

HUMANISM IN ART

by

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What is Humanism? What does this concept signify? If we approach it in the usual, accepted meaning of the concept, then we may describe it as a direction of thought, which in Europe has developed during the XVth and XVIth centuries and was the foundation of the so-called "RENAISSANCE" period in Europe. It was a movement to direct contemporary thought into new channels, to solve the immediate and practical problems of life by formulating and emphasising lofty, spiritual and moral values based upon the great classic heritage of the Greeks and Romans.

These great periods of man's history, of cultural afflorescence and maturity, repeat themselves or rather come to the fore in every nation, every country in one way or another and coincide with the great historic rhythms of a particular nation. Here in India we had our classic periods, the great Gupta Period which was followed by a number of subsequent localised upsurges, each one important in itself and because of the variety of the cultural heritage and ethnic groups they formed a rich panorama of artistic and cultural crests over long centuries from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, often borrowing from one another and enriching the previous achievements in some specific way. The religious, epic and philosophic foundations were the common binding element to provide a well defined unity into the wealth of local expression and tradition. It is not possible in the course of a few pages to describe or analyse India's great cultural heritage and we shall leave it for some other occasion. The great architectural, plastic and even pictorial tradition of India was largely anonymous and we know very little about the actual artists and their lives, except in a few isolated cases and then mostly in later periods, as for instance during the Moghul Era. Hence we shall deal primarily with the accepted definition of Humanism, the 15th and 16th centuries in Italy, since history preserved for us many precious records of the master artists and their attitude towards life. Humanism is when man is moved to the center of a particular cosmos and the higher human values are brought forward as guide lines of our creative vision and aspiration.

If we but turn towards the so-called quattrocento of Italy, we see an unique galaxy of inspired artists all striving towards greater perfection of expression: more eloquent compositions, more beautiful forms, every means that would uplift and inspire the onlooker towards more beautiful thoughts and life. If we but study the writings of the great masters of the 15th and 16th centuries, the period we agreed to refer to as the RENAISSANCE, we find a striking common approach, the striving towards higher values - the striving towards perfection, towards more forceful means of expression, towards something sublime. The choice of inspiring and heroic subjects, the means to portray

them, the cult of the Beautiful - these were the guidelines followed by these Inspired Men.

"The search of the Beautiful" in all its multifacetedness that is how we can perhaps describe the quest of the great Masters who still remain unsurpassed in the greatness of their achievements. Their approach, their vision, their life are wonderful examples of a complete dedication to a lofty ideal, the visualisation and depiction of Beautiful images which would inspire and elevate the onlooker and make him a better person. All truly great men throughout the ages were concerned with the building up of a more perfect society - more perfect humanity, a better, richer and happier life.

From remotest antiquity we heard of the healing power of Art. Beautiful images to inspire an expectant mother, and influence through her the child in gestation. Beautiful music and songs to calm men and tame the beasts. Instinctively even primitive people always wanted to beautify their dwellings and adorn themselves sometimes in most elaborate attires. This striving towards the beautiful is inherent in all life striving evolutionary towards more perfect forms, more beautiful and perfect combinations.

Take a look at nature, our great mother and greatest teacher. Look at birds and the striking display of their plumage during the mating season. Look at the butterflies and insects, would all these astounding colour schemes and forms be there unless they were needed, unless they fulfil a great evolutionary purpose? Our visual impressions are much stronger and lasting than any other impression, hence the visual arts have always played such an important role in our lives. Beautiful images hold our attention, inspire us and guide us towards better thoughts. Instinctively man responds to beauty, a beautiful face immediately holds our attention, we recognise spontaneously the more perfect proportions and combinations and our admiration is a tribute to something more perfect, something greater and higher than the average. And if the quest of the beautiful is an inherent evolutionary force common to all, how careful we must be in our own creations not to distort wilfully, not to make ugly images and fill space with ugly combinations which would persist and react upon others and have a negative influence especially upon the young generation, which is always more sensitive to all kinds of impressions and influences.

There are certain basic patterns and factors underlying our behaviour and our lives, no matter how much times may change, no matter how many discoveries science may give us.

