



Meditation Monthly International

Nicholas Roerich – Leaves Of India

A WMEA Spiritual Pilgrimage

It is our joy to present to you excerpted writings from the poetic pen of Nicholas Roerich. His various writings describe much of the spiritual trek Joleen and three other members of the White Mountain Group made in May this year (2001). When possible, we have included photos taken from our journey to pictorialize the various sacred sights, as well as maps to help you recognize the area of India visited. All photos are copyrighted by WMEA, but will be made available free of charge upon request.

We have also included writings of Lama Govinda whose home was the Himalayas for fifty years. Of the Himalayan mountains he says:

“The Himalayas are not only the highest and mightiest mountains in the world—awe-inspiring by their mere vastness—they are also the meeting place of the most ancient and spiritually advanced civilizations of the world. Like a gigantic magnet, the Himalayas seemed to attract the best that each passing age and culture had to offer.”¹

“Though the mountains acted as a barrier to physical forces and the worldly ambitions of kings and conquerors, they were no obstacle to the exchange of spiritual achievements and to the cultivation and preservation of ancient traditions. On the contrary, they acted as a restraining, selective, and purifying factor, separating the chaff from the grain, the base metal from the gold, and the trivial and superficial from the genuine. The mountains are therefore a challenge to the human spirit. Only those



Close up of Kanchenjunga

who have the strength and endurance to stand up to such a challenge can survive in this world.”²

“The profound parallelism of body and soul, spiritual and natural laws, inner and outer forces, is nowhere more capable of direct experiment than in the mountains, and of all mountains nowhere more than in the Himalayas where thousands of years of human devo-

tion have created an atmosphere and tradition which is unequalled by any other region in the world. It is an atmosphere of devotion, which is older than any organized religion or dogma, though many religious beliefs may have grown out of it and many systems of religious interpretation may have been superimposed on it.”³

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Kanchenjunga in the morning mist from Darjeeling



This page is dedicated to Helena Roerich

Helena Roerich's home in Kalimpong, "Crookety House," where she moved after Nicholas had made his transition, is being renovated. When the renovations are complete it will be available for small conferences.



This is how it looked just a few weeks ago. The landscaping and ivy will be restored as soon as the physical restoration is complete



This is how the house looked when she lived in it.



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Photos by Shary Singer, Joleen Du Bois, and Gary Bettis



This is her stupa, situated near the Zangdak Palri Monastery in Kalimpong. It is being carefully and respectfully maintained.



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Sikkim:

“This blessed country, full of reminders of the illumined leaders of religions, leaves an impression of great calmness. Here lived Padma Sambhava⁴, the founder of the Red Hat sect; and Atisha, who proclaimed the teaching of Kalachakra, and who crossed this country on his way to Tibet. Here in the caves dwelt many ascetics filling space with powerful thoughts of blessing.

“Hermits still live behind Kanchenjunga in subterranean caves; and only a trembling hand, stretched out for food in answer to a prearranged knock, indicates that the physical body is still alive. All seventeen peaks of the Himalayas shine above Sikkim. From west to east they are Kang Peak, Jannu, Little Khabru, Khabru, Dom Peak, Talung Peak, Talung saddle, Kanchenjunga, Pandim, Jubonu, Simvoo, Narsing, Siniolchu, Pakichu, Chomiomo, Lama Andem, Kanchenjunga.

“It is a realm of snows, its outlines changing with every variation of light! It is truly inexhaustible in impressions and ceaselessly evocative.

“Nowhere else on earth are two such entirely different worlds expressed. Here is the earthly world with its rich vegetation, brilliant butterflies, pheasants, leopards, panthers, monkeys, snakes, and innumerable other animals which inhabit the evergreen jungles of Sikkim. And about the clouds, in unexpected heights, shines the snowy kingdom which has nothing in common with the busy anthill of the jungles. It is an eternally moving ocean of clouds with untold varieties of mist.

“In general, a beneficent atmosphere is maintained in the monasteries of Sikkim. On every hill, on every summit, as far as the eye can reach, you see white specks—these are all strongholds of the teaching of Padma Sambhava, the official religion of Sikkim. The Maharajah of Sikkim, who lives in Gangtok, is deeply religious. The Maharani, his wife,

is of Tibetan descent, and her education is quite exceptional compared to that of the majority of Tibetans.

“All the monasteries of Sikkim are associated with relics and ancient traditions. Here lived Padma Sambhava himself. Here the Teacher meditates upon a rock. When this rock splits anew, it will mean that the life of this place has been diverted from the path of righteousness.



