ESSAY

IN PERSIA

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IN PERSIA I

11 April, 1932. I had settled it in my mind that the age for venturing forth from one's country had passed for me. Just then came an invitation from the Kingdom of Persia. It seemed to me that to refuse such an invitation would be a discourtesy. Yet from my seventy-year-old, weary body hesitation was not absent. My Parsi friend Dinshah Irani wrote from Bombay, offering assurance, that he himself would be my companion from the port of Bushire in Persia. Besides this, he informed me that Mr. Kehan, the Persian Consul in Bombay, had on behalf of the Persian Government taken charge of the arrangements and comforts of my journey.

After this it seemed shameful to play the coward. Since the railway route and the Persian Gulf would not suit me in that season of heat, it was decided that I should go by the airmail service of the Dutch. It was arranged that my daughter-in-law would accompany me to nurse me, and as working companions would go Kedarnath Chattopadhyay and Amiya Chakravarty. Since there would be no room for four persons in a single aeroplane, Kedarnath set out a week in advance by the aerial route alone.

I had once before made acquaintance with this route, from London to Paris. But there, the earth I had risen up from leaving behind was one to which my bond was but loose. Its lands and waters called me back with no insistence, so I had no need to struggle in raising anchor. This time I was letting myself drift into the void having cut away the pull of my Bengal soil—and my heart felt that parting.

When I set out from the village outside Calcutta it was still dawn. Beneath the star-studded, silent darkness the current of the Ganges rippled on. On the garden wall the branches of the betel-nut palms swayed in the breeze, and from the mingled breath of

creepers and thickets a scent of green darkness hung dense upon the sky. The motor-car moved through the winding, narrow lanes of the sleeping village. Here

and there stood old, stained brick buildings—part habitable, part crumbling; half-urban shops with shuttered doors; a deserted Shiva temple; uneven, waste ground; a scum-covered pond; thickets of scrub. No stirring yet in the birds' nests; the life of the village, like the Ganges at the turning of the tide between ebb and flow, lay suspended in the last sleep of dawn.

Past the sleeping veranda at the turning of the lane, past the police station with its spread pallets, the motor reached the high road. At once the harsh smell of the new age met us as the dust awoke—kin by blood to the petrol-fumes of the car.

Only in the darkness stood two rows of trees, still with their thick foliage, bearing silent witness to ancient times; through centuries this stream of bygone ages' history had flowed along Bengal's shade-cool wayside, sometimes at a deep, grave pace, sometimes in a foaming rush of eddying speed. Along this road, marked by the footprints of dynasties, now Pathan, now Mughal, now the terrible Maratha raiders, now the Company's sepoy had journeyed proclaiming in the language of dust the change of empire. Then there were elephant, camel, the decorated horses of tazim-riders; all those strange vehicles of royal pomp have vanished like a mirage into the grey obscurity of dust. The only thing that remains, bearer of everyone's burden through all ages, is the plaintive-wheeled bullock cart.

There, visible, is the aerodrome of the roaring flying-ship. From its vast flank bursts the glare of electric light. Yet the great field-wide darkness still remains. In the dimness of that twilight, friends and well-wishers and the messengers of the newspapers began gathering like shadow-bodies. The time had come. Turning its wings, scattering dust, stirring the wind, with a grinding roar the mechanical king of birds broke free from its cave and came out upon the open field. I, my daughter-in-law, and Amiya climbed up and took our seats. A covered chariot, two rows of three each, six spacious leather-hooded seats, and at our feet the light box of our travelling necessities. A glass window at the side.

For as long as the airship flew over Bengal, it kept fairly near the earth. The villages clustered thick round the borders of scummy ponds appear here and there in the grey, vast plain like clusters of small islands. From above their shadow-dense green forms are seen, scattered apart, but I could well perceive that in the coming

summer heat the tongue of this whole thirst-parched land was today dry. For pure, wholesome drinking water this land of many crores of people has no dependable hope save the caprice of the god of rain playing upon the sky's wall.

That anything—man, beast, or bird—exists upon this earth is no longer noticeable. No sound, no motion, no life; as if the earth, forsaken by the creator of life, lay covered under a patched quilt. The higher we rose, the more the earth's variety of form shrank to a few scattered patches. The memorial inscriptions of some forgotten ancient civilisation seemed to lie engraved in unknown letters across the plain of some dead land; one can see their trace, but not grasp their meaning.

It was about ten. Nearing Allahabad, the aeroplane tilted to descend. Looking through the window on the right I saw nothing below—only bottomless blue; on the left, the earth's surface came tilting up. The bird-chariot touched the ground; here it went bounding along, jolting again and again, as if it could not win the assent of this exhausted earth.

The place was some distance from the town. All around lay a parched waste. A sun-scorched, joyless earth. I had no wish to get down. One Indian and one English employee of the Company took my photograph. Then when they demanded two or three lines of

my signature in their register, I wanted to laugh. In my mind at that moment echoed Shankaracharya's verse on Mohammed's tomb. A little before, from above, I had seen on the lifeless dust-plain the scattered signature-scratches of some invisible life. It was as though the reflected image of a future dissolution had turned back and fallen upon the present. What I saw was a vast emptiness; all the documents of time obliterated; the very historian himself absent on eternal holiday; even the foundation of the Research Department sunk beneath the earth.

Here the engine drank its fill of oil. After half an hour's halt, the sky-journey resumed. Till now I had not much felt the jolting of the chariot—there had been only the unbearable roar of its wings. Plugging both ears with cotton wool, I sat gazing through the window. In the seat in front of me sat a Dane; he supervises a sugarcane plantation in the Manila Islands, and is now returning to his own country.

Turning his folded map this way and that, he was taking note of the route; from time to time cheese, biscuits, chocolate sweets, mineral water were served. He had brought a great many newspapers from Calcutta and was reading them thoroughly, from cover to cover, one after another. Among the passengers there was no bond of conversation. In the storm of the engine's roar, talk was all but drowned. In one corner someone with earphones fitted to his ears was, by turns, at work, asleep, or reading. The remaining three took turns in navigating the ship, sometimes writing up the log of the journey, sometimes eating, sometimes dozing. A little fragment of living warmth, flung off from the earth below, was flying on through boundless emptiness.

The ship climbed gradually into a higher sky, the wind grew restless, the chariot swayed unsteadily. Gradually it turned quite cold. Below, the stony earth of Rajputana was etched with the withered lines of hard, dry watercourses—like the face of some ochre-clad widow-land's cheerless day of fasting.

At last, in the afternoon, from afar was seen the ash-grey bosom of the arid desert bearing the city of Jodhpur. And on its edge the vast gaping nest of the mechanical bird. Getting down, I saw the Secretary here, Kunwar Maharaj Singh, present with his wife to receive us, ready at once to take us to their home for the courtesy of tea. My body then had strength enough to sustain life, but hardly any surplus fit for sociability. I discharged the obligation with effort and came to the hotel.

The hotel had been established by the Maharaja for air travellers. In the evening he came to call. His natural courtesy was truly princely. The Maharaja himself is skilled in the piloting of aeroplanes. Nearly every kind of daring skill there is, he has mastered.

The next day, 12th April, we had to board the plane at dawn. The wind's temper was better than the previous day's. With body somewhat more rested, we reached Karachi at noon amid the warm welcome of the townsfolk. There, having partaken of a devoted Bengali housewife's carefully prepared meal, within half an hour I was again aboard the aeroplane.

The ship flew along the seacoast. To the left, blue water; to the south, the hilly desert. In the final stretch of the journey the wind grew rough. On land the wind's restlessness declares its own character upon various objects. Here its sole proof is the aircraft's shuddering. Far, far below, upon the white line of the sea's foam, a touch or two of a brush was being laid. I heard no roar, saw no turbulence of waves. Now, through the desert gate, entry into Persia. From Bushire the Governor there had sent a welcome by wireless telegraphy. From Karachi, in a short time, the airship reached its destination.

By the seashore, in the desert, this modest village. Small houses of various shapes, built of mud, roofed flat, are scattered here and there, like a casket of earth.

We took shelter in the travellers' rest-house for aviators. In this barren land, amid sand-dunes canopied by blue sky, there is nothing of varied beauty at all. Perhaps that is why, at the hour of twilight, I saw the tenderness of the horizon-maiden bestowed upon this poor earth. What a deep sunset, what a radiant peace, what pervading majesty! Having bathed, I sat on the veranda; the moist breeze of spring wrapped my weary body in close comfort.

The officials here came to pay their respects. Outside, upon the sandy field, what a crowd had gathered for us! I spoke with the one or two who knew English. It was clear that Persia today, breaking through the old husk of the past, stands ready to begin a fresh chapter of new vitality. Wherever among Eastern nations there is the stirring of awakening, this same mood prevails. A society free from the clutter of the past, a mind free from superstition, human relationships free from obstruction, a scientific vision unclouded by illusion toward the world of reality—these are their chief aims of endeavour. They know that either they must accept the education of the present age, or else its terrible blow. The complexity of their once-indissoluble bond with the past, today they are preparing to be cremated together with the dead age.

To my question as to how members of other religious communities are treated here, I heard that in former days the Zoroastrians and Bahais suffered persecution and humiliation. Under the present king's rule, intolerance toward other faiths has vanished; all now enjoy equal rights, and nowhere is there the blood-soaked horror

of religious violence. In Dr. Mahmoud Isa Khan Sadiq's book on the modern educational system of Persia, it is written—

"Not long ago the influence of the priesthood had overwhelmed Persia. With the spread of modern education, the force of this influence diminished. Before this, countless people of various classes—students of religious schools, preachers, Koran-readers, sayyids—all used to wear the turban and dress of the mullahs. When the majority of the country's leading people became educated in modern methods, the trade of the shrewd, worldly-wise priests grew narrow. Now anyone cannot at will don the mullah's garb. Only after passing a special examination, or by the consent of a genuinely pious and learned scholar of religious law, can one obtain the right to wear such dress. Under pressure of this law, ninety per cent of the people have shed the mullah's costume." The author says:

"Such were the results of the contact of Persia with the Western world. They could not have been attained without the leadership of Reza Shah Pehlevi, the greatest man that Persia has produced for many centuries."

It does no harm to imagine, at least once, that in Hindu India, the countless pandas, priests, and sannyasis that exist should by some new law be required to pass an examination for their titles. Who is a true sadhu or sannyasi cannot be proven by any examination—that I admit. But it is even more impossible to prove it by a self-assumed title and outward dress. And yet the country has accepted that baseless proof. Merely on the strength of untested costume and easily-won names, the heads of millions of people in India bow without discrimination, and the handful of grain from a starving country's mouth is spent freely, in return for which, in most cases, there is no recompense save self-deception. If sainthood and asceticism are for one's own spiritual practice, then there is no need to don special dress or take a name—indeed, doing so is a positive harm; but if it is meant for others, then it is one's duty to submit to a proper examination. If religion is made a livelihood, even an object of public reputation, if by special dress or special conduct an advertisement of piety is put forth, then it must be admitted that society, for the sake of its own self-respect, has the right and duty to judge the truth of that advertisement.

The next day we had to rise at three in the morning; departure was at four. On the 13th of April, at half past eight in the morning, we reached Bushire.