The great philosophers and students of life could project

their inner gaze far ahead and they could probe and intuitively grasp the basic truths of our existence. Every nation tried to evolve certain canons of beauty. The artists and thinkers of the past tried to work out certain golden rules of proportions which though they might change in some aspects in succeeding periods, still retain their perfect equation for the particular period and place where they were first formulated. From the great brilliant periods of the RENAISSANCE upto the present day, Art has undergone a number of transformations. In the constant search for some new more expressive treatment, artists and critics have gone a long way to discover and interpret something different, something more striking, something never attempted before.

AS we have already mentioned Humanism was and is the search for the higher human values, often through the re-discovery of the heritage of the great periods of the past. It is the apex, so to say, the culmination of a certain period when man matures and searches for an outlet for his great creative urges and experiences and for a suitable embodiment of his ideals. It is a natural evolutionary crest of the great waves of life which carry mankind to new achievements, new discoveries and realisations. It is the urge of a maturing society when all its nascent forces and experience expand towards a new awareness, realisation and achievements. The creative impulse inherent in the nation and people looks for a new outlet and ever searches for new creative expressions, a new expansion of its innermost urges. The re-discovery of the great preceding periods, becomes an inspiration and guiding impulse.

Every society engaged in some creative activity tried to re-discover at sometime or other and revive the great spirit which moved the ancients and this re-discovery led to new realisation, new conquests, and again new developments.

Of course one must not blindly copy the past, we must not be mere imitators, we must be the true creators and from the beautiful mosaics of past achievements we shall re-create our own new message always remembering the lofty feelings which animated the great creators of the past and try to emulate their beautiful attitude towards life, towards the sacred realm of the Beautiful. As my Father, Nicholas Roerich beautifully expressed it in a widely circulated and commented upon motto:

"With the wondrous stones of the past,
we shall lay the steps of the future."

We must carefully peruse the writings of the great men of the RENAISSANCE and ANTIQUITY and try to visualise and understand the great urges which moved them and guided them to leave us the wonderful heritage which is the pride not only of the country which gave these men their birth, but of the entire world. We shall

quote here some of their sayings in order to come closer to the thoughts which guided and animated them, since it is only by studying their thoughts that we shall come to understand and appreciate the great works of Art which were the embodiment, the sum total of their individuality. Striving towards perfection was the key note of their life and it shines upon us like some sort of an inexpressible glory which emanates from these great works of Art and lifts us to another plane of consciousness and fulfilment.

The great Humanism in these works of Art does not only lie in the subject matter or its handling, the real Humanism of these masterpieces lies in their exalted influence upon the onlooker who partakes of their glory and is made to feel the marvels of the power of thought. Thought which elevates him, inspires him and makes him a better man, a richer man whose inner chords begin to vibrate to a new experience awakened by the magic of the creator's touch.

By unseen genetic threads we are closely interlinked with the past of our countries. We are the inheritors of their great cultural achievements and conquests. They live in us, dormant and often unknown to us and to others until the hour strikes and we suddenly remember the great lessons of the Past, the past glory and achievements. What are these special talents, sudden illuminations if not memories, stored away within the fathomless memory of nature?

Humanism then, in the broadest sense of this concept, is an attitude of mind and heart when man "becomes the center of research and dedication, our inspiration and our concern." By every means at our command we must try to extend our sphere of thought and advance our horizons. The Superior Man appears as an ideal, a lofty hope and the arts become one of the foremost vehicles for our meditations and realisation. Let the beautiful creations and words, of the great Masters be our inspiration and our guide lines. Let us learn from their experience and their wisdom. Let their dedicated lives inspire us and awaken in us the fire of striving and creative imagination.

What is this attitude of mind and heart which begets the great periods of culture, which has given us our great inspirations and which produced our greatest men and masterpieces of Art. Masterpieces which endure and defy the passage of time and are the beacon lights of our cultural and spiritual progress. Let us quote a few great men who dedicated their lives to the service of the highest. Listen carefully to their inspired words, in these words we shall find the golden key - the answer to their greatness.

Michelangelo the pillar of the so-called era of Humanism in Italy over four centuries ago uttered these inspiring words:

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"True Art is made noble and religious by the mind producing it. For those who feel it nothing makes the soul so religious and pure, as the endeavour to create something perfect, for God is perfection and whoever strives after perfection is striving for something Divine."