The Yi-Gah Chö-Ling (Old Ghoom) Monastery

“The Pemayangtse monastery is the official center of religion in Sikkim. Near this monastery there are still ruins of the ancient palace of former Maharajahs. But of far greater spiritual importance is the old monastery of Tashi-ding, which is one day’s march from Pemayangtse. Every traveler should visit this remarkable place despite the difficult path of a bamboo bridge over a wild torrent.

“We were in Tashi-ding in February, at the time of the Tibetan New Year, when thousands of visitors from the neighboring villages lend an exceptional picturesqueness to the ancient place. At that season in Tashi-ding, the annual miracle of the Chalice is also performed. Every year an ancient stone chalice is half filled with water and sealed in the presence of the lamas and representatives of the Maharajah. The following year, also on New Year’s Day, the casket where the chalice is kept is unsealed. The ancient silk cloth in which the chalice is wrapped is removed and, according to the amount of water in the chal-

ice, the future is predicted. The water has either decreased or, as is told, sometimes increased. It is said to have increased considerably in 1914 before the Great War. Such an increase always means calamity and war.

“In all the monasteries of Sikkim you can feel a friendly attitude toward foreigners, and the hospitable atmosphere is undisturbed. The head lamas readily show you their treasures, among which are many old objects of fine workmanship.

“We were in Sikkim at the time of the third ill-fated Everest Expedition; and the lamas told us, ‘We wonder why the pelings—foreigners—take such trouble in climbing. They will not be successful. Many of our lamas have been on the top of Mount Everest, but they were there in their astral bodies.’⁵

“I cannot refrain from mentioning here incidents that occur in these places proving the power of the will. During the visit of the Tashi Lama to India, he was asked whether it was true that he had some special psychic powers. The spiritual leader of Tibet smiled but did not reply. But within a few minutes he disappeared. All present began to search for him, but in vain. Then a newcomer entered the garden where this occurred and was surprised at the unusual sight: The Tashi Lama was sitting quietly under a tree, surrounded by people anxiously searching for him—in vain!”⁶



The Tharpa Chö-Ling Monastery

“On the summits of Sikkim, the foothills of the Himalayas, among the blooming rhododendrons and the fragrant Balu—the healing plant—a lama who looked like a carved image from the middle ages told us, pointing towards the five summits of Kanchenjunga: ‘There is the entrance to the holy land of Shambhala. By passages through wonderful ice caves under the earth, a few deserving ones have, even in this life, reached the holy place where all wisdom, all glory, all splendor are gathered.’”⁷

“The last pass is Sepo La. It is the easiest of all. We pass a turquoise blue lake—the source of the Lachen River. The torrent begins as a diminutive stream; and, after a journey of two days, it begins to roar and grows so powerful that one can no longer cross without a bridge. We sense the fragrance of the healing Balu and the first stubby cedars. Once again we see rhododendron before us. We are in Sikkim.

“Again, files of bronze, half-naked Sikkimese with garlands on their heads carry baskets full of tangerines on their backs. The noisy monkeys whistle in the trees. Blue butterflies, large as birds, fly ahead of us. Everything is a rich, varied green. From above, crowned by rainbow clouds, fall cascades.

“Near the Tishta River, two leopards appear on the road. They look at us peacefully and then, with their soft step, disappear in the jungle.

“The Himalayas block our view of Tibet.

Where else is there such brilliance, such spiritual plenty, if not among these precious snows! Nowhere else does there exist such descriptive language as in Sikkim; to every word the conception of hero is added: men-heroes, women-heroes, hero-rocks, hero-trees, hero-waterfalls, hero-eagles.”⁸

Darjeeling and Sikkim:

“Just as when you are approaching the Grand Canyon of Arizona, when you approach the foothills of the Himalayas you go through the most uninteresting landscape.

“And only for a moment, at dawn in Siliguri, do the white giants appear before you as the first messengers. And again they are hidden in the curly jungles. And again tea plantations. And again barrack-like structures and factories. And only sometimes does a typical habitation appear and conceal itself again as a vision from another world. There are tales about the attacks of tigers and leopards. There are mountains of cases of tea with the mark, Orange Pekoe. There is a Belgian missionary from Kurseong.”⁹

“Mountains are densely covered. The view of Darjeeling itself disappoints you. Is it necessary to seek the Himalayas in order to find merely a corner of Switzerland? The colorful types of the bazaar are not apparent at once, and the regular barracks and bungalows already strike one’s eye.

