A Great Artist Calls Youth to the Service of Beauty and Truth

By Nicholas Roerich

A World Unity Of Culture

Our times are verily difficult, because of all the commotions of the spirit, non-understanding and the attacks of darkness against Light. Quite recently there were pictures in magazines showing the auto-da-fe of precious books in the streets. It is hard to realize that this could have taken place in the present age. But perhaps this terrible tension derives from the impulse to direct humanity through all storms and over all abysses of all the commotions of the spirit, non-understanding and the attacks of darkness against Light. Quite recently there were pictures in magazines showing the auto-da-fe of precious books in the streets. It is hard to realize that this could have taken place in the present age.

Respect for Treasures of Human Genius

What an epoch-making day might be before us when over all countries, all centers of spirit, beauty and knowledge, could be unfurled the one Banner of Culture. This Sign would call every one to reverence the treasures of human genius, to respect culture and to have a new valuation of labor as the only measure of true values. From childhood people will witness that there exists not only an international flag for human health (the Red Cross), but also there is a sign of peace and culture for the health of the spirit. This sign, unfurled over all treasures of human genius, will say: “Here are guarded the treasures of all mankind; here above all petty divisions, above illusive frontiers of emnity and hatred, is towering the fiery stronghold of love, labor and all-moving creation.”

Unity in Beautiful Things

Real peace is desired by the human heart. It strives to labor creatively and actively. For it labor is a source of joy. It wants to love and to expand in the realization of Sublime Beauty. In the highest perception of Beauty and Knowledge all conventional divisions disappear. The heart speaks in its own language; it wants to rejoice at that which is common for all, uplifts all, and leads to the radiant Future. The treasures of humanity contain one hieroglyph, the sacred prayer—Peace. It is truly beautiful, if amidst the turmoil of life, in the waves of unsolved social problems, we still may hold up before us the eternal Flambé—the Torch of Peace. It is beautiful through the inexpressible well of love and tolerance to understand the great movements which connect the highest knowledge with the highest aspirations. Thus, in studying and admiring, we are becoming real co-operators with evolution and out of the brilliant rays of Supreme Light may emerge true knowledge.

Real Understanding and Tolerance

This refined knowledge is based on real comprehension and tolerance. From this source comes the great understanding. And from the great understanding rises the Supremely Beautiful, the enlightening and refining enthusiasm for Peace. On the scrolls of command it has been inscribed that a spiritual garden is daily in need of the same watering as a garden of flowers. And as the Garden of Eden, eternal vigilance mark the manifestations of the workers of culture; and let us strive in every possible way to ease this difficult path of heroic achievement.

Great Ones of Pan-Human Culture

Let us also mark and find a place in our lives for the Great Ones, remembering that their name no longer is personal, with all the attributes of the limited ego, but has become the property of pan-human culture, and must be safeguarded and firmly cared for.

The Country of Great Culture

If you shall be asked, of what kind of country and of what future Constitution you dream, you can answer in full dignity: “We visualize the Country of Great Culture.” The Country of Great Culture shall be your noble motto. You shall know that in that country will be peace, where Knowledge and Beauty will be revered.

Everything created by hostility is impractical and perishable. The history of mankind gives us remarkable examples of how necessary peaceful creativeness is for progress. The hand that fired from the sword the creating hand sustained by the might of the Spirit is uniting and unconquerable. No sword can destroy the heritage of culture. The human mind may temporarily deviate from the primary courses, but at the predestined hour will have to return to them with renewed powers of the spirit.

The Stupidity of Lies

Culture and Peace make man verily invincible and, realizing all spiritual conditions, he becomes tolerant and all-embracing. Each intolerance is but a sign of weakness. If we understand that every lie, every falsity shall be exposed, it means that first of all a lie is stupid and impractical. But what has he to hide who has consecrated himself to Peace and Culture?

Where Culture Is, Is Peace

Not harming others we do not harm ourselves and eternally giving we realize that in giving we receive. And this blessed receiving is not a hidden treasure of a miser. We understand how creative is affirmation and how destructive is negation. Amidst basic conceptions those of Peace and Culture are the conceptions which even a complete ignoramus will not dare to attack. Where there is Culture, there is Peace. Where there is the right solution for the difficult social problems, is achievement. Culture is the realization of highest Beauty, of highest Knowledge.

We are tired of destructions and negations. Positive creativeness is the fundamental quality of the human spirit. Let us welcome all those who, surmounting personal difficulties, casting aside petty selfishness, propell their spirits to the task of preserving Culture, thus insuring a radiant future.

Nicholas Roerich And His Work

Nicholas Roerich today stands as one of the leading lights of the century. A powerful artist, his creative genius has found expression in three thousand masterpieces of painting, of which one thousand are in the Roerich Museum of New York, and two thousand are in the leading museums of twenty countries of the world. Halls dedicated to his paintings have been founded in Paris, Belgrade, Benares, Zagreb, Bruges, Allahabad, Buenos Aires, Kyoto and Prague.

This artist and leader of culture has established his permanent contact with India by the foundation of the Uruvati Himalayan Research Institute, at Naggar, in the Kulu Valley in the Punjab, where he has made his home. The Institute conducts scientific researches in the fields of archeology, philology, and the natural sciences, with special reference to India, and the Central Asiatic regions.

Roerich ardently loves India, and venerates the ancient culture and wisdom of this great land.

Only recently he wrote to the artist, Asit Kumar Haldar: “You know how I love India. I am very proud that it has been my destiny to glorify in many paintings the lovely sacred Himalayas . . . loving India, and being a Russian, I am happy that in the history of Russian art, the Himalayas and India shall be recorded with love and veneration.”

Nicholas Roerich

Photograph, Courtesy of the Artist

“ARMAGEDDON 1936” BY NICHOLAS ROERICH

By R. C. Tandan

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