Rabindranath Tagore in his analysis of Art wrote these beautiful words:

"In Art the person in us is sending his answer to the Supreme Person who reveals Himself to us in a world of endless beauty across the lightless world of facts."

Swami Vivekananda exclaimed:

"That man cannot be truly religious who has not the faculty of feeling the beauty and grandeur of Art."

My Father, Nicholas Roerich affirmed:

"Art will unify all Humanity. Art is one - indivisible. Art has its many branches, yet all are one. Art is the manifestation of the coming synthesis. Art is for all. Everyone will enjoy true Art. The gates of the 'Sacred Source' must be wide open for everybody, and the light of Art will influence numerous hearts with a new love. At first this feeling will be unconscious, but after all it will purify human consciousness, and how many young hearts are searching for something real and beautiful! So, give it to them. Bring Art to the people where it belongs. We should have not only museums, theatres, universities, public libraries, railway stations and hospitals, but even prisons decorated and beautified. Then we shall have no more prisons."

How beautiful and lofty are these sentiments, to quote just a few. And thought expressed by people far apart in time, place and birth, yet how close they come in their innermost feelings. This essential unity is the unity of true Culture and of the Arts as the exponents of that Culture.

When Leibnitz, the great German Scientist and Philosopher watched Rembrandt paint he found that Rembrandt meditated and lamented about the appearance of his paintings more than he actually used his brush. Leibnitz writes: "Rembrandt believed in the magic of his excited eye, the magic of his invocation, the magic of a word. Rembrandt believes, that if he laughs in his soul while painting, the painting will exhale joy, if he covers it with his sighs and moaning, the painting will exhale

sorrow."

These words written by Leibnitz give us an insight into the processes that go into the creation of a great work of Art. In other words the work of Art is given a life of its own. The creator breathes a living soul into inert physical matter. Like all great artists Rembrandt knew well that in order to convey a living message, to convey the powerful truth of an experience, the Artist must identify himself completely with the inner soul of the subject he was treating or expressing.

There, where our words come from our heart, our inner being, where we stand as a complete personification, of our emotions and thoughts, our message will have the greatest power, carry the greatest conviction, in other words it will be truth itself.

Why are we moved by the early primitives, their simple often clumsy lines and forms, all far from the perfection of technique attained at later periods? The faith which animated those artists, the directness and sincerity of their feelings, radiate upon us from these early works and convey the message with the same vibrant intensity as it was experienced by the artists themselves.

Have you ever felt a thrill when beholding a beautiful painting, listening to music or to the words of an inspired poet? Have you ever felt moved or elevated contemplating a beautiful statue, a great work of Art? Works of genius are the crystallisations of the artist's thoughts and emotions, his aspirations and trials. They are living records left to us by these inspired souls. These works of Art have a subjective force concealed in their outward aspect, and by tuning ourselves to them we respond to the vibrations that have originally called forth these particular images. We must consciously make an effort to rouse our mind to a receptive state, to draw inwards and let ourselves become aware of the influences emanating from a work of Art.

The true artist has the power to arouse in the onlooker or listener a sudden surge of emotions and thoughts to fill the soul of men with new images, new living concepts, experiences and aspirations.

It is not an accident that people like to keep some little keepsake of a beloved hero or leader - it is not only the memory or association. Take for instance the handwriting, even an autograph. The character of the writer can be read from the signature by an experienced graphologist. In other words, it lives imprisoned in those lines and curves and speaks eloquently to him who can decipher them and for those who cannot

consciously do so, it remains there still concealed and radiates its influences, but it will be felt subconsciously. This unseen energy, this inner life is ready to emerge for anyone who can attune himself to its influence.

Likewise, all great works of Art are endowed with a measure of life. They are the living records of the artist's emotions, accumulated thoughts and influences. They are powerful store houses of manifold energies and we must respect and value them, in the same way as we would any sincere and great emotions in a living person.

