



Nicholas Roerich : the Conserver of Culture

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Nicholas Roerich –The arch bearer of contemporary Himalayan paintings. He was an artist with the holistic approach of thinking. He did not believed in compartmentalization. He applied this approach not just on the combination of peace, beauty and culture but also on all aspects of life. He firmly believed in the cross-fertilization of arts.

Nicholas Roerich was of the view that for the better evolution of mankind. It is very important for us to conserve our culture rather than disposing them off as thing of past, because culture is the ground on which the flower of mankind blossom. In "Joy of Art" Nicholas Roerich writes- "Each departure from the beautiful, from culture, has brought about destruction and decay. On the contrary, all striving towards cultural constructiveness has created brilliant epochs of renaissance". These lines clearly indicate the views towards cultural conservation. Nicholas Roerich also cautioned the world that culture is for one and all and is not the sole responsibility of any one person or group and everyone should play his part in its conservation. He wrote – "So long as culture is a luxury and Sunday repast, it cannot reconstruct one life ...culture should become part of daily life, in huts as well as palaces...not a confused hazy occultism and mysticism but the light of Great reality shines there where the enlightenment of culture has taken roots". (Joy of Art)

He called upon the women of the world to become the torchbearer of the monument to conserve the culture, for he he was of the thought that a woman has a power to solve all the mysteries and difficulties of life. He says- "And so how, when times are difficult for the universal abode of culture. And again we hope that that heart of women will understand that grief for impeded how one will grime for spiritual treasure and come to the aid of all realism of the beautiful"(Quoted in JOY OF ART)

The biggest effort by Nicholas Roerich to promote and protect culture was the Roerich Pact and Banner of peace. He formulated the concept of "Pax Culture". It's aim, to spread peace through culture and establishment of international agreement allowing any nation to protect its cultural or artistic heritage with symbol banner the "BANNER OF PEACE"

The idea of protection of cultural treasures of humanity had preoccupied Nicholas Roerich, right from the beginning of his activities and in 1904, while addressing the society of architects and artists in St. Peterburg, he had outlined his idea, calling attention to the deteriorating condition of many state monuments.

The large scale damages wrought by the First World War and the Russian revolution in his own country provoked Roerich and made him think for an effective answer to this menace. He realized that the cul-

tural heritage of each nation is in essence of world treasure. His view of cultural heritage included the existing remnants of earlier cultural activities, creative centers, universities, libraries, concert halls and theaters of all nations. Roerich succeeded in getting the treaty signed by twenty-two nations in 1935 while several other countries signed later, including India in 1948. In consultation with lawyers of International law, a pact was formulated which suggested that a flag would be flown over all places under its protection. The design of the Banner shows three spheres surrounded by a circle in magenta color over a white background. The pact states, "Education Artistic and Scientific institutions ... shall be protected and respected by the belligerents... without any discriminations as to state allegiance of any particular institution or mission ... may display a distinctive flag (Banner of Peace)... which will entitle them to special protection and respect". (Quoted in THE ROERICH PACT AND BANNER OF PEACE) (1945) This treaty is an international law today.

The Banner of Peace was praised worldwide includes the greats like Albert Einstein, George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells and R.N. Tagore.

Roerich faith in the mission of peace establishment and culture preservation is well seen from the following concluding passage from his message to the Washington conference: "Verily humanity is tired of destructions, vandalism and negation. Positive creativeness is the fundamental quality of the human spirit. In our life, everything that uplifts and ennobles the spirit must hold the dominant place... Be assured it is not a truism to speak about the undeferrable and urgent striving of culture ... let there resound once again the mighty prayers for peace of the entire world. As the Red Cross affirms physical health, so may the Banners of Peace establish and affirm the spiritual health of mankind". (Quoted in NICHOLAS ROERICH PAINTER AND PACIFIST)

REFERENCES

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