

THE SPIRIT OF THE HIMALAYAS

By

SVETOSLAV ROERICH

(1940)

For <sup>many</sup> (over twelve) years I have intimately known the Himalayas - the mighty ranges of the West - as well as the towering peaks of the East. My first impressions and visions called forth by their unparalleled beauty and grandeur have only become more vivid as years went by and their message has become even more eloquent. Gradually their outward form and their inner meaning have assumed a new significance. Blended into one and transmuted by the very power residing in the multiple concepts for which the Himalayas stand. This Great Temple of Nature reserved for the true seekers after truth in all its forms.)

From time immemorial the best aspirations of mankind, the loftiest concepts and legends have been woven about the Himalayas.)

*riches*

Throughout the world, whenever the word Himalayas is pronounced, people become attentive, and a special eagerness and expectation light up their countenance. It is not only the concept of tremendous heights, the call of unconquered peaks, uncharted glaciers and valleys or the unbelievable richness of vegetation and animal kingdom, there is something else besides these outward attractions, there is a greater and deeper significance the word Himalayas conveys to the listener, as if an unseen spiritual influence lives in this very word, a special magnet which made the Himalayas the Great Centre of Spiritual pilgrimage.) Innumerable are the shrines and caves dotting the valleys and slopes of the Himavat. Everyone knows Kailas, Manasarovar, Badrinath, Kedarnath, Ravalsar, Triloknath, the caves of Arjuna and Milarepa - these centres of spiritual research and aspirations. But how many are the shrines unknown, reserved for the true seekers after Truth, either on this or the other side of the Range.

The great Rishis directed their holy quest towards the Himalayas. Mighty teachings and doctrines were born under the towering peaks. Is it not strange that throughout the world, the great teachers of whatsoever Race or Faith have always gone to the Heights to receive some of their greatest revelations? Does height, does eternal snow, the rarified atmosphere contribute towards greater or lucidity, or is it in order to rise above the sphere of the turmoil of life?

Those of you who have climbed great heights, know how active becomes your mind, how light and even unnecessary becomes sleep. Are these some of the qualities that attracted the great searchers after Truth from time immemorial?

Pure thoughts are born in pure places, in places unsullied by the lower selfish passions generated in the struggle for existence and self gratification.

The caravan is nearing the highest point of the Pass. The men dismount and gather bright primulas; reverently they place these offerings on the nearby rocks; "to the Devas, who live on those Peaks". Truly this is the sentiment unconsciously expressed by everyone when the word "Himalayas" is pronounced - the Abode of the Devas.

The great sages and Rishis, perhaps they could contact these spiritual influences, they most probably could or else they would not turn towards these mighty peaks. These great souls these brilliant minds, who have given us the loftiest philosophies, systems, could they ever be justly suspected of not knowing what place was best for the generation of transcendental thought?

These great philosophers proclaimed the mysteries of Nature long before science was able to demonstrate them; the atomic theory, the theory of relativity and vibration, the Maya and tattavams, they proclaimed telepathy long before the human brain was found to emit waves.

The conscious awakened mind must and can attune itself to the influence of the cosmos and can read the book of life. It is part of life itself this individual focus of conscience existence, hence partaking of all its influences. And if it is endowed with the faculty of self-realisation and cognition with individual consciousness, truly there can be no limits to what human mind can achieve and know. Some of these marvellous mysteries of the sub conscious we see in certain prodigies and in the realm of hypnotism.

The pilgrims gather at a wayside shrine: "Have you ever heard of the shining ones, the snow men, and those who live beyond the eternal snows?" Quietly flows the narrative, attentive are the faces. A new hope and understanding unite these accidental passing friends.

There is always some Truth at the foundation of every legend, of every apocryph.

The quest of the spirit, for ever it remains the supreme effort of mankind, the inborn aspiration to something beyond the apparent emptiness of every day life. All great minds stopped to ponder over the mysteries of life and death and they told us that this life here on earth, this short evanescent existence is not a mere accident to come and to go, snuffed out by death for some unknown purpose. This life is only the means for the spirit to gain experience and when the material existence has come to an end, the real man continues in a different state and sphere.

Could one logically accept or believe that the products of the human mind, systems, philosophies, great works of art and all manifestations of human genius to survive for centuries and milleniums are the products of a finite mind, and the creator, the cause of all these manifestations has disappeared and exists no more?

