

SVETOSLAV ROERICH'S ART

by

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Strange as it may seem my first acquaintance with the paintings of Svetoslav Roerich was made in the Roerich Museum, New York, in 1945. I saw a painting of a torch-light procession on a mountain pass. The golden glow of torches contrasting with the deep purple of the night made a deep impression on me. On a visit to his home near Bangalore in 1958, I was delighted to see his paintings from the Kulu Valley. The impression which he has given of the Kulu Dussera in a masterly painting reminded me of the colourful humanity of Kulu Valley draped in multi-coloured blankets and laden with ornaments, the beautiful women of Kulu and the men wearing Monal feathers on their caps.

Svetoslav Roerich's paintings of the colourful people of Mysore against glowing sunsets and copper red soil made a profound impression on me. He has fully mastered the technique of painting under the guidance of his father Nicholas Roerich, who was a great mountain painter. Like his father, Svetoslav Roerich makes liberal use of glowing colours and has made a deep study of rocks and mountains. His Himalayan landscapes are steeped in spirituality and reveal unearthly beauty and grandeur. The simplicity of his colour schemes is more apparent than real, and behind it we see a real mastery of composition, juxtaposition of pigments, and a sense of colour and rhythm.

His perception of nature is idealistic rather than realistic. He is not satisfied with plain reality and he uses nature and its manifestations merely as a plastic material which he works into forms unusual and unexpected, but far more impressive. In his paintings nature reveals itself in its pure beauty.

In his beautiful home in the countryside of Mysore, colourfully framed in red Bouganvilleas and Poinsettias,

he has found an ideal place where he can exercise his artistic talent with joyous abandon. No doubt, his charming wife Devika Rani has indirectly contributed to the wealth of artistic treasures which he has been producing in his garden home.

The contribution which Svetoslav Roerich has made to Indian painting is unique and India is fortunate to have him.

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