But would not this, in some way, lead us to hero-worship, it may be asked? Hero-worship, as such, is only the natural, I should say, evolutionary urge to aspire towards something beyond the manifestations of every day life. It may degenerate only when it is misplaced, as almost any misplaced devotion is apt to, but otherwise it is essentially a most worthy feeling, this recognition of merit and achievement. Only by aspiring to something better and greater can we raise ourselves; and in this light, how paramount becomes the need to guard and preserve all the innumerable heritages entrusted to our safe keeping by generations already past!

Let us safeguard jealously and lovingly the living records of all great men. These great souls, who left us their enduring records, will ever radiate their influence on those, who can attune themselves to them. Let us strive and find a worthy purpose in life, not merely to improve our material existence. Let us look beyond it and life will assume a new aspect full of meaning, full of significance.

New and beautiful concepts regenerate our every day life, with widening horizons will grow our interest and tolerance, the aspirations of our brother will assume a greater meaning through the spirit of understanding and cooperation. Let us beautify our life, let us carry the message of Beauty into every heart and every home. Let us make the pursuit of the Beautiful our daily prayer.

Violence hesitates under the vaults of a lofty cathedral while it will thrive in an ugly den. Beautiful surroundings will radiate their influence upon us, upon our children and rapay us a thousandfold.

We know of the influence colours have on the mood of people. Extensive experiments have been carried out and have clearly demonstrated this reaction on the mentality of men.

Those countries which encouraged the Arts most had the greatest artists, as if to compensate for their striving towards

Beauty, the souls of great artists were born in brilliant galaxies, where conditions were ready to receive them.

Let us remember the great popular enthusiasm aroused by great works of Art, enthusiasm which marked the performance of the Greek Tragedies by Eschillus and Euripidies, the great influence exerted by the great poets of classical periods and middle ages, the great upsurges of popular emotions in response to great works of Art. There are moments when the people, the masses, suddenly recognise the influence of Art within the very heart of their lives and they respond to the inner call of a great genius. They, the people, feel the truth, the great emotions crystallised within a great work of Art even if they cannot always explain it.

Whenever we behold a great masterpiece let us remember the full meaning of the process that underlies its creation, and without prejudice try to read into its innermost meaning and attune ourselves to the influence both of the artists inner life and those complex higher forces that flowed through the artist at the time of his realisation and creation.

Like Prometheus, a true artist brings down to us the Heavenly Fire of his greater inspiration, experience and beauty and like Orpheus he builds through the harmonies of his Art the walls of his Heavenly City.

It is impossible to describe, to convey in words the importance of Art in our daily life. Besides the wonderful training the study and practice the Arts provide, they help to crystallize the genius of the people and give an outlet to the creative faculty which resides in every human being. That mysterious creative force which expresses itself throughout the infinite manifestations of life from the flash of a butterfly's wing ready to alight on a flower adapted to its pollination, to the happy song of a bird calling out to its mate and forgetting all in the ecstasy of its sublime expression.

Who can measure the true benefits which great Art bestows upon the people? So much of its influence can never be calculated or directly equated to any experience, besides the purely physical benefits of refining the taste, attracting people, making a place known and making others respect and admire the community or race which has produced great works of Art, it contains the intangible spiritual aspects which are the leading aspects of our life.

Even if vast sums were expended on the building of a Taj Mahal, it has paid for itself thousands of times over not only in fame for its builders but also providing an endless source for inspiration, admiration, study, research, discussion and also imitation. It has even supported a large

number of artisans for centuries making reproductions of the famous edifice or some details of its decorations and attracted millions of tourists.

It is the duty of every enlightened Government of every community to try to foster and help the National Genius to manifest itself by providing the opportunities and encouraging the creative genius of its citizens. Who can tell where that genius will appear and what great benefits he may ultimately bestow upon us?

Good examples of Art will multiply and encourage good Art since Art like Life reproduces itself and refines and sublimates our taste.

Leonardo da Vinci thus described the Art of Painting:

"He who despises the Art of Painting despises the philosophical and sensitive contemplation of the world, for Painting is the legitimate daughter or rather grand-daughter of Nature. Everything that exists has been begotten of Nature which in turn has begotten the science of Painting. For this reason I maintain that the Art of Painting is the grand-daughter of Nature and is related to God Himself."

Who was better entitled to speak on this subject than that sublime Master?

