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THE HIMALAYAS IN MYSORE CITY.

The giving of an exhibition of forty large paintings by the famous Russian artist, Nicholas Roerich, and his gifted son, Svetoslav Roerich, under the patronage of His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore during the present Dasara celebrations, ⁽¹⁹⁴²⁾ was a tactful and appropriately topical compliment to the great ally, Russia, of the United Nations including India. The famous painters are Russian, and they have shown their appreciation of India by living and painting their masterpieces for twenty years at both ends of the Himalayas. Professor Cousins, who founded the Chitrasala (Art Gallery) in the Jagannohan Palace for His late Highness the Maharaja in 1924, and has watched its development, spent a number of days in hanging these great pictorial creations in two galleries recently extended, by the building up of old arches, into 50 feet long walls, lit from the ceilings which ideally suits the austerity and large mass-effect of these representations of the elemental powers of the longest and highest range of mountains in the world which are characteristic of both artists.

On entering the impressive central hall, the eye is immediately attracted to a noble symbolic picture entitled "Victory," which fills the middle position of one side of the gallery. The foreground is a fortified town on the top of a hill in gloomy darkness while a great cloud-mass in the sky above glows with the brightness of the rising sun. The shape of the cloud causes it to look like an archer shooting arrows of light into the night and conquering the powers of darkness. The light of knowledge and the glow of beauty are, in Professor Roerich's estimate, the natural future victors over ignorance and ugliness.

Directly opposite on the other wall of the gallery the central position is given to an oblong narrow presentation of the spreading Himalayan range with the snow-clad Kunchinjunga mass in the centre above a foreground ^{of} deep-darkish blue. Above

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this picture is placed a vertical composition in which a single inspiring white peak rises into the "intense inane" of a cloudless blue sky. This picture reaches the highest point of the arrangement of these 25 pictures of Nicholas Roerich, all of which are shown in this central gallery and a small ante-room. Other paintings comprised in it have been seen before such as the "Song of the Waterfall," with the figure sitting near it playing its song on a lyre; the picture of the horse bringing the Teachings of the Buddha radiating on its saddle across the vast eastern Himalayas; the picture of the Rishi in front of his dark cave on the road to Kailasa to whom pilgrims are paying reverence, the whole mountain-side glowing as if lit from within its own substance, a tour de force of the painter. All this gallery shows the hills and immobile masses with a minimum of human subjects. Yet they do not weigh as one as mass production. So varied are their shapes, so contrasted their colour compositions, that they have a sense of aliveness, of a purpose in their own realm, and they exude strength, immortality, beauty and aspiration such as is badly needed in these days of instability and changing and cruel human values.

One section of this Nicholas gallery has two outstanding Chinese pictures of Russia and China in quite different colours, and a particularly lovely picture which shows St Sergius^u, overtired by his labours in building a small church, being joined by a bear out of the woods and snow who kicks up one of the planks and carries it following the saint to help in the Holy Work.

In the parallel gallery the pictures by Svetoslav Roerich have a different appeal. He also uses large canvases and subjects right out of nature, but he is equally interested in portraying these as interlinked with the daily life of humanity.

He has painted nothing better than the fleecy clouds of one most inspired picture, the wind-driven clouds of another, the background of great cumulous clouds to the human toil of

ploughing the ridge of a hill. In another masterly creation the joy is infectious of a monk who is ringing his bell and singing to the rhythms of his small drum. One can see happiness swelling up in him and flowing over in song, while near him are some goats who look the essence of dumbness; and a little white kid is so appealing and lifelike that it looks as if it could walk right out of the picture.

Mr Svetoslav has chosen three Biblical themes for three new large canvases which are very striking in their portrayal of divine and human nature. But it is impossible to convey in a few words the inspiring effect of this exhibition. All is in the grand manner, nothing is trivial or casual. The touch of the master, the vision of a consecrated soul, shines through these pictures, and the experience causes one the better to realise why and how the Himalayas are the magnet which attract the pilgrims of India to their heights. It is understood that six of the paintings, all by the father, and all of Himalayan scenes, have been acquired for the Jagannohan Palace public gallery, and after permanent framing will, with one previously acquired, make a special Roerich Room that will be ~~an~~ a source of delight to the thousands of visitors who go through the "Chitrasala" annually.