The Governor of Bushire had taken charge of our hospitality. His care knew no bounds. The dust of the earth had made intimate acquaintance with the sky; what my mind said, I shall set down in this pause.

Ever since childhood, the chief trait I have observed in creatures of the sky is the effortlessness of their motion. There is a sweetness in the friendship between their wings and the wind. I remember how, from the roof-room, in the noonday glare, I used to gaze and gaze at the soaring of kites; I used to feel they were not flying from necessity, but that the wind's unhindered right of motion was extending its own joy through them. That joy's expression lies not only in the beauty of the wing's motion, but in the beauty of its form. The sail of a boat has to be kept trimmed to match the temper of the wind—for the sake of keeping that rhythm the sail-maker's craft has had to make it beautiful. The bird's wing too moves in harmony with the wind, and hence such is its grace. And in that same wing, what harmony of colour besides! This, then, is the story of living creatures; and then there is the play of the clouds—how many kinds of colour, borrowed from the sun's light, do they weave into the sky's playhouse of caprice! On the earthly ground, in walking and turning, is the visage of conflict; there, the tyranny of weight, in every task the burden must be pushed. What has all this while charmed our minds about the aerial realm is the absence of weight, the easy roaming of beauty.

After so long a time man has taken weight from the earth up into the sky. So the form his flight has assumed is the form of force. His going is not in harmony with the wind, but oppresses it; this oppression has today gone from the earthly realm up to the heavenly. In this oppression there is no birdsong, but the roar of a beast. The earth's surface, having conquered the sky, is today screaming.

The sun rose above the horizon-line. The arrogant engine made not the least attempt to harmonise itself with the crimson dawn. Against the blueness of the sky its discordance jarred; in the colour-hall of the firmament its mismatch with the clouds remained. It is the messenger of the modern age, free of any taint of sentiment; it disdains beauty; it thrusts aside with an elbow whatever is

unnecessary and passes on. When the eastern horizon flushed red, when in the west, upon the tender blue, there was a pearl-white light, through the midst of it that engine went buzzing along like some monstrous black cockroach.

The higher the airship rose, the more our five senses' connection with the earth narrowed until it came down to a single sense—the sense of sight, and even that not intimately. The earth that I had known as diverse and definite through the testimony of many senses gradually grew faint; what had been the reality of three dimensions became the picture of two. Within the particular framework of a fixed time and space lies the particular form of creation. As its boundary grows more indefinite, creation itself moves ever toward dissolution. In the prelude to that dissolution the earth was seen; its being became obscure, its claim upon the mind's assent grew less. It occurred to me that in such a state, when man sets out from an aircraft to rain down destruction, he might become ruthlessly terrible; the reckoning of guilt of those he strikes does not stay his uplifted arm, because the very sum of the reckoning becomes invisible. That reality toward which man's natural tenderness is directed, when it grows hazy, the very vessel of tenderness itself vanishes.

Even the doctrine preached in the Gita is of this same kind of flying machine—it took Arjuna's compassion-stricken mind to such a far country that, looking from there, who is killed, who kills, who is one's own, who is another's, becomes indistinguishable. Many such artificially-constructed flying machines that veil reality exist in man's arsenal—in man's imperialism, in his social politics, in his religious politics. From there, those upon whom the blow falls are given the word of consolation: "He slayeth not, nor is he slain, in the body."

At Baghdad there is a British air force. A Christian chaplain of that force told me they are bombing daily some sheikh's village here. There, young and old, men and women, are dying, struck down from the upper realm of the British Empire; this imperial policy makes death so easy for them precisely because it renders the individual being obscure. Christ acknowledged these people too as children of the Father, but to the Christian chaplain that Father and His children have become unreal; from the aircraft of their imperial theory they could not be recognised—that is why, throughout the empire, the blow falls today on Christ's own breast.

Moreover, from a flying machine the killing of these desert-dwellers becomes so exceedingly easy, the fear of being struck in return so slight, that the reality of the killing grows faint even in that respect too. Those who can be killed with such perfect safety do not appear sufficiently real to the killers. For this reason, those who do not know the art of Western killing find their human reality growing ever more blurred to the weapon-holders of the West.

The chaplain of the Iraq air force asked me, on behalf of their aerial expedition, for a message. Let the message I sent be published here:

"From the beginning of our days man has imagined the seat of divinity in the upper air from which comes light and blows the breath of life for all creatures on this earth. The peace of its dawn, the splendour of its sunset, the voice of eternity in its starry silence have inspired countless generations of men with an ineffable presence of the infinite urging their minds away from the sordid interests of daily life. Man has accepted this dust-laden earth for his dwelling place, for the enacting of the drama of his tangled life ever waiting for a call of perfection from the boundless depth of purity surrounding him in a translucent atmosphere. If in an evil moment man's cruel history should spread its black wings to invade that realm of divine dreams with its cannibalistic greed and fratricidal ferocity then God's curse will certainly descend upon us for that hideous desecration and the last curtain will be rung down upon the world of Man for whom God feels ashamed."

From close by, our eye can look with one fixed gaze only so far into the distance; from above it perceives a far vaster expanse than that. This is why, when the airship rushes onward at nearly a mile a minute, looking down we do not feel its motion to be so swift. Great distances, being compressed and diminished for our eye, cause even our sense of time's measure to lose its true bearing. What sense of reality is born in us from the combination of these two is far removed from our natural perception. If this mechanical measure of the world were the natural measure of our life, we would dwell in an altogether different world. I found myself thinking, then, that creation is a play of rhythm. If the tempo by which we perceive this universe were changed toward slower or faster, that would become another creation altogether. We are surrounded by countless invisible vibrations. Because the rhythm of our nerve-pulses cannot keep time with the rhythm of their pulsing,

they remain beyond our ken. How can I say that even at this very moment there do not exist around us countless worlds of different rhythm, mutually imperceptible to one another? What that other mind, according to the rhythm of its own perception, sees, knows, and receives, is wholly beyond our reach—in the various instruments of various minds, the messages of various universes arise simultaneously, moving toward a boundless unknown.

Riding in this aerial vehicle I cannot help but feel a certain constraint of mind. This machine is a thing of great wonder; with it I have a bond of enjoyment, but no bond of power. The story of the Vimana is written in the scriptures—it belonged to the world of Indra; mortal kings like Dushyanta were sometimes invited to journey through the firmament—mine is that same condition. Those who built the aircraft of this age are of another breed altogether. If only the strength of intellect were manifest in this, there would be nothing more to say. But the strength of character—that is the thing most worthy of praise. Behind this lies indomitable courage, unconquerable perseverance. Through how much failure, how much death, have they had gradually to bring this to completion, and still they do not admit defeat. Here one must offer a salute.

I gaze and gaze at the four Dutch sailors of this airship. Massive bodies, thick bones, embodied energy. The climate that gave them birth has not, at every moment, worn them down but has kept them fresh. Health and vigour bred in the marrow could not let them remain still, tied to any single monotonous shore. Nourished for many generations on abundant, strength-giving food, their strength is the accumulated surplus of many ages. In India, crores upon crores of people do not get their full measure of food. Bodies unfed, generation after generation, paying tribute to every kind of enemy within and without, are utterly spent. Success in spiritual endeavour is possible only when body and mind together strive—but if our mind wills it, where is the life-force in the body? A body exhausted by fasting cannot but shirk its work, and that shirking, entering into the marrow of the entire nation's bones, keeps striking it down. Today in the Western continent the treasury is pouring out money in anxious effort to solve the problem of food shortage. For it is only on the strength of adequate food that all the machinery of civilisation, inward and outward, runs at full throttle. In our country, that concern for food is an individual matter—not only is it without force, it is positively obstructed. In their

country that concern is a matter of the state; in that direction the endeavour of the whole nation stands freely open—so much so that it hesitates not even to take the help of ruthless injustice. We are very far removed from the gaze of India's arbiter of fate; that is why for us, government is not as abundantly available as sustenance ought to be.

IN PERSIA II

The Great Soul awakens age after age, changing his abode. Once, for many centuries, the playing-field of that awakened divinity lay in Asia. Then it was here that ever-new revelations of man's glory occurred through the path of ever-new powers. Today the bright manifestation of that great being is in the Western continent. We often try to belittle it by calling it materialistic. But no nation can ever reach greatness riding solely upon the raft of materialism. The purely materialist is the purely barbarous. It is the man who can revere truth, who can pay its full price, who is entitled to attain scientific truth. This reverence is spiritual; the power of truth-seeking with life-devoted dedication is spiritual. The Western nations have, through that very illusion-free spiritual power, conquered truth, and that same power has made them victorious. In the world today, it is in the Western continent that man shines forth in brilliant splendour.

As the vitality of a living force grows weaker, the inertness of the body becomes exaggerated in various forms all the more. There was a day when Asia's mind, in religion, in action, in knowledge, was full of vitality; under the influence of that living faith its self-creation flowered in variety. When its strength grew weary and fell into torpor, when the work of its creation ceased, then its religious observances became futile, mere mechanical repetition of accustomed ritual. This is what is called inertia, and in this all-round defeat of man occurs.

On the other hand, the signs of peril that have appeared among the Western nations today arise from this same cause. Scientific intellect and power have made it influential; this influence is truth's own blessing. But once man's dealings with truth become polluted, truth in turn strikes him down. Day by day Europe has been harnessing science as the vehicle of its own greed, bridling it with reins. Thereby the power of greed has grown monstrous, its form has become gigantic. The envy, violence, and falsehood that it is spreading throughout the world are today poisoning Europe's own body politic. The predominance of animal instinct is also a mark of man's inertness. Then his intellect, his will, are set in motion like a mechanical puppet. In this lies the destruction of manhood. The cause is not the machine itself but inward brutishness—greed, violence, bestiality. When one

whose bonds are loosed runs amok and destroys himself, freedom is not the cause of it—intoxication is the cause.

When I was young I read European literature with deep delight; discussing the pure truth of science, I came to feel devotion toward its seekers. Through this, the vision of man that has today spread on every side is itself the manifestation of the eternal man; this manifestation, a man blinded by greed may dishonour. In that sin he will destroy only his own base self, but he cannot destroy the great. It was to see that great, that awakened man, that one day I set out far from home, going to Europe in the year 1912.

I count that journey a blessing. For we are people of Asia, and grievance against Europe runs in our blood. Ever since their pirates of land and sea set out, from that eighteenth century onward, to drain the blood of the weaker continents, they have been diminishing our honour alone in our own eyes. There is no shame in that, for they never thought us worthy enough to be ashamed before. But coming to Europe I discovered for the first time a truth: that the natural man and the nation are not creatures of one kind. Just as the nature of an unclothed body and of a body clad in armour differ. In the one, the nature of life expresses itself; in the other, the body imitates a machine. I saw that these people found no difficulty anywhere in feeling the natural man to be their own; the humanity that shows itself in him is sometimes charming, sometimes even worthy of veneration. I loved him, revered him, and in return received his love and reverence. To see the eternal man so clearly manifest among strangers in a foreign land is a rare fortune.

