INAUGURAL SPEECH SVETOSLAV ROERICH on the occasion of the inaugural function of the Government law college FINE ARTS ASSOCIATION at Sir Puttanna Chetty Town Hall on Monday the 13th November 1967.

Professor Sadashivaiah, Professor Rangaswamy, all distinguished guests and friends:

I am glad to be here tonight and assist at this happy and important function. Happy because it made it possible for us all to meet here today and important because who can tell what benefits may accrue through this Art Association to its members and the public in the future.

The inauguration of the Art Association of the Law College is an important event and I hope the Members of this Association will always carry with them throughout their lives the interest they are evincing in the Arts at present.

It boies well for the State and the Country if our legal minds take an active interest and show a proficiency and knowledge of the Arts. Even if some members of this Association may not continue in their present chosen legal profession they undoubtedly would have benefited by the study of law and by the interest they have shown in the Arts. Who knows some of you may be so much attracted to the Arts that you may altogether devote your entire attention to the cultivation and practice of any one of the Arts?

The importance of Art, its vital place in our life can never be overestimated. The wise Hebrew Philosopher Rabbi Gamaliel advised: "The study of law is a noble thing if it is connected with Art. " But as the old Roman saying goes: "Ars Longa, Vita Brevis" - ("Art is long, but life is short".) To really master the Arts requires application, devotion, dedication. Yet even a general knowledge and

familiarity will go a long way to enrich our life, open up new horizons and form new and precious contacts.

Tonight I would like to give you a few definitions of Art and its ultimate function as formulated by a few great men whose names are well familiar to you. I would like you to remember these lines, as they touch upon fundamental ideas and ideals.

Rabindranath Tagore when speaking of Art said:

\*In Art the person in us sends his answer to the supreme Person who reveals Himself to us in a world of endless beauty across a lightless world of facts.\*

Swami Vivekananda the great Spiritual Leader said:
"That person cannot be truly religious who has not the faculty
of feeling the grandeur and beauty of Art."

The great Russian Writer Dostoyevsky said: "Beauty will save the world", while Plato the great Greek Philosopher almost two thousand five hundred years earlier pronounced:

"He who contemplates the beautiful elevates himself."

How simple yet beautiful are these statements, they all clearly show the importance of Art and its ultimate mission.

Many years ago speaking on creative thought I said: "Violence will hesitate under the vaults of a lofty cathedral while it will thrive in an ugly den". We must beautify our surroundings, our homes, our lives and they will in turn radiate their influences upon us and our children.

The arts have always been known and appreciated as the great magnets of men, and religion freely made use of this great field of human expression. The best artists were engaged to build beautiful temples, erect great sculptures and images, depict subjects of spiritual significance and awaken and attract through them the masses which came in

contact with these works of Art. This was done for the sake of religion and had to conform to the canons of the particular faith. But how great is the power of true Art: After long centuries, after thousands of years when the religious sentiments that moved mankind began gradually to wane, the great artistic merit of these temples and images has come to the fore recognised by everybody regardless of their faith. These edifices, these sculptures attract us perhaps even more, but not only through the appeal to our religious feelings, but through their great message of Art. It is indeed a great triumph of Art that these images are sought for all over the world, people are ready to pay fortunes to possess them and the entire world pays tribute to them and admires them.

This to me is the real, most eloquent evidence of the transcendental power that resides in Art.

In many countries there was a practice to surround expectant mothers with beautiful images, beautiful inspiring symbols. The thought behind it was to influence through the medium of the mother the formation of the child.

It is of special interest and something that may have escaped your attention that hermitages, places which were chosen by hermits for meditation and retirment were almost invariably chosen amidst very beautiful surroundings so that beauty could inspire and elevate the souls who attempted to transcend earthly life and rise above the every day.

These are some of the hidden powers residing in Art, in Beauty, the healing touch of more perfect combinations, harmony and the inspiration which fills greater Art.

I will now give you a few examples of the regenerative and happiness-giving power which resides in the appreciation of Beauty of which I was a witness.

I remember many years ago a well educated middle aged man who held an important post came to visit us in the Himalayas. My Father was then alive and in his conversation with this man he became aware that whenever this man referred to mountains he always said they were either black or light, apparently referring to shadow and the lit up portions.

My Father became interested and in the course of his conversation he found out that this man had apparently no sense of colour or rather was not using at all his colour discriminating faculty. My Father at great length and pain began to explain to him the differences of the shades, the colours, the harmonies, the constant changes of the finest nuances that exist in the hills and mountains. After some time my Father's patience was rewarded, this man gradually began to discern the differences of colours and began to see the different shades. There was no end to his joy as a new rich world unfolded before him, be became aware of a new beauty which he never was conscious of all his life.