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The Art of Nicholas & Svetoslav Roerich.

Robert G. and D. M.

Before looking at Prof. Roerich's paintings, or attempting to criticize them, you must make up your mind about one thing: are you an admirer of the naturalistic school of painting or are you - to use an American term - a Modern art "fan" ? Do you respond to that technical realism in painting which makes a lady's dress look as if it could rustle in the wind and a tree appear as if it would literally drop its leaves in autumn, or are you prepared to overlook these textural complexities for a vital force of expression ? If you are a Titianian, if Michael Angelo's plastic sense alone can satisfy your artistic faculties, you would feel a natural antipathy for Prof. Roerich's paintings; they would seem to you frail, insipid, and fitted in like a jig-saw puzzle. In effect, you would criticize them for being too "stagey and spectacular". But, then, the paintings of Matisse and Seurat should also be condemned for their frank individualism. If an abstract symbolism can be forgiven because it has concocted a particular shell for itself, the so-called ballet technique of Prof. Roerich's paintings can be accepted because of the strong sweeping impression it creates.

Artists can be divided into two categories, if not many more. There is the fastidious draughtsman who has got into the habit of erecting flawless steel structures which are so cold and scientifically correct that they do not attract the "soul". Then there is the modern Symbolist who strives so desperately to capture the "soul", that he is prepared to do away with superfluous lines, selecting only those which are essential.

If you are one of those old-fashioned art critics who accused the Impressionists of destroying the fabric of traditional painting, I advise you to have nothing to do with Prof. Roerich's paintings. You are bound to come out of the exhibition burning with orthodox anger. I can

hear you murmur under your breath "these pieces of fancy-paper stuck together". Poor Mr. Whistler, whose prejudices must have affected you, would have fainted on observing such "glaring" colours, and particularly so many offsprings of the dreaded red tint. It took you very long to arrive at an understanding with modern painting - that is to say, if you "arrived" at all; therefore, it is even more difficult for you to understand Prof. Roerich's paintings which combine symbolism with mysticism and for some inexplicable reason are painted in rainbow colours. You have become accustomed to a style of painting which implies x in Art what the word "chic" applies in the world of fashion: concentrated effort without an appearance of stunning originality. Prof. Roerich is not "chic". He has an oriental eye for frank splendour. It is as a vivid impressionist and not as an orthodox painter, that he has to prove himself great.

The paintings of Van Gogh are charged with a religious intimacy. Gaughin preferred barbarism to civilization and painted nude brown Tahitians among banana leaves as a reaction. Yet they are considered great artists for placing expression above a recognized conventional technique. Does mysticism clash more violently with the medium of painting than primitive rebellion and monomaniac religiosity? To say that Gaugin has not the polish of Velazquez or that Van Gogh should have cultivated the texture of Ingres, would be as absurd as to say that coffee is not good because it lacks the flavour of pomegranates.

We accepted the elongated distortions of Modiglianis' faces and the flimsiness of Matisse's decorative technique. Have we become so intolerant of individualism and experiment now that we cannot abide Prof. Roerich's brilliant colours and semi-cubistic style? Call him a Fauvist and

a reactionary if you like, but you cannot dispute his supremacy as an artist simply because he happens to be a mystic as well.

The fact that Prof. Roerich' is a sage does not necessarily imply that he is a good artist. His spiritual accomplishments should be applauded in a Buddhist Monastery or by people in some sort of a mystic circle, and not at the opening of an exhibition. Yet we must remember that painting is no longer merely a faithful reproduction of nature and natural objects. It is being used as a channel of self-expression, and therefore Prof. Roerich is perfectly justified in making mysticism felt through his symbolic paintings.