But it is for this very reason that I feel a certain sorrow when I recall something. In a country where the minds of a great many people whirl endlessly in the machinery of politics, their very nature becomes set to the mould of that mechanism. Skill in accomplishing one's ends becomes the sole aim. This is what is called mechanical inertia, for the ultimate success of a machine lies in the accomplishment of its task. That this mechanical corruption in human character is steadily increasing in Western lands cannot be overlooked. The proof that the benevolent instinct of the man-machine is becoming numbed has, in the countries of the East, become impossible any longer to conceal from us. I recall that in Iraq a respectable, aristocratic gentleman once asked me, "What is your judgment concerning the

English nation?" I said, "Among them, those who are best are the best of mankind." He smiled a little and asked, "And those who are the next best?" I remained silent. Had I answered, there was danger of using intemperate language. Most of Asia's dealings are with this "next best." Their numbers are many, their influence great, their memory remains eternally imprinted in the minds of the vast populace. Their natural human character is not meant for us, and that character is becoming increasingly rare even for themselves.

I returned home. Not long after, the Great War broke out in Europe. Then it was seen that these people were using science for the great destruction of mankind. The flame that this destructive intellect lit in country after country has died down, but the fire in its burnt coal has not yet died. So vast a calamity has never before been seen in the history of man. This is what I call inertness; under its weight manhood lies overwhelmed, unable to save itself even seeing destruction before its eyes.

Meanwhile it can be seen that Asia's pulse has grown restless. The reason is that although Europe's pressure remains outside it, it has shifted from off its mind. One day, even while suffering blows, Asia had in every respect accepted Europe as superior to itself. Today, from one end of Asia to the other, there is nowhere that reverence left in its mind. Though Europe's power of violence has today multiplied many times over, nevertheless, from Asia's mind that fear, mingled once with awe, has vanished today. To acknowledge inferiority before Europe is today impossible for it, because Europe's glory in its mind is today utterly diminished. Everywhere it asks, with a faint smile, "But the next best?"

We are today born at a turning point in the history of man. On Europe's stage, perhaps, the scene is changing towards the fifth act. The signs of Asia's new awakening spread gradually from one horizon to another. On the rising peak of mankind's world, this scene of new dawn is indeed a thing worth witnessing—this vision of liberation. Liberation not merely from external bondage, but from the bondage of slumber, from the bondage of disbelief in one's own strength.

I say this: if Asia cannot fully awaken, there is no salvation for Europe. In Asia's weakness lies Europe's death-warrant. Over the sharing out of Asia's fortune, how

much rivalry there has been, its false and tainted intrigue, the espionage of various nations! Gradually the burden of military preparation has grown, the market of goods has spread ever wider, until today it is making unbearable, amid an ocean of boundless wealth, its thirst for poverty.

Wishing to welcome the newly-awakened consciousness of mankind in the new age, I once set out for East Asia. Then, in Asia's easternmost sky, Japan's banner of victory was flying, lightening Asia's shadow of despondency. I felt joy, and also fear in my heart. I saw that Japan, having mastered Europe's weapons, had made itself secure on the one hand, but equally had brought about a deeper cause of danger on the other. Into its blood had entered Europe's plague, called Imperialism; it was churning up hatred all around itself. It kindled a burning resentment in the minds of its neighbours. This neighbour is not one to be ignored, and in that burning resentment the conflagration of the future waits only upon time. In history, fortune's favouring wind does not blow forever. That day will surely come when today's weak will demand from it an exact and full reckoning. What Japan failed to learn was how to make friends; the lesson of how to strike, it learned readily enough from Europe. This blow will one day come, tunnelling beneath the earth, and strike at its very heart.

But I do not say this is to be lamented merely because it involves an error of political calculation. What I wish to say is this: if indeed a new age has come to Asia, then let Asia give it a new voice of its own. If instead it merely imitates the bestial roar of Europe, that, even if it be a lion's roar, is still its defeat. If a borrowed road leads toward a pit, then its shame is doubled. However that may be, from far off can be heard news of how Asia's western frontier trembles from time to time. When I thought Turkey this time had gone under, suddenly Kemal Pasha appeared. Then the loosely-joined portions of their great empire had, under the shock of war, broken and scattered. That proved, in the end, a blessing in disguise. It became possible to reconstruct the state firmly anew, established in its natural unity, within a smaller compass. An empire means binding to oneself, in the cords of subjection, many who are not one's own kin, thereby making the body unnaturally swollen. In times of adversity, when the bonds slacken, the conflict of these alien elements makes self-preservation ever harder. Turkey, having become light, at once grew properly compact. Then England set upon her, egging Greece on against her. In

England's council chamber at that time sat Lloyd George and Churchill. In 1921, the Allied Powers called a conference in England. At that conference the representative from Angora, Bekir Sami, made proposals for Turkey by which they were prepared to sacrifice a considerable part of their national interests. But Greece stubbornly held to its full, hundred-percent demand, and England backed her from behind. That is to say, uncle Kalanemi's enthusiasm for the plunder of Lanka was still very keen.

During this turmoil, Turkey extended friendship with France. An understanding was also reached with Persia and Afghanistan. In the second clause of the treaty with Afghanistan is written:

"The contracting parties recognize the emancipation of the nations of the East and confirm the fact of their unrestricted freedom, their right to be independent and to govern themselves in whatever manner they themselves choose."

Meanwhile the war between Greece and Turkey continued. Even now the Angora side, with the aim of preventing bloodshed, repeatedly sent proposals for peace. But England and Greece remained unmoved against it. At last all negotiations ceased with Greece's defeat. Under Kemal Pasha's leadership, new Turkey's life was re-established in the capital of Angora.

New Turkey, on the one hand, forcefully repelled Europe, and on the other, just as forcefully accepted it, within and without. Kemal Pasha said, Turkey must free itself from the confinement of the medieval age. They hold in reverence that liberation of the human mind achieved in modern Europe. It is this illusion-free mind that is victorious today in the world. To save oneself from the disaster of defeat, the awakening of this scientific temper is needed before all else. Turkey's Minister of Justice said, "Mediaeval principles must give way to secular laws. We are creating a modern civilised nation and we desire to meet contemporary needs. We have the will to live, and nobody can prevent us." It is the mythological blind superstition of the medieval age that fully and reasonably obstructs the conduct of life; toward this modern men must be ruthless in their dealings—this is their proclamation.

After the victory of the war, when Kemal Pasha entered the city of Smyrna, he called a great public assembly and said to the women, "In war we have without doubt won victory, but that victory will be futile unless you give us your support. Win victory in education, and then we shall be able to accomplish far more than we have already done. Everything will fail unless you advance with firm resolve along the path of modern life. Everything will fail unless you accept the responsibility that the principle of modern living has placed upon you."

In this age, Europe has attained success in one particular endeavour of truth. The fruit of that endeavour is meant for all mankind of all times; whoever refuses to accept it will only deprive himself. This truth has been acknowledged in Asia's easternmost corner by Japan, and in its westernmost corner by Turkey. That truth must be applied to the material world—this discipline belongs to the modern scientific age; failing to do so, we shall be cheated both in intellect and in worldly affairs. The stairway to the application of this truth is to free the mind from superstition, and by pure method to recover the underlying material truths of the universe.

This is true. But there is more to consider. Where Europe has attained success, our gaze has long been fixed; there its glory is manifest to the world. Where it has not succeeded, that place lies deep, at the root, and so it has long remained hidden. There it has done the world terrible harm, and that harm is gradually turning back upon itself. The greed that made China eat opium does not die merely with China's dying. That merciless greed is daily blinding itself further with delusion, whether from outside we see it clearly or not. Not only in the material world, but in the human world too, applying truth with a heart free of desire is man's supreme means of self-preservation. Toward the endeavour of that application of truth, the Western countries are daily losing reverence, and along with it, losing their shame as well. Hence all its problems have grown tangled, and destruction draws near. Japan, blindly following Western nature, has, it appears, forgotten the truth of eternal principles in the intoxication of success; but let it be known for certain that eternal righteousness will not forget its own unerring rule.

How Western Asia is responding to the call of the new age is not yet clear to know in full. It is not yet time to know this in any large way. Here and there a slight sign

or two can be seen, but they are not vivid enough to strike the eye forcefully. But truth comes, small though it be, of itself. That truth has begun to strike at that weakness of Asia where, in blind superstition, in rigid custom, its channel of movement is blocked. This path is not yet cleared, but it can be seen that in this direction its mind is stirring. In various countries of Asia this thought has arisen: that sectarian religion cannot continue to dominate every field of human life. When a senior British official of the Palestine administration, at a farewell gathering given in his honour, said, "Palestine is a Mohommedan country, and its government should, therefore, be in the hands of the Mohommedans, on condition that the Jewish and Christian minorities are represented in it," the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haji Amin al-Husseini, replied: "For us it is an exclusively Arab, not a Mahommedan question. During your sojourn in this country you have doubtless observed that here there are no distinctions between Mahommedan and Christian Arabs. We regard the Christians not as a minority, but as Arabs."

I know this liberal-mindedness is not universal, nor even that of the majority. Yet that it should wish to express itself even within so small a compass, like a tiny seed, is a matter of hope. In the present it is small, but in the future it will not remain so.

Look now at what is happening in another obscure corner. If one examines the new life that the Soviet Government has infused, in so remarkably short a time, into the desert peoples of Asia in Russian Turkestan, one cannot but be astonished. The reason for so swift a pace and so great a success is this: that in cultivating the moral improvement of these peoples, in giving completeness to their own strength, the government there has, at the very least, no obstacle of greed, and hence none of envy. These small, scattered peoples of the desert plain have been granted the right to establish their own respective republics. Moreover, the arrangements for the spread of education among them are vast and varied. I have said elsewhere before: in the great, multi-national Soviet empire, nowhere today is there strife and conflict between one community and another. Under the Tsar's imperial rule that used to happen constantly. The health that must exist in the mind if man's sense of kinship is not to become distorted—that health awakens through education and freedom. This education and this freedom have begun to enter the rivers and streams of Asia like the flood-waters of a new monsoon. And so, after many ages, the people of Asia have today risen to free themselves from the calamity of self-abasement.

However much suffering and torment may attend the beginning of this endeavour of liberation, still this effort—this staking of one's all for the sake of gaining human dignity—there is no joy greater than this. It is through our liberation alone that the whole world shall gain freedom. This truth must be kept certainly in mind: Europe today is a prisoner, both within its own house and outside it, of its own prisoners.

In 1912, when I went to Europe, an English poet asked me, "Why have you come here?" I said, "I have come to see man in Europe." In Europe the light of knowledge burns, the light of life burns, and so there man is not hidden—he ceaselessly reveals himself in this direction and that.

That same day in Persia, someone asked me exactly that same question. I said, "I have come to see the man who is truly Persian, in Persia." There is no hope of seeing him if there is no light in the country. I know a light burns there. So when the call came from Persia, once again my mind grew restless, gazing toward the distant sky.

I had only just then risen from a sickbed. I dared not even ask the doctor—I had not the courage—nor had I the courage to travel a long road through summer heat over land and water, enduring the sun's blaze and the machine's jolting. I climbed up into the sky-chariot instead. The boy who, sitting alone in a corner of the room, day after day, used to hear the call of the distance while gazing at the sky—today, in answer to that same distant call, he responded by way of that very sky. I landed at Persia's threshold just two days later. The morning after, I reached Bushire.

IN PERSIA III

Bushire is a port town by the sea—a town of ships and harbours. It is not the intimate heart of Persia.

