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 epidemic—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 majestic—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 heroic names of the satrapies: Media, Elam, Parthia, Haraiva, Bactria, Sughd, Khwarazm, Drangiana, Arachosia, Thatta-gush, Sindh, Egypt, Armenia Cappadocia, Sparda, Ionias, Skudra, Kushiya, Machiya, Kerkas! The names alone already convey a fairy tale of glory! Who did not dream of Passargadae, of Babylon, of Suza, of Ecbatana, of Persepolis? Whose imagination was not uplifted by the sight of the gorgeous images on the rocks, colossal statues—guardians of the entrance to 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 creativeness.

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 semi-mythical heroes. Nimrud with the ruins of the palace of Assur-nazirpal! Also the Kuyundjik and the palace of Nineveh and the ruins of the gorgeous dwelling of Tiglatpulssar in Kalat Pergat! And the famous gates with reliefs of the deeds of Salmanassar. And the marvellous didyrian statues, vessels and Babylonian bronzes! And the palace of Artaxerxes! And finally the unforgettable library of Assur-banipal—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 Gilgamash. All these treasures will be unveiled by the incantation of one word—Iran and will give wings to new thoughts. Aerian! Iran! Iran!

And Zarathustra Who brought the Fire, and Mani, and the Bahais, 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 un-conquerable citadel on its summit! And the Kuyundjik! 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, Agha Mirak from Herat with all their pictorial wonders from Shahnana, with the entire epic of Iskander, with the popular images of King Bahram and Asad. 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:

"Khushct Shirazu viz i bi misalash
Khudavanda nigah dar az zawalash".
"Fair is Shiraz and matchless her display
Oh, God protect her ever from decay."

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