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Iran,
(DIARY LEAVES)
BY NICHOLAS ROERICH

"This I ask Thee—tell it to me truly Lord,
Who the Sire was, Father, first of holiness?
Who the pathway for the sun and stars ordained,
Who through whom is't moon doth wax and wane again.
This and much else do I beg, O God, to know."

Thus spoke Zarathustra!

Many deep thoughts reverberated on the Iranian upland.
Over a year ago we entered into our diary: From March on, Persia will cease to exist. Iran will be in its place. It is difficult to judge from afar the true reasons for this change of the name. At times these changes seem epidemical—so much has been re-named now-a-days geographically and socially.

As if in some great migrations people move from old places to new ones. Perhaps, they try to find earth where less blood has been spilt. Or they recall some ancient paths. Or, striving into the future, these travellers want first of all movement as such. They dream of something, rejuvenated and mighty.

We do not know, why Iran instead of Persia. We do not know why precisely from March. But anyhow the ancient name "Iran" sounds majestical—there is great scope in it—many great remembrances and promising aspirations. From our very heart let us wish to Iran that which so beautifully resounds when this
ancient concept is pronounced. Let us thus express our wishes
to the valiant Shah of Iran—Riza Khan Pehlevi.

We do not know whether our "Himalayas" reached Persia,
or already Iran. Precisely let the unsurpassed Himalayas trans­mit their greeting to the snowy giants of Iran. Let them remind
of the ancient and always glorious songs of heroism.

Perhaps the old songs are not everywhere still resounding.
The picturesque garments have begun to disappear. But will not
the re-born concept of Iran remind the people of the beautiful
treasures inherited by them from the past ages? Will it not
remind the two and half thousand years of history during the
waves of which the Empire stood and now with renewed might
it is ascending the steps of self-realization?

Is not Shahnama—the "Book of Kings" really beautiful,
expressing the entire Iranian magnitude and is not this immortal
poem created by the thought of the great poet? The primordial
struggle of Light and darkness, the symbol of the participation of
man in the increase of good and evil is expressed in the beautiful
images of Iran. Now, when the country wishes to reveal even
through its name the glory, strength and depth of thought, then
one can consider such a change of name as a sign of the inner
growth.

Many beautiful pages have been recorded in the history of
Iran. Let us remember the heroical names of the satrapies:
Media, Elam, Parthia, Haraiva, Bactria, Suehdi, Khwarazm,
Drangiana, Arachosia, Thattaghush, Sindh, Egypt, Armenia Cappa­docia, Sparda, Ionia, Skudra, Kushiya, Machiya, Karkas! The
names alone already convey a fairy tale of glory! Who did not
dream of Passargadae, of Babylon, of Susa, of Ecbatana, of
Persepolis? Whose imagination was not uplifted by the sight of
the gorgeous images on the rocks, colossal statues—guardians of
the entry into the ruined palaces. Even in such remnants you
feel the greatness of the past; even the chips of the beautiful
ornaments of the floor, even the smallest fragments of magnificent
necklaces—all they speak of the inspiring scope and quality of
creativity.

The name of Horsabad vividly reminds us of one of the
founders, Sargon with all the legends and myths which surround
him. The beautiful bas reliefs again bring to life these semi­mythical heroes. Nimrud with the ruins of the palace of Assur­nazipal! Also the Kuyundjik and the palace of Mineherib and
the ruins of the gorgeous dwelling of Tiglatpalassar in Kalat Pergat! And the famous gates with reliefs of the deeds of
Salmanassar! And the marvellous dyorithian statues, vessels and
Babylonian bronzes! And the palace of Artaxerxes! And finally
the unforgettable library of Assurbanipal—such eternal treasures
transmute the remote antiquity into a majestic reality. Even in
the last century all these memorable places were still lifeless
burial mounds. And even in our presence so many significant
scrolls were still unrolled. In our days only, were found the
most important Babylonian sagas of the biblical flood and parts
of the epos dedicated to Gilgamsch. All these treasures will be
unveiled by the incantation of one word—Iran and will give
wings to new thoughts. Aeriand! Iran! Iran!

And Zarathustra Who brought the Fire, and Mani, and the
Bahaists, and the living Messian mystery of the Great Imam,—
from the ancient Sumerians, through Babylon, through the
Achaemenides, up to all the inspired Iranian poets on wings of
the miraculous Al-Borak "sparkled the rays of highest knowledge
and highest culture"! Does not all this uplift the imagination?
The wizzard of the mountains—the rock of Alamut, crowned
with an unconquerable citadel on its summit! And the Kitab-­El­Igan! And the snow-white Demavend! And like Guru Charaka,
upon the blossoming meadows of Hamadan, the famous philoso­pher and healer, Abu-Ali-­ibn-­Sina searches for wonder-working
herbs; who in the West does not know him as Avicenna? His
works are, at present, being published with great reverence in
Europe.

From the same flowery meadows are born the unforgettable
Isfahan and Ardabil carpets. No one can forget the artists of
Iran: Bihzad, Riza Abbasi, Ustad Muhamadi, Agza Mirak from
Herat with all their pictorial wonders from Shahnama, with the
entire epic of Iskander, with the popular images of King Bahram
and Assad. Also, like an immense meadow in full bloom!

And do not up till now live amidst us the sonorous verses of
such poets like: Rudaki, Fordausi, Anvari, Qatran, Omar
Khayam, Sa'di, Rumi and Hafiz........sonnets, odes, elegies, poems,
in which the beloved heroes of Iran proclaim unforgettable words
of valour, achievement, devotion and love?

Countless are the images with which the history of Iran is
imbued. Everyone remembers the valley of Shiraz, of the roses
of Shiraz.

A famous ode in which Hafiz sums up the charms of Shiraz,
begins:

"Khusha Shira'z Yas' i bi misalash
Khuda'anda neygh dar as saralash ''. "
"Fair is Shiraz and matchless her display
Oh, God protect her ever from decay."