Nicholas Roerich

A PILGRIM OF THE HIMALAYAS, A MESSENGER OF SHAMBALA



Foreword

Foundations for good character and spirituality are laid in childhood through stories. In India, the Amar Chitra Katha series, Chandamama, and other such picture books have long been depicting stories from Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranas, and other epics very effectively for children.

The inspiration and impressions gleaned from such picture books during childhood remain with us, either consciously or unconsciously, throughout our lives.

Here is a humble attempt to bring out similar picture e-books to introduce children to the Masters of Wisdom, i.e. Lord Maitreya, Master Morya, Master Koot Hoomi, Master CVV, Master MN, Master EK, Master Count Saint Germain (Master CSG), Madame H.P. Blavatsky and Nicholas Roerich.

This biography has been creatively adapted to make it easier for children to understand. We believe these picture e-books will be of immense benefit to the children. We extend our gratitude to all the volunteers for their contributions to scriptwriting, translation and proofreading this book.

This book is primarily based on the forthcoming book 'Nicholas Roerich: The Russian Bridge between East and West' by Jordi Pomés.

Other books referred are :

1. Paintings by Nicholas Roerich used with permission of the Nicholas Roerich Museum, New York.
2. Shambala, by Dr. K. Parvathi Kumar
3. Shasta, Shambala and Sanat Kumara, by Dr. K. Parvathi Kumar
4. Whisperings of Light – Shambala Retreat by Dr. K. Parvathi Kumar

The painting credits are duly acknowledged in the Acknowledgements section at the end of the book.

This electronic book is available for free download at the WTT website under Story Books.

Composer
Sanath Kumar Sripathi

Illustrations
AI generated

Price
Invaluable.

Publisher
The World Teacher Trust – Global, Switzerland
worldteachertrust.org

Copyright
© 2026, The World Teacher Trust – Global, Switzerland

This children's storybook on Nicholas Roerich's life is a humble offering to Master KPK, who shared insights into relating to the energies of Shambala.

On October 9, 1874, Konstantin and Maria Roerich, an affluent couple from Saint Petersburg, welcomed a baby boy named Nicholas into the world.



His father, Konstantin Roerich, was a sharp, respected lawyer with a methodical mind and a formal demeanor.

His mother, Maria, came from a long line of traditional Russian families and filled their home with art, music, and culture.





Their grand city apartment was constantly filled with the murmur of lively voices as famous scientists, historians, authors, and artists gathered around the parlor hearth to debate world events, ancient ruins, and modern science.



Every summer, when the city grew stifling and warm, the family left behind the paved streets for **Isvara**, their vast country estate named after an ancient Sanskrit word meaning 'Divine Lord'.



To young Nicholas, Isvara was a vast, open-air laboratory where he spent his days tracking deer through thick woods, taming wild wolf pups, and befriending local woodsmen.





When Nicholas turned nine years old, an archaeologist friend of his father arrived at Isvara to conduct an official historical survey of the land. Noticing the boy's sharp curiosity, the scientist handed Nicholas a small trowel and a horsehair brush, inviting him to participate in a real dig.





Nicholas worked carefully, sweeping away layers of dark dirt, a metallic glint caught the sunlight.





Nicholas gasped, pulling out a handful of bronze belt buckles, silver rings, and hand-carved stone beads.



Later that summer, while exploring the high-ceilinged study at Isvara, Nicholas climbed a wooden library ladder and pulled down a heavy, leather-bound volume.



As he turned the pages, the soaring peaks of the Himalayan Mountains with their sharp and icy summits piercing the clouds caught his attention.

In 1893, at the age of eighteen, Nicholas entered the University of Saint Petersburg to study law while simultaneously pursuing artistic training at the Imperial Academy of Arts. There, he came under the influence of the renowned landscape painter Arkhip Kuindzhi.











That understanding of light and atmosphere made a long-lasting impression on Nicholas.

In 1897, he completed *The Messenger*, one of his important early paintings, and the work attracted attention in Russian artistic circles.



Two years later, in the summer of 1899, Nicholas met an extraordinary young woman who was a concert-level pianist.



They married in 1901 and formed an unbreakable partnership. Over the next few years, their family grew with the birth of two sons: George, who would become a master linguist, and Svetoslav, who would follow his father as a painter.

By 1906, he had become Headmaster of the School of the Imperial Society for Encouragement of Arts. Nicholas and Helena travelled through many parts of Russia, studying ancient buildings and monuments. At an old structure Nicholas stopped before a damaged wall and ran his fingers over the weathered surface.

