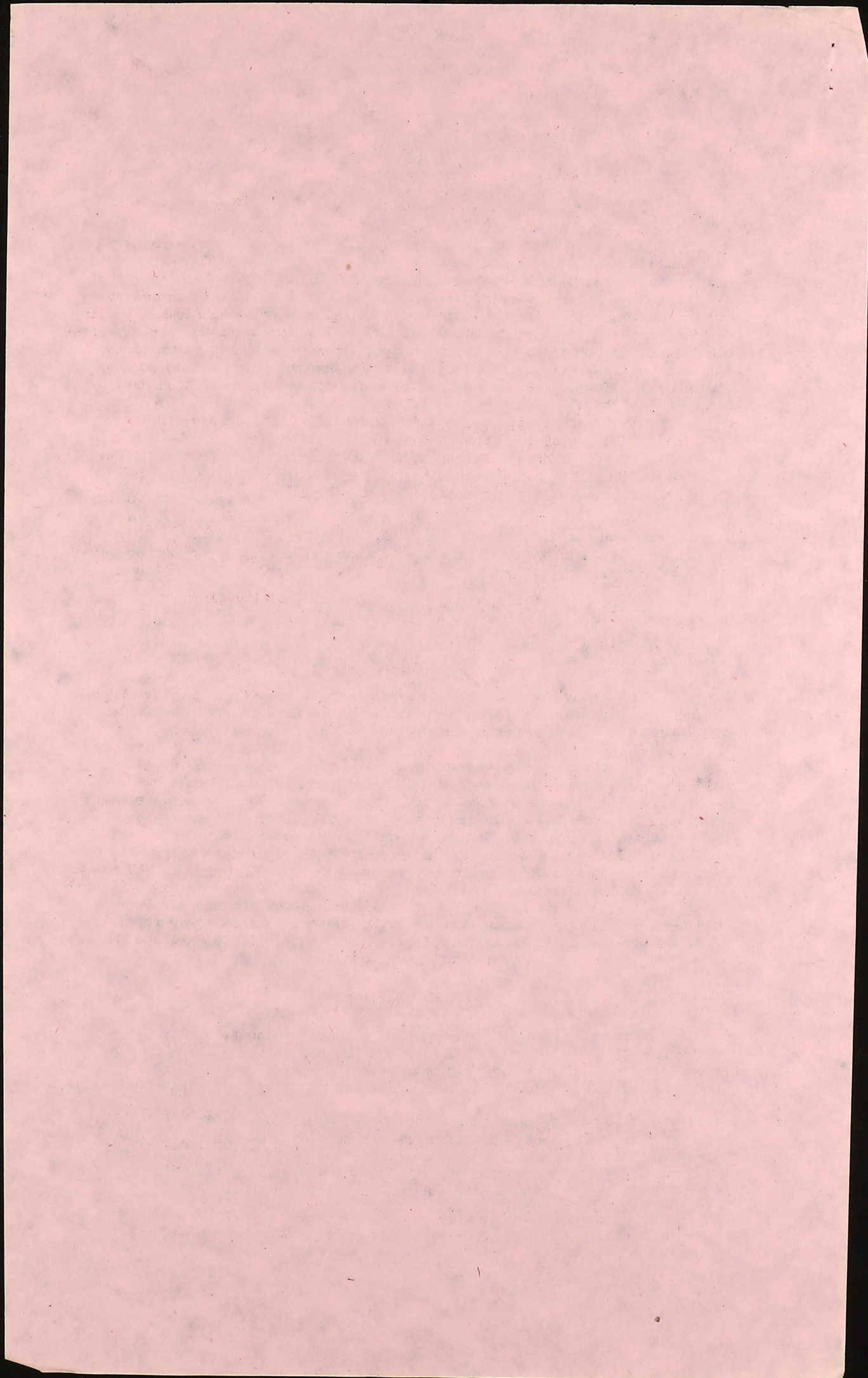
Now, in this year of his father's centenary and his own 70th birthday, which both fall in October 1974, Svetoslav feels moved to realise that his works and his father's priceless paintings will be exhibited together, after several years, all over Russia.

