



Meditation Monthly International

Agni Yoga & Creativity

Agni Yoga, 67. How to awaken devotion? By goal-fitness. How to improve quality? By reverence for mastery. How to awaken creativity? By the desire for beauty.

Agni Yoga, 645. Some ask how one should regard daily routine. Most people are quite afraid of it. It is considered to be the death of creativity, and the demeaning of dignity. But We say that you should learn to see in each day's labor the pranayama that uplifts your consciousness. Prana descends from the higher spheres; but any labor produces energy, which in its essence is similar to the spatial energy. Thus, the one who knows the common essence of energies can sew shoes, or beat rhythms on a drum, or gather fruit. In all these the higher energy is generated, since it is born out of the rhythm of Cosmos. Only a low consciousness dreads the rhythm of labor and thus builds its own prison. It is difficult for humanity to understand that a king and a shoemaker are comparable in every respect.

Supermundane IV, 789. Urusvati knows how carefully one must protect the great innate quality of inspiration. We have already mentioned it, but one should turn special attention to this link with the Supermundane World. The very word "inspiration" points to some kind of external guidance. Do not think that such a link can be created instantaneously; it requires many tests over many lives.

People restrict this trait to the realms of science and art for no reason. Man can be a creator in any field. High quality in any kind of labor is in itself an inspiration. Thus, any perfected labor can be welcomed as true creativity.

Precisely at present, during this time of mass development, it is appropriate to mention the close

link with the higher energies. An intense dedication to self-improvement will prompt people to understand the nature of inspiration. Pointing out the higher energies is not hypocrisy. People already know about the saturation of space and about infinity, and for them inspiration is a scientific concept.

It has been related that a certain master, whenever he completed a creation, closed his eyes and remained in full silence. Finally, his disciples asked him whether he was resting after his labors or was planning a new work. The master replied, "Neither one nor the other, for in this silence I do not think. But do not call it thoughtlessness; it is beyond thinking. I must find new sight, so as to perceive my work in a new way."

You should also learn to become renewed, to assess more deeply the quality of your labor. Let a fluttering wing from space touch you and bring you new sight and new achievement.

The Thinker ordained, "He who can be renewed from space remains young."



Networkers Letter



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Cover art: *Arjuna*, 1929
by Nicholas Roerich

Dear Friends,

In the February/March issue of *Meditation Monthly International*, we focused our keynote article on the founders of the Agni Yoga Society, Nicholas and Helena Roerich. We felt it important to give our readers some insight into their spiritual lives and creative works. In that light, we would like to give you additional information about the art of Nicholas Roerich as presented to the Nicholas Roerich Museum in an early lecture by the president of the Agni Yoga Society in New York City, Edgar Lansbury.

There is a lovely book, a favorite of mine, that is now out of print and considered rare. It was written by Jean Duvernois about the life and art of Nicholas Roerich; it is titled *Roerich, Fragments of a Biography*.¹

“While at the Academy of Fine Arts, Roerich completed three classes in one year, and the inspector of the Academy, Mr. Bruni, shook his head and said, ‘Oh, Roerich, Roerich, you are always in a hurry.’ He never suspected how valuable time was to the young artist. Before he entered the class of Kuindji, Roerich showed his works to Repin.”

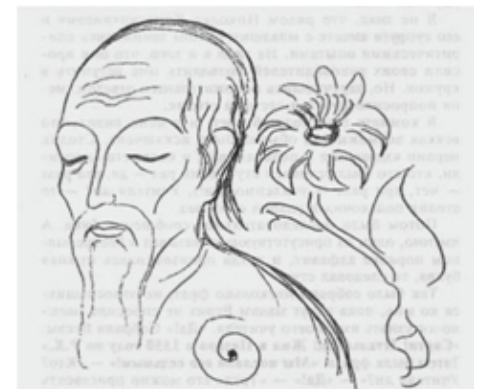
“‘Will you work with Repin?’ he was asked. ‘No,’ he said. ‘Why?’ ‘Because he praised me too highly and didn’t say anything of value.’ But with Kuindji Roerich found much that was significant, and throughout his life he retained a tender feeling for his forceful teacher. Let us recall the touching remembrances of Kuindji in his articles, ‘Guru—the Teacher’ and ‘St. Francis of Assisi.’ Altogether, the theme of discipleship, the famed theme of the ‘Guru.’ S. Makovsky, in his chapter ‘Vrubel-Roerich,’ brings out an interesting parallel of these two giants of graphic art. Those who read the article of Roerich about Vrubel will understand why the Seeker Vrubel was always so close to the Viking Roerich. It has been