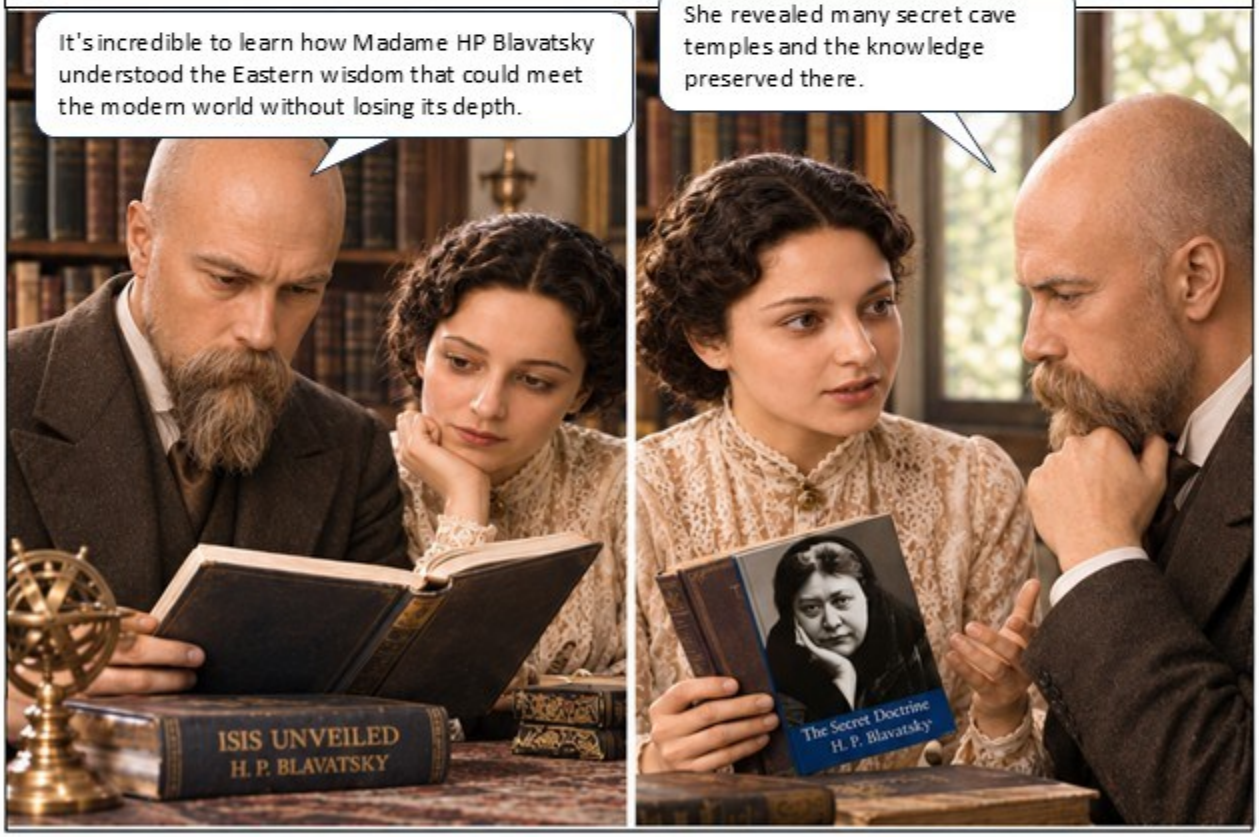


The journey strengthened his determination to protect cultural heritage.

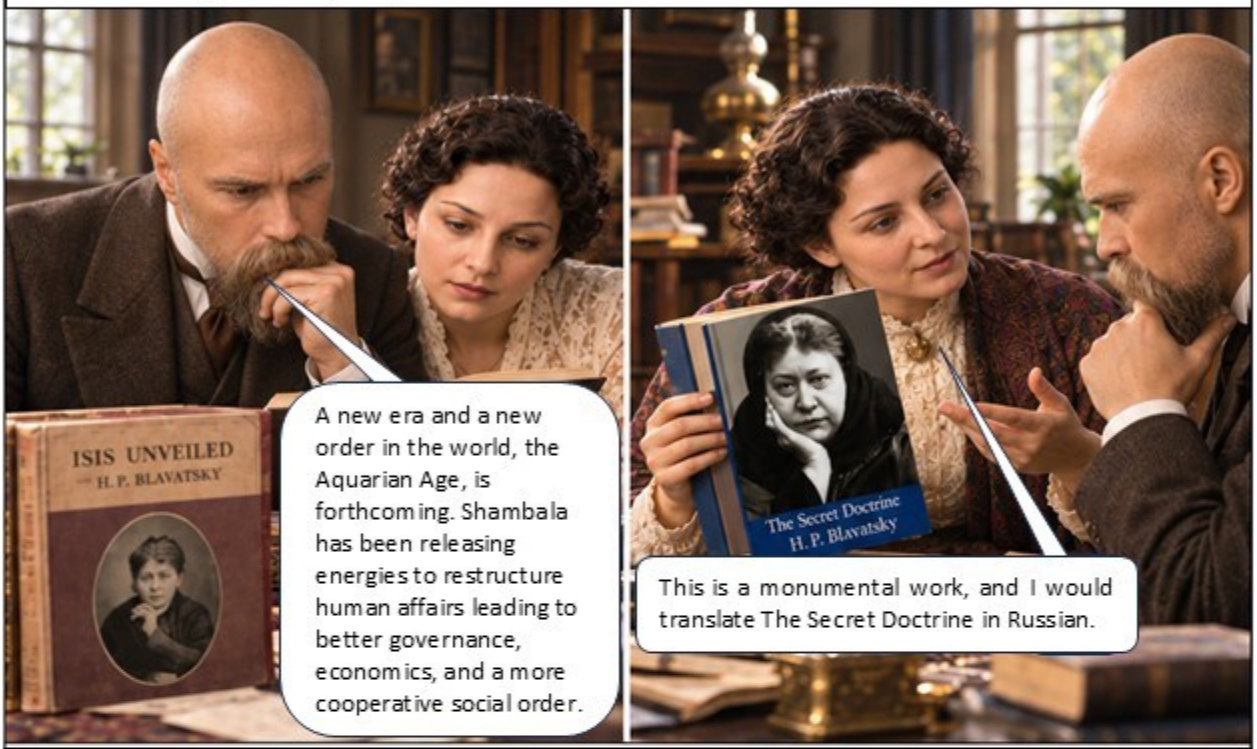
In the years that followed, they became increasingly interested in Eastern philosophy and spirituality. They studied the Bhagavad Gita, Buddhist teachings and the writings associated with Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Swamy Vivekananda.



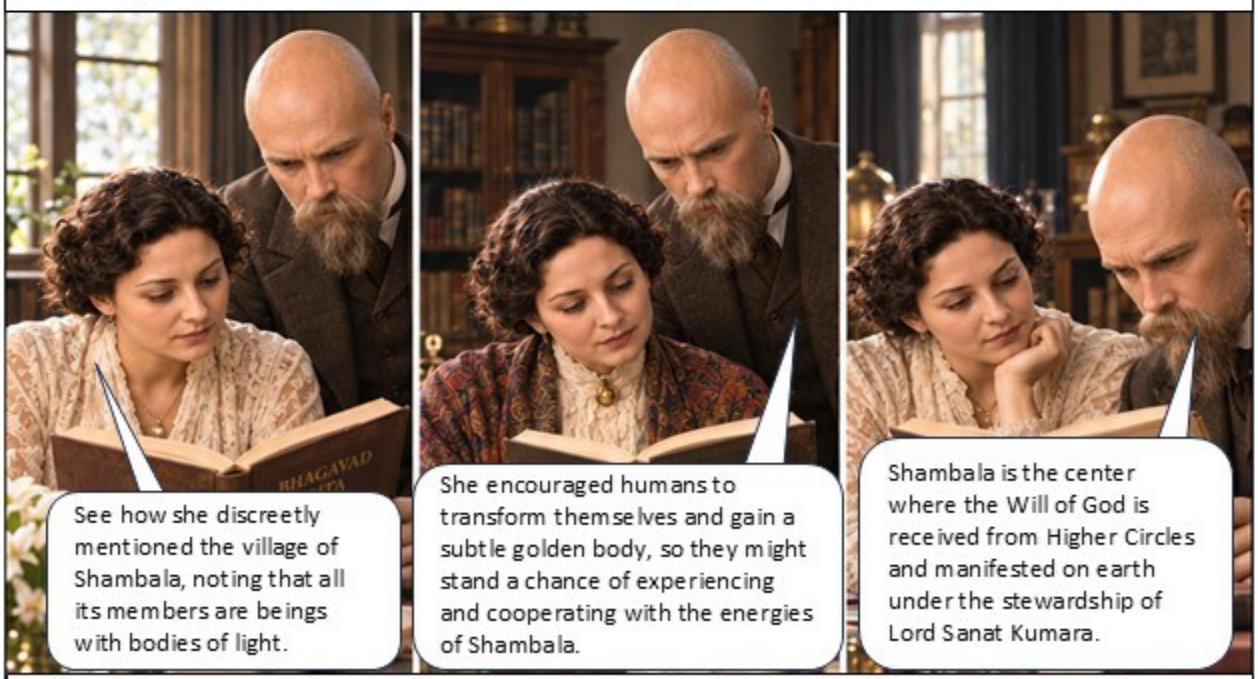
It was within this growing spiritual search that the Roerichs studied Blavatsky's writings with great seriousness.