### Vast preparations

"There have been requests from many other countries for these exhibitions, but at the moment I have not planned anything further than these Russian exhibitions," said Dr. Svetoslav Roerich, describing the vast preparations and work involved in taking out these paintings to Russia.

The capable organiser that she is, Madame Devika Rani Roerich, has taken several responsibilities off her husband's shoulders, to give him more time for his art and writings. "There are 189 paintings that have so far been got ready in 80 crates ... these will be flown to Moscow, in a specially chartered plane. Moscow is the venue of the first exhibition," said Dr. Roerich.







Madame Roerich showed a facsimile of the stamp of Prof. Nicholas Roerich being released by the Government of India on October 9, 1974, as a centenary tribute--a fitting memoir indeed for a great master painter, revered by his equally great contemporaries like Tagore, Gandhiji, Father Andrews, Jawaharlal Nehru and others.

If India, the country of his adoption, has done him proud, the country of his birth, Russia, has gone all out to perpetuate his memory and taken interest to show the works of the Roerichs to the Russian public. Many of the younger generation are getting this unique chance for the first time in their lives, to see together the paintings of two great artists, who are universally acclaimed. This is indeed necessary in the wake of the extreme awareness Russians of late are showing in even modern art!

It is difficult to classify or label the works of Svetoslav Roerich. One cannot type them either as traditional or modern, since his work, like that of his father's, is for all times, as true art always is. His large, lovely landscapes show the vast panorama of nature and its resplendence, as compared to insignificant humans.

Often they portray the hidden beauties of the mountains, in all their glory, at different times of the day, at different seasons of the year, in bright, pulsating tempera colours, rich tones, mixed with subtle hues, and as near to natural shades as has ever come out of any artist's palette and brush. All this plus their spiritual inner quality eloquently communicating with the viewers, appealing to them, calling them and moving them, as only the Roerichs can.

#### Snowy white tops

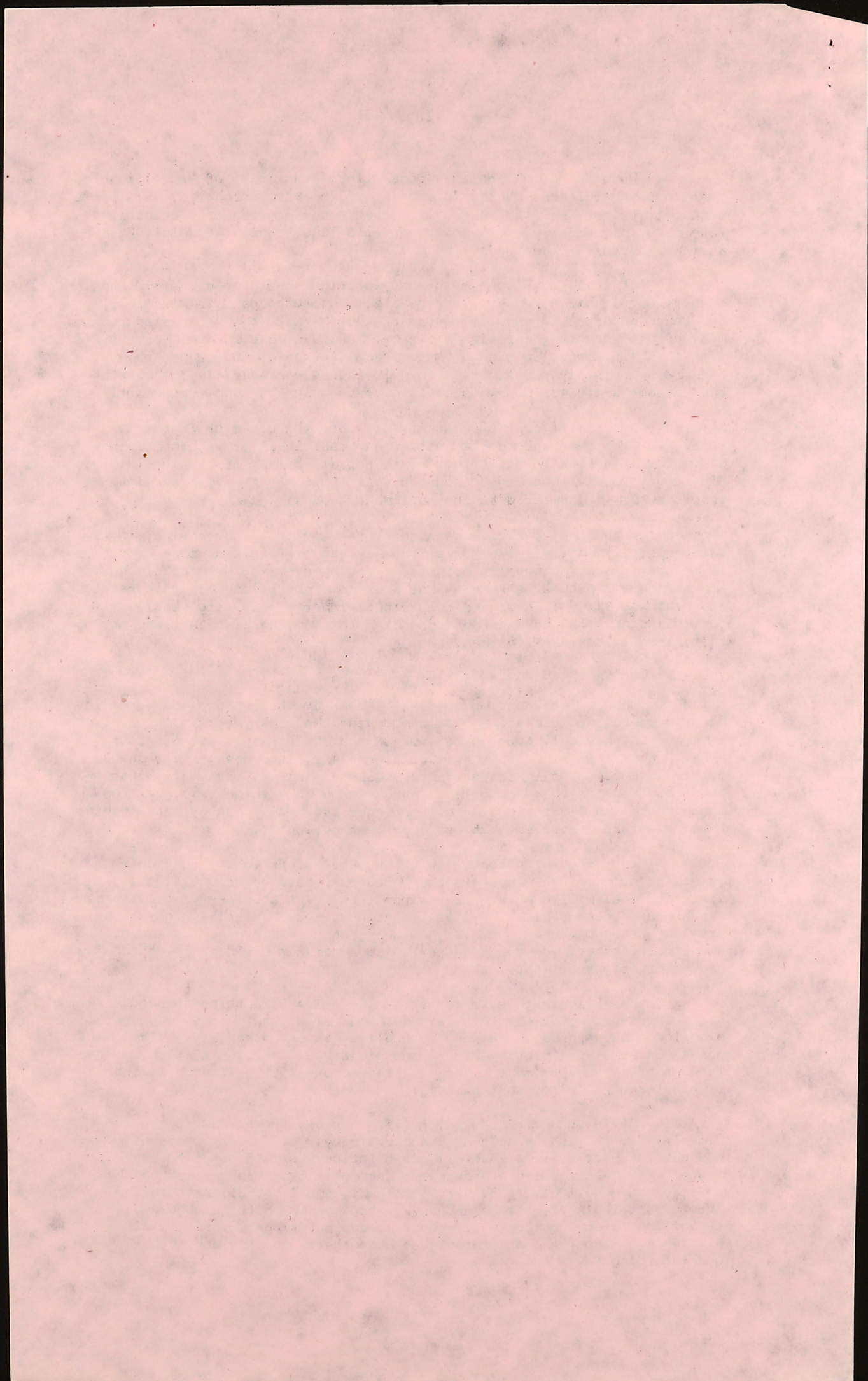
When animals and humans are present in these paintings Svetoslav Roerich makes them vibrate the same mood and the same rhythm of nature. I have seen only a limited number out of the 7000 and odd paintings of Prof. Nicholas Roerich and that too the smaller sized ones. I remember mostly the mountains in tones of grey, blue and black, with only hints of other tints of colour, and of course the snowy tops in white. But the magic these small paintings have, the inner depth they convey is something that cannot be described, but can only be experienced.