related touchingly how Roerich tried to obtain a pension for the sick Vrubel and also how Roerich cares



about many. He obtained a scholarship for Anisfeld and helped Chagal through the hardships of life. One may hear from David Burluk how benevolently Roerich treated him and altogether the entire group of modernists, but Roerich also loves the paintings of Venezianov and the portraits of Borovikovsky and the decorations of Gonzaga.

“Roerich is a descendant of Iceland and Yutland Vikings. One of his ancestors, Frederick Roerich, was the head of Templars, and during the reign of Paul



Arhat by Nicholas Roerich, 1932

I, the guardsman Roerich was close to the Maltese order; and the trident of the coat-of-arms of the Roerichs closely resembles the trident of the seals of the Templars. One cannot help but recall the Chalice of the Grail, and the construction of the temple, and unforgettable is the remarkable tale of A. Remisov in his *Zvenigorod* of Roerich-Rurik. The work of Constantine F. Roerich, attorney and

*continued on page 6
third column*

The Art of Nicholas Roerich

Presented by Edgar Lansbury, December 1968

Today we are going to talk about Nicholas Roerich to whom this museum [Nicholas Roerich Museum, New York City, New York, U.S.A.] is dedicated and whose works are collected here. Strangers who come to this museum for the first time, as they walk through the front door, are hit by the color, beauty, and vibrancy of these paintings. They may not like the style particularly, but there is something about the consistency of them and the artist's point of view that is undeniable, and sets them to wondering who this man was, what kind of person, what kind of point of view can be so focused in a lifetime to create such a body of work, because what we see here in the museum is only a very small part of the grand total of about 7,000 paintings that Nicholas Roerich created in his lifetime, and about 7,000 paintings is a very small portion of the work that this great man did.

Nicholas Roerich was more than just a painter, and I think that in understanding his paintings and his work as an artist, it helps to know a little bit more about his other activities and aspirations because he was responsible for some quite remarkable achievements in areas other than painting.

Thus, people coming here ask the questions, "Why a museum?" "Who was Roerich?" "Where did he fit in the history of art?" "Where did he fit in relation to other artists?" "How do we compare him with Picasso, how do we compare him to Matisse, how do we compare him to Rembrandt?"

There is a tendency in our culture to categorize everybody, to put each man into a slot—a convenient cubbyhole

where we can, at a moment's notice, refer to him and have the comfort of knowing that he fits somewhere between so-and-so and so-and-so and "this" is what we can expect of him! Roerich defies such categorizing. He is a man who created his own style. If one looks at his paintings today and tries to equate them with the classic or some of the ancient styles of paintings, though he derived a



Nicholas Roerich, 1908

tremendous lot from all of these—the artistic heritage of the Western and Eastern World—it doesn't really work to put him into any of the cubbyholes. He truly created his own world. In the words of the eminent historian, Claude Bragdon: "In the history of the finer arts, certain individuals have appeared from time to time, whose work has a unique and profound quality which differentiates them from their contemporaries, making it impossible to classify them in any known category and to ally them to any school, because they resemble themselves only—and one another, like some

spaceless and timeless order of initiates. Such were Leonardo, Rembrandt, Durer, Blake, and in other fields, Beethoven, Balzac, and Rodin. Roerich in his life, in his character and in his art reveals himself as a member of this fraternity." I think that Mr. Bragdon has very aptly described this singular and personal position that Roerich as an artist holds.