Like Madame Blavatsky and Alice Bailey, Nicholas and Helena Roerich came in contact with the Himalayan Masters such as Master Morya and Master Koot Hoomi. # Through their subsequent paintings, writings, and letters, the Roerichs offered rare glimpses into the Masters' work, wisdom, and personalities.

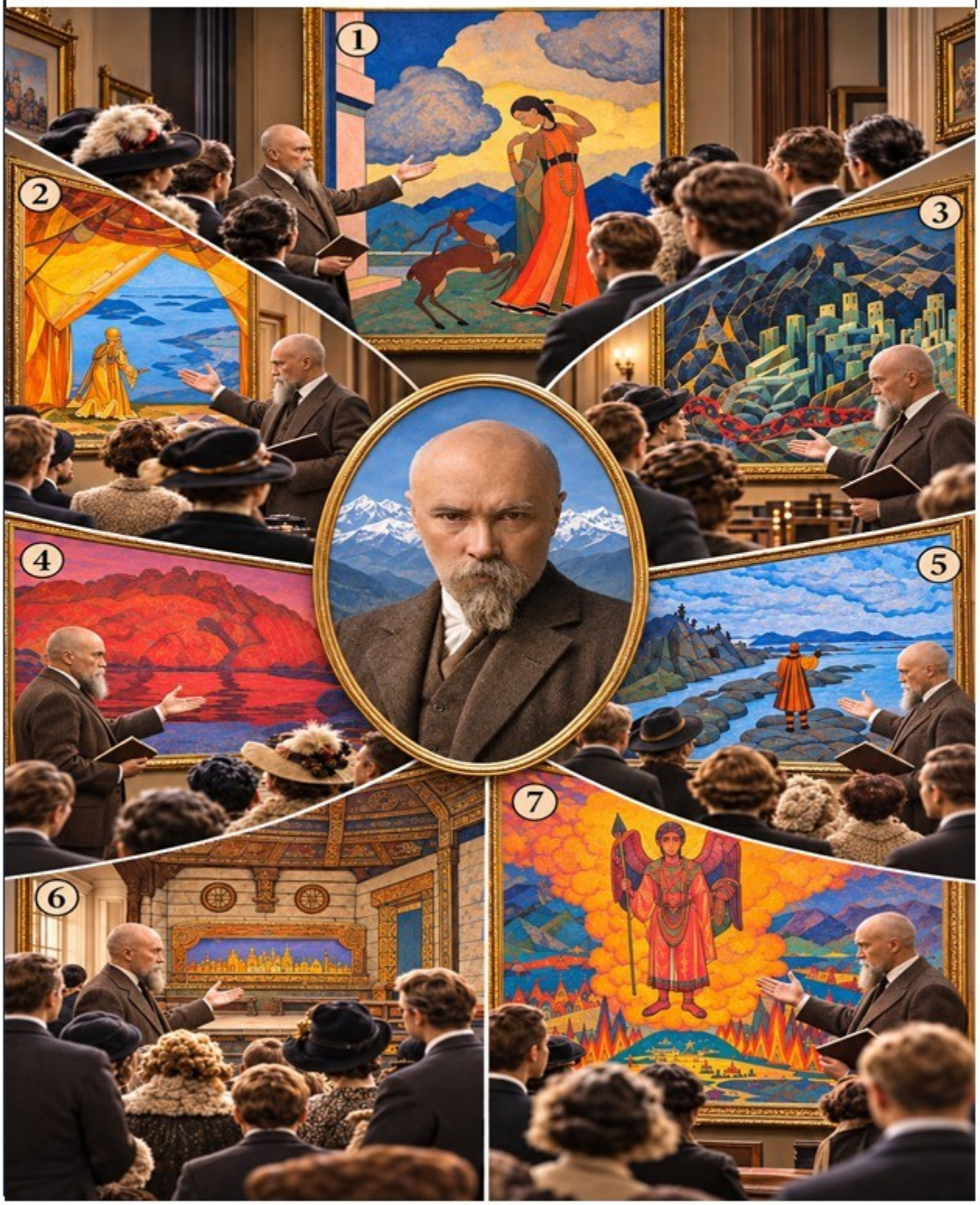


Inspired by Madame Blavatsky's writings, Roerichs developed a strong will to associate with the energies of Shambala, Gobi desert and Himalayas.



To know more about them, you may read the storybooks on them at the WTT website under Story Books.

When the Russian Revolution broke out in 1917, Nicholas was recovering from a severe bout of pneumonia. He gathered his family and moved first to Finland, then to London in 1919, before finally sailing to America in 1920, where he toured various cities with his art exhibitions.



Nicholas was regarded as a Master, while Helena was considered a high-degree initiate. As Nicholas's paintings and writings increasingly sought a meeting point between art, and spirituality, he and Helena received and recorded teachings associated with Master Morya. Nicholas's artistic endeavors and Helena's spiritual and literary work complemented one another.





Alongside Helena, he introduced Agni Yoga# in 1920, a philosophy that taught that selfless work, courage, and beauty were essential for human growth.



In 1921, he founded the Master Institute of United Arts in New York, uniting musicians, sculptors, artists, and actors under one roof.



You can learn more about the Agni Yoga Society on it's website Agni Yoga.

In 1922, he founded Corona Mundi, an international cultural center devoted to mutual understanding through art. It's Exhibitions brought together works from different countries and traditions.



The Nicholas Roerich Museum # was established in New York in 1923, providing a permanent home for his paintings and creating another space where cultures could meet.



In 1923, the Roerichs set out on their Trans-Himalayan expedition, inspired by Nicholas's lifelong attraction to the Himalayas, accompanied by a massive caravan of horses, yaks, and scientific equipment.