It is not possible within the short space of a lecture to enumerate and describe all the most excellent artists who built up the Pre-Renaissance and Renaissance period in Italy or for that matter in other countries also. But Italy stands out as something quite apart where the arts of a high order permeated life and life itself was activated and filled with great inspiration and Humanism which stemmed from the glorious heritage of the classic periods and inspired humanists, poets, writers and reformers as Dante, Pico della Mirandola, Angelo Poliziano, Marcellio Ficino and Savonarolla, when man directed his gaze towards new horizons of beauty, of lofty concepts and formulated new schools of thought, new directions and found new unexplored fields to conquer. These searches of higher values repeat themselves periodically and usually mark the culmination of a cycle when all the latent, so to say, creative forces are suddenly released and great souls appear as if attracted by some unseen and unknown magnet to make use of all the accumulated experiences of the past and cast these experiences into new moulds, to form new combinations. This preoccupation with higher human values has always been one of the most powerful incentives to advance. Obviously the study of man in all its manifold ramifications is and must always remain the noblest pursuit of man.

Pictorial Art is one of the most powerful stimulants of our creative imagination and through the beautiful images it gives man, is the quickest and surest way to elevate the onlooker and through him act upon others. As I have already said man responds quickest to a visual stimulus. When one beholds the beautiful works of the great Masters, when one stands in front of them and lets their influence flow freely and permeate our being, one becomes filled with the influence which is distilled from their surface. One becomes aware of a certain undefinable in words, aura which surrounds these great creations, a certain glory which flows from these works of Art. It is a sense of fulfilment and exaltation, an awareness, a reflection of the great and complex forces which went into their creation, the crystallised thought which they carry. The greater was the personality of the artist, the greater the work of Art and the greater will be our experience.

There is a certain glory as I already mentioned, some sublime triumph expressed through the great harmonies of images, thought, associations, composition and colouring. As if nature opens up before us her sanctum sanctorum and we partake of a great mystery, the mystery of creative perfection.

From the time of these sublime artists upto the present day many great artists have come to the fore in many countries. Some followed the great classical precepts and tradition, others tried to find new ways of expression. But all of them in one way or another were humanists since they dealt with human problems, human trials and aspirations. They were concerned with the same heroic exploits, the same religious interpretations, and similar historic events.

It is very difficult at times to draw a line between the classical searches and aspirations and the subsequent search for more realistic, forceful and often romantic interpretation. Practically all great artists were inspired by some leading ideal, because they were all concerned with the interpretation of something that moved them, something that fired their genius even, if it was not of the cosmic grandeur of Michelangelo or the profound and moving introspection and beauty of Leonardo.

All the great artists who followed these unique creators were great in their own right - Giorgione, Titian, Corregio - Tintoretto, Paolo Veronese, El Greco, Poussin. The marvellous Flemish circle of Van Eyck, Gerard David, Holbeins, and later of Rubens, Van Dyck and the German Durer and Cranach and so many other most excellent masters, or the supreme master of light and shade of profound meditations and moving emotions - Rembrandt. Later we had the Spanish Goya and the French panorama with such powerful and inspired artists, as David, Ingres, Delacroix, and other masters. David and Ingres were the followers of the early

classical traditions, the great adaptors of the doctrines of Humanism to our modern times, though they always remained themselves. The dynamic Delacroix who is often defined as a romanticist was moved by great human problems and contemporary events, he searched for a more forceful interpretation and technical rendering of his vision and besides his Art also left us a series of important essays and theories on Art. The English had also some splendid artists as for instance Sir Joshua Reynolds, whose lectures at the Royal Academy are most important documents of lofty concepts and mature reflections on Art or Turner who was far ahead of his time.

Practically all these great artists drew their inspiration from the great Italian artists, who were the true Humanists, who followed the great precepts of antiquity and left us a glorious heritage of their divine art and sublime personalities. Rarely, indeed does any modern artist measure up to the magnitude, the perfection, the excellance of those exalted men.