The other thing that strikes one, underlying Roerich's work, is a singular kind of purpose and striving. Here at the museum, particularly in the paintings of the Himalayan period, we see this striving to express spirituality in nature and to link that spirituality with man's own spirituality and with man's own striving to perfect himself. This idea is very basic to Roerich's art and life, and the more one studies the man, the more one recognizes the basic spirituality of his life and purpose. And as one studies, the more one realizes that this work is the expression of a great soul—really a remarkable human being—whose expressions can

only be matched by examples such as Leonardo or Rembrandt. He was a painter. He was an archaeologist. He was an explorer. He was a writer. He was a pan-humanist, a great philosopher, a poet, a friend of kings, emperors, presidents, and hermits, from the lowest to the highest.

Now I am going to tell you a little bit about his life, and as we go along, relate it to what has been said. Nicholas Roerich was born in Russia, in St. Petersburg, in 1874. His father was a very eminent lawyer, and he grew up on the family estate, which interestingly

enough was called *Izvara*, a Sanskrit word meaning Ashram, or sacred dwelling. Even in that early age, there was a certain orientation towards the Eastern mysticism that we commonly associate with the artist! He was also educated in St. Petersburg. His father, being a lawyer, was quite anxious, like most fathers, that his son would follow in his footsteps and also become a lawyer. With that purpose, in 1893 Roerich simultaneously enrolled in the university and the Academy of Fine Arts. As a young boy, on his father's estate, he very early showed a great interest in the heritage of the particular area that he grew up in. He used to go with a shovel and dig around in the mounds and come up with ancient artifacts which he linked with his own forebears and the early settlers of that particular countryside. The name Roerich is a very ancient one in Russia since it can be traced back to the earliest pioneers in that part of the world to a famous, almost mythological, but quite real hero, by the name of Rurik, who was invited in 862 to rule over the tribes inhabiting the area that was later to become Russia. He accepted the invitation and founded a dynasty from which many of the Russian princes claim descent. In all of the Roerich's earliest paintings, one finds an expression of this tremendous interest in his own past, in the heritage of the Russian people. One finds paintings of Nordic boats, the old camping places of the great chieftains, and so forth.

In 1897 just prior to leaving the Academy of Art, he painted a now-famous painting, *The Messenger*, of which we have a reproduction of downstairs. It was bought by a Mr. Tretyakov—a great art patron of Moscow—and placed in his private collection, which is now known as the Tretyakov Gallery—one of the great museums of Russia. This resulted in a great deal of prestige for Roerich, and his work immediately became of great interest to collectors, museums, and people who wrote about the arts.

The painting itself ... is very interesting because it has a lot of the mystery, foreboding, and portentousness of his later paintings. It's not just a landscape. It's an epic landscape, and a design for a great play that's going to be enacted there. Even the two people present in the picture have a mysterious quality to them. This quality of mystery and portentousness is carried into his later works. The earlier themes are repeated and we have many with the strong feeling and subject matter. In the words of Michael Babenstchikoff: "He tells us



The Messenger by Nicholas Roerich, 1897

of the first days of human existence on the earth, of man's struggle with the dark powers of nature. He describes the customs and the habits of our forefathers with a vibrant emotion and with such an abundance of details that the power of the past completely overcomes us." And Nicholas Roerich himself, though striving with tremendous strength and passion into the future, believed that the man who did not understand the past could not think of the future.

In 1902–1904 Roerich took an extended tour through Russia. It was a

voyage of discovery, for wherever he went he found the ancient artifacts and ruins that to him represented the national heritage. He was shocked to find these ancient monuments, old buildings, walls and remnants falling into disrepair. In some places people were not even aware that they existed. As an archeologist he realized what they should symbolize to Russia, and he knew the importance of them to students of archeology and the history of man. Roerich was determined to have them preserved and properly looked after. To this end, he painted an

extraordinary series of paintings which, oddly enough, ended up in this country in the Oakland Museum in California. Not too many years ago, one of our museum members discovered them there and after a lot of hard work and correspondence succeeded in having them loaned to the museum. Since then they were purchased by a trustee of the museum, and they are shown at frequent intervals here. They are interesting in terms of Roerich the artist because they show an earlier style of painting and are executed in oil. He later went almost exclusively to tempera as a medium of work.