To know more about Nicholas Roerich Museum, please visit the website Nicholas Roerich Museum New York.

They pushed through Sikkim, Kashmir, Ladakh, the ice-slick passes of Karakoram over 15,000 feet high, Chinese Turkestan, Altai, the scorching Gobi Desert, and Mongolia.



The expedition also reached regions that were normally extremely difficult for foreigners to enter. Tibet was strictly closed to many foreign travelers, and the party faced serious restrictions there, yet they succeeded in entering Tibetan territory.



Over 500 brilliant paintings resulted from the expedition, reflecting Roerich's growing appetite for mountains and the beauty of nature.



Nicholas Roerich's paintings were unique because his artistic style when depicting nature was marked by a profound use of symbolism and spirituality.



His colors had dense and opaque layering that made the canvas look almost self-illuminated, evoking a dreamlike, transcendental world.



2

The expedition gathered an extraordinary body of material. George, the eldest son of the Roerichs, who had mastered dozens of Asian dialects, walked alongside the local guides and tribal elders, translating ancient legends and recording their history.







They also encountered many local traditions concerning sacred mountains, hidden valleys and great spiritual teachers. Nicholas recorded these accounts with great interest.



Nicholas transformed landscapes, especially the Himalayas into cosmic, spiritual symbols. As one of the avid readers of spiritual and mystical literature, he drew deep inspiration from philosophy and esoteric writings, which profoundly reflected in his artwork.

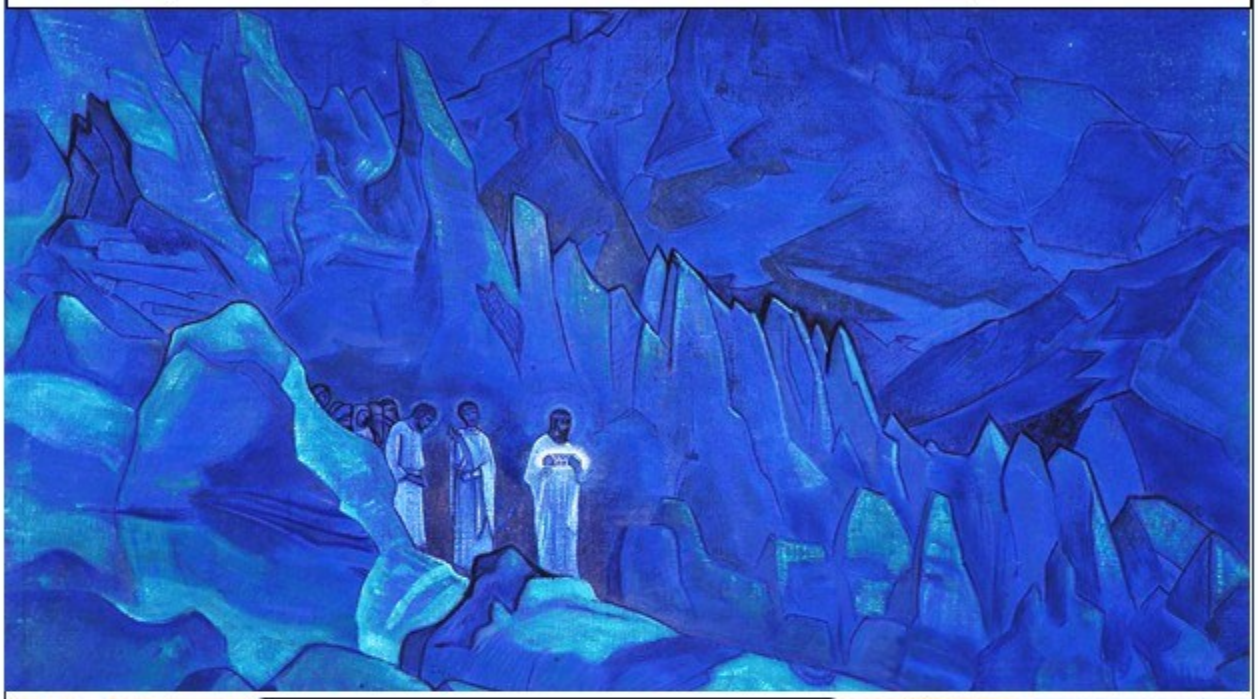


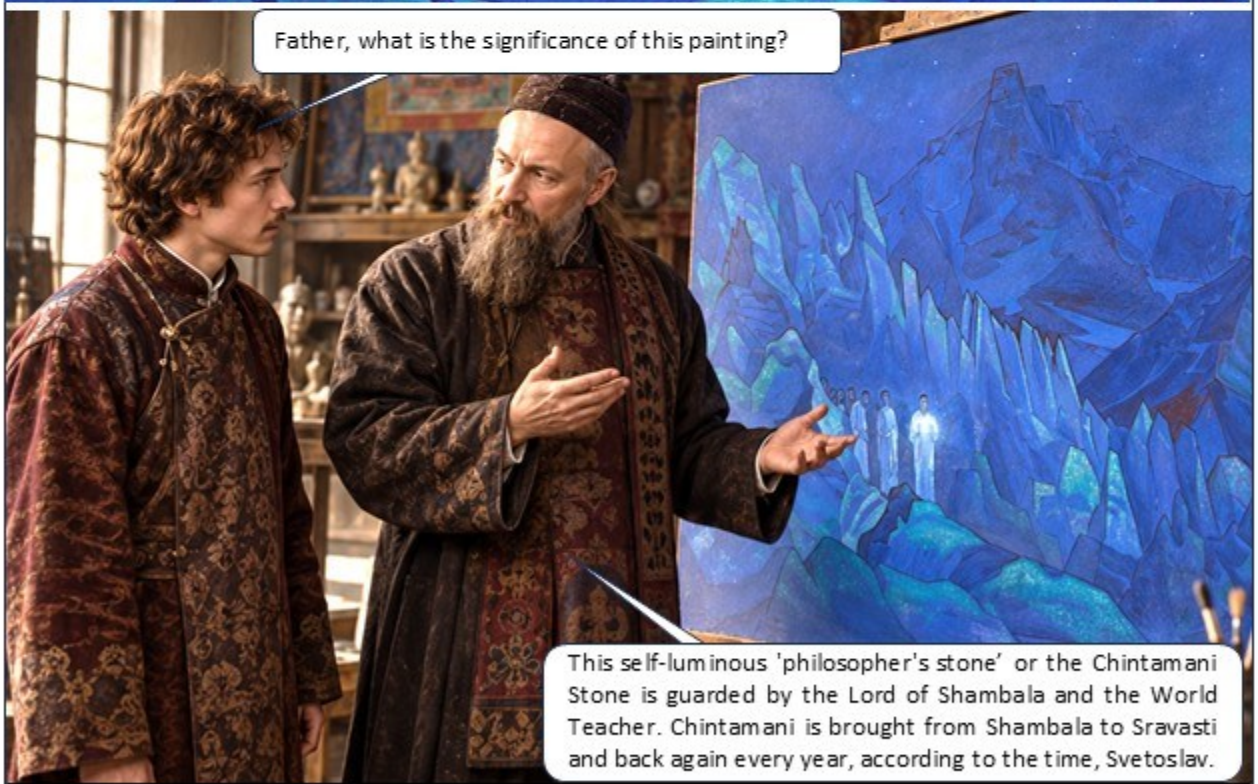
He sought mystical truths from the esoteric lore surrounding the Chintamani Stone # and Shambala, weaving his findings into artworks.



