

Himavat

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FRIENDS OF THE EAST

(Diary Leaves)

By NICHOLAS ROERICH

Your letter came just at a time when I was finishing my essay "Tolerance" with the following passage:

"Let us remember the instructive from a Chinese Legend: A famous artist was invited to the Court of the Chinese Emperor, in order to paint his best possible painting. The expenses connected with remuneration and travelling of the artist were great, but the Emperor—the Protector of Art—wanted to have the best masterpiece and spared no effort to give the artist the best conditions. The artist agreed to complete the picture within a year. Special apartments were allotted to him. Here he spent day after day in contemplative thinking so that everyone became worried as to when after all he would begin to paint. All material was long ready, but the artist apparently had no intention to start work on the canvas. Finally they decided to ask the artist, in view of the approach of the term, but he merely replied: "Don't disturb me". And two days before the expiration of the year, he got up and with precise touches of the brush accomplished his best masterpiece, stating afterwards: "To

make does not take long, but one has to visualize first, what one wants to make".

It seems that sufficient time has elapsed for humanity to realize the impracticability, the baseness and meanness of intolerance. Let us hope that past centuries have already taught us to see and realize the harm which is continuously done. Let us hope that in accordance with the saying of the wise Chinese artist: "to visualize takes a long time, but to do takes little".

Is it not a happy coincidence that just at the time of receipt of your letter, I was mentioning three important principles: Chinese wisdom, The Ruler as a protector of Art, and striving towards achievement. If I wouldn't have written this article at a time, I still would have had to mention these three basic points. And I may also quote in addition the following passage from Agni-Yoga: "according to ancient wisdom, patience is a gift of Heaven." And no doubt you have read in my book "Altai-Himalaya" my quotation from Tao-Te-Ching about the distinctions of a sage, which closes with the phrase: "He who possesses the quality of Tao is like a child—

the venomous insects will not sting him; wild animals will not attack him, birds of prey will not strike him!" The great Wisdom of Tao is also reflected on the great ancient Chinese Art. What a wonderful example for the future this un fading wisdom can give! The perfection of quality, if once already attained can always be easily renewed. How wonderful are all the teachings of the East, revealing the power of the heart with all mighty flames and achievements.

It is so gratifying to see that also in our times such great conceptions are obtained and they can transmute the dull twilight into radiance of the future.

And Agni-Yoga indicates again: "We do everything and we exist only for the future". How beautiful is it to realize our great responsibility in face of the future. First of all this responsibility should express itself in safe-guarding the great treasures of Culture. This is a heavy task but we should rejoice at being entrusted to accomplish something great. Numerous are the obstacles on the great Path. But by these we learn, through them we ascend and develop in us vigilance, resourcefulness and creative abilities. In everything, from the smallest to the largest we have to affirm untiringly this glorious call: create, create, create! May this call be transformed into an imperative stimulus of life. Bringing into existence these virile commandments, let us not forget the young generation, for whom it is our duty to prepare the path of ascent.

Thus gathering all the best treasures of the past and creating

new image of heroism, achievement and spiritual beauty, we shall point out to the young ones where are true treasures, where lies the Great Reality and where the human spirit is to find its justification.

Verily, verily, Beauty is Brahman. Art is Brahman. Science is Brahman. Every Glory, every Magnificence, every Greatness, is Brahman.

Thus exclaimed the Hindu saint coming back from the greatest samadhi. A new path of beauty and wisdom shall come.

And we are not alone in our struggle. Great Swami Vivekananda tells us: "Don't you see I am above all a poet. That man cannot be truly religious, who has not the faculty of feeling the beauty and grandeur of art. Non-appreciation of art is gross ignorance."

"Illumine yourself with the light of knowledge." Ossia (10-12).

"Man has to become the co-worker of heaven and earth."

"All beings nourish each other."

"Consciousness, Humanness and courage are the three universal qualities, but sincerity is needed to apply them."

"Does there not exist a panacea for everything that exists? Is it not love to humanity? Do not do unto others that which you do not wish done unto you."

"If man would know how to govern himself what difficulty could he encounter in governing a state?"

"An Ignoramus proud of his knowledge, a nonentity excessively desirous of freedom, a man who

returns to ancient customs, are subject to unavoidable calamities." (Confucius)

"It is not better in the world." Verily it is so! The world structure is cracking. But where there are pilgrims, where there are stone-masons, where there are creators, there hope itself is being transmuted into straight-knowledge. This knowledge speaks of the un-deferability of the hour. Let us hasten and be not afraid.

Rabindranath Tagore finishes his book (What is Art) with such words: In Art the person in us is sending its answer to the Supreme Person, who reveals Himself to us

in a world of endless beauty across the lightless world of facts.

There is no other way, O friends scattered! May my call penetrate to you. Let us join ourselves by the invisible threads of the Beautiful. I turn to you, I call to you: in the name of Beauty and Wisdom, let us combine for struggle and work.

During days of Armageddon let us ponder on Eternal Values, which are the corner-stones of Evolution.

In the name of Culture I send you from the Himalayas my heartiest greetings!

The artist is the witness who testifies of the Beautiful. Art is the most unselfish form of happiness in the World" (Sw. Vivekananda)