Beyond all conflagrations and strife, beyond all destruction and violence stands the eternal concept of spirit.

Mightily stand the Himalayas, their ramparts drawn towards heaven. Along the winding valleys and gorges Guru Charka gathered his precious, healing herbs. Huen Siang, that amazing Chinese traveller thirteen centuries ago describes the medicinal plants found on the Himalayas. The Pandavas came here to rest wearied by the great struggle, and the Tibetan Poet-Saint Milarepa listened to the echoes of nature and voices from beyond.

What memories lie concealed in the mighty folds of these Ranges! The great Gautama in search of the salvation of mankind, Rishi Vyas, Rishi Narada, Rishi Aghastya, innumerable are the noble souls to find their best inspirations in the shadows of these towering peaks and to carry them down again to struggling humanity. Humanity caught in the coils of ignorance and selfishness. The great Pythagoras, Appolonious of Tiana, they have certainly contacted these illuminated men, when treading the soil of India in search of wisdom.

The Lama says: "I must go, my teacher calls me, his pilgrimage on earth is coming to an end."

"But where does he live, your teacher?"

"He is now at Kailas and it will take me months to reach Him there."

Thus speaks a Lama Hermit, having heard the voice of his Guru a thousand miles away.

Mysteries still live along the slopes of the Himalayas. They are ever present for him who searches for them with an open heart, not for the sake of curiosity or for derision.

Let us then look with an unprejudiced mind for the real understanding of life, we shall find it all around us, and it will regenerate our outlook and our habits. How wonderfully rich life becomes once we contact these eternal values, everything assumes a different meaning and purpose. And it is precisely now in these days of Armageddon that we must think of the sublime Truths, Real and Eternal beyond every conflict and destruction.

Beyond the ravages of strife the spirit of the Himalayas distills its influence throughout the world. We find it in the lofty philosophies, we find it in the Arts, in Poetry, in Music, in Painting, Sculpture and Architecture.

The great temple of Kailas at Ellora, its outline was designed after the holy summits of Kailas to inspire and remind those who were far from the Mighty Ranges, of those profiles and masses that meant so much to the builders.

How unforgetably beautiful are these majestic ranges! Every possible variety of form and colour is theirs

Through the narrow winding gorges, mighty rivers carry the message of the snows into the distant plains, the three sacred life givers of toiling millions; the Ganges, Brahmaputra and the Indus! Waterfalls break into a thousand rainbows and relentless glaciers wind their way down into dark precipices. The ever present, all pervading pulse of life scattering, <sup>pull-</sup> verising rocks and growing glittering crystals. The eternal Proteus Life in its infinite manifestations combining and recombining forms, dissolving them in order to bring them again into objectivity under a fresh impulse and in new combination. ~~X~~ One can truly say such riches of natural beauty as are found in the Himalayas are not to be seen anywhere here on this earth.

Kanchenjunga, the Guardian of the Five Treasures, like a priceless necklace of shimmering pinkish pearls floating above the hazy valleys and hills, the transcendental vision of another world of sublime beauty to draw our spirit upward.

( I always think of the words of a world traveller who said: "If the Grand Canyon of Arizona ~~is~~ the entrance to Hell, the Himalayas are the Gates to Heaven." ) <sup>could be.</sup>

Himavat: the birthplace of the Greatest Thought, the loftiest Concepts hover over thy Mighty Peaks. Shambhala, the Holy Grail, the Heavenly Jerusalem, are symbols of the interlinked aspirations and visions of so many different ages, the eager and earnest Hope of weary mankind and the eternal affirmation of the great philosophers.

Himavat, the beautiful, Thou hast given us our greatest Treasures and for ever Thou Shalt remain Guardian of the Greatest Mystery - the Holy Marriage of Heaven and Earth.

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# BULLETIN

## THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF WORLD CULTURE

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Thus the intimation of the Most High brings to us along three ways the sure sense of security from fears of disease, death, This knowledge is what men need, but how many know that it is available? Let us seek within the heart the light of the purified mind. In our attempt to do this we are aided and encouraged by fellow soldiers, who, fighting their own battles, are achieving their own successes. And the Great Chain called the GURU - PARAMPARA reveals our true Gurus—Lovers and Benefactors of the human race.

Thus Have I heard.