In Hindu and Buddhist traditions, the Chintamani Stone or the 'philosopher's stone' is a mythical, wish-fulfilling jewel associated with spiritual enlightenment, higher consciousness, and prosperity.

Nicholas had the darshan (vision) of groups of beings of light and was able to physically experience the legendary figures of the Himalayas. He could enter the ashrams of great and noble beings in Shambala, Kalāpa, and the caves of Srāvasti in the Himalayas.





Note: *Inspired by this insightful conversation with his father, Svetoslav later drew a portrait of Nicholas Roerich carrying the casket that is said to contain the sacred fragment of the Chintamani stone. This artwork has been adapted as the title page for this book.*

In late 1927 a disaster struck on the high plateau of Tibet. The hostile local guards blocked their path, confiscating their travel permits and forcing the expedition to camp in flimsy canvas tents through a brutal winter.



Night after night, howling blizzards shook the ropes. Temperatures plummeted far below zero, ninety-two pack animals froze to death, five expedition members died.



Food supplies dwindled almost to nothing.



Western newspapers reported...





His expeditions were both artistic and scientific, gathering archaeological artifacts like sculptures, other monuments, and manuscripts while documenting diverse cultures.

Shortly after the end of the Central Asian expedition, the Urusvati Himalayan Research Institute was founded in July 1928 in India's Kullu Valley.

The Roerich family # settled in Naggar, a stunning village in Kullu Valley surrounded by snow-capped Himalayan peaks, where Urusvati, a Sanskrit name meaning "Light of the Morning Star," served as a bustling research center.





Nicholas sent scholars into the dense forests to collect rare medicinal plants for study, while George translated ancient palm-leaf manuscripts. The Institute opened many departments.



In this picture, from left to right, are Nicholas, Helena, and their sons, George and Svetoslav.

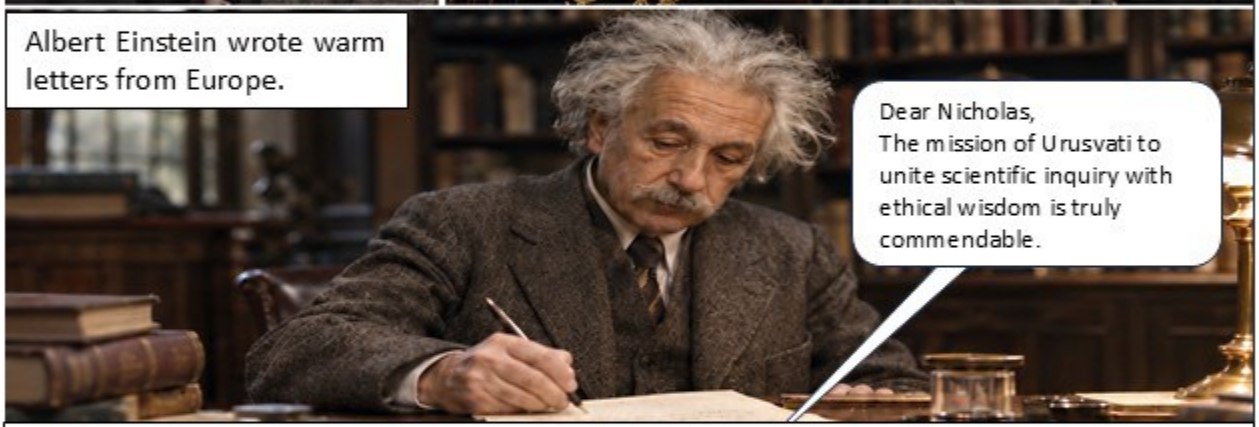
In 1929, Nicholas was honored in New York and received at the White House by President Herbert Hoover.



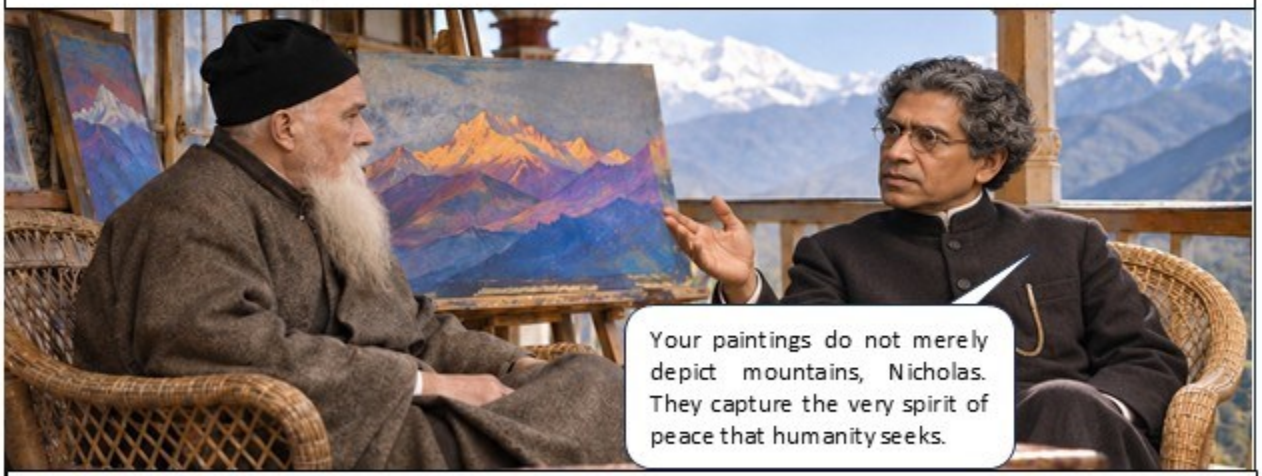
The University of Paris nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize that year, and letters of appreciation and support poured into Naggar from all over the world.