I have been fortunate to see several of Svetoslav Roerich's paintings at his lovely home in the Tadgunni Estate of essential oil plants. It is an ideal milieu--his well-equipped, well-lit studio--for all his canvases are so colourful. He is a silent, but superb display man when he promises to show you his work. And oh! when the canvases are shown, one after another, you are transported to a strange world of beauty of joy and of delirious delight.

Was this what Keats meant when he said: "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever." Oh no! This is something far beyond, for you cannot experience such peace, such joy, such bliss, in any other way. The paintings make you forget yourself and gives you a strange elation, a feeling of immense peace of a transcendental quality. If this is not true art and religion, what else is?

It is wonderful the way Roerich has created an atmosphere for himself, far from the bustle of Bangalore city. This very peace he has been able to breathe into all his paintings for all of us to experience. To Svetoslav, all great art must reflect nature and art has to portray the beautiful. "Why take the ugly and immortalise it in the form of a painting?" he asks and says, "let us learn to see the good in everything around us and portray that in our paintings ... This will gladden the viewer and help create an atmosphere of peace and better understanding."







A truly great philosophy explained in so simple a manner, echoing his faith in art as a means of grand communication. Yes! to Dr. Roerich all art has to communicate without needing any explanation. It is surprising that, like in all other things, in painting too, to be simple is most difficult and requires a clear mind and greater appreciation of the soul of things. Then only will art really communicate beauty and peace to those coming under its influence.