In the afternoon, a member of the Persian Parliament came to see me. He wished to ask what I wanted to know. I said: I wish to know the eternal essence of Persia—the Persia that stands established in its own inner light.

He said, this is a great difficulty. Who knows where that Persia is? In this country there is a vast mass of people who are unlettered—amid the old, corrupted; amid the new, unenlightened. Those who are distinguished as "educated" are the modern ones; they have begun to recognise the new, but they do not know the old.

My reply to this is that the country is not manifest equally in all; in the majority it remains vague and undefined. The true expression of a country is found in the life and realisation of certain particular individuals. The inward current of a country's life-force, its current of thought, suddenly bursts forth through some one crack, from some one particular source. What lies accumulated in the depths is not everywhere revealed among the many. What remains hidden behind the turbid consciousness of the majority becomes, easily enough, expressed through the natural mental clarity peculiar to certain individuals. How far his book-learning extends, whether the country acknowledges him or not—these questions are beside the point. Some such perceptive people must certainly exist in Persia; they are perhaps not among those bearing famous names—indeed, they might even be among foreigners. But where is the traveller to find them?

The man in whose house I am staying is named Mahmud Reza. He is a landholder and a merchant. Having given up his own house and courtyard, he has suffered no small trouble on our account, bringing in new furniture, upsetting the arrangements of his own accustomed comfort. Behind the scenes, at every moment, he is busy attending to our needs, but he never comes forward to trouble us with the burden of social formality. He is young in years, gentle by nature, ever occupied with his tasks.

Since our arrival, the pomp of honours has continued in various forms. My mind cannot wholly accept this thing; within myself I cannot make its accounts balance. Amid this crowd of Bushire, who indeed am I? In my own personal history, in language, in thought, in action, I am a man unknown to them from so great a distance. When I went to Europe, my identity as a poet went with me. By some particular epithet they judged me. The instruments of that judgment were in their hands. These people too know me as a poet, but that knowledge is by imagination; to them I am not a "particular" poet—I am simply "the poet." That is, whatever meaning they commonly attach to the word "poet," they have had no hesitation in ascribing wholly to me. Poetry is the Persians' passion; their friendship with poets is heartfelt. Through my fame I have received that friendship without giving anything in return. In other countries, poets find welcome only among literary circles; in the courts of politicians a poet's seat is not laid—here that boundary was nowhere to be found. Those who arranged the honours were chiefly people of the court. I recall Egypt. There, when I went, the leaders of the state came to receive me. They said that on this occasion their Parliament's session had to be adjourned for a while. Among Oriental peoples this is possible. To them I am not merely a poet, I am an Eastern poet. Hence they naturally wished to come forward and honour me, for that honour belongs to them all. In the eyes of the Persians there is yet another particular distinction attaching to my identity. I am Indo-Aryan. From ancient historical times up to the present, Persia's sense of pride in its Aryan lineage has continued unbroken, and of late it seems this has shown signs of flaring up all the more. With these people I have a bond of blood. Furthermore, there is a rumour current here that my writing has kinship with the compositions of the Persian mystic poets. Where the poet must, for his reader, leave open and unrestricted his own path, there the ground belongs to the friend. But in a land where I have no readers, here I am the poet of that safe country; here the royal road of all the poets of all ages belongs to my path as well. Even from the standpoint of affection, these people have come to me as to a natural man—they are not my critics; theirs is not the trade of appraising goods and settling accounts of value. When they have felt me to be one close to them, they have not erred; truly, I have come easily to them. That coming to them without hindrance was easy—this could be clearly felt. That they belong to another society, another religious community, another social circle—no occasion has arisen to remind me of this. In European civilisation there

is the fence of rigid social rule; in Indian Hindu civilisation the fence of social convention is even more rigid. In Bengal, stepping out from my own corner, whether I go west or south, it is difficult to make a place for myself within another's household—one must walk carefully, guarding against convention at every step—even within Bengal itself. Here, in food, in seating, in behaviour, man can mingle easily with man. These people are famed for hospitality, and that hospitality knows no distinction of rank at table.

16th April. We were to leave for Shiraz at seven in the morning. Though my body was unwell and weary, still, as is my habit, I rose at dawn, when everyone else was still abed. By the time all had got ready to set out, it was past nine.

A dirt road. The motion of the motor-car and the temperament of the road had no accord between them. That mismatch's jolting the travellers understood at every moment—what one calls being shaken to the very bones.

Field after field, with no end to them. Nowhere do I see a house, a tree, or a sign of habitation. Most of the land of Persia is high plateau, ringed with mountains, and here and there mountain ranges as well. This plateau stands five or six thousand feet above sea level. Its middle portion descends into a vast desert. Because of this elevated tableland, the clouds are hindered from reaching it. The quantity of rainfall is very slight. Streams descending from the mountains here and there create fertility. But these thin-flowing streams scarcely ever reach the sea; the desert either drinks them dry or they meet their doom amid swamps.

Jolting along the rough road, gradually, in the midst of that vast, dreary emptiness, one sees far off a clump of date palms, or here and there an acacia. In this sparsely populated region, armed police keep guard at intervals of ten miles. On the road we hardly see a traveller at all. In our country one would have seen the wailing bullock-cart. Here, in its place, is a donkey laden with bags slung on either side of its back, or a train of mules tied together; here and there a shepherd with his flock of sheep, and in one or two places a herd of camels grazing among the thorn-bushes.

The day advances, the heat increases. The wind blows, whirling up dust from the wheels of the motor—cold like our winter breeze. Occasionally, in one place or another, I see a small mud fort with a gateway, where the motor is halted and our welcome announced. On the eastern horizon the form of a mountain has emerged clearly; at the start of the journey this mountain lay veiled in the hazy blue of the sky.

This region is inhabited by the Bakhtiari tribe; their language is Turkish. They settled here in the time of a former king. Their trade used to be brigandage. In the new era they are being tamed. We heard that some time ago they had broken a bridge along the road. As soon as a laden motor-bus overturned, they plundered it with murder and robbery. After this incident, the king took the son of their chief to Tehran as a hostage. The punishment is not severe, yet it stings. The leader of this tribe, Shakrullah Khan, came from his settlement to offer us his greeting. Had this been a few years earlier, the language of this greeting would have been altogether different—one might say, more heartfelt. All along, since Bushire, ahead of our car another motor with armed guards has been travelling. At first I thought this was merely an excessive flourish of royal ceremony; now it occurs to me that it may have a rather urgent meaning.

The dirt road gradually became strewn with gravel. One could tell we were climbing into the heart of the mountains. At the edge of the road, here and there, a mountain stream flows, cutting its way through stone. But these are not serving as nursemaids to any human settlement. Where are the people? In the fields, here and there, willows, poplars; here and there I catch sight of wheat fields under cultivation, but no sign of the cultivators themselves.

Noon passed. The road to Shiraz is long. It having been decided that it would be too taxing to complete in a single day, we were to take our midday meal and spend the night as guests of the Governor of Kazerun. But we started late, and there was no hope of reaching there in time; so along the way, at a place called Konartakhteh, our motor-car stopped at the mud encampment of the guards. On the earthen floor, in haste, carpets and rugs were spread. We had food with us, and we ate. It felt like something out of a storybook—a wayside inn amid a grove of date palms.

Now we were climbing a winding, ascending mountain road. The mountains were entirely bald, bare even of stones for the most part. Great heaps of earth. As if some giant's shaved head. One could tell this was a land sparse in rainfall, for if the roots of trees had not bound the soil, how long could that soil have withstood the battering of rain? On the sparsely-trodden road, occasionally, a donkey passed by carrying loads of kerosene. Big government motor-buses, fully loaded, rattled past us, swaying, down toward the lower slopes. Mountain after mountain, grassless, peopleless, rugged—as though from the bosom of the earth a thirsting barrenness had welled up tearlessly, sob after sob, and hardened.

The day drew on. At one point I saw that the Governor of Kazerun had sent a horseman ahead along the road to meet us and bring us in. It was clear they had been waiting a long while.

We reached the mansion. A dense, avenued grove of great orange trees, in whose moist shade the eye found rest. A pleasure-garden of olden times, named Bagh-i-Nazar. In the midst of such destitute barrenness, suddenly this kind of green splendour, this oasis of hospitality—this indeed is Persia's particular character.

Under the trees of the garden our meal was arranged. But for now it went unused. I was utterly exhausted. I lay down upon a bed in a small carpeted room. There was no warmth in the air; through the open door in front, the surge of dense greenery met my eyes.

After a while I rose from bed and went out into the garden to see, under the trees, great cauldrons in which thick cuts of meat were being cooked, like the cooking for a sacrificial feast in our country. I understood this to be the preparation for the evening meal.

In honour of the guest, there was today a public holiday here. Taking advantage of this, people had been gathering for a long while. Because of our delay, they had gone back home. Those who remained, we sat down among them. On everyone's lips was talk of their king. They said he, by the strength of his extraordinary genius, had within ten years transformed the very face of Persia.

Here it might be well to give a brief sketch of modern Persian history.

The present chapter of this history begins with the demonic cruelty of Agha Muhammad Khan of the Qajar clan. These people are not Persian. The Qajars are of Turkic race. Timur brought them into Persia. Down to the time before Reza Shah Pahlavi, Persia's royal throne remained in the hands of this dynasty.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Nasir-ud-Din Shah was king. From that time began the stirrings of political revolution. A sign of the awakening of Persia's mind at this time can be seen in the religious revolution of the Babis. At this very same time, Rammohun Roy in Bengal was preaching religious reform. Nasir-ud-Din, with extreme cruelty, crushed this sect.

Among the kings of Persia, Nasir-ud-Din was the first to visit Europe, and from his reign onward the country began to be entangled in the web of foreign debt. In the reign of his son Muzaffar-ud-Din, this net widened further. He granted a monopoly of the tobacco trade to an English company. This the people of the country would not tolerate; they boycotted tobacco altogether. For the entire country's tobacco-smokers, life without tobacco was hard, but even that was endured. By this means the grant was cancelled, but the company had to be compensated with a very heavy payment. After this came Russia, with the railways.

Officials arrived from Belgium to collect customs duties for Persia, and England too rose to take a hand in the partition of Persia.

Meanwhile, ceaseless demands for political reform kept coming from the people of the country. In the end the king had to yield. The first Persian Parliament opened in October, 1906.

That king died. His son, Muhammad Ali Shah, ascended the throne. In Persia at that time, the provincial governors were each a kind of petty despot, obstructing everything. When the subjects demanded their dismissal, and also proposed removing the Belgian officers collecting customs, this too was raised in Parliament.

It goes without saying that the people of the country were novices in the practice of parliamentary governance. As responsibility fell into their hands, gradually they became more adept. But the treasury was empty, the revenue department in ruins.

At last a compromise was struck between England and Russia. One of the two powers took the head of Persia, the other its tail, both mounting their respective howdahs as riders, with their armies as goads to keep it in check. The northern portion fell to Russia's share, the southern to England's; a small remainder was left in the middle where Persia's lamp flickered dimly.

Disputes between king and subjects increased. One day the king's faction, joined by the mullahs' party, fell upon the city and razed the Parliament building to the ground. But they could not subdue the country; once again, anew, the foundation of the constitution was laid.