If there is a law against using the medium of painting for moral preaching and religious propoganda, all the paintings of the holy family, The Madonna, and scenes from the Testaments would become disqualified automatically. How can a man disconnect his personal experiences and his philosophies from something which is essentially an expression of himself ? Believe me, a cool scientific detachment in painting might produce excellent draughtsmen, but it won't ever produce great impressionists. After looking at Professor Roerich's paintings we must ask ourselves a very vital question: do these pictures affect us in any way (those of us who are upholders of the Modern movement) and do they leave a lasting impression on our minds ? The answer to this question which will be in the affirmative will prove to us that Prof. Roerich is a great impressionist artist.

To call him a genius would be to under-rate him; he has risen above these worldly standards. The word genius is associated with a tortured spirit, a vicious urge, and an all-round cracked-headedness. I am sure Prof. Roerich does not possess any of the characteristics of a brilliant

maniac. His presence must be dignified and quiet, his gaze mellow and serene, he must have that unconscious grace of manner which we associate with noble people. This is not an attempt to draw an imaginary character sketch; you can "sense" all these things in Svetoslav - Roerich's portrait of his father.

In the work of a genius like Beethoven or Strindberg, you feel a brooding melancholy; the paintings of Professor Roerich are charged with a soothing serenity. If his soul has struggled with the elements it is not recorded in these paintings. They symbolize the event when he has passed through cosmic uncertainty into a region of higher mystical understanding, where everything is as clear as crystal, where the craggy hills, the monasteries, the mountain slopes, look as if they have been washed by a torrent of snow-flakes into a dazzling purity. A sort of a chilled moonlight seems to have been captured by the layers of brilliant colours. The loveliness of these pinks and mauves and blue chiselled blocks takes your breath away. The spacious vastness of the scenes seems to unroll itself before your eyes even beyond the picture in its restricting frame. It is this sense of space in the paintings of both these artists which gives us the feeling that here nature reigns supreme, and human beings are mere particles of dust, shall I say? - jotted on this lovely expansion. One of the most striking features of Prof. Roerich's paintings is that they have a psychic atmosphere in spite of the fact that they are painted in fresh and brilliant - almost rainbow - colours; you would have thought that only browns and greys and floating mists could convey a ghostly unreality. The secret of this phenomenon lies in the theme and composition of the paintings; the frame-work or the foundation is so unearthly in itself that whichever way it is painted it will retain its element of mystery for us. We are not familiar with any of the epics of

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this Tibetan grandeur and whether they are shown to us in broad daylight as in *Terra Slavonica* or lit up by the firelight in the darkness as in *Shambhala* ? they will seem incredibly haunting dreams to us.

The clarity of the pictures is so powerful, it affects you physically. You feel, when looking at them, that a layer of film has been lifted from your brain and eyes and you can see more clearly than you have ever seen before. I do not know if anyone has tried this experiment accidentally, but I am sure your headache would go away if you were to gaze at one of Prof. Roerich's eye-opening pictures long enough.

It is customary for an ordinary artist to "dig out" things from the soil which is the common property of every one. He is slightly superior to the layman because whereas the layman only sees, the artist can also reproduce. With Prof. Roerich not even a great worldly artist can claim to have an affinity; he is a "higher" being, he brings down his experiences to us in the form of painting from a higher sphere, which we can never have the privilege of visiting. It is an honour to see these profound revelations.

The remark "Professor Roerich's pictures look like posters" should be merely an observation (although it would in any case be an irrelevant one). To use this as a condemnation would be as silly as to say that a great artist should not use blue and red and yellow because they are primary colours and are used for illustrating children's books.

The spirit of greatness is a thing apart; it is so complete that it can lodge itself in a plain or an elaborate shell equally effectively. Some of the greatest pieces of music are very simple technically; you could play them with one finger; the pauses in between however make them Sonatas

of haunting beauty, and no technically superb composition with clever undercurrents and subdued ~~thrills~~^{trills} can compare with their profound simplicity. The "statement" of Prof. Roerich's paintings is so forceful that they must have a very simple and direct technique, to let it assert itself. There is no scope here for textural complexities or technical virtuositities. Prof. Roerich proves himself great and exceptional as a creative mystic, and not as an accomplished draughtsman, in the realistic sense of the word.

There is essentially a contemplative mood in the paintings which makes you want to be alone with them; it is not possible to assimilate them at an opening so reminiscent of a social function. They are dignified and aloof with all their wealth of wisdom and exquisite beauty; to get to know them you must establish a personal contact with them.