“We search for a house. The first information is not encouraging. We are assured there are no good houses. Some are shown to us, lacking outlook and grounds,



A flood of flowers near the Tharpa Chö-Ling Monastery

some immersed in the little streets of wooden country houses and fences. This is not suitable. We want something, beyond—there before the image of all the Himalayas, where the city orchestra does not play its conventional tunes. ‘You will find nothing there!’ But we are persistent. We go ourselves, and we find an excellent house. And calmness and solitude, and the entire chain of Himalayas before us. And still another surprise. Just here lived the Dalai Lama during his long flight from Lhasa. For us, this house is just what is needed.

“Not on one occasion only were we awakened by the chanting and the rhythmic beats around the house. These are the lamas who, bowing to the ground many times, marched around our dwelling.”¹⁰

“Whoever is acquainted with riding horseback in Caucasia or in the Arizona and Colorado canyons, will know how to climb the steep slopes of the hills of Sikkim. Only, instead of the colorful tragedy of American wonders, here you behold an ascending garden cultivated by the mysterious rise of exalted teaching. And in its unknown caves sit hermits, who upon the strings of earth are composing the legend of celestial life.

“He who has known the approaches to the old monasteries and ancient town sites in Russian with their blossoming hills and fragrant pine groves, will understand the feeling on the approach to the monasteries of Sikkim. I always repeat that if you want to see a beautiful spot, ask the inhabitants



The statue of the Maitreya Buddha in the Yi-Gah Chö-Ling (Old Ghoom) Monastery



The ruins of the Maharaja's Palace, which was abandoned in the 1600s

of a town to point out the most ancient site. These people of times immemorial knew how to select the most beautiful places.

“Every mountain summit is crowned by a beautiful mendong, with its wheels of life, its prayers carved in relief and with its niches for seats from which you behold the image of the far-off distances. Here lamas and travelers are meditating. Here banners are fluttering. Here each rider will slow down his horse.

“From the mountain summit you plunge again into the receding hills. The ribs of the checkered hillocks also disappear, like the backs of panthers, tigers and wolves.

“The most fantastic hills and rocks form themselves into a seeming Sacred Chalice—a vast valley. In the center of the valley unapproachably stands the mountain of the *White Stone*, girded by two rivers. It is crowned by the Monastery Tashi-ding, which means ‘Valley open to heaven.’ An ancient place this. Try to search the endless wrinkles and cavities of its rocks. Try to unearth the treasures collected by the monastery—the miraculous stone, fulfillment of all wishes; the immortal Amritha and a hundred images of Buddha; as well as all the sacred books temporarily hidden; and all else spoken of in the ancient manuscript, ‘The Voyage through Sikkim.’

“The approaches to Tashi-ding are very difficult. Only recently have the impossible

trails been transformed into steep footpaths. Verily, the path of the spirit must be traversed by human feet!

“One crossing on the suspended bamboo bridge is especially hazardous. Below, the mountain river rushes and roars, bearing down the icy current from Kinchenjunga. And above the bridge on the steep slope, you pause many times.

Shall I at last arrive? One must hold one's breath to conquer this age-old mountain.”¹¹

“Tashi-ding is one of Sikkim's prominent sites and belongs to the parish of a great monastery, Pemayangtse, and is a day's travel away. It is also on the peak, standing like a bulwark. It has been newly rebuilt. Its renovation has been done with such sensitivity that even the most recent painting gives you joy by its fine and ingenious decoration. And the carvings on the casements are fairylike. And the tall heavy doorways lead you into the wooden temples of Russia. Dignified are the head lamas with their festive purple garments and with their impressive red tiaras adorning their heads. Nevertheless one recalls with most pleasure the 80-year-old abbot of Tashi-ding, ever zealous and careful to improve his structure, with his economical eye penetrating everywhere.

“Behind the gates of Pemayangtse is standing as guardians three-hundred-year-old ancient trees—like the fairy forest of Berendey. A tiny street of the lamas' homes is like the suburb of Berendey, painted and

ornamented with its many-colored porches and stairways.”¹²

“The four most ancient monasteries of Sikkim are: Dubdi, Sanga Chöling, Daling and Robling.

“An excellent monastery is Sanga Chöling; nor do we forget Daling with its blue-white, porcelainlike entrance amidst a bamboo grove. Here at the altar is preciously kept a sealed box continuing relics of the founder of the monastery. There are banners—gold on a black background. In Sanga Chöling there are no relics, but there lies a stone made sacred by the blessing of the founder; when the life in the monastery is undefiled the stone is firm, but each besmirching of life makes the stone crack.”¹³

“Although the teacher, Padma Sambhava, was never in Pemayangtse, yet in the monastery are kept the things which belonged to this founder of the religion. The things are kept sealed but on some occasions are shown; a garment, headdress, beads, tiny bells of a wondrous chime, two magic daggers and a small exquisite image of Buddha.