The other one is about a simple man from North India
who worked with me as a driver for many years. Whenever
there was no driving to be done he would happily attend to
all sorts of duties and work. One day I sent him into the
distant mountains to collect for me from great altitudes a
certain flower which was about to blossom then. He went and
was away for quite some time. After his return he reported
to me about all the work he did and then with sudden enthusiasm
and eagerness turned to me and said: "How I wish Sahib was there
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there was a rapid mountain stream frozen over by a crust of ice,
the water was rippling and running below the ice and the sun was
shining from the side and the whole scene was sparkling with
every conceivable colour. It was so beautiful I never saw anything

like it. " - Just think of the joy which was kindled in this simple man by the sight of beauty :

When I was in Moscow at the time of my exhibitions one day we went with my wife to a large Department Store where you can buy anything needed by and for children, I believe its name is 'Children's paradise'. As we were getting out of our car and crossing the pavement to the entrance suddenly I heard behind me a little voice exclaiming: "Mother how beautiful" and as I turned round I saw a little boy holding on with one hand to his mother's hand and pointing with the other towards the bright Kulu Shawl worn by my wife. The little boy must have been not more than four years old, but he was completely overcome by the emotion of beauty as he stood there with his eyes transfixed and little hand stretched out.

Friends, this episode took me back to a time many, many years ago in the last century, in West Bengal, when a little boy whose name was Gadadhar was plunged into his first samadhi upon seeing a flight of white Herons tracing their course across the dark blue sky. This boy was to become shri Ramakrishna Paramshamsa :

Such is the power of Beauty - let us prepare to receive its Blessed Tidings.

To conclude I would like to narrate to you an old Russian legend which came down from the middle ages - it is quaint and naive like all Primitives are, but it breathes unalloyed faith and truth.

When Christ was ascending to Heaven, minstrels approached Him and said: "Lord, whom are you leaving us to, what will happen to us, how shall we live without you "? and Christ said: "Don't cry my children, I shall give you golden mountains and silver rivers, I shall give you spacious residences where you

shall dwell in happiness. St. John who was present then said to Jesus: "Lord don't give them golden mountains and silver rivers, someone powerful and covetous may take it away from them and they may not know how to keep them, but give them the power of Your songs and command that he who will listen to these songs and appreciate them will find the doors of Paradise open" - and Christ answered: "Yes, I shall not give them golden mountains and silver rivers, but I shall give them my songs and command that everyone who will listen to them, everyone who appreciates them will find the gates of Paradise wide open."

- I thank you and I wish you every success -

Sd/- (SVETOSIAV RCERICH)

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(SVETOSLAV ROERICH)

Bangalore 13th November 1967.

