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AMRITHA SHER GIL

(December 1968)

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by

SVETOSLAV ROERICH

Amritha Sher Gil was an artist of outstanding promise, a rare efflorescence of a rich and striking talent. Had she lived we might have received through her some new and very personal revelation of the Beautiful. She had the power, the intelligence and broadness of approach and outlook so important in the moulding of a new and powerful message.

It is futile now to try to guess what would have happened had she lived. Perhaps the intensity of her flame came from a certain crowding of impulses within a few short and eventful years. Perhaps this was her message. She was re-discovering and re-narrating the beauty of the Indian village scenes, the typical and striking types of the North and South and she was searching for new and concise forms and expression.

My personal contact with her was brief. I met her in Lahore shortly before her passing and we arranged to meet again upon my return from the South where I was going then. She wanted me to pose for a portrait. We never met again.

She told me of her disappointments and frustrations. Frustrations of a bright, alert intelligence confronted and impatient with the mediocrity of certain circles of society and disappointment with the surroundings and attitudes. Something that must have been on her mind at the time. I told her, her art was all that mattered, not to worry over certain disappointments and not to take any time off her work. Her art, her creative expression were above any other consideration, they were that safe refuge beyond the petty iniquities of life.

She left us her unique gift, her paintings. Her own precious record of self expression, moving and beautiful. They are the blossoming of her own rich personality in her discovery of India, as it was then unfolding itself before her gaze after her sojourn abroad. Activated by the complex surging forces of her own heritage which stirred deep within her heart, she ever tried to recast these impressions through the prisms of her own personal experience.

Her paintings have the strength of her personality and the wistfulness of a sympathetic approach and understanding. Undoubtedly they are a great contribution to our cultural life.

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