Although technically they are modern and impressionistic they do not possess that spirit of rebellion which is the main feature of the pictures of Van Gogh or Matisse or Gaugin. They do not seem to bawl out in a loud voice "come and look at us, we have something new to say". They only remark in a mellow tone when looked at, "Those who wish to gaze at us may do so". The pictures of Svetoslav Roerich are naturally tinged with a more youthful enthusiasm for contacts.

I won't commit the unnecessary fallacy of saying that Svetoslav Roerich is a greater painter than his father. It is fashionable among Pseudo-intellectual circles to declare that a disciple is greater than his master, or that a Bodhisatva is better than the Buddha. These startling statements never fail to create a sensation. I do not, however, belong to the category of these professional shockers, but I do say that the art of the son has a more

direct appeal, and that he is more versatile, for the simple reason that he is still attracted by all those things which have ceased to possess any significance for his father.

The average man has more affinity with a clever artist than with a profound mystic. It is easier for him to understand the language of human-figures and human faces, and flowers, and trees, than a vapourless stunning mysticism. The layman finds Svetoslav's pictures more personal, the paintings of his father would seem so only to the masters living in Shambala. One feels that Svetoslav Roerich could paint in any style and depict any theme with equal ease and efficiency; his lines have reached that self-confident flexibility when he can bend them to his will. There is a great sense of poise and balance in his portraits. His heads and hands are flawlessly drawn, his rendering of faces is elegant and sensitive, yet his approach to them is too bold to make them insipid. Looking at Mrs. Qadir's portrait you realize that Svetoslav has great powers of adaptability. He is so sure of himself that he can feel equally at home painting a Tibetan beggar in rags or a society lady with all her complicated fineries, the texture of which has to be worked out so carefully. But Svetoslav is so skilled in anatomical details, that racial differences between his models do not frighten him. As an anatomist he is intellectually aware of these slight racial peculiarities, but he does not stress the point unnecessarily. He knows that the Tibetans and the Chinese have high-cheek-bones and small slanting eyes, whereas an Aryan face might often be gifted with heavy-lidded eyes like the lady meditating over the flowers in the Portrait of Miss R.B., but he also sees points of resemblance between people belonging to different countries; he knows, for instance, that the chin of an Indian lady juts out exactly like the chin of a European lady, making the same sort of an angle between the

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jaw-bone and the neck. Svetoslav is imaginative enough, however, to recognize the inevitable differences produced by environment and heredity, and he expresses this fundamental difference grinding it very subtly into the coat of pigment. He depicts a characteristic pose of an Indian woman with her hair coiled at the nape of her neck, a veil flung carelessly round her throat, an ear-ring dangling from her ear, with as much finesse and sympathy as he would depict the short bobbed hair and impersonal aloofness of an English woman.

Svetoslav's figure studies though not as remarkable as his portraits, have a charming pictorial value, (a description condemned by the puritanical art critic who excludes the word "charm" from serious art criticism). Some of these studies have a sweeping rhythm, some are subtly dramatic such as "Jacob and the Angel".

Personally I have a weakness for his "Saga of Gessar Khan". The picture has a beautifully ethereal quality, and yet the figures seem to have an affinity with us. The figure in the centre gives the whole composition its balance and symmetry. The sky is particularly lovely, it is so luminous, and the clouds have such a golden depth, they seem to envelope the scene below. You wish you could be in such a place at such a time. It is the sort of a place we could aspire to see, as it is midway between heaven and earth; not even in our wildest dreams could we reach the lofty heights in the father's paintings.

It is obvious that Svetoslav is fond of the lovely things of the earth, he is sensitive to the texture of fruits and flowers and dress materials, in fact everything which is closely interwoven with our lives. A close proximity with his father and the admiration he has for his paintings leads him on temporary excursions to the mystic

regions, his spirit roams about at large taking delight in many things. He is like an epicurean who has tasted many dishes but has not yet found one so infinitely superior that he should automatically stick to it forever and forget all else.

