“REALIZATION vs. BOOK-LEARNING”
by Swami Yogananda

“ACTIVITY” by Nicholas Roerich

“MEDITATION” by “A. E.”

“VIVISECTION ON PLANTS INSTEAD OF ANIMALS”

Published by
YOGODA AND SAT-SANGA
New York, N. Y.

November-December, 1927

Price 25c
"BUDDHA, THE CONQUERER", by Nicholas Roerich

The Archive of Nicholas Roerich Museum
ACTIVITY
By Nicholas Roerich

It is said that once the great Akbar drew a line and demanded of his wise man, Birbal, that he shorten the line without cutting or erasing from either side. The latter drew a longer line parallel to it and Akbar's line was thereby shortened. Wisdom lies in drawing the longer line.

When one sees in our day the apotheosis of rush, sometimes we feel helpless to shorten this turmoil, this useless prodigality of forces and possibilities. And only in imagining a longer line of real activity can we decrease the effervescence of nowadays—the standard of Hurry.

Certainly one must remember: Silence acts; speech gives the impulse to action. Silence compels, speech persuades. The immense and inscrutable processes of the world all perfect themselves within, in a deep and august silence, masked in a noisy and misleading surface of sound. The greatest exertions are made with the breath inheld, the faster the breathing the greater the dissipation of energy. He who in action can cease from breathing—naturally, spontaneously—is the master of the world energy—the energy that acts and creates throughout the universe.

But there are two kinds of stillness—the helpless stillness of inertia which manifests dissolution and the stillness of assured sovereignty which commands the harmony of life. It is the sovereign stillness which is the calm of the ruler. The more complete the calm the mightier the power, the greater the force in action.

In this calm, true knowledge comes. The thoughts of men are a mesh of truth and falsehood. True perception is marred by false perception; true imagination distorted by false imagination; true memory clouded by false memory. The superficial activity of the mind must cease and a silence succeed the restlessness—then in that calm, in that voiceless stillness, illumination comes upon the mind. And a right knowledge becomes the infallible source of right action.

This true activity, invisible for the eyes of rushing crowds, is manifesting itself only in results. And through results one sees with the physical eyes how much longer is the line of activity compared with that of rush.

And the day of rush is the night of Activity. For nothing is created in rush; perhaps money. But in all history only Croesus was mentioned for his wealth, and even he ended his life pitifully.

To be capable during the rush to manifest real activity, to be capable of silence, stillness, illuminated passivity, is to be fit for “Immortality.” The “inaction” of power creates, preserves, and destroys. This action is dynamic with the direct, stupendous driving power of a great natural force.

Even the moving wheels at their greatest speed seem unmoving. The harmony of the highest action is not to be distinguished by a physical eye, but only the results are apparent.

The real stillness sometimes is covered by a ripple of talk and some activity without—the ocean with its lively surface of waves. But it has nothing in common with rush. Rush has some special attribute—for it is always accompanied by vulgarity. You are sure to find during the rush, all aspects of this hideous disease of modern humanity.
The outlines of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, like an ancient temple, appear in this painting of seven figures prostrated before an advancing radiance, crossing a bridge in fulfillment of the legend that the Messiah will come across a bridge.

For what do the best elements of humanity search? For what are spreading revolutions of blood and researches of achievement? The human spirit is fighting in all those diverse battles against vulgarity.

When the crowd becomes a mob, what happens? There spreads the black kingdom of vulgarity. To the doors of vulgarity are rushing the mob. The same miraculous transformation of the crowd into the mob is seen in the trains rush, the meeting rush, in shopping and in the rush of selling, or the rush of disaster. The same rush, we sometimes discern in music, in colors, in line of design, in rhythm of sculpture.

Shall you now ask what is the psychological moment? Everyone now knows the psychological moment when this paroxysm is growing. One aspect of rush is inevitable. The expression of each eye changes. During the sad performances of rush you never perceive a happy face. Rush is proclaiming feverishly, “go, go,” and everything obeying this command will hasten away; but the shield of activity is “come, come.” and everything following this call is approaching, multiplying the possibilities. People are too busy. They do not wait for a union of souls and in a brief moment something can occur; the best mannered crowd can be converted into a mob losing all discrimination, full of the wildest instincts.

We have many explanations of this moment, but the most definite one is that vulgarity is becoming predominant.

The realm of this mysterious power of vulgarity is immense. The same vulgarity is bewildering the crowds; the same is gilding the frames; the same is curving hymns into “Jazz”; the same is transfiguring athletics into cruelties; the same is manifesting the standard of superficial life. Even the lips are colored alike.

It is as though the human skin were cast off and animals leapt before the astonished eyes. But, nevertheless, take human beings in nature. Only take them away from the rush, and real human aspects shall arise again. Like a chemical solution! In the same scientific way, humanity must distinguish rush from activity.

“All forms of tyranny have their beginning in kindness,” is a saying all too true. “All forms of vulgarity have their beginning in compromise.” One day the smallest compromise. Another day a small compromise, and then at once a high priest of vulgarity.

This is not a commonplace, not a truism. We must repeat it now, for much of real activity, much of discrimination, shall be needed in the near future. And in each movement peoples must distinguish where is the vulgar rush and where eternal activity.

But the first possibility exists of shortening the line of rush with results of the longer one of activity. Only results! You can never conquer vulgarity through the power of ugliness. In the power of Beauty lies your victory. Verily only Beauty can overcome vulgarity and stop the wild rush before the gates of that false-gilden realm. And the victory is not far! Everything that we sometimes call “fallen” has it not also “risen”? 