Both England and Russia felt deeply pained that the people of the country were troubling the Shah in so unseemly a manner. Needless to say, they had no sympathy for the new constitution. One day the Russian Colonel Liakhov fell upon Parliament with troops. A battle ensued; many prominent members were killed, or taken prisoner, or fled—clear proof, said the "Times" of London, that self-government lay beyond the capacity of Orientals.

Tehran was cowed into submission by dreadful oppression, but in other provinces the fighting continued. In the end the king had to flee the country, and his eleven-year-old son ascended the throne. England and Russia arranged for the exiled king to receive a fat pension. With Russian help, the fugitive king returned and invaded the country. He was defeated.

From America came Morgan Shuster to set Persia's ruined revenue department in order. At the very moment he had succeeded, Russia set upon Persia. An order was issued that Shuster must be dismissed. It was proposed that no foreigner might be invited to state service without the consent of England and Russia. Against this, agitation arose in Parliament. But it did not hold. Shuster was dismissed; the reformers were, some imprisoned, some exiled. In the book Shuster wrote about this period, entitled The Strangling of Persia, one finds a history as tragic as any.

Meanwhile the war in Europe broke out. Then Russia, seizing that opportunity, sought to entrench its position in Persia still more firmly. At last, under the pressure of the Bolshevik Revolution, they withdrew. Taking this opportunity, England occupied northern Persia. Constant fighting continued with the people of the country.

In 1919, Sir Percy Cox came as British minister to Persia. He extracted a pledge from one faction of the Persian government that the sovereignty over all Persia would rest in England's hands, that its administration and military affairs would be conducted at England's beck and call. This, in polite language, is called a "protectorate." Its hidden meaning is well known to all—its preface lies in the sack of the Vaishnava, its conclusion in the clutches of the Shakta. However that may be, no one had the courage to submit this treaty to the full Parliament for ratification.

In this hour of calamity, Reza Khan, with his Cossack troops, occupied Tehran. Meanwhile the Soviet government sent troops into northern Persia to resist England. England abandoned Persia. After such long and continuous oppression, Persia gained complete deliverance. The Soviet Russian ambassador Rothstein, arriving there, put it in writing that whatever policy of coercion Imperial Russia had for so long pursued against Persia, the Soviet Government was fully prepared to renounce entirely. Whatever rights of Persia had fallen into Russia's grip, all these they were returning; Persia was released from whatever debt it owed to Russia, and whatever roads, ports, and the like Russia had itself constructed in Persia, the rights to all of these, without any claim of payment, were transferred to Persia.

Reza Khan was first Minister of War, then Prime Minister, and then, at the request of the people, became king. Under his guidance Persia has grown strong and vigorous, within and without. In the various departments of state where foreigners once held authority, they have one by one withdrawn. The tyranny of exploitation and plunder has come to an end; throughout the entire country today, strict vigilance stands with finger raised in warning. Bewildered Persia has today regained itself by its own hand. Victory to Reza Shah Pahlavi!

From these people we also learned another piece of news: that the country's money is not to be allowed to leave its borders. Foreign traders who come to do business here, unless they purchase goods of equal value from this country, will find their own goods barred from sale. Attention is paid to seeing that there is no imbalance between imports and exports.

IN PERSIA IV

My body being weary, these good people had resolved that my night's meal should be sent to my room alone. I would not consent. In the garden, beneath the trees, by lamplight, I sat down to eat with everyone. The food here was of the country's own kind. In such things as pilau and kabob no special difference could be discerned from the Mughlai cuisine of our own land.

I went to bed in a state of exhaustion. As is my custom, I was ready at dawn, and when I opened the door, one or two birds had just begun to call.

When the journey began it was half past seven. Outside, the almond trees had put forth blossom. Before the gate, on either side of the road, shops had just opened. A beautiful, cool morning. Along the left side, a dense, deep-green grove of pomegranates—and a wheat field, in which new shoots had sprung up. This year, owing to prolonged drought, the crop lacked vigour, yet this particular spot stood wrapped in a romance of green.

Over a road strewn with pebbles the car jolted along. From the high mountain road we came down onto comparatively lower ground. Elsewhere, generally, the approach to a town is signalled somewhat before one arrives; here it was not so—upon the edge of an empty plain, Shiraz suddenly stood revealed. Looking over the mud walls here and there, one caught glimpses of poplar, orange, chestnut, and elm treetops.

The Governor of Shiraz took me with great ceremony to a large house, to the assembly hall. It was a vast room spread with carpets. Along the walls at either end sat the guests, before whom stood small tables laid out with tea accompanied by fruit and sweets. Here were gathered Shiraz's literary circle and representatives of various classes. On behalf of the citizens of Shiraz, one gentleman read out an address of welcome, the gist of which was this—the city of Shiraz is glorified by the glory of two immortal men. The compass of their minds lies close to the compass of yours. From the very source whence your utterance springs, that same stream has consecrated the flower-garden of these two poetic lives here. The body of that

Saadi, who for many centuries now has lain in eternal repose beneath this sacred ground, has this very moment risen upward into the sky of this garden, and even now the fully-satisfied laughter of the poet Hafiz spreads abroad amid the joy of his countrymen.

I replied that there was no possibility of my competing appropriately with your courtesy. For the language in which you addressed me is your own, while this language of mine is borrowed. Upon the ledger of accounts only a single figure can be entered on my side—namely, that I am present here in bodily form. The lord of Bengal once invited the poet Hafiz to Bengal; he was unable to go. The poet of Bengal, receiving the invitation of the lord of Persia, has both honoured that invitation and, by directly declaring his affection and good wishes toward Persia, has become the one enriched by gratitude.

When the assembly's proceedings ended, I went on to the Governor's palace. The Shiraz I came to know on the way was the new Shiraz. Roads and houses were under construction everywhere. In town after town of Persia this work of new creation has stirred to life; the whole country is astir with welcome for the new age.

Passing through a great courtyard lined with ranks of soldiers, I entered the Governor's palace. Preparations for the midday meal awaited there. But it was arranged, at my request, that I might rest before all other ceremonies. Having freshened myself, I took shelter in the bedroom.

It was then four o'clock. At night, dining with the invited guests, the long day drew to its close.

In the morning the Governor said that nearby there was a certain gentleman's garden-house prepared for our use. It was decided we should move there, as my rest would be more convenient in that place.

17th April. This afternoon, at Saadi's tomb-grounds, an assembly awaits my welcome. The Governor first took me to the Chamber of Commerce. There, having sat with the members over tea, we went on to Saadi's resting place. Crowds thronged both sides of the road. Women, their whole bodies wrapped in black

cloaks, much of the face too covered, but not veiled entirely. Men's dress was generally European; only rarely did one see turban and long robes. By order of the present king, the cap the men of this country now wear is called the Pahlavi cap—a peaked, brimless cap worn forward on the forehead.

Just as our Gandhi-cap is opposed to lifeless Indian tradition and leans toward the foreign, so is this. In an age of efficiency, superfluity of dress naturally falls away of its own accord. Besides, in this modern era, class-distinctions of dress, great and small, tend toward becoming cheap and universally convenient. Once in Europe there was, country to country—even within a single country—great diversity of costume. Yet all Europe today wears virtually one dress, and the reason is that one and the same wind has blown across the whole of Europe. Time is short, the press of work is great, and social class-distinctions besides have grown lighter. Today Europe's dress belongs not merely to the strong man, the man of action, but is the dress of the ordinary man—of all who walk the same broad road together. Today, wherever in Persia, Turkey, Egypt, and parts of Arabia there has been awakening, all have adopted this universal livery; otherwise, perhaps, a change of mind cannot come easily. It is the same in Japan. We too, perhaps, if we are to change our loose, dhoti-clad minds, need a change of dress. We were long ago babus; suddenly we have become khadi-clad shirtless men, and yet does the wavering dress of the babu remain forever? What excess of drapery there was in that costume is fast disappearing—trousers clipped to the knee are advancing at speed. The command of the age presses not merely upon the mind but has reached the body too. The pressure of change in women's dress has not struck in quite this way—for women are the bridge between the past and the present, men the bridge between the present and the future.

At Saadi's tomb there is nothing of architectural excellence at all. As is customary today, the grave-site has been decked with flowers and lamps. From there we went behind the tomb into a spacious courtyard and took our seats amid a great public gathering. Before the assembly the towering wall enclosing the square has been covered with exquisitely patterned carpets, and carpets are spread upon the floor as well. Before all the assembled guests, fruit and sweets are arrayed round the courtyard. To the right of the gathering, at the edge of the blue mountains, the sun was setting. To the left, outside the assembly, on either side of the road, on higher

ground, a crowd had gathered—mostly women clad in black, with armed guards here and there among them.

Three Persian gentlemen had come from Tehran to make our journey convenient. Among them was one, brother to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, named Feroughi. All say he is a philosopher; gentle and calm is his bearing. He knows French but not English. Yet his silent presence, through mere companionship alone, gave me satisfaction. Whatever he was unable to say owing to the barrier of language, I could well surmise to be valuable. He expressed the hope that my coming to Persia would prove fruitful. I said: to your former mystic poet-sages and imaginative artists I belong as their own kin, though I have come bearing the language of the modern age; thus it should not be difficult for you to acknowledge me. But neither do I disdain what this new age has to give. If in this era I cannot accept what Europe has come bearing as the vehicle of truth, then I must accept its blow instead. Yet that does not mean one must lose one's own inward wealth in order to receive outward riches. He who can give can also take; the beggar cannot.

This morning, after visiting Saadi's tomb, it was arranged that we should go take shelter in the garden-house. Before that, I had discussion with the Governor about the king of this land. Once, Reza Shah was merely commander of a Cossack cavalry regiment. He never received a European education in school; indeed, he is unpolished even in the Persian language. I was reminded of our Emperor Akbar. Not only did he rescue Persia from the clutches of the foreigner, but by freeing Persia—firmly bound in the grip of the mullahs' dominion—he rescued the machinery of state from a heavy and immovable obstruction.

I said: unfortunate India, India entangled from head to foot in the coils of complicated religion. Our country lies crippled under the burden of blind custom; our society is split a hundred ways by the futility of rules of prohibition.

The Governor said: so long as India does not become one, transcending the barrier of sectarian religion, there is no escaping the necessity of accepting whatever comes from a Round Table Conference. The blind, even when freed, do not advance; and even should they try to advance, they fall into the pit and die.

At last we set out to see Hafiz's tomb. Under the present king's reign, restoration of this tomb is under way. Over the old grave, a canopy of modern factory-cast latticework has been erected. This does not suit Hafiz's poetry in the least. The poet-soul, encircled by iron railings, seemed to me a prisoner of our police-state ordinances.

I went inside and sat down. The tomb's keeper brought forward a large, square-shaped book. It was Hafiz's book of poems. The popular belief is that if one closes one's eyes with some particular wish in mind and opens this book, the verse that appears will determine whether the wish will be fulfilled. I had just been discussing that very subject with the Governor, and it was still fresh in my mind. So, silently, I wished that India might be freed from the death-throttling noose of that phantom named religion.

The page that turned up—its verse may be divided into two parts. I accept the translation made jointly by an Iranian and someone else. I give only the first verse of the first part. The poem is taken to be allegorical, but by its plain meaning the poet's subject is simply a beautiful beloved.

First part: Crowned kings are slaves to your captivating eyes; the nectar that flows from your throat overwhelms the wise and the learned.