Art was always recognised as one of the best mediums to convey great ideas. The creative processes inherent and evoked in Art are closely interlinked with man's natural striving towards and recognition of perfection and beauty. The magic of beauty as a powerful magnet and awakener was known to man from the earliest periods of his civilised life. He made use of it in a thousand different ways on an ever greater scale until it reached the sublime heights of the middle ages and the RENAISSANCE when Titans grappled with visions of Cosmic grandeur, when Leonardo da Vinci delved deep into the secrets of nature and life to evoke the great images which have become for us symbols of man's triumph in portraying the innermost emotions of man through the means of pictorial Art.

It was once said of Raphael:

"Of the beautiful, the most Beautiful."
 And this sentence gives us a key to the attitude of contemporaries to the genius of Raphael. That striving and inner prayer to which I already referred to, moved all these great men, and they were able to manifest themselves because the conditions of life permitted the efflorescence of their genius. In her wonderful adjustments nature provided these great cycles of evolutionary maturity with the necessary means and conditions to manifest these exalted achievements. Nature showered her infinite bounty and blessings on her chosen few to elevate the masses and inspire the future generations of mankind to still greater heights, still greater achievements.

Let us hear how a contemporary of these great men, describes

them and gives us a key to the attitude of those distant days. Vasari this great Art historian left us a precious record of documental facts connected with the lives of the leading artists of his day. Too numerous to quote at length we shall give only a few excerpts which will serve as a certain mirror and key to evaluate the attitude and appreciation of the great Masters in their time which was such an important factor in the cultural life of the period.

This is what he writes in his chapter on Michelangelo:

"The Art of Michelangelo received an universal acclaim not as it happens to others, only after their death, but during his lifetime, and we have seen that the great Popes Julius the II, Leo X, Clement XII, Paul III, Julius 11th and Pius V constantly desired to have him with them. The same is also known of Suleiman the Sultan of Turkey, Francis Valois, the French King, Emperor Karl V, the Signoria of Venice and the Duke Cosimo de Medici, who were all ready to pay him large sums of money exclusively out of the wish to partake of the glory of his Art. This happens only to such worthy person as him. Everyone has seen and acknowledged that the three arts have matured in him to full perfection, which cannot be found among the ancient and modern masters and which was not granted to anyone by God during the countless revolutions of the sun. He possessed such a powerful creative imagination that his hands could not execute the grandiose and passionate thoughts which were evoked by his genius in the realm of thought.

"No one will consider it strange that Michelangelo loved solitude, because he wholeheartedly gave himself to Art, which demands for itself the whole person and all his thoughts and those that have devoted themselves to it, it ordains to shun society. He who is absorbed in the contemplation of Art is never alone or without thoughts and those who consider this as some sort of eccentricity or foolishness are very much mistaken because he who wants to create something really great, must be away from all worries and unpleasantness. Art demands concentration, solitude and peace and is incompatible with a distraught mode of life. But with all this Michelangelo highly valued his contacts with superior, learned and clever people and knew how to preserve their friendship."

Goethe wrote in 1786:

"No one who has not seen the Sistine Chapel can have

a clear idea of what a human being can achieve."

"The masters inner security and strength, his greatness is beyond all description."

"I am so engrossed by Michelangelo that even nature makes no appeal to me for her vision is not so grandiose as his."

Sir Joshua Reynolds called Michelangelo's style

"The language of the Gods".

Speaking of Leonardo da Vinci, Vasari wrote:

"Guided by heavenly influence, bountiful gifts are sometimes poured by nature upon human beings. But it happens very rarely that one person would combine within himself, as some sort of a supernatural and bountiful gift, so much beauty, charm and such genius that every action of his would seem divine and he would leave far behind all other mortals. All this clearly bespeaks that all his creations are the result of a divine design and not of human Art. We see all this in Leonardo da Vinci. His body had incomparable beauty, every movement of his was fascinating and he mastered Art to such a perfection that wherever he would direct his genius he would solve the most difficult problems. A rare physical strength was combined in him with great refinement. His courage and fearlessness were full of nobility and grandeur and the fame of his name received such wide recognition that he was highly acclaimed not only by his contemporaries but also by the succeeding generations."