“And the trumpets sound more thunderous in Pemayangtse and the dragon guardians seem more terrifying and the influence of the monastery is greater. The ruins of the palace of the Maharajah are near. According to the biblical custom the first Maharajah was chosen to reign by the



The Pemayangtse Monastery from the Palace

head of the religion. But there is no figure of Maitreya in the big monastery.

“A few solitary temples with a single fire before them, surrounded by peach and rose flowers and intertwining orchids and wild peonies, indicate closer the path of simple attainment of the Teaching.

“Out of the forest walks a peasant and his head is adorned with white flowers. Where is this possible? Only in Sikkim.”¹⁴

“In the cave Kandro Sampo, not far from Tashi-ding, near a certain hot spring, dwelt Padma Sambhava himself. A certain giant, thinking to penetrate across to Tibet, attempted to build a passage into the sacred Land. The Blessed Teacher rose up and growing great in height struck the bold venturer. Thus was the giant destroyed. And now in the cave is the image of Padma Sambhava and behind it is a stone door. It is known that behind this door the Teacher hid sacred mysteries for the future. But the dates for their revelation have not yet come.”¹⁵

“Hundreds, perhaps more, are monasteries in Sikkim, each crowning the top of a summit. A small temple in Chakong; a big suborgan and monastery in Rinchenpong. Upon the next mountain appears gleaming white Pemayangtse, still higher, Sanga Chö ling. The Tashi-ding is almost unseen.”¹⁶

“In the first full moon after New Year, which fell this year on the 20th of February, there was the annual festival in Tashi-ding. The miracle of the self-filling chalice occurs at the time. Since ancient days—more than eight generations ago—this miracle has been ordained. From a designated spot in



Some of the many stupas at the Tashi Ding Monastery

the mountain river a small vessel of water is drawn and poured into an ancient wooden chalice. In the presence of witnesses, representatives of the Maharajah of Sikkim, the chalice is closed and hermetically sealed. A year later at sunrise during the same full moon, the chalice is unsealed amidst due ceremony and the quantity of water is measured. Sometimes the water has diminished but sometimes it has increased considerably. In the year of the great war the water tripled in quantity, which meant war. Now the water has diminished by half, which means famine and disorder.

“This evil omen has been intensified by another sign. On February twentieth there occurred a complete eclipse of the moon. Never has there been so evil a sign.”¹⁷

The following is a description inside the Tashi-ding:

“Entering the temple, you walk along your left up to the wall of the altar. Within the temples of the Yellow Sect, in the center of the altar wall, is the statue of Buddha. Or now, perhaps Maitreya-Buddha is at the right. Sometimes the lower temple is dedicated to Padma Sambhava and the upper one to Buddha. These positions are closely related to the inner meanings of the teachings. Buddha represents heaven; Padma Sambhava the earth. Upon the side niches are images of Avalokiteshvara—a spiritual conclave of brotherhood, many-headed and many-armed, like our Russian Hundred-Armed One. There are also statues of the “Keepers of Lightning,” of the founders of Monasteries and of sixteen Arhats, sitting in carved caves. Upon the altar are lamps and various offerings, seven chalices with water, a saucer of rice, censers with incense, a shrine with relics.

“The walls are generally covered with frescoes, especially one wall, that of the altar. At the entrance stand the images of the guardians of the four hemispheres. In every temple will be found an image of the seven treasures vouchsafed to humanity; among them on a white horse is the image of the miraculous stone.”¹⁸

“In a special compartment are kept the sacred books.”¹⁹



The stone in the cave of Padma Sambhava

“Under Kinchenjunga are secreted the caves in which are resting the treasures. In stone coffins the cave dwellers are praying, torturing themselves in the name of the future. But the sun has already defined the future; not in secret caves but in full sunlight one perceives the worship and expectation of Maitreya-Buddha”²⁰

1. *Insights of a Himalayan Pilgrim*, Lama Govinda, p. 3 © 1991 Dharma Publishing
2. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
4. Founder of the Red Sect, one of the two great Tibetan Sects. Twelve hundred years after Buddha, the Teacher Padma Sambhava brought closer to men the Teachings of the Blessed One.
5. *Heart of Asia, Memoirs from the Himalayas*, Nicholas Roerich, pp. 9–12; first published in 1929 by Roerich Museum Press. © 1990 Nicholas Roerich Museum
6. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 76–77.
9. *Altai-Himalaya, A Travel Diary*, Nicholas Roerich, p.13, second printing 1983 © 1929, 1957 Svetoslav Roerich
10. *Ibid.*, p. 13–14.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 66.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 65–66.