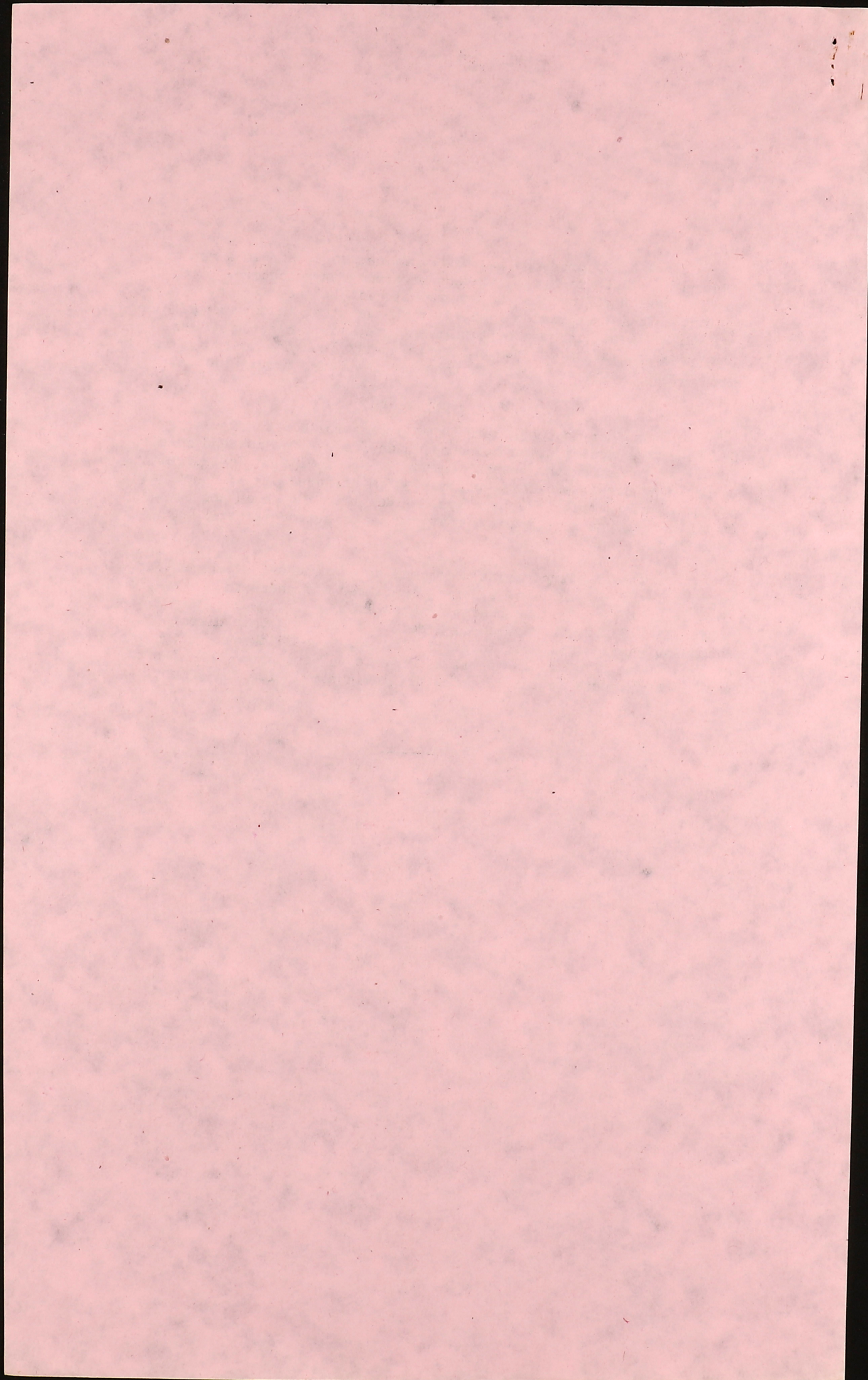
#### As a corollary

Another instance came to me as a corollary to emphasise Dr. Roerich's contribution to peace, when I saw a few ink and colour pencil sketches, by the revered Radhakrishna Swamiji in Bangalore. He had done simple sketches, portraying in different ways, mountains, pools, trees, temples and pathways. But then the peace and serenity in these drawings is something that has to be sensed rather than explained.

When contemporary art reaches this stage of development of being able to communicate, to bring happiness and peace to the people, then it would really have reached a high level. The works of a living genius like Svetoslav Roerich is indeed a pathway in this direction. Svetoslav Roerich believes in simple living, high thinking and the yoga of art. Men like him do not relax, retire or renounce; for life to them is holy, work is art, art is religion and religion fulfilment.

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Bombay

Subject :

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13 OCT 1974

# DECCAN HERALD WEEKLY MAGAZINE

BANGALORE, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13, 1974

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Svetoslav's career as a painter began at a very young age and the genius in him earned him instantly world-wide recognition including the Inter-

national Grand Prix Award. In fact, he has received the privilege of being accorded special recognition with his renowned works together. There is great similarity in their work, yet the two are different, for they are two truly great artists and each one has expressed the soul of things in his own manner. Each work of art reflected the individual personality and the two have displayed their own inner vision, the beauty of their compositions uniting in this diversity.