Second part: The gate of heaven shall be flung open, and with it shall be undone the whole knotted tangle of our complicated affairs—can this indeed be? For those proud, self-styled righteous ones, if it must remain closed, then keep faith in your heart that for God's own sake it shall be opened.

My friends were astonished to see how aptly the answer matched the question.

Sitting beside this tomb, a sudden thrill passed through my mind—in this morning light of spring, in the sunlight, there came from a distant spring-day of the past a signal from the poet's laughing eyes. It felt as if we two were companions of the same tavern, who many a time have filled many a cup of varied wine. Have I not myself, time and again, seen the crooked frowns of ritual-bound pious men? Their web of words could never bind me; I am a fugitive, taking my leave upon the

unhindered flow of joy's own wind. It felt certain, today, that after so many—many hundred—years, crossing the gulf between life and death, such a traveller had come beside this grave who is, to Hafiz, a man forever known to him.

With a heart brimming full, I came to the garden-house. The one whose house it is, is named Shirazi. He does business in Calcutta. It was his nephew, Khalili, who took upon himself the burden of hospitality. A clean, new house, its front open, with a small hill not far off. Through the glass panes abundant light entered, brightening the well-furnished rooms. In every room, small tables were laid out with almonds, raisins, and sweets.

After tea, I was given a few samples of the music-making here. In one man's hand, a kanun; in another's, a sitar-like instrument; in the singer's hand, an instrument for keeping time—a combination of tabla and baya in one. Music in three parts. The first part restless, the middle part slow and sorrowful, the last part in dance-rhythm. I found much resemblance, here and there, with our own native melodies. I see a certain kinship with Bengal too—music here is not separated from poetry.

Before setting off for Isfahan, I am resting. I sit on the long, mat-spread veranda of the upper floor. At the front, blooming geraniums are set in rows along the railing. In the garden below, amid a flowerbed, in a small pool, a motionless fountain stands, and around that bed a stream of water flows with the sound of gurgling. In the distance, the softness of trees. Against the pale blueness of the sky, the wave-like grey outline of tree-bare, folded hills. Far off, beneath some trees, a group sits talking. Cool breeze, silent noon. I am far from the town, cut off from the crowd; birds fly about chirping, though I know not their names. My companions have all gone off into town somewhere; my perpetually weary body refuses to move, so I sit alone. There is nothing here to remind me particularly that I am in Persia. This sky, this air, this bright light trembling upon the trembling green leaves—it is just as in my own country's winter.

It cannot be said that the city of Shiraz is ancient. This city's origin dates only from after the Arabs conquered Persia. Whatever prosperity had come to Shiraz under Safavid rule was destroyed by the Afghan invasion. Once there stood a stone gateway encircling the city; that has been razed, and in its place has risen a mud

wall. No other country in the world has received such blows from the hand of merciless history as Persia has, and yet its life-force has repeatedly renewed and reformed itself. In the present age it has taken up that same task again, awakening from its own state of near-death.

IN PERSIA V

We are going toward Isfahan. Past seven o'clock we set out through the city gate of Shiraz. We began travelling through the mountain range. Looking back, it seemed as though the mountain-nature had poured out Shiraz as an offering in stone.

Outside Shiraz, all human habitation vanished entirely, leaving no trace of continuation; not even trees or plants were to be seen. Through this featureless emptiness, the road wound winding on—broad and comparatively good for motor traffic.

After about an hour's journey, on the left appeared cultivated fields—wheat and poppy. But no villages were to be seen; the horizon stretched bare to its very edge. Here and there flocks of curly-fleeced sheep, or square tents made of black goat-hair. The green, grain-filled fields gradually widened out. The distant mountains grew low, as though they were the young offspring of greater mountains.

Just then, suddenly, Persepolis appeared close by—the ruins of the world-conquering Darius's palace. A raised platform of earth, upon which stand broken, gigantic stone pillars, as if that ancient epoch, standing in the sky with helpless upraised arms, were cursing merciless time.

Seated on a chair, I was carried up the stone steps. Behind, mountains; above, emptiness; below, a horizon-spread, deserted plain—and at its edge stands this stone signal of a mute cry. The famous German archaeologist Dr. Herzfeld is employed in the task of excavating this ancient monument. He told me he had heard my lecture in Berlin, and had also come to see me at the hotel.

The stone pillars are, some broken, some relatively whole. Standing scattered, pointlessly, like the disjointed bones of some enormous creature in a museum. Among the timber used for the roof, the account records that teak brought from India was included. The art of making arches was then unknown, so a stone roof was not possible. But the skill by which these massive, colossal stones were set into

their proper places is today entirely forgotten. Seeing this, one is reminded of the story of the Mahabharata's assembly hall. It is understood that those who knew the art of constructing such vast palaces were not of Yudhishthira's own race. Perhaps it was from this very direction that the masons went. That Purochana who built the lac-house for the Pandavas—was he not also a foreigner?

The doctor said there is no doubt Alexander burned this palace down. In my opinion, envy intolerant of others' glory was probably the cause. He had wished to establish a great empire, but the rise of a great empire had already appeared before his time. Alexander has left nothing behind in the world today that could compare, as compensation, to this Persepolis. Here, among the carved figure-friezes on the walls, one sees Darius sitting beneath the royal canopy, while before him prisoners and slaves come bearing tribute. In a later age, some vizier of Isfahan smashed and mutilated this stone inscription.

At another site in Persia, excavation has yielded objects of a still more ancient, forgotten age. The professor showed me a decorated eggshell-bowl of that kind. He said the craftsmanship is of the same type as that of Mohenjo-daro. Sir Aurel Stein has also found in Central Asia certain objects bearing resemblance to those of Mohenjo-daro. Seeing such scattered, far-flung evidence, it seems that before all modern civilisations, a great civilisation once spread its play across the world and then vanished.

The professor has restored a portion of these ruins and made it his home. All around the room, a library and various collections. Having become heir to the lost remaining wealth of these three generations of ruling emperors—Darius, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes—the professor lives in seclusion, deeply content.

The very first thing one notices on coming to this country is the complete contrast between the natural character of East Asia and West Asia. The two might as well be called utter opposites. Beginning from Afghanistan, through Mesopotamia, all the way to Arabia, the land is mercilessly dry and hard. The mountain ranges of East Asia did not act against the earth; through their bounty of rain, the whole land there flourishes. But in the west they have made the earth barren and blocked the sky's

gift of moisture. Here and there, in scattered fragments, this neglected soil receives the touch of fertility; being rare, its allure is intense, its charm captivating.

Fortunately these people obtained the camel and the horse as beasts of burden, and reared flocks of sheep for their livelihood. Following this livelihood, the people here had constantly to remain on the move. The inhabitants of West Asia have, from very ancient times, again and again established vast empires—their fundamental impulse drawn from the harshness of this land, which drives them outward. They received no unsought bounty from nature; they have had to snatch and eat another's bread, advancing into ever newer fields to gather food.

Here, dominance belongs not to the village but to the fortified, wall-enclosed city. The ruins of how many ancient capitals lie dust-strewn across western Asia! The place of farmers is the village, where wealth must be produced by one's own hand. The city was first established upon the might of conquering warriors. There, unless wealth is gathered and defended, defeat follows. In India, the farmer's aid is the ox; in Central and Western Asia, the aid to conquest is the horse. In the world, whether of men, of beasts, or of weapons, swift movement is the chief means of achieving victory. So it was that once the desert-riding horsemen—the Mongol barbarians of Central Asia—set the world ablaze far and wide with the terrible fire of conquest. Their perpetual restlessness made them formidable. It is precisely for want of food that these peoples are each divided into clan-tribes, and among these clan-tribes exists an unbreakable unity. Whatever the reason, when this unity of theirs swelled into the combined unity of many branch-streams, nothing could withstand their onrush of conquest. When the scattered, divided desert-dwelling Arab tribes united in the oneness of one undivided faith, in the name of one God, in no short time their victory-banner flew from far western horizon to far eastern edge, like a blood-red cloud driven by the wind of doom.

Once, a branch of the Aryan race took refuge in the mountain-strewn, desert-girt high plateau of Persia. At that time some unknown civilised people already dwelt here. The remnants of their crafted works that survive show astonishing skill. Perhaps one might call them people of the Mohenjo-daro age. Their handiwork bears resemblance to that of these people. This resemblance extends far across Asia. From the traces of Mohenjo-daro, the form of religion then prevailing that we

can surmise is the worship of Shiva, riding a bull. Ravana was a worshipper of Shiva; Rama broke Shiva's bow. The race to which Ravana belonged was neither forest-dwelling nor pastoral. From the folklore of the Ramayana it is understood that this race, gathering wealth from conquered lands, enriched its own capital, and for a long time by force of arms was able to disregard the Aryan god Indra. That race was urban. The civilisation of Mohenjo-daro was also urban. Joining with India's primitive, forest-dwelling, more barbarous peoples, the Aryans destroyed this civilisation. There exists an account of that ancient conflict in mythology—the sacrifice of Daksha. Once a worshipper of Shiva extinguished the fire of the Vedic sacrifice, and even today Hindus read that legend with devotion. In Puranic India, the diminishment of the Vedic gods before the Shaiva and Vaishnava faiths is spoken of with pride.

Fifteen hundred years before the birth of Christ, the Iranian Aryans came to Persia—this is the view of European historians. Their sacrificial fire achieved victory. India is a vast land, fertile and densely populated. The various faiths and customs of its aboriginal races were many. Becoming entangled with these, Vedic religion was changed almost beyond recognition and altered in many parts—becoming manifold, even mutually contradictory in its observances; through the admixture of various gods and goddesses of various sects, there was no end to the complexity of religion in India. In Persia and thereabouts, throughout western Asia, habitable land is everywhere limited, and there the scope of arable land too is restricted. In that small territory where the Aryans settled, a pure cohesion remained among them; under the influence of non-Aryan barbarism, their religious rites did not become greatly complicated or corrupted. There is evidence in ancient literature that a dark-skinned, almost Negroid race dwelt in this part of Asia, but they were unable to overwhelm the Aryan-ness of the Iranians.

When the history of Persia emerged clear from the mythological tales of the Shahnameh, more than a thousand years had passed since the Aryans' arrival in Persia. By then we see two branches of the Aryan race occupying the beginning period of Persian history—the Medes and the Persians. The Medes came first and established colonies, followed by the Persians. The leader of these Persians was Hakhamanish. After his name, this race came to be called, in Greek, Achaemenid. Five hundred and fifty years before the birth of Christ, the Achaemenid Persians

freed the whole of Persia from Median rule and unified it under their own dominion. That first, undisputed emperor of the whole of Persia was the famous Cyrus—his true name was Khorash. He did not merely unite all of Persia; he raised that Persia to the pinnacle of so vast an empire as had no equal in that age. A supreme deity of this heroic dynasty was Ahura Mazda. He is akin to the Vedic god Varuna of Indian Aryans. His worship was not merely an attempt to please him through external offerings before an external idol. He asked of his worshippers good thought, good word, and good deed. Like the Vedic Aryan deities of India, he had no temple, and here too, just as there, the fire-altar was central.