Albert Einstein wrote warm letters from Europe.



The Roerichs actively sought out the world's leading minds to collaborate at Urusvati. At Nicholas Roerich's invitation, pioneering biophysicist Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose joined the institute as an honorary scientific advisor.



Many global figures collaborated and advanced the Roerichs' cause by validating their "synthesis of knowledge" and driving collaborative research across several key domains:

As the 1930s unfolded, dark clouds of conflict gathered across Europe and Asia. Nicholas knew that when war broke out, armies destroyed ancient cathedrals, libraries, and museums. He decided that human culture needed an international shield, just like the Red Cross protected the sick.



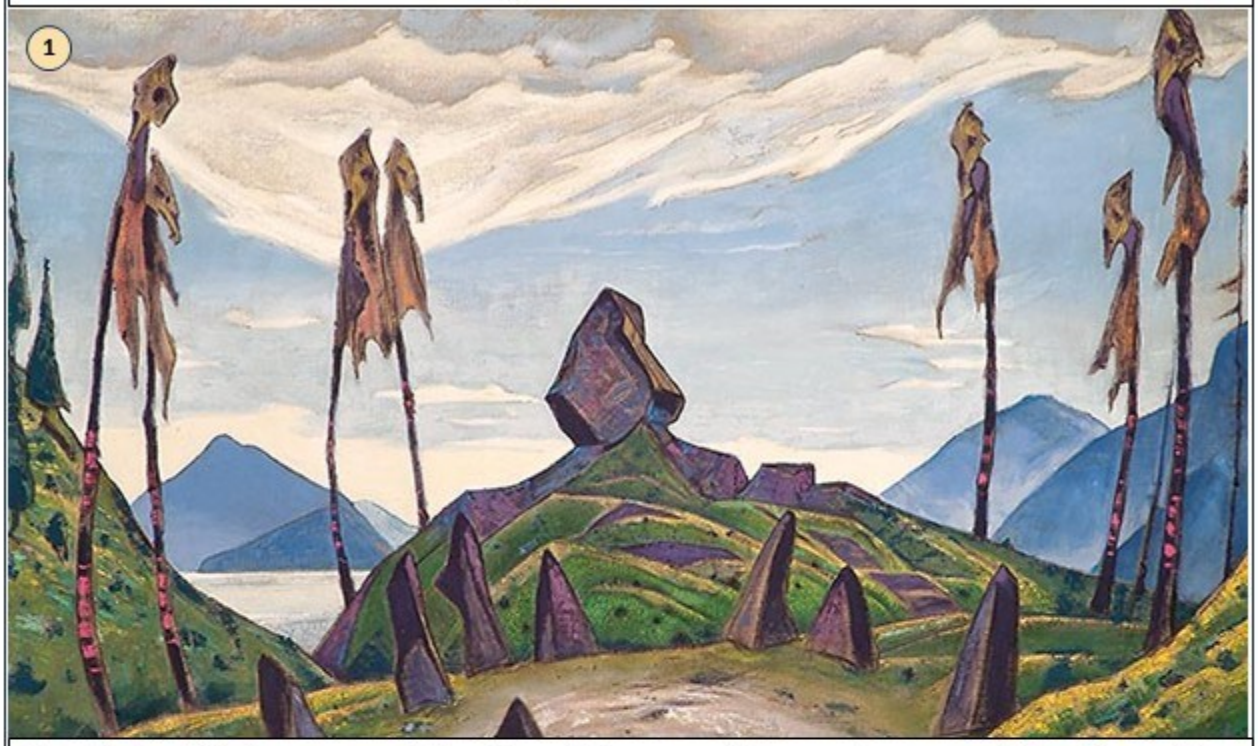
He discussed the proposal with supporters and specialists in international law.





Nicholas knew that transforming an idea to preserve our heritage into an international agreement would require patience and persistence.

He used his art as a means of reaching a wider audience.



Roerich is globally renowned for his striking use of pure colors, especially ultramarine, cobalt, and glowing whites, contrasted with earthy browns, reddish ochres, and deep purples.



His compositions reduce nature to essential, geometric forms, pyramidal peaks, flat horizons, and vast skies, giving his work an otherworldly, timeless stillness.



His work had now attracted attention far beyond the artistic world.



The campaign spread through international committees and conferences.

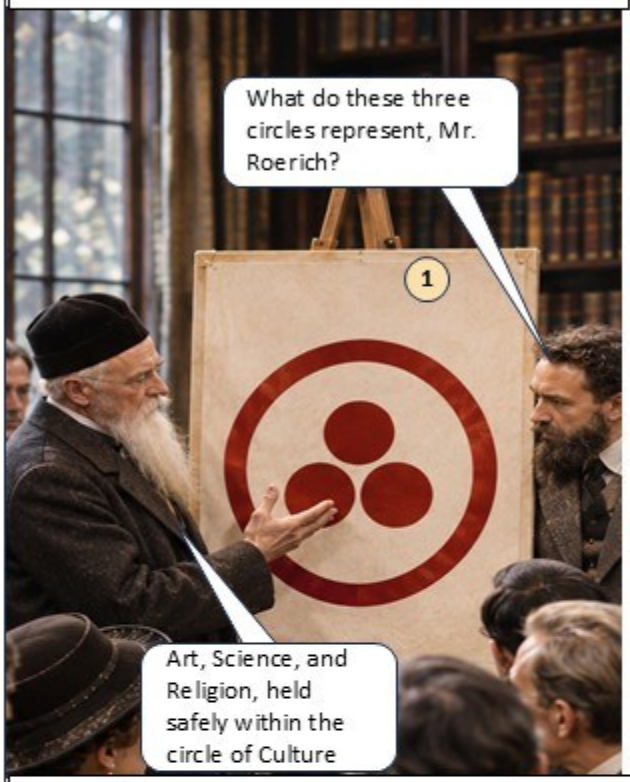
Nicholas created the 'Roerich Pact' to preserve cultural heritage and designed the 'Banner of Peace', a white flag featuring three dark magenta circles enclosed within a larger ring.



The movement expanded through Europe, with conferences and art exhibitions bringing together supporters from many countries.



Roerich appealed to governments, artistic scientific and educational institutions of the world to preserve the heritage and culture.