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"From Beyond", a composition by Nicholas Roerich.

## Relevance of Nicholas Roerich for India

By V. Balu

NOW and then, one comes across powerful, pulsating personalities who are so outstanding in so many fields of human endeavour that they are revered by all mankind.

Prof. Nicholas Roerich, whose century is being celebrated the world over on October 9, 1974, was one such dynamic figure, whose compelling contributions as master painter, writer, poet, scientist and philosopher form part of the global heritage.

Prof. Roerich's researches in archaeology and history have given him special eminence in the twin fields and his extensive excavations in Russia are part of history. The theatre movement got considerable fillip because of the inspiration provided by him and even the stage settings introduced by him have become classics.

His versatility was amazing and his contributions to the world of art, culture and beauty in English language does not have a better word, and hence one has to be content with using the word 'genius'.

Even at a very early age, Prof. Roerich received world recognition as an artist and his paintings were exhibited all over Europe and America. Learned Bodies and Government, vied with one another to honour him. At the age of 31, he headed

the Banner of Peace is the emblem of the Pact and the design of the banner shows a white flag with a symbol in red. The symbol comprises three spheres surrounded by a circle. The three spheres signify the past, present and future achievements of humanity within the circle of eternity.

Through this banner of peace, Prof. Roerich not only wanted protection for cultural and educational treasures of the world for art and culture, but also for world art and culture, through which, he hoped, hu-



V. Balu

manly would achieve a newer and deeper understanding.

In the family of Roerich, where the Bhagavad Gita and Tagore's Gitanjali were honoured, there was an old painting of a majestic mountain which Nicholas Roerich admired even as a child and which he later learnt was the famous Kanachanganga Himalayan range. In 1923, Prof. Nicholas, Madame Helena Roerich, his wife, and their sons, Svetoslav and George, came to India. First they lived near Darjeeling, but later moved over to the Kulu Valley.

This pact, known as the Roerich Pact, was initially accepted by 35 nations and signed by 21 nations, including the U.S.A. in 1935. It became the foundation for the Hague Convention of 1954 when it was adopted by all countries of the world. The Pact specifically provides that educational, artistic, religious and scientific institutions, as well as sites of cultural significance, shall be deemed inviolable and respected by all nations in times of war and peace. The Pact provides for man's cultural achievement the same guardianship the Red Cross gives for preventing the physical suffering of man.

Those in India who would like to experience the joy of seeing his works and beautiful works must be grateful for the representative specimen of his studies of the Himalayas and other paintings in Benares (Sharda Kula Bhawan), Allahabad (Atmipal Museum), Calcutta (Indian Museum), Madras (Adyar Museum) and Tiruvannamalai (Sree Chaitanyam Gallery). The Shantiniketan collections of Rabindranath Tagore and in State Museums of Hyderabad, Baroda and other centres of India. The Benares collection includes paintings of the Buddha, the Kalid Avastar and Bhawan Sri Ramkrishna.

The residence of Prof. Nicholas Roerich in Kulu remains a fitting memorial to him and

houses a good collection of his paintings of the Himalayas and of areas adjacent to the Kulu Valley. This gallery attracts visitors from all parts of India and the world.

Prof. Roerich envisaged development of this place as a cultural, scientific and research centre in his life time. He founded the Himalayan Research Institute for the study of the Himalayas and more especially the Western Himalayas in which the Kulu Valley is situated. Research at this centre has already been done in botanical and zoological fields, as well as in ethnology and philology and the local pharmacopoeia, which is a blend of Ayurveda, the local indigenous medical tradition and Tibetan medical lore.

Many scientists from all over the world have participated in this effort and it is envisaged that work at this centre will be further developed, as visualised by Prof. Roerich.

In his paintings, Prof. Roerich transports the human soul to the dizzy heights of divinity. His sincere portrayal of the soul of nature that is inseparably linked with the soul of man, projects the human quest for striving towards perfection. Indeed, this idea is innate in Prof. Roerich's art and life. Thus it is that his art has no time limits of time and space and binds the age of Adam to the modern age of the Atom.