Roerich was also painting murals at this time. In 1907 he completed a very large and beautiful mural in the church of the Holy Spirit in Talashkino, near Smolensk (which I understand was partly destroyed in the war and is now being restored) and a mural for the Kazan railways in Moscow. He was really rising to his own as an artist of rank and reverence. He was recognized throughout the world as a man of consequence, a painter of importance, and as a philosopher and humanitarian. In 1909 and 1910, during the summer of these years, Roerich visited Italy, Germany, Holland, England, and toured these countries. It was at this time that he designed for Diaghilev sets for *Prince Igor*, at the same time he held exhibitions in Paris, London, Brussels, Rome and Zurich. His work became known and was received by many of the major museums of these countries.

Starting with *Prince Igor*, he had a full career as a stage designer, a career that in many men's lives would have been enough to satisfy them, but in the life of Roerich, a man of many facets, is only a small aspect. He then designed sets for *Peer Gynt*, *Princess Maleine* for the Moscow Art Theater, and also for *Tristan and Isolde*, and many operas by Rimsky-Korsakov. Bakst, Natalie Goncharova, and Picasso were designing for Diaghilev. He moved in the company of the best artists, modern and traditional, of that period, painting all the time in his own personal way, in his own inimitable style. It was at this time, of course, that he did what became his most famous design for the theater, the decors and costumes for Stravinsky's ballet, *Le Sacre du Printemps*, which was presented in Paris. As the eminent art historian and writer Barnett Conlan wrote about this production: "When Roerich designed the settings for *The Rite of Spring* in 1912, his style was at that time the most advanced, and it is a question if any painter could have approached the heart of the subject with so much insight. Not only did he

give the outer sense of spring—the great spaces and the growing light, the hard green landscapes caught up by the evening glow, but he also gave that inner sense of the sharp, chill sap rising through the pores of the earth, all of the acid activities of the fresh vegetation as shrill in its movements as the east wind. The colors were hard and clear, the forms rough and primitive, and what was infinitely old in a circle of ancient rocks, seemed to have again come round on the ring of time and pointed to the future. The most modern technique of today could not have done more, not half as much."

So we see how the work of Roerich helped to make this such an extraordinary occasion. In 1920 he designed the décor and costumes for the *Snow Maiden* for Covent Garden, also for *Czar Sultan* and *Sadko*. In 1920 Roerich was invited by the director of the Chicago Art Institute to come to America with his paintings and exhibit his work throughout the country on an extended tour of twenty-nine cities that was to last for a year and a half. He brought over four hundred paintings, which is quite a collection. It was an immense success, and the artist was received in this country by the leading patrons and museum directors with the same degree of reverence and importance that he had received in Europe.

In 1921 Roerich arrived for the opening of his tour, which started here in New York City. He spent the summer of that year on the island of Monhegan in Maine, and painted a series known as the *Ocean Series*. In these works it is interesting to see the Roerich style of painting applied to the coastline of Maine. They have a lot of the quality of his early work—very forbidding in a sense, portentous, and with that look of destiny about them that characterizes Roerich's paintings. He remained in this country for a period of two years and during that time made many friends and founded several institutions, including the Master Institute of United

Arts here in New York. This institution was founded around a very advanced concept—the combining of the study of all the arts and many other aspects of life under one roof, thus breaking down the barriers existing between each and achieving a sense of synthesis.

