

"THE ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY OF INDIA", JUNE 1, 1947

PAINTERS OF THE PRESENT

SVETOSLAV ROERICH

By

G. VENKATACHALAM.

...As the Vice-President of the New York Roerich Museum and of the Urusvati Himalayan Research Institute and as the organiser of the Roerich Pact and Peace Banner, Svetoslav Roerich has ably and worthily represented his father in many an international gathering, and has done splendid pioneering work in the cause of art and beauty, peace and freedom. That in itself is no mean achievement.

...He is a painter after the grand manner of his father, a painter of mountains and their moods, a revealer in form and colour of the mysteries of nature and a daring explorer from the 'devaic' world, where colours take their birth and have their being in all their pristine purity.

...Great as are his gifts as a technician in the art of painting, who knows all there is to know about building imposing structural masses, suggesting strength and beauty, (the "substance of things" of which Cezanne spoke) and of laying contrasting complementary colours in such a subtle way as to bring out their rich pulsating qualities, (the dream of the Impressionists), and which make Svetoslav's pictures such exquisite dreams in colour harmony and pattern. ... In the words of Carlyle, "they take you to the brink of a precipice and let you gaze into Infinity".



...Svetoslav Roerich's paintings, like his father's have this indefinable "something" which gives them their immortal character. In other words, his art is a kind of a Yoga, the Yoga of Beauty, another pathway to Moksha or Liberation.

That, according to the ancient scriptures of India, is the real purpose of all art; and the true test of all great art is this: that it should not only please the senses, satisfy the emotions and the mind but also lift one to a realm of spiritual ecstasy and experience.

Some of Svetoslav's works have this deep mystic quality, the quality of letting you glimpse, however momentary it may be, the Real amidst the Unreal, the Light amidst Darkness, the Truth amidst Falsehood. ...Hence also the symbolic nature of some of his large canvasses, like the triptych - "Whither Humanity", "Humanity Crucified", "Humanity Released" - "Jacob and the Angel" and others.

Dr. Goetz, the well-known critic, summarises the spiritual significance of this aspect of Roerich's art thus: "The suffering Christ and the Mother of Sorrows occupy a central place in his art. But Christ is dying even today, Christ is born and sacrificed in every one of us in the Apocalypsis of these decades of successive horrible wars and revolutions.

"Thus mankind crucified is the central figure of Svetoslav Roerich's grand triptych! 'Whither Humanity', feeling helplessly amidst the threatening rocks and sultry clouds of inescapable disasters, 'Humanity Crucified' under the flames of war and destruction poured by God's angels from the phials of



wrath, and 'Humanity Released' from the Inferno of hatred by the love of Christ.

" A grand triptych, like the visions of William Blake, accepting tradition only in order to say what the philosophical ideas cannot be expressed by the artist, by means of discreet allusions to other masterpieces, and mastering the drama into a symbol by means of a grand rhythm and antithesis of lines and colours worthy of a Greco".

Svetoslav is a lovable man. Kind and courtly, soft of speech and gentle of manners, he is a born aristocrat, who impresses all who come in touch with him. He is a Western artist after the heart of an Eastern law giver, Sukracharya, an artist who is pure in life, kind in deeds, noble in words and spiritual in aspiration. Such have ever been the sons of the spirit, the true creative artists.

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