Small wonder that Rabindranath Tagore said Prof. Nicholas Roerich was a man who realises that truth is infinite.

To the present writer, one of the most important contributions of Prof. Nicholas Roerich has been his son Svetoslav, the painter in the class of the master painter. By his own incidence, Svetoslav Roerich completed his 70th birthday in October, 1974. Svetoslav Roerich, and his wife Madame Devika Rani, spent their time between their estate in Bangalore and their residence in the Kulu Valley. Svetoslav Roerich in his own rights is a great painter, whose misdeeds are also imbued with the same strange, mystic flavour and great vision as his father's paintings. He realises that truth is infinite.

In India, Roerich did several thousands of paintings immortalising the sublime beauty of the great Himalayas and the cosmic concepts pertaining to the ancient wisdom of India. The long gallery of pictures painted by him reflect the majestic beauty of the hills and their shimmering spiritual satisfaction. Deeply religious, he got inspiration from all the world's great religions and philosophies. His paintings depict Jesus Christ and the Buddha, Mohammed the Prophet and Lord Krishna, Confucius and Lao-Tse, and many revered saints.

will be held in several parts of Russia throughout 74-75. The relevance of Prof. Nicholas Roerich's life and work for India is indeed significant. He not only immortalised the beauty of the country and its culture but also spent his last days in the Kulu Valley where he died in 1947.

In the words of his son Svetoslav, Prof. Roerich had always carried the message of India throughout the world from the very beginning of this century, when he began writing about India and the greatness of India's cultural heritage. In all his books and writings, his message had always found a special place.

Prof. Roerich always hoped for closer and better understanding between India and Russia and he will indeed be happy to see this fond hope of his, having been realised today. Once again, the two countries are coming closer and closer together in mutual understanding and appreciation.

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"Spring", a large canvas by Svetoslav Roerich.



# Straight From The Shoulder

By Leslie F. Wilson

**J**UST when every cricketer, enthusiast and writer was trying to figure out who will lead India against the West Indies, Ajit Wadekar solved one quiz by announcing his retirement from first-class cricket. He said: "Although I am good for another two years, I would like youngsters to be given a chance at the right moment and have, therefore, decided to retire from first-class cricket." This is very generous of Ajit but, I am sorry because this is one pill that I cannot swallow.

**A**JIT, incidentally, gets a juicy Benefit Match of two days in his home town against the West Indies. He is still young and fully capable of playing at his usual No. 3 position. The question now is whether he was going to be dropped as captain; whether he was planned for the name of the thing that happened in the tour of England and whether the Cricket Board was willing to let him continue as a player but not leader of the team? Ajit will not answer these questions, of course. Here is the ball, if it was such. Here is just to tempting a Benefit match against the biggest crowd-pullers in cricket.

**S**O another question arises. Was Wadekar bought off? Well, to tell you the truth, if I were in Wadekar's position, I would have gladly accepted such a Benefit Match because his golden opportunity (or carrot) will never come again. Oh, to be a cricketer! Publicity (written and photographic), unlimited hospitality, ladies of various ages, dresses and medals (yum, yum) chasing you with autograph books and "fleshy" smiles; various commissions and dealers doing the bidding in advertising campaigns; making hay while the cricketers shine; cash and material awards of large dimensions; autographs and other goodies; and if Lady Luck has not smiled enough—one more Jack-pot in a Benefit Match at a young age!

**C**rickets, like most sport, is grudging. A cricketer or any other sportsman, benefiting in the course of playing, but one expects them to be men of character with grit and determination to do well and not submit like lambs to the wolves. Alex Baunister wrote: "It was a cruel play between heavy artillery and peashooters." Alex has come to India with an England touring team and he has seen our cricketers play here and abroad. He was never given the opportunity of writing in such a manner. So, you can well imagine, how fanny our men went down.

**I**NDIA lost. In fact was humiliated. So what? We have been beaten before and we have also won. But the majority of the present set-up of cricketers just don't like being criticised.