B. P. WADIA

### CONTENTS

<u>The Spirit of The Himalayas, Svetoslav Roerich</u>	1
The Festival of Lights, B. P. Wadia	6
Programme for November 1986	8
"What happened during the Ice Storm"	10
Words, from MANAS	11
Couplets XX, A poem, Robert Mezey	16

# INDIAN INSTITUTE OF WORLD CULTURE

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Publications consist of a monthly bulletin, transactions, books and reprints. Sale as well as exchange arrangements are welcome. Programmes are held each month consisting of literary, visual and performing arts. About 8 to 10 activities are planned every month.

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" THE SPIRIT OF THE HIMALAYAS "

SVETOSLAV ROERICH

[We are happy to print here the text of the Founder's Day Address delivered on 19 August, 1986]

For many years I have intimately known the Himalayas, the mighty ranges of the West and the towering peaks of the East. My first impressions and visions called forth by their unparalleled beauty and grandeur have only become more vivid as years went by and their message has become even more eloquent. Gradually their outward form and their inner meaning have assumed a new significance, blended into one and transmuted by the very power residing in the multiple concepts for which the Himalayas stand, this Great Temple of Nature reserved for the true seekers after Truth in all its forms.

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7

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### THE FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

The wisdom of Sages points to the meaning and purpose of festivals. These, like folklore and so many persistent social and religious customs, have a core of truth hemmed in by superstition and sham. When disassociated from their form side, these festivals reveal a spiritual significance. Men and women who desire to celebrate them in an enlightened manner should make use of such significance. Divali, which falls this year on the 1st of November, is such a festival with a message for the earnest learner.

Deepavali is a festival associated with the symbol of Light. Light in Nature is universal and impersonal and occupies an important place in the code and classification of symbols.

The physical sun is commonly supposed to be the giver of light and life and is widely worshipped as such; but esoterically, and as the ancients well understood, it is but the visible symbol of the Spiritual Sun—the impersonal Deity, from which all has proceeded and into which all will return. Its first manifestation, as the opening chapter of GENESIS points out, was Light and Light is life.

Focused in the heart of every living being is a ray of this pure light of Divinity — some call it the Light of Christos; others, the Light of Krishna or of Allah or of Ahura Mazda. It is "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world", in the words of the Apostle John, and a parallel teaching can be found in all the great world scriptures. This is

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*U. R. Ananthamurthy*
- Transaction No. 64  
The Human Situation, *S K. Ramachandra Rao*
- Transaction No. 65  
Bhavabhuti, Life & Work, *C. Ramanathan*
- Transaction No. 66  
A New Vision of Reality, *Bede Griffiths*
- Annual Report, 1983
- Bulletin, Vol. 3. Numbers 1 to 12 (back numbers)

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- Transaction No. 67  
Reconstruction of the Indian Home in the Modern  
Context, *Vanaja Iyengar*
- Transaction No. 68  
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- Transaction No. 69  
Sri William Jones, *A. Ranganathan*
- Transaction No. 70  
Vedic Concept of the Universe, *V. Badarayana Murthy*
- Annual Report for 1984
- Bulletin, Vol. 4, Numbers 1 to 12 (back numbers)

**1985 Publications**

- Transaction No. 71  
Moving into the 21st Century, *M. P. Pandit*
- Transactions No. 72, 73 & 74
- Annual Report, 1985
- Bulletin Vol. 5, Numbers 1 to 12 (back numbers)

Complete book list sent on request. Please write to :

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### SUMMER PROGRAMMES : APRIL — MAY 1987

We are currently planning our summer programmes for 1987. If you or any of your family members or friends would like to share their skills with others may we please request you to contact us immediately? It will be good if persons who possess special skills, arts, crafts, etc. can share them with other participants.

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### BHAJAN CLASSES

Every Wednesday, 6-00 to 7-00 p.m.

This class is open to all. Anyone can join at any time. Rs. 2.00 only per month. Bhajans in all languages are taught, Directed by Shri N. Krishnaswamy.

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### GROUP DANCE CLASS : FOLK & BALLET

A new group will be started from December 4, 1986. This meets every Thursday and Saturday from 5-30 p.m. to 6-30 p.m. At the end of the 3-month course a public performance is offered. You are invited to the performance to be held on November 29 at 6-00 p.m. Directed by Ms Tripura Kashyap. Rs. 20 per month.

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