Among the Semitic peoples of that time, warfare knew no religion of mercy. Slaughter of a country's people, plunder, destruction, enslavement, banishment—this was the custom. But the statecraft of Cyrus and his successive emperors was the opposite of this. In conquered lands they established justice, good governance, and peace, thereby making them prosperous. European historians say that Persian kings waged war with moderation, showed unfailing benevolence toward conquered peoples, did not interfere in their religion or their customs, and preserved their own native leaders in their positions. The chief reason for this was that, whether in war or in conquering lands, they could never forget their code of religious ethics.

In Babylonia and Assyria, idol-worship was the practice. Conquerors would carry off and plunder these idols of conquered peoples. Cyrus's practice was the opposite. Wherever he found such plundered idols, he returned every one of them to their original temples.

Not long after, his kinsman Darius rescued the empire from the hand of the enemy and extended it far further still. The founding of Persepolis dates from his time. In this era, the many monuments of Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Greece, and similar lands found expression chiefly by taking shelter in temples of the gods, but no trace of this is found in Achaemenid rule. Wherever, on some mountainside, a depiction of the defeat of enemies is carved, there too, at the very top, is engraved the image of Ahura Mazda, the venerated god of the Zoroastrians—that is, it is acknowledged within that very carving that their own success is by his grace alone. But there is no evidence that worship was conducted by installing images in temples. Traces of

fire-worship are found as symbolic representation. There is no doubt that, from history's very beginning, the simple worship of one god helped give unity and strength to the Persian people.

There is no possibility of remaining stable while holding a vast empire in one's grasp. One must constantly carry it forward on the path of growth, especially where hostile forces surround it on every side. Through such perpetual effort, weakness and exhaustion appear. At last, under sudden blows, the excessively bloated body of the state collapses from every side. Within any race or royal dynasty, the strength to bear the weight of empire for a very long time simply cannot endure. Because empire itself is an unnatural entity—the units of which it is composed lack singleness of purpose among themselves, and constantly, internally, strive to break free from the bond of coercion; besides, its widely extended boundaries keep coming into contact with manifold disputes. The Achaemenid Empire too, gradually growing weak under its own excessive weight, finally received its final blow at the hand of Alexander. That it fell under a single blow was not due to Alexander alone. The bearers of an excessively vast dominion's burden are one day bound to certainly rebel; broken-thighed, dust-strewn, like the dead Duryodhana, the fragment-ruined Persepolis bears witness to this truth today. It is well known that the empire Alexander patched together also inherited that same truth, with but a short lifespan of its own.

From here, after another hour's journey, we reached the village of Sadatabad for our midday meal. A large-sized village, with densely-packed houses of raw brick and mud, shops and eating-places, on either side of the road. Passing through, I saw on the right side of the road, spread over the earth, various coloured wildflowers thick in a cluster. Beneath the shade of tall elms, a slender stream of water flowed with a cool, gurgling sound. In this delightful grove, a carpet was spread upon the grass and we dined—pilau, meat, fruit, and a generous quantity of buttermilk.

Clouds are gathering in the sky. Ninety miles from here is a small town called Abadeh, where we are to spend the night. Far off can be seen mountain peaks marked with the tilaka-line of snow. Leaving behind the village of Dehbid, we reached Surmaq. Along the road, the chief government official there went ahead

to convey his welcome. At about five o'clock we reached the town palace. Tomorrow, setting out at dawn, we shall reach Isfahan by noon.

Those who are true travellers are of an altogether different breed. On one hand, their body and mind are ever-restless; on the other, they have an easy grace amid the unfamiliar. Those who keep the body still while letting only the mind travel belong to another category. Yet, in the mediation of railway and motor-car, this distinction between the two kinds has been erased. The travel of the base sort of person is only for coming from one's own corner to another corner equally one's own. In our spiritual language, they would be called of lesser attainment. They buy cheap tickets for a bound route, thinking their travel along the path of liberation is thus complete—but with great fanfare they return once more to their own narrow circle, into their profit, having perhaps gathered only pride.

The discipline of true travel is not in my nature—at least not at this age. Those who are true seekers find joy of their own nature in hardship's austerities; upon them falls the noble burden of finding the way. They are the worthy possessors, and it is they alone who reap travel's ultimate fruit. I, for the present, went on by motor-car toward Isfahan.

The morning was overcast; preparations for it had been under way since yesterday evening. Today the cold has set in properly. Over the monotonous, near-empty plain, the shadow of imminent rain spreads wide. The mountain-range girding the horizon lay veiled in bluish indistinctness. Hour after hour I have travelled, along an endless, meandering road through land bearing no mark of habitation. But where are the people? Why does no farmer come to the field with plough and yoke? On market day, does no one go to market; is there no need for anyone to go and weed the crop-fields? Armed watchmen stand far apart from one another, from which one can guess that beyond that horizon, in some unseen backstage, somewhere the manifold-conflicted business of human life goes on. In the fields, here and there crops, here and there for a long stretch only weeds, on which white flower-clusters nod atop tall stalks. Now and then a small river, but no village clings to it. Women do not draw water there, wash clothes there, bathe there, or let cattle drink there; it flows past the foot of desolate mountains, like a widow bereft of children. After a long while, without preamble, a mud-walled village suddenly appears, and shortly

after there is no continuation of it. Once more that empty plain, and at the plain's far edge, mountains enclosing all.

Going along the road, at one place I saw this high plateau suddenly rent and sunk down, and from that chasm-floor a steep mountain rising. Upon this mountain's face, in tiers, in clusters, human dwellings—like the nests of sand-martins in the crumbling bank of the Padma. Cut off on every side, for entry into these hollow-dwellings there are narrow bridges of joined split-wood. This human hive is named Yazd-i-Khast.

Noon has struck. From the citizens of Isfahan came a party bearing welcome by motor-car. Along with that welcome was combined a poem by a poet of the village of Shah-Reza. I set down here the English translation of that poem:

"The caravans of India always carry sugar but this time it has the perfume of the muse. O caravan, please stop your march, because burning hearts are following thee like the butterflies which burn around the flame of candles.

O zephyr, softly blow and whisper on the tomb of Saadi. Thereupon in joy Saadi will come to life in his tomb.

Tagore, he is the unique, the philosopher who knows what is past and what the future holds.

Let his arrival be blessed and fortunate in the land of the great Cyrus, an august descendant of whom to-day fortunately wears the crown of Persia."

Along the roadside appeared rows of elm, poplar, olive, and mulberry trees. Ahead, upon a sloping mountainside, the far-spread city of Isfahan came into view.

IN PERSIA VI

I had already said beforehand that I did not wish for ceremony, that I be kept in some quiet spot with as much peace as possible. From above, just such an order had come. So I have come to a garden-house. To call it a garden-house is to belittle it. This is a vast, splendidly furnished palace. The Governor here is calm and dignified, gentle in his courtesy—there is in him the mild-spoken, unruffled dignity characteristic of the Eastern temperament.

I hear that the owner of this house was once something like one of our old-fashioned dacoit-landlords. Once, with armed men and soldiers, he committed a great deal of mischief here. Now, his arms and men taken from him, he has been placed under confinement in Tehran—not as a prisoner in jail, but under a form of house-arrest. His sons have been sent to Europe for education. I note some points of difference from the policy of the Government of India. When the sheikh of Mohammera stirred up rebellion against the government, the state moved with troops to attack him. When the sheikh then sued for a truce, that plea was granted. Now he has been given a residence in Tehran. He is kept under watch, but no noose has been fastened round his neck nor chain upon his hands.

When I entered the city in the afternoon, my weary sight and exhausted mind could take in nothing properly. This morning, the sky is clear, the sunlight cool and pleasant. I sit on the veranda of a corner room upstairs. In the garden below, a small pool and fountain surrounded by elm, poplar, and willow trees. Amid the trees in the distance, the dome of a mosque can be seen—like the bud of a blue lotus, made of glossy blue Persian tiles—deeper blue this morning than the thin-cloud-touched sky itself. Along the gravel-strewn road in front, an armed sentry paces up and down.

Throughout all of Persia that I have seen so far, how these people love their gardens! Here there is a famine of the colour green on every side, and so this arrangement to satisfy the eye's hunger. Babur had expressed contempt on seeing the lack of gardens in India. He had come from the desert land, where a garden for such people was not merely a luxury but a necessity. Hence such deep love, since

it had to be won through great effort. Bengal's women do not cultivate colour in their sari-borders the way Western women do, because colour is so abundant on every side here. In Bengal, colour has never bloomed on quilts and coverlets; it is in the West that colourful printed calico with leaf-and-vine patterns is found. It is the Marwari who paints colour on house walls; the Bengali does not.

This morning there was no opportunity for bathing. One after another, the Municipality, the military department, the education department, and the merchants' association came to offer me their courteous greetings.

Past three o'clock I went out to tour the city. Isfahan has one particular characteristic that struck me as beautiful. Human dwelling has not isolated nature into a separate compartment; the city's intimate delight in trees is manifest everywhere. Streams of water flow beneath rows of trees planted in lines—it is as though the very flow of human affection itself. In its close union with trees and plants, the city strikes the eye as a healthy child of nature. Ordinarily, viewing cities from an aeroplane, one feels as if looking at the skin-disease of the earth.

In the middle of this city stands an astonishing monument of human craftsmanship, surrounding a great square. It is named Maidan-i-Shah, that is, the King's Square. Here once was the king's polo-playing ground. At the middle of the southern boundary of this square stands the Masjid-i-Shah. Its construction began in the reign of Shah Abbas the First, and was completed in the time of his son, Shah Abbas the Second. No worship is now conducted here. Under the reign of the present king, ages of accumulated dust are being washed away and the place cleaned. Its architecture is at once towering and grave, and yet gracefully beautiful; its craftsmanship is the fruit of robust strength joined with refined, meticulous devotion. I entered another mosque nearby, the Madrasa-i-Chahar-Bagh. On one hand it is magnificent in its soaring vastness, as though a hymn of stone; on the other hand, adorned throughout with colour-harmony's variegated splendour, it is charming, like a lyric poem. Inside is a courtyard, in which stand ancient chinar and mulberry trees; along the southern side, a spacious hall of worship with an exceptionally lofty dome. The tiles with which its walls are adorned—in some places their glossy, thin colour-glaze has worn away; elsewhere the tiles have had to be replaced in later times, but the new work does not match. That astonishing

blue colour of former times is impossible in this age. What overwhelms the mind about this house of worship is its utterly pure, all-pervading gravity. Nowhere is there a mark of neglect or untidiness. Everywhere a reverent dignity, preserving perfect purity, stands manifest.

In the courtyard of this mosque, those I saw wore the mullah's dress. They looked at us with an air of indifference, perhaps not pleased at heart. I heard that even ten years ago our entry here would not have been possible. That I should feel astonished at hearing this is not open to me. For, even twenty years hence, to hope that some outcast like myself might be allowed to enter the Jagannath temple at Puri would be a mere delusion.

Through the middle of the city flows a river divided into channels amid its sandy bed. Its name is Zayandeh Rud—that is, the "life-giver." At the bottom of this river, wherever one digs, springs come forth from there, hence this name: the "source of life." It is not, like the Ganges near Calcutta, sickly, polluted, and chain-worn. Calcutta has made a slave-maid of the Ganges, not a friend, and therefore the humiliated river has lost its beauty and grace. This ancient city's river is smaller and narrower than the Ganges in comparison, but its healthy beauty flows joy-bearing through the very heart of the city.