They still think they are peacocks, the blue-eyed boys of sport. They ignore the fact that who helped build their future in the game and fill their wallets. They want to cry on your shoulder when ignored by the powers-that-be. They speak ill of those who write anything against them, wanting to be praised even when they bowl short-pitched balls that are swung and full tossed that are hammered.

**A**ND, some of these so-called exports talk and talk about "what does he know when he has never held a bat." I have had many years of cricket in fact every sport before the present lot was born and then it was for the game and not fame and whatever one can get out of it. But don't for a moment think that only those who have held a bat can give expert commentary on the game. I met the man who created "Ghost Writers" in England when working with the Lord Thomson Foundation Editorial Study Centre. He always regretted the day he had done so because he felt that genuine writers in England were being deprived by cricketers who could not write a paragraph. He had genuine writers by their side doing the job for them. Only their names were used! I can show you some of these cricketers-turned-writers and you will understand whether they can write or not.

**E**VERYTHING comes with experience, if one follows the correct path. If one does not have excuse such as injured fingers which were unable to pound the key-board of a typewriter, it ruined so I had to run away from the groves of my long and "lively" unwashed hair would get wet. They do not get Benefit Matches or Arjuna Awards like youngsters in the country have been getting. This month I will have completed 26 years services in D.I. and my one and only reward—and no one can ask for anything better—is the joy of having contributed to the planning and promotion of sport from the school-level to the adult.

**A**ND if only all our sportsmen would think in terms of having played and played well, they would be much happier than they are at the moment. And if only many of them will try not to think of their days of playing to make comparison with the present generation, then sport will definitely improve. True there have been some outstanding personalities but has there been a Wilson Jones who won the lone individual world title among them? Even in the days of Vijay Merchant and Hazare and before that C. K. Nayudu, was India won Test series like Wadekar and his men have done, and that too against stalwarts like the West Indies and England?

**J**UST because they have lost this time everyone is ready to make comparisons. The only thing I feel sorry about is the time manner in which they came down and certainly not because they lost. The three-man Probe Committee has realised this and also the fact that our players, whether the same or new, should not be demoralised on the eve of the West Indies tour of the country. I sincerely wish now that the choice of captain, no matter who he is, should be unanimous and that every player and the State Association accept him in the true spirit of sport. Cricket requires teamwork.

**S**uitor: "May I marry your daughter?"  
Stern Father: "What do you do?"  
Suitor: "I'm a cricketer."  
Stern Father (angrily): "Then get out before I hit you for a six."

**I**T was Induji's first tour abroad. I gathered and asked her how she felt, what countries she had visited before landing in America.

Trying to precariously balance the many bags of purchases she had made, including quite a lot of knickknacks and souvenirs, she said: "Ham Tokyo bhi dekha, aur Japan bhi dekha." She felt proud. She spoke in great admiration of the wonderful roads the Americans had built in the mountains and deserts.

Poolchand cut her short: "Don't be silly and talk like a child. These things are taken for granted. Building good roads isn't difficult for those who can send men to the moon."

Induji didn't like to be snubbed, specially when there were so many Indians around. Husband and wife both entered into some long arguments in Marathi, the language I couldn't make out.

"She doesn't want to see any more of the Canyon. She has strong views. She says that the path is more beautiful." Poolchand tactfully persisted her to go on the tour and they went.

## IN LIGHTER VEIN

I made acquaintance with a Polish tourist who had hired a car and went along with him for a spin. The writing on a gold-coloured sticker in the car amused me. It said: "God bless this automobile. This is God's car. God's hand is at the wheel. God's law of order and right adjustment is manifest in all its mechanism. God's wisdom inspires in the driver's decisions, good judgment and alertness, good judgment and quick decisions. God's patience gives him temperance and courtesy."

I doubted the judgment of my friend's driving on mountain roads. He was already smelling of whiskey. His driving was somewhat reckless and I felt uneasy. Inspired by the legend on the sticker, I began to burst out in Sanskrit invoking the blessings of Lord Ganesha when suddenly the Pole interrupted me: "What's that you are saying, chum?"

When I told him about the prayer to Ganesha for a safe journey he seemed somewhat amused. "Don't worry. I don't

# The Canyon people

By T. S. Satyan

think God was an automobile engineer. I'm one. He only knew how to create places like the Canyon. He pulled up his bottle and had another slug at the whisky. I closed my eyes.