Like his father, Svetoslav has mastered, to perfection, the art of creating a perfect harmony between the colours and objects in his paintings. This is purely an oriental accomplishment associated with significant decorative paintings of the old Chinese or Moghul period. It would be irrelevant to look for a definite point in Nicholas and Svetoslav Roerich's paintings for the eye to rest upon. We should remember that it is not the aim of these artists to erect a hostile factor in their composition for our convenience. They seek to express through the combined efforts of every single line and tone ^{what} ~~that~~ another artist would express by drawing our attention to some obviously conspicuous factor. The lines and tones of these paintings drift into each other by mutual consent, and they do so with such grace and composure that a harmonious compactness becomes the key-note of the paintings. Each colour seems to have been trained to show the other to advantage; that is why Svetoslav and his father can use such vivid colours so amazingly successfully. Any other artist would have made a perfect "hash" of such daring colour schemes.

I wish we could see many more of Svetoslav's portraits. Through these deplorably few but very fine specimens he introduces himself as a portrait-painter of a very high calibre. We feel as if we have just listened to a very remarkable overture, but we have been denied the pleasure of listening to the whole composition, every movement of which must be thrilling and brilliant.

DASARA

October 11th to 20th, 1942.



UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF
HIS HIGHNESS THE MAHARAJA



EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS

BY

NICHOLAS ROERICH

AND

SVETOSLAV ROERICH

(World-Famous Russian Artists)

IN THE

JAGAN MOHAN PALACE, MYSORE

CATALOGUE

The Exhibition is the first in the renovated gallery, and has been arranged under the guidance of Prof. J. H. Cousins, who organised the CHITRASALA in 1924.

NICHOLAS ROERICH

was born in Russia in 1874. In 1896 he graduated in Law and in 1897 in Art. His earliest paintings were recognised as those of a genius, and he became head of the Russian Imperial Society for the Encouragement of the Arts. Exhibitions of his paintings became a feature of European art-centres. He travelled widely in pursuit of "knowledge and beauty." His fame increased, and great galleries acquired his works for their distinction in subject and skill. For a number of years he created frescoes and mosaics in religious and other buildings, and designed the stage settings for famous operas and dramas by Stravinsky, Rimski-Korsakov, Maeterlinck and others. In 1920 he was hailed in the United States of America as a master; and institutions were founded for the spreading of his art and the philosophy of beauty and noble life which he propounded.

In 1923 he came to India with his wife (a grand-daughter of the Prince of Smolensk who was Commander-in-Chief of the Russian armies during the Napoleonic invasion), and his two sons, Dr. George Roerich, a famous Tibetan scholar, and Svetoslav Roerich who follows in his father's footsteps as a painter of world-renown. Professor Nicholas Roerich is a scientist as well as an artist and philosopher. He has headed expeditions through Asia in search of biological and medicinal information for the relief of human need and disease. Since 1929 the Roerich family have lived and worked at Naggar, Punjab, in sight of the Himalayas. Prof. Roerich is a warm admirer of Indian art. His own art is executed in the tempera medium of old Indian painting. During his life in India he has loved and interpreted the nature and humanity of the Himalayas, and the history and legends associated with them.

SVETOSLAV ROERICH

son of Nicholas Roerich, studied painting under renowned artists of Europe and America, but the spiritual outlook and high seriousness of his father has been the chief creative influence in his life. In 1939, at the age of 34, a portrait by him of his famous father was acquired by the Louxembourg gallery in Paris which thus gave the two modern artists a place among the immortals of painting. Though interested in scenes and themes similar to his father's, the son has a method of his own, and the two collections of typical works of great pictorial art by father and son in the renovated Jagan Mohan Palace gallery provide material for a fascinating and educative study in the similarities and differences of two artists of the front rank.