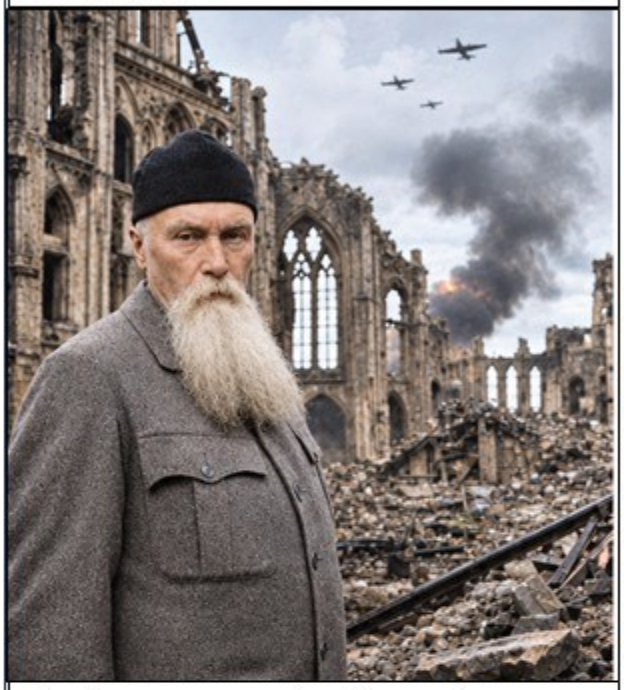
The Banner of Peace symbol has inspired a variety of interpretations.



On April 15, 1935, representatives of twenty-one nations gathered around a wooden table in the White House as United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized the minister of agriculture, Henry A. Wallace to sign the Roerich Pact into international law.



The Second World War began, and the destruction Nicholas had feared spread across Europe and beyond.



In 1942, he helped establish the Russian-American Cultural Association, seeking to maintain cultural understanding between Russians and Americans at a time when political tensions were severe. Writers, artists, musicians and other cultural figures supported the effort.



The humanitarian side of his work continued as well. During both world wars he had used exhibitions and other activities to support people affected by conflict.



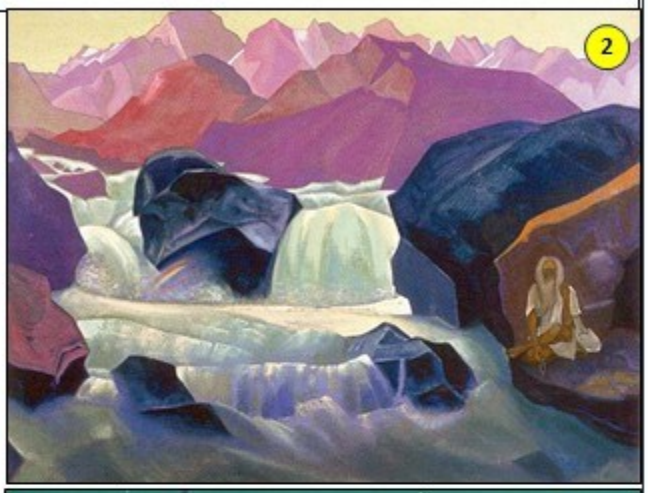
The war finally ended in 1945, but Nicholas did not regard the work as complete. Too much had been destroyed, and rebuilding would require more than repairing physical structures.



Nicholas with his son George.

Nicholas remained in the Kullu Valley, spent his final years in Naggar, painting over four thousand works of art. His artwork eventually entered museums and private collections across the world.



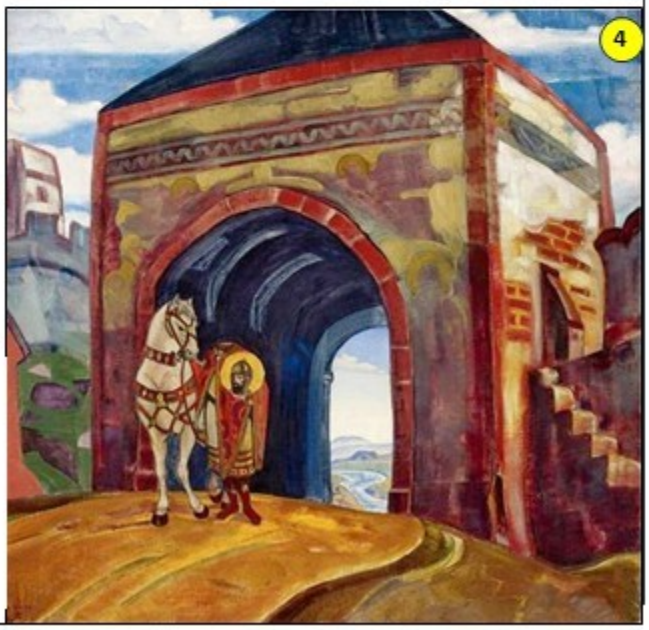


His health began to fail seriously. In July 1947, he underwent surgeries, but the procedures were unsuccessful. Despite this, he continued his artistic work and finally passed away peacefully in the Kullu Valley on December 13, 1947.