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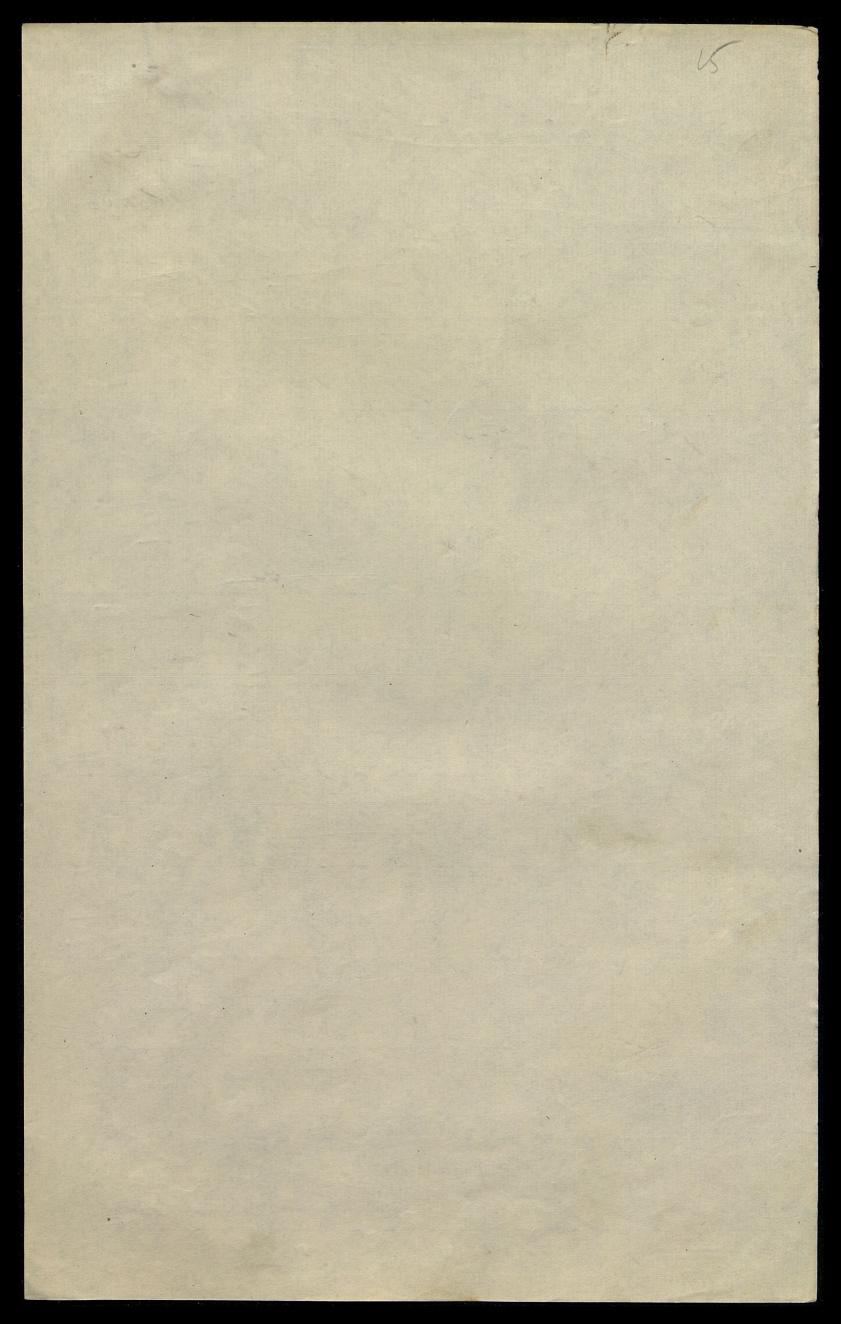
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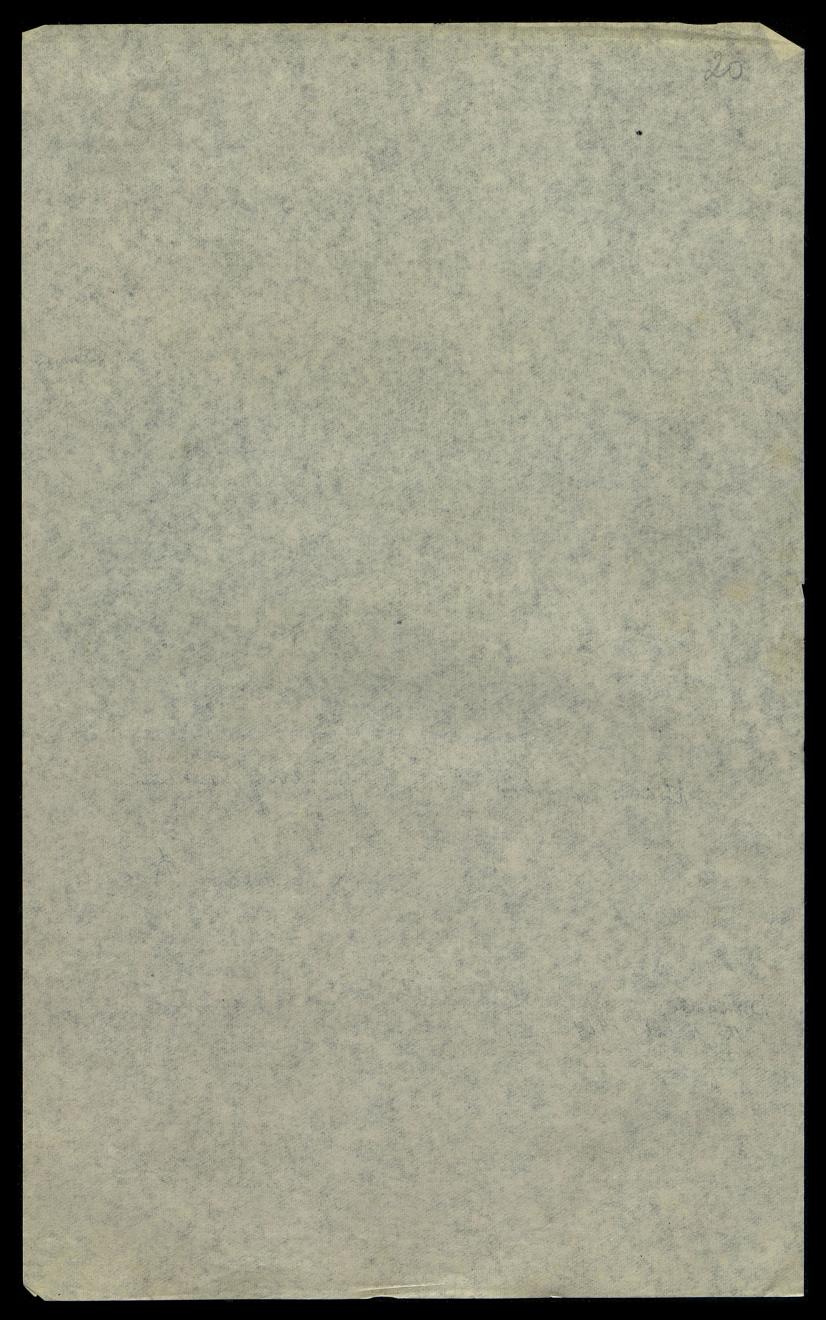
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