NORTH

CHRIST THE
UNKNOWN

CHRIST IN
THE GARDEN

JACOB AND
THE ANGEL

BY SVETOSLAV ROERICH IN ANTE-ROOM

STORY OF
SHAMBALLA
and
SACRED FLAME

NANGA PARBAT
and
THE HUNT

THAKUR'S
CASTLE

LADAK
and
THE BOOK
OF LIFE

VICTORY

ISSA
and
MOUNTAIN
LAKE

SONG OF
THE
WATERFALL

TERRA SLAVONICA
and
HEROICA OF CHINA

TIBETAN
MONASTERY
and
SOURCE OF
THE INDUS

KAILASA

MAITREYA
and
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CHINTAMANI

HIMALAYAS
(TWO)

NEW EARTH
and
SAINT SERGIUS

PAINTINGS

BY

NICHOLAS
ROERICH

SIX PAINTINGS OF THE HIMALAYAS

BY

NICHOLAS ROERICH IN ANTE-ROOM

NORTH

LITTLE SISTER

SACRED FLUTE

Mrs. BOGDANOV
and
TWO HEADS OF
LADIES

MENDING
THE NET



PAINTINGS

BY

SVETOSLAV
ROERICH



HOLY
WORDS

YOGIS

GESSAR
SAGA

I GREET
THEE, MOTHER

THE MESSAGE

MOTHER EARTH

THE PATH

THE SONG

"An exhibition by the Roerichs should exercise a most beneficial influence on the young painters of India in presenting them with masterly works that are in close affinity with the Indian outlook on life, and have Nature in India as their scenic background. Attempts to copy such works would be futile. But communication with their spirit is bound to generate a worthy pride in the outer and inner India, and to help in the development of a sensitiveness to beauty and a nobler ideal of art that will stimulate the best efforts of the rising generation of Indian artists."

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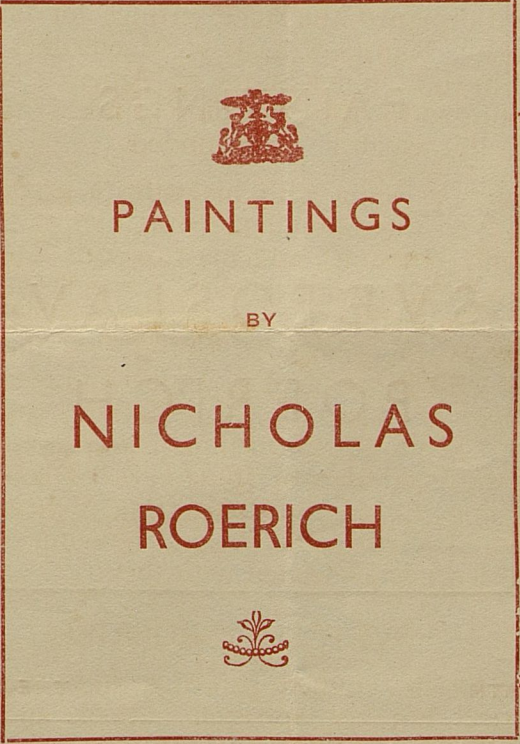
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CHRIST THE UNKNOWN CHRIST IN THE GARDEN JACOB AND THE ANGEL

BY SVETOSLAV ROERICH IN ANTE-ROOM

← 20ft →

<p>STORY OF SHAMBALLA and SACRED FLAME</p> <hr/> <p>THAKUR'S CASTLE</p> <hr/> <p>LADAK and THE BOOK OF LIFE</p> <hr/> <p>VICTORY</p> <hr/> <p>ISSA and MOUNTAIN LAKE</p> <hr/> <p>SONG OF THE WATERFALL</p> <hr/> <p>TERRA SLAVONICA and HEROICA OF CHINA</p>	 <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">PAINTINGS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">BY</p> <p style="font-size: 3em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">NICHOLAS ROERICH</p>	<p>NANGA PARBAT and THE HUNT</p> <hr/> <p>TIBETAN MONASTERY and SOURCE OF THE INDUS</p> <hr/> <p>KAILASA</p> <hr/> <p>MAITREYA and KINCHENJUNGA</p> <hr/> <p>CHINTAMANI</p> <hr/> <p>HIMALAYAS (TWO)</p> <hr/> <p>NEW EARTH and SAINT SERGIUS</p>
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SIX PAINTINGS OF THE HIMALAYAS
BY
NICHOLAS ROERICH IN ANTE-ROOM

10ft

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16

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SACRED FLUTE

Mrs. BOGDANOV
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