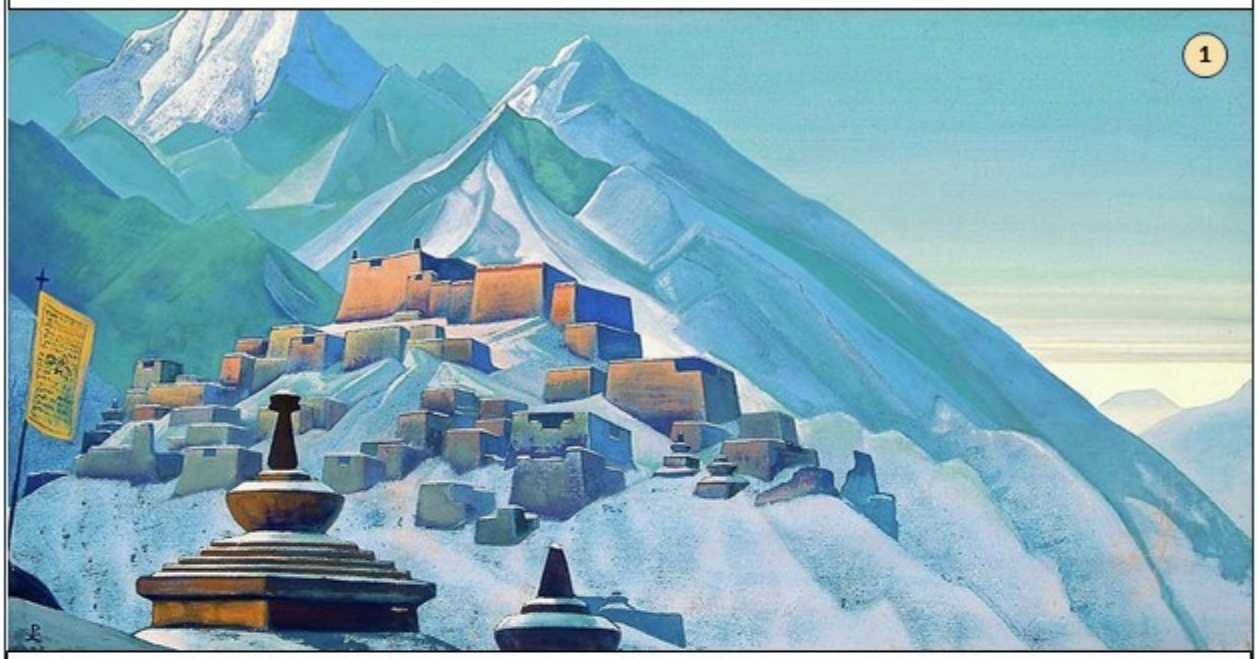




After Nicholas' death, Helena continued writing about the teachings associated with Master Morya, through agniyoga which continued to reach readers across different countries and in many languages. Helena left her physical sheath on Oct 5, 1955.



Nicholas was granted access to a dimension of Himalayan life that would not have been apparent to an ordinary traveler, and his paintings help visualize the energies of Shambala. #



His art could give a glimpse and presence of sacred centers such as Shambala, Kalāpa and Srāvasti and the great Himalayan Masters Lord Maitreya, Master Koot Hoomi and Master Morya, whom he described as having encountered the Himalayan being Yeti or Yaku.



The recurring motif of a horseman riding through the clouds, along mountain rocks, or appearing subtly in the background holds profound cross-cultural messianic symbolism, spiritual prophecy.

You may read the book Shambala by Dr. K. Parvathi Kumar to learn more about how to relate to this energy.

In his Symbolist paintings, the rider on horseback served as a central allegorical motif, symbolizing spiritual awakening, the triumph of light over ignorance, and the dawn of a new cultural era. His mountain peaks and skies often seem to glow from within, illuminated by an inner, mystical light.



His landscapes of Shambala and Kailas give the viewers and the truth seekers the grandeur of the cosmos and spiritual enlightenment.



The elixir of Roerich's life was his conscious cooperation with Shambala and the Hierarchy. The more we relate to Shambala, the more we become its outpost, allowing its energy to be transmitted through us to our surroundings.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express sincere gratitude to the Nicholas Roerich Museum, New York, for their help and for graciously granting permission to reproduce the paintings of Nicholas Roerich and Svetoslav Roerich used within this publication.

Page No	Frame	Painting Name	Artist Name	Year
Title	-NA-	Nicholas Roerich with the Sacred Casket	Svetoslav Roerich	1928
6	1	The Messenger	Nicholas Roerich	1897
10	1	Song of the Morning	Nicholas Roerich	1920
10	2	Lord of the Night	Nicholas Roerich	1918
10	3	The Dead City	Nicholas Roerich	1918
10	4	The Hidden Treasure	Nicholas Roerich	1917
10	5	The Command	Nicholas Roerich	1917
10	6	The Tower Room	Nicholas Roerich	1914
10	7	The Last Angel	Nicholas Roerich	1912
11	3	Maitreya Sangha sign	Nicholas Roerich	1920
11	4	Master Institute of United Arts	Nicholas Roerich	1921
12	1	Corona Mundi logo	Svetoslav Roerich	1922
14	1	Remember	Nicholas Roerich	1924
14	2	Padma Sambhava	Nicholas Roerich	1924
15	1	Mother of the World	Nicholas Roerich	1924
17	1	Fire Blossom	Nicholas Roerich	1924
17	2	Treasure of the World	Nicholas Roerich	1924
18	1	Burning of Darkness	Nicholas Roerich	1924
24	1	'The Rite of Spring'. Sketch for a Curtain	Nicholas Roerich	1930
24	2	Star of the Morning	Nicholas Roerich	1932
25	1	Chandra Bhaga	Nicholas Roerich	1932
25	2	Koksar	Nicholas Roerich	1932

Acknowledgements

Page No	Frame	Painting Name	Artist Name	Year
26	1	To Kailas. Lahul	Nicholas Roerich	1932
26	2	Madonna Oriflamma	Nicholas Roerich	1932
26	3	Pilgrim of the Radiant City	Nicholas Roerich	1933
26	4	White Stone	Nicholas Roerich	1933
26	5	Path to Shambhala	Nicholas Roerich	1933
26	6	Lake of the Nagas	Nicholas Roerich	1932
26	7	Nicholas Roerich portrait	Svetoslav Roerich	1937
26	8	Mount of Five Treasures (Two Worlds)	Nicholas Roerich	1933
26	9	The Sacred (Treasure of the Mountains)	Nicholas Roerich	1933
26	10	Sophia - the Wisdom of the Almighty	Nicholas Roerich	1932
26	11	Hermitage of St. Sergius	Nicholas Roerich	1933
27	1	The Banner of Peace	Nicholas Roerich	1932
29	1	Krishna, from Kulu series	Nicholas Roerich	1929
29	2	Santana	Nicholas Roerich	1936
29	3	Heavenly Forces	Nicholas Roerich	1934
29	4	St Mercurius of Smolensk	Nicholas Roerich	1919
30	1	Tibet. Himalayas	Nicholas Roerich	1933
30	2	Sacred caves	Nicholas Roerich	1932
31	1	Palden Lhamo	Nicholas Roerich	1931
32	2	Path to Kailas	Nicholas Roerich	1933

We also extend our sincere thanks to **Jordi Pomés** for generously permitting us to use information from his forthcoming book, ***Nicholas Roerich: The Russian Bridge between East and West,*** as a source for this publication.

Nicholas Roerich

Nicholas Roerich was a Russian yogi, an eminent artist, writer, archaeologist, and philosopher who loved and experienced the beauty, and divinity of the Himalayas. To him, many wonders of life and light were revealed.

He experienced the mysteries and legends of the Himalayas and, through grace, gained entry to the cave temples of the Mahatmas associated with Kalāpa, Srāvasti, and Shambala. Inspired by his spiritual experiences, he helped disseminate teachings through the Agni Yoga movement. His paintings continue to inspire people across the globe.

He initiated the Roerich Pact, an international treaty for the protection of cultural and historical monuments during times of war, for which he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Other books in this series