I came to see a bridge over this river, named Allahverdi Khan Bridge. Allahverdi was Shah Abbas's general; by the king's order, he built this bridge. There are many bridges, modern and ancient, in the world, but this monument is extraordinary among them. This is a triple-tiered bridge with many arches; it was not built merely so that travellers might pass over the top of it—that is, it is not merely incidental to some other purpose, but is itself an end. It is a creation of that magnificent age which, even amid the pressure of its own affairs, never forgot its own dignity.

Crossing the bridge, I went on to the Armenian church here. Crowds had gathered both outside and within the church.

I went inside. An ancient church. The walls and ceiling of the prayer-hall are painted, ornamented. The lower portion of the wall bears fine Persian tile-work; the remaining part is painted with mythological pictures illustrating Bible stories. It

is said that some Italian painter, coming here while travelling, painted these pictures.

Three hundred years have passed since Shah Abbas brought many thousands of Armenians from Russia to settle in Isfahan. They were skilled craftsmen. The world-conquering kings of that age did not hesitate to plunder artisans along with works of art. After Shah Abbas's death, persecution against them began. At last, under Nadir Shah's reign, the oppression grew so unbearable it could no longer be endured. It was at that very time that the Armenians first fled to India. Under the present king's reign they suffer no such hardship. But whatever renown they once had for craftsmanship seems now to have largely faded.

I returned home through the bazaar. For some occasion today, all the shop doors were shut. I came upon the city's long avenue of chinar trees. Under the king's reign, water once flowed through a tiled channel down the middle of this road; here and there fountains played, and there were flowerbeds. Necessity itself had been turned into an object of affection; even the road held invitation and hospitality.

Thoughts of the astonishing mosques I have seen around the square at Isfahan keep circling in my mind. This creation belongs to an age far removed—not merely in terms of time, but in terms of the human mind's scale. In that age, one powerful man was the representative of the whole populace. Just as, at the earth's creation, in the force of an earthquake, a great mountain would rise up—these mountains are called, in Sanskrit, bhudhara, meaning that each such towering peak was believed to hold the whole earth firmly in place. Similarly, in the primal age of human society, one leader after another, gathering into himself the strength of all mankind, expressed the common people within his own person. In this the common people found joy, seeing their own fulfilment. Just as such a one alone assumed the responsibility of all, so too did the glory of all reside in him alone—to the many, across ages, he was accountable. If there was any deficiency at all in his monument, that dishonour belonged to the many, across the ages. For this reason, achievements difficult almost beyond accomplishment were realised by the great men of that time. That achievement was, on one hand, great in its own individuality, and yet, on the other, universal. To give shape to that vastness which

man loves to imagine in his own self-expression lies beyond the capacity of ordinary men.

For this reason, the task of giving it fit form belonged to the king, the ruler of men. The king dwelt in the royal palace, but that palace, in truth, belonged to all the subjects; through the king, all the subjects possessed that palace. It was for this reason that gigantic works of art became possible in ancient times, resting upon the figure of the king. Seeing the ruins remaining of King Darius's royal hall at Persepolis, one feels it entirely disproportionate to the use of any one particular individual. In truth, a vast era had made its home within it—in that age, all mankind was expressed in one man alone.

The monument of Persepolis, now fallen into ruin, reveals that that age has gone, broken. Such a monument can never be built again. Along the edge of that very plain which today's age ploughs and grazes cattle upon, along the very road by which today's age carries its goods, these colossal columns stand, having lost their own meaning.

Yet it seems that, had it not by chance been destroyed, even so it could not have remained in the midst of today's world. Just as the Ajanta caves exist, and yet do not exist. Those broken pillars carry only a mere symbol of the past age, having left the confused present far behind. All the grand significance of that symbol points toward the past. Below, along the road, raising dust, roars the motor-car like some lowly creature. That too cannot be despised; in it too there is human grandeur. But these are two separate species, not of one kin. In one lies opportunity for all; in the other, self-glorification for all. In the manifestation of this self-glorification we were able to see how the man of that bygone age sought to see himself, each in his own small measure, merged into one supreme personage, appearing as one vast form. The value of that form is not measured by its necessity—whatever exceeds necessity by far is what we call splendour. Man cannot see that splendour in its extraordinary form unless it is expressed through some powerful figure pouring forth his strength within some overwhelmingly powerful being. Each person's own small strength is spent daily upon small necessities; that day-to-day journey cannot embrace grandeur beyond necessity. That age of splendour—splendour that could afford to disdain necessity—has now passed. Its pomp and ceremony this present

age refuses to bear. Therefore, if the monuments of that age were to press themselves upon today's living present, they would obstruct the expression of this present age.

Man's genius lies in ever-fresh awakening, not in prolonging any single manifestation indefinitely, however beautiful, however great that manifestation may be. The temple at Madurai, the mosque at Isfahan, are documents of the existence of ancient times—if they were to occupy the present age, I should call that usurpation. That they are no longer living is proved by the fact that they can no longer sustain their own tradition. They may, perhaps, be imitated from outside, but within themselves the passion for new creation has run dry.

Their defence is that they are still, even now, vehicles of religion. But in this present day, no sectarian religion survives possessing the pure essential truth of religion. Whatever bricks and mortar were used to prop up and keep those sects standing, generation after generation, belong entirely to another age's customs, judgements, traditions, beliefs, and folklore. Their rituals, their disciplines, press one age's history down beneath another age, holding it back.

Sectarian religion itself is a thing of former times. That some fixed doctrine and ritual of ancient times must be observed by all in all ages alike—that is the rule of sectarianism. In truth, for so long, royal power and priestly power have proceeded hand in hand together. Both have seized from the common people the burden of their self-governance, of their thought, of their worship, and stored it away concentrated elsewhere. If any particular individual, by the promptings of his own thinking mind, has attempted independence, that has been thrown into the category of rebellion and governed with life-threatening severity. But political power has gradually spread from the hand of a single centre out to the periphery of the common people, while religious sects bound to fixed doctrine, as though forever unchanging, still today seek to overwhelm and paralyse everyone's mind through a single dominion—through fear, through greed, through allurement, through delusion. This can no longer continue. For this reason, if men today try forcibly to preserve every relic of such sectarian religion, they will lose the strength of their own minds; even though grown to age, they will remain as worthless as the child who, past his years, still clings to his mother's lap with a girlish nature.

I do not say that ancient monuments should not survive. Let them survive—but only as vehicles of memory, not as fields of practical use. As, say, the Scandinavian sagas exist—we shall acknowledge them as poetry, not use them as scripture. As Paradise Lost exists—for enjoyment, not for obedience. In Europe there exist many ancient cathedrals, but the medieval religious sensibility from which they arose has, deep within, undergone change. The ghat remains; the water has receded. There is no harm in keeping a boat tied at that ghat, but that boat cannot be rowed. Age after age, the sphere of knowledge expands, its experience is corrected, its condition changes; if, alongside all this, man's mind does not likewise purify the religion entangled in immovable custom, then, in the name of religion, either hypocrisy or foolishness or self-deception will inevitably accumulate. For this reason, sectarian religious sentiment has done man no less harm than worldly greed has done—perhaps more. In the delusion of worldly attachment, man becomes unjust and cruel to whatever degree; but from attachment to religious doctrine, man becomes far more unjust, blind, and violent than that—history bears continuous witness to this; and its most dreadful proof is one we in India receive, close to home, every single day, more than anywhere else on earth.

In connection with all this, it has also occurred to me that Manu's counsel was sound. The very nature of the world is that it moves ever onward, and yet, past a certain age, those whose minds can no longer keep pace with time should remain distant from worldly affairs—as distant as the Ellora caves, as the statues of Khandagiri, remain. If they have brought fulfilment to their own age, then they possess value—but that value is the value of an ideal. An ideal has attained fixed permanence in one place, and it is by that very fixity that we use it as a standard of measurement. If somewhere in the water a mountain stands with its head raised, then, comparing it to that mountain, we can understand how high the flood's turbulence has risen; but the mountain has no business with the current itself. Likewise, when the monuments and personalities of great men become disconnected from prevailing life-currents, they may still serve us, if for nothing else, as instruments for constructing an ideal. Such an ideal does not encourage imitation; it instils momentum within strength. The great man exists not merely to be multiplied within himself, but to carry every man forward toward the utmost fulfilment of his own strength. If the sage of ancient times still serves that ideal

purpose, then he is meaningful even in the new age. But if he vows to have himself endlessly repeated forever, then he will only create refuse.

Whatever mind habit takes hold of becomes disconnected from active thought—that is, the bond between the current of consciousness and the matter contemplated grows slack. When the season for flower or fruit is over, the branch's flow of sap tries to reject it; yet if it still clings stubbornly to its stem, that is pure loss. For this reason I approve of Manu's saying—panchashordhvam vanam vrajet—"past fifty, one should retire to the forest." Only through independent strength of thought, through questioning, through testing, does man's mental disposition remain healthy and vigorous. Those who are truly ageing should not destroy or obstruct society's newly diligent, ever-testing, questioning, and robust health—this was Manu's intent. Any society ruled by the aged or the elderly is crippled; the working strength of the aged is unnatural, and therefore that labour is not healthy. The activity of their minds, by the law of their own nature, gradually withdraws from the outward and turns inward. So for the sake of their own fulfilment too, it becomes their duty to relinquish the position of guardian and retire quietly from worldly life—to think this would cause harm is merely a form of pride.

Today is the twenty-sixth. It is only fifteen days since I left home. Yet it feels as though a long time has passed. On reflection, I found the reason is not that the sorrow of unaccustomed exile has made time seem eternal. The real reason is this: at home, I live bound very closely to myself, occupied with the small durations of countless minor tasks. Here I remain, to a considerable extent, having transcended myself and my own concerns, existing above a broad, wide-ranging role. Just as, from ground level, one sees only a little of the country, whereas from a detached height above one sees a great deal more, so, coming away from time bound in the net of one's own joys and sorrows, buried under a heap of necessities, one is able to see a great span of time all at once. Then it feels as if I see not the day, but the age; I see the pages of history, not the paragraphs of a newspaper.

Under the Governor's arrangement, these two evenings, after dinner, I have heard the music here for about an hour at a time. It is quite pleasant. The stringed instrument that is played with a plectrum ranges, in its movement, from the most

delicate soft murmur to a powerful ringing sound. The instrument used to keep time is called the dombak; the sound of its beats has more variety than our own tabla-baya.

Today is my last day in Isfahan; this afternoon, welcome on behalf of the municipal council. The palace to which I am invited dates from the era of Shah Abbas, named Chehel Sotoun. Its portico is graced with ranks of towering stone pillars; behind it, an assembly hall; and behind that, a spacious room—its walls painted with varied pictures. At some time, a certain unenlightened administrator had covered the whole thing over with whitewash. Under the recent regime the pictures are being uncovered once again.

My work here is finished.

Occasionally one comes upon a city whose essential character is wholly clear, with which acquaintance deepens at every moment. Isfahan is such a city. It is one of Persia's holy places. Within it, not merely the strength but the love of many ages remains alive.

Isfahan is a very ancient city of Persia. In the written account of an ancient traveller it is recorded that before the madrasa and tomb