Allesh in his survey of the "RENAISSANCE IN ITALY" writes:

"In the history of mankind it happened sometimes that entire generations applied all their energies to solve some particular problem and suddenly there appeared a man to whom everything - what with such great effort was gleaned by others and even then only partially - was obvious. The solution of these problems in his hands was like a well ripened fruit. Such a man was Leonardo da Vinci who combined within himself all that was achieved in the Art of the RENAISSANCE before him. As if all the preparatory work had been completed and real work was to begin."

This is what Vasari wrote about Raphael:

"How generous and loving manifests itself Heaven in respe'

of one single person combining in him the infinite riches of its treasures and all those charms and rare talents which it usually spreads over long periods of time and on many people. This we clearly see in this great and equally enthralling artist - Raphael Sancio da Urbino. Nature endowed him with all the goodness and modesty which sometimes adorn those who stand out from their environment and combine a captivating personality with a very affectionate and considerate nature. They evoke admiration among the most diverse people and in the most diverse ways. Nature conquered by the Art of Michelangelo wanted to be conquered not only by him, but also by a lofty character and to this end made a gift of Raphael to this world.

"Without any doubt one can affirm that he who is so richly endowed cannot be called simply a man. He is, if one may say so, a mortal God and he who leaves after himself such an honoured name and glorious creations will undoubtedly partake in Heaven of the Joy worthy of his creations and achievements."

Jaques Louis David the great French Master wrote:

"Oh, Raphael you Divine Man, you who have gradually lifted me to understand antiquity, precisely you, sublime artist, among the modern artists are nearest to these unsurpassable examples. You also made me understand that antiquity is even greater than you. You, the sensitive and benign artist that you are, you placed me face to face with these records of the past. It is precisely your paintings, full of knowledge and beauty that made me discover their beauties. Deign to acknowledge me after an interval of three centuries, as one of your most devoted pupils. The emotion which your creations evoke in me and my gratitude for the knowledge which you transmitted to me empower me to recognise you as my Master. By your hand you gave me something else, you placed me before the School of Antiquity. Am I not indebted to you for this Blessing. Such a great Master as you, I shall never leave in all my life."

I shall quote from Jean Dominique Ingres one of the greatest Masters of the 19th Century:

"The Greeks cultivated Art with a fervour which was equal to their genius and carried it to such a degree of perfection that it seemed it had transcended nature itself. Strictly speaking the Greek statues transcend nature only in that, that in them are brought together so many beautiful details which nature never combines in one and the same object or brings them together very rarely. The artist who works in this manner is admitted to the Holy of Holies of nature, he delights there at the sight of the

Gods and he converses with them, he observes their grandeur, like Phidias, and learns their language, in order to transmit it to the mortals."

"One must always remember that the parts which compose the most perfect statue can never surpass nature separately and that we can never raise our thoughts above the beauties of her creation. All that we can do is to reach a certain rare and divine mixture of Nature and Art."

"Art is reborn amidst its contemporaries upon the ruins of the creations of the ancient and one must strive to revive among us the means of the ancients and follow them. One must not hesitate to copy the ancients whose creations one must consider our common treasure, where everyone can take whatever pleases him and which can be useful to us in every sense, when we know how to make use of it properly."

According to Proclus he who takes for models nature's forms and he who limits himself to the exact copying of them will never reach perfect beauty, because the creations of nature are full of imperfections and therefore cannot serve as an example of beauty."

Phidias reached exalted heights by correcting nature, by nature itself. For his Olympian Jupiter he made use of the beautiful which he gathered from the entire nature as a whole in order to reach the sublime in Art, and not that which is unsuccessfully referred to as a "Beautiful Ideal". Because this word must be understood as a combination of the most perfect parts of nature, which we rarely find so perfect, besides nature is such that there is nothing higher than nature and all human efforts cannot surpass it or even compare to it."

Humanism, the subject at hand, is necessarily a very vast and fascinating one, with all that it could be formulated in a few words only. It finds its expression when "Man" is moved to the center of a particular expression or Cosmos and the whole scale of his higher emotions and aspirations begin to vibrate to a spiritual impulse and becomes the primary concern of the author.

Plato has given us a very beautiful and practical formula for our conduct and behaviour which in itself contains the whole range for our progress. He said:

"From beautiful images we shall go to beautiful thoughts, from beautiful thoughts to a beautiful life and from a beautiful life to Absolute Beauty."