June/July 2001 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

The Florida (Sarasota) WMEA
Study Group meets at 9:30 a.m., on alternate Wednesday mornings in Sarasota. The group is exploring the book Education as Transformation. Please call **Ginette Parisi** at (941) 925-0549 for complete information.

The Ohio (Ashville) WMEA
Study Group meets once a month for a meditation gatherings. For upcoming meeting dates and times, please call **Kate Studebaker** at (740) 983-2225 or (614) 323-7093.

The Oregon (Lebanon) WMEA
Study Group meets once a month for a meditation gathering. For upcoming meeting dates and times, please call **Vicki Stevens** at (541) 258-6142.

The Colorado (Denver) WMEA
Study Group meets at 7 p.m. on Wednesday evenings. Please call **Beverly Phillips** at (303) 757-7228 for complete information about the class and Sun Festival meetings.



June 2001

- Sun. 3** Sunday Service: “**The Energies of Gemini**” Lecture and Meditation with Rev. Joleen Du Bois, 10:00 a.m., at **WMEA CENTER**
- Tues. 5** **New Summer Class begins next week**
- Wed. 6** Class: *Thoughts on Agni*, 7–8 p.m., WMEA Center
- Sun. 10** Sunday Service: “**Temptation and Tests in Discipleship**” with Cathy Ross, 10:00 a.m., Yavapai Hills Clubhouse
- Tues. 12** Class: *Agni Yoga Facets*, 7–8 p.m., WMEA Center
- Wed. 13** Class: *Thoughts on Agni*, 7–8 p.m., WMEA Center
- Sun. 17** Sunday Service: “**Responsibilities of Fathers on the Spiritual Path**” with Richard Woodard, 10:00 a.m., Yavapai Hills Clubhouse
- Tues. 19** Class: *Agni Yoga Facets*, 7–8 p.m., WMEA Center
- Wed. 20** Class: *Thoughts on Agni*, 7–8 p.m., WMEA Center
- Sun. 24** Sunday Service: “**The Teachings and Discipleship**” with Rev. Joleen D. Du Bois, 10:00 a.m., Yavapai Hills Clubhouse
- Tues. 26** Class: *Agni Yoga Facets*, 7–8 p.m., WMEA Center
- Wed. 27** Class: *Thoughts on Agni*, 7–8 p.m., WMEA Center

July 2001

- Sun. 1** Sunday Service: “**The Energies of Cancer**” Lecture and Meditation with Rev. Joleen Du Bois, 10:00 a.m., Yavapai Hills Clubhouse
- Tues. 3** Class: *Agni Yoga Facets*, 7–8 p.m., WMEA Center
- Wed. 4** **Holiday - No Class**
- Sun. 8** Sunday Service: “**Discipleship & Common Sense**” with Rev. Joleen D. Du Bois, 10:00 a.m., Yavapai Hills Clubhouse
- Tues. 10** Class: *Agni Yoga Facets*, 7–8 p.m., WMEA Center
- Wed. 11** Class: *Thoughts on Agni*, 7–8 p.m., WMEA Center
- Sun. 15** Sunday Service: “**What is Group Meditation?**” with Rev. Valarie Drost, 10:00 a.m., Yavapai Hills Clubhouse
- Tues. 17** Class: *Agni Yoga Facets*, 7–8 p.m., WMEA Center
- Wed. 18** Class: *Thoughts on Agni*, 7–8 p.m., WMEA Center
- Sun. 22** Sunday Service: “**The Inner Life of the Disciple**” with Rev. Joleen D. Du Bois, 10:00 a.m., Yavapai Hills Clubhouse
- Tues. 24** Class: *Agni Yoga Facets*, 7–8 p.m., WMEA Center
- Wed. 25** Class: *Thoughts on Agni*, 7–8 p.m., WMEA Center
- Sun. 29** Sunday Service: “**Spiritual Discipline and the Path**” with Kathryn Agrell, 10:00 a.m., Yavapai Hills Clubhouse

To see lots more pictures from the trip visit the online version of Meditation Monthly International. (<http://www.wmea-world.org> and go to the Meditation Monthly International link at the bottom of the list on the left. Look for the June/July 2001 issue)

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