"Don't go to sleep. You are nervous. Look at the grand sight. If you ever fall down, keep your eyes wide open. It is a grand sight," he said.

I was greatly relieved when we returned to the Bright Angel. Soon after I got involved with another American near the Bright Angel. This man who wore a beautiful flowery bush shirt and khaki pants was a retired Major General of the American Army and looked very much younger than his 72 years. He said his wife had been to India on a group tour.

"India. Wonderful country. Bombay - Jaipur - Delhi. Delhi - Srinagar - Delhi. Delhi - Khajuraho - Banaras - Delhi. She did it in five days and says it was wonderful."

"Is she writing a book on her first-day odyssey?"

"Your guess is right, my dear chap. Perfectly right. But it is a silly project. Downright silly."

"There is one tour that takes you to seven countries in twelve days. You may like to go on that."

"It's like reading Playboy with your wife turning the pages!"

The army man began to laugh enjoying his own joke.

## Intellectual

The retired Major General, I found, was greatly interested in religion, Indian philosophy and the Vedas. He said he wanted to learn more about it and things for myself.

"I have curiosity, intellectual and psychic. I instinctively fall in love with people like you for example. Not because you are from India. You seem to be interested in people. I have been observing you, my dear chap. Observing."

"Are you from the CIA?"

"No, no, no. Don't be afraid. I am just an ordinary American wanting to find things."

"You said you were interested in religion."

"I don't belong to any institutionalised religion. I'm an

eclectic. I cannot accept Christianity. May be I'm a Buddhist. Believer in brotherhood of man and Na. Everybody doesn't believe it."

"What do you want to do with me now? These are tough subjects for me. I'm an ordinary photographer-traveller."

## Communicate

"I want to communicate. Isn't in the dictionary. I expect of coming word means relate, influence, a react."

"Are you unhappy with life?"

"Not at all. I live from day to day and make it fun everything—as much as I can. Might sound selfish."

He began to narrate a chaitanya story of a man hanging on to a rope from a 'the monkey' below, the b of grapes stuck to the b and the rat gnawing at rope.

"What would you do? Do eat the grapes before the rats eat you?"

"I would scream in horror. I wouldn't do that. I would rather eat the grapes."

He seemed like a Hermit who could be alone and at peace even in New York's Times Square.

Trying my best to sound knowledgeable I told him: "You can live among the conditions without being conditioned. It's great. Am I right?"

"Absolutely. One has to be that. Life has become complicated, regimented, organized. Everyone today has a number. On the Passport. On the Visa. And on almost everything concerning him. Some of us in America want to get away from it all. Here is where the Oriental knowledge, philosophy and yoga come in. You must develop a feel for things. You can't analyse poetry by a computer."

Things were getting serious. To change the subject, I started talking about the beauty of the Grand Canyon, how happy I was to be there.

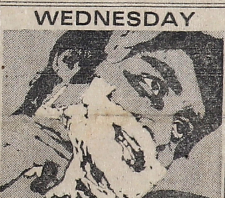
"The world is made of creators and appreciators."

SHAVES SO CLOSE YOU FEEL CLEAN-SHAVEN

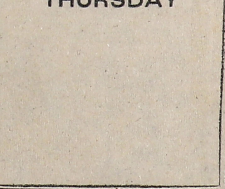


TUESDAY

FOR A FULL 24 HOURS EXTRA



THURSDAY



FRIDAY



SATURDAY

Flash SHAVES SO CLOSE YOU FEEL CLEAN-SHAVEN

FOR A FULL 24 HOURS EXTRA

# Week For You

By TINY

or look for a new place to live in. Love, a welcome visitor on Tuesday, if single romantic home will be confirmed. Business hurried are out of your sight on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

This will be evident from the way money falls into your hands. Nobody is well indicated, but happiness is yours. Thursday brings unity is laid in your lap then turning a point in partnership. The day will mark a major vitality. Single or married, house life has much to offer now. (15 to 12)

—Sita Judda

Flash SHAVES SO CLOSE YOU FEEL CLEAN-SHAVEN