In 1923, with his two sons, George and Svetoslav, Roerich set out on the first of his expeditions to Asia. His idea was to penetrate into the hidden recesses of the Himalaya, a region that had beckoned him since he was a small boy on his father's estate in St. Petersburg, where hanging on the wall was a picture he afterwards discovered was the holy mountain of Kanchenjunga. Roerich was later to paint this mountain with much reverence and great success. For five years the Roerich expedition traveled all over India, Tibet, Sikkim, Mongolia, Chinese Turkestan, Altai, and so forth. Many of the paintings that you see in the museum are the result of that expedition. During the course of it, he also studied the ancient relics of the Himalayas, the Eastern religions, the cultures of the people, the languages. His son Svetoslav was by that time becoming a painter himself and his son George, a scientist. Between the lot of them, they constructed a multifaceted expedition during which many things were explored and discovered. Wherever he went, Roerich's inner belief in life and humanity and in the destiny of man was reinforced. Wherever he went he found the ancient philosophical, religious Eastern beliefs, echoing his own inner knowledge. We find this quality of man's destiny and his striving toward it a dominant theme, an all-pervading subtext in these paintings—the great Himalayan range became a fitting symbol for a concretion, perhaps, of the artist's lofty concepts, of man's relationship to Cosmos, to God. During the time of the expedition, he made a few trips back to the United States and other parts of the world for one purpose or another, sometimes to coordinate things

he had started for a new school, a society, or perhaps a new structure of some kind. In 1929 the family returned from the expedition and settled in the Kullu Valley in the Himalayan foothills. There they founded the Urusvati Himalayan Research Institute, which was organized to study the results of the expedition and discoveries made during the expedition. George Roerich has written about this institute: "The buildings of the Institute were erected on a mountain ridge at an altitude of 6,500 feet. From 1930 to 1939 scientific work and explorations were conducted under the guidance of the artist, until the events of the Second World War brought about a temporary halt to those activities."

"The Himalayan Research Institute had two departments, botanical and ethnological-linguistic. The latter was also concerned with exploring archaeological sites. Each year, at the beginning of the summer when the mountain passes were open, the expedition squads went their way toward the Tibetan Highland and into the high mountain zone of the Himalayas. In October they returned to the main base of the Institute in Kulu [*sic*] and spent the winter months in working with the materials collected." So you see it was entirely scientific and an extraordinary Institute for that period. J. K. Nag, a prominent Indian writer wrote about Roerich at this time: "There lives on the roof of the world a unique figure—a genius that has so ardently worshipped Beauty—a genius that has so passionately loved art and culture. He is the world famous painter, the great Nicholas Konstantinovich Roerich—a towering personality of this century. Besides his genius in art, Roerich is one of the ardent enthusiasts for world peace. He dreams of an international peace through art and beauty. He says, "Art is to create beauty; through beauty we gain victory, through beauty we unite and through beauty we pray."

And indeed at that time Roerich dreamed of peace, and dreamed also of a



Madonna Oriflamma
by Nicholas Roerich, 1932

plan of preserving all the great treasures of man's creativeness and cultural institutions throughout the world in times of war. To this end he founded the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace Committee, which describes in considerable detail the purpose and aspirations of those ideas that Roerich created. On the flyleaf we read: "The Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace was created and promulgated by Nicholas Roerich, for the protection of the treasures of human genius. It provides that educational, artistic, religious and scientific institutions, as well as all sites of cultural significance, shall be deemed inviolate, and respected by all nations in times of war and peace.

"The Banner of Peace is the symbol of the Roerich Pact. This great humanitarian ideal provides in the field of mankind's cultural achievements the same guardianship as the Red Cross provides in alleviating the physical sufferings of man.

"The design of the Banner of Peace shows three spheres surrounded by a circle in magenta color on a white background. Of the many national and individual interpretations of this symbol, the most usual are perhaps those of Religion, Art and

Science as aspects of culture which is the surrounding circle; or the Past, Present and Future achievements of humanity guarded within the circle of Eternity."

On April 15, 1935, the Pact was signed in the White House in the presence of President Franklin D. Roosevelt by the representatives of twenty-one governments of North, Central, and South America.

During the last years of his life, Nicholas Roerich lived in the Kullu Valley writing abundantly. During all the years of the Second World War, he sought endlessly to find ways to peace, and wrote to people all over the world pointing out the directions in which mankind could seek it.

Nicholas Roerich died on December 13, 1947, in the Kullu Valley.

Networkers Letter
continued from page 2

father of the artist, during the liberation of the peasants, and his participation in the Volno-Economic Society, introduce the vast traditions of the Russian Intelligentsia.