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Plato considered images as the primary movers, the primary incentives to subsequent progress. The early church fathers were quick to realise the power of Art and the paramount role of Art in giving and maintaining a direction to thought. In every country whatever religion may have been followed by the people, the arts were always called upon to attract the people and give them an inspiration and experience which nothing else could. Various canons of proportions were devised and formulated, to create more perfect images, more perfect compositions. While treatise were dedicated to the analysis of proportions to create more perfect divine forms to give us beautiful temples, edifices, with all the intricacies of their architectural ensembles where great pictorial and plastic concepts moved us to a state of spiritual awareness and receptivity and inspired us to more beautiful thoughts and a more beautiful life. But it is not only the outer concept and form that move man, but the mysterious power which resides within more perfect proportions and combinations which we choose to call great Art. It is an instinctive response of man to something more beautiful and perfect to which all nature aspires through its great evolutionary forces inherent in everyone of us, in every manifestation of life.

We have'nt got the space nor is it a part of our subject today to analyse the modern trends in Art and fit them into the perspectives of Humanism, but we have the healing and revealing hand of time which will separate the accumulated dross from the real and lead us to new conquests and beautiful vistas.

My lecture today would not be complete if I did not tell you something about my Father, Nicholas Roerich who was in every sense not only a great artist, but a great humanist in the true sense of this word, a man who spent his entire life to bring about a new appreciation of the beautiful in every domain of life.

His was an extraordinary life, rich in experience and great achievements, completely dedicated to his lofty ideals and in every way it could be described as a glorious progression of ceaseless labour and struggle to give mankind a new vista in the appreciation of the beautiful, more perfect, more sublime and inspiring.

Besides being a great artist - he painted more than 7000 paintings, besides murals and designs for mosaics and the stage, my father had many other interests and achievements to his credit. He was an outstanding writer and his published works number more than thirty volumes besides

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innumerable articles and essays. He was an archaeologist, historian, philosopher and explorer and organised many scientific expeditions and explorations across the great continent of Asia. His travels took him around the world and wherever he went he founded various cultural organisations and carried his message of Beauty and Unity, the building of a more perfect life and society. He believed that it is our constant inner striving, our constant inner prayer towards something more perfect, something more all containing, which will transform us into that towards which we strive. The creative forces in man will shape his inner image through the powers of the creative energies inherent in every man, in every living being, in every manifestation of life. He was a living embodiment of all that he preached and could be fittingly described as the "Superior Man" of the Confucian Doctrine.

One of his great contribution to our cultural life was his International Pact for the preservation and protection of cultural treasures in times of war and civil commotions, which pact became a reality already in his life time. To me he was the greatest living example of Humanism as I understand it.

Rabindranath Tagore on seeing Father's paintings wrote:

again: "Your pictures profoundly moved me. They made me realise one thing which is obvious and yet which one needs to discover for oneself over and over it is that Truth is infinite. When I tried to find words to describe to myself what were the ideas which your pictures suggested, I failed. It was because the language of words can only express a particular aspect of Truth, and the language of pictures finds its domain in Truth where words have no access. Each Art achieves its perfection when it opens for our mind the special gate whose key is in its exclusive possession. When a picture is great we should not be able to say what it is, and yet we should see it and know. It is the same with music. When one Art can fully be expressed by another then it is a failure. Your pictures are distinct and yet are not definable by words - your Art is jealous of its independence because it is great."

To conclude, I shall quote a quaint Russian legend which came down to us from the Middle ages: -

When Christ was ascending to Heaven, some minstrels approached Him and asked: "Lord Christ, to whom are you leaving us? How can we exist without you?" and Christ answered, "My children, I shall give you the golden mountains and silver rivers and beautiful gardens and you shall be nourished and happy" - But then St. John approached Christ and said: "Oh Lord, give them not golden mountains and silver rivers. They do not know how to guard them and some one rich and powerful will attack them and take away the golden mountains. Give them only your name and your beautiful songs and give the command that all those who appreciate the songs and who care for and guard the singers shall find the gates open to Paradise". And Christ replied: "Yes, I shall give them, not golden mountains, but my songs; and all who appreciate them shall find the gates to Paradise open".

