

INTRODUCTION TO THE EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

by

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This is the most, and probably first, comprehensive exhibition of the work of Svetoslav Roerich. His paintings adorn public galleries and private collections all over the world - Europe, United States and India. But here we have, gathered together in one place, more than a hundred of his paintings covering a period of over two decades up to the present day.

Svetoslav is a true cosmopolitan. Born in Petrograd, of a distinguished lineage, educated in Russia, Sweden, England and the United States, and married to a most talented and distinguished daughter of India, Shrimati Devika Rani, he and his art represent a fine synthesis of the East and the West, of the North and the South.

Though Svetoslav followed in the foot-steps of his renowned father, Gurudev Nicholas Roerich whom he considers as his greatest Teacher and whose close collaborator he was both in his artistic and cultural activities, he is a great artist in his own right and his artistic genius is distinct from that of his father. Eminent art critics have described Svetoslav's art as more human and less mystic than his father's. But comparative estimates are more often than not misleading. I, for one, find the mystic element equally present in his work.

Svetoslav's paintings cover a vast range and thematically fall into five main divisions - Portraits, Landscapes, Genre (Scenes from life), Religious and Imaginative creations. Svetoslav paints in tempera and oils and in both he excels. The development of his technique from different aspects is manifest from the paintings exhibited here.

His portraits can stand comparison with those of the famous European masters. His Himalayan landscapes capture the transcendental beauty, majesty, and awe of those snow-clad mountains. His genre paintings are not only true to life;

they are splendid decorative compositions. His imaginative creations are full of meaning and message.

In Svetoslav Roerich's art, one finds a new individual approach, unique but always bold and striking colour schemes, draughtsmanship of the highest order, superbly rhythmic composition, realism which does not consist in mere verisimilitude, but is an expression of the essential reality; and above all Vision, founded as much on an intuitive apprehension of spiritual values as on profound knowledge, varied experience and intense contemplation. There is an ancient Sanskrit saying: Nanrishih kurute kavyam - "No one who is not a Rishi can be a great poet." Nor, would I add, a great painter. To my mind, Svetoslav Roerich is a Rishi and through his paintings has given us a beautiful and inspiring message.