"Of the old Masters, Roerich loves Duccio, Benozzo Gozzoli, Orcagna, the school of Sienna, Durer, Holbein, Cranach, P. Breughel the Elder, and of course the Dutch Primitives. Of the new masters, he especially admires Gauguin, Van Gogh; he loves Maris, Puvis de Chavannes."

Here are but a few snippets so that you may get a "flavor" of the nature and character of this master artist.

With love,

Joleen Dianne DuBois,
President and founder

¹Jean Duvernois, *Roerich: Fragments of a Biography*, pp. 32-33. © 1933 The Author

June/July 2012



*The Florida (Sarasota) Group meets biweekly to study the Teachings. Please call **Ginette Parisi** at (941) 925-0549 for complete information.*

*The Ohio (Marysville) WMEA group meets monthly for Sun Festivals and classes. Please call **Kathy O'Conner** at (937) 642-5910 for complete information.*

*The Puerto Rico WMEA Group meets weekly to study the Teachings. Please call **Jennifer Santiago** at (787) 649-3817 for complete information.*

*The Colorado (Longmont) WMEA Study Group meets each month for Full Moon meditation gatherings. Please call **Doreen Trees** at (303) 651-1908 for complete information.*

June

- Sun. 3** ***Sun Festival of Gemini***, Lecture and Group Meditation with Rev. Valarie Drost, 10:30 a.m., Izvara Center
- Wed. 6 **No Class**
- Sun. 10** Sunday Service: Meditation, Singing, and Lecture ***"The Glorious One"*** with Ms. Gay Hendin, 10:30 a.m., Izvara Center
- Tues. 12 Paloria Study Group, 6:30–8:00 p.m., Eastwood Dr., WMEA Center
- Wed. 13 Class: *The Solar Angel and You*, 7–8 p.m., Izvara Center
- Sun. 17** Sunday Service: Meditation, Singing, and Lecture ***"Father's Day"*** with Mr. Richard Woodard, 10:30 a.m., Izvara Center
- Tues. 19 Paloria Study Group, 6:30–8:00 p.m., Eastwood Dr., WMEA Center
- Wed. 20 Class: *The Solar Angel and You*, 7–8 p.m., Izvara Center
- Sun 24** Sunday Service: Meditation, Singing, and Lecture ***"The Common Good"*** with Rev. Joleen DuBois, 10:30 a.m., Izvara Center
- Wed. 27 Class: *The Solar Angel and You*, 7–8 p.m., Izvara Center

July

- Sun. 1** ***Sun Festival of Cancer***, Lecture and Group Meditation, with Rev. Joleen DuBois, 10:30 a.m., Izvara Center
- Wed. 4 **No Class**
- Sun. 8** Sunday Service: Meditation, Singing, and Lecture ***"The Spirit of Taking Right Action"*** with Mr. Lewis Agrell, 10:30 a.m., Izvara Center
- Tues. 10 Paloria Study Group, 6:30–8:00 p.m., Eastwood Dr., WMEA Center
- Wed. 11 Class: *The Solar Angel and You*, 7–8 p.m., Izvara Center
- Sun. 15** Sunday Service: Meditation, Singing, and Lecture ***"The Wisdom of Love"*** with Ms. Carol Woodard, 10:30 a.m., Izvara Center
- Tues. 17 Paloria Study Group, 6:30–8:00 p.m., Eastwood Dr., WMEA Center
- Wed. 18 Class: *The Solar Angel and You*, 7–8 p.m., Izvara Center
- Sun. 22** Sunday Service: Meditation, Singing, and Lecture ***"The Energy of Love"*** with Ms. Beverly Phillips, 10:30 a.m., Izvara Center
- Wed. 25 Class: *The Solar Angel and You*, 7–8 p.m., Izvara Center
- Sun. 29** Sunday Service: Meditation, Singing, and Lecture ***"The Inner Potentials in Man"*** with Rev. Joleen DuBois, 10:30 a.m., Izvara Center
- Wed. 31 Class: *The Solar Angel and You*, 7–8 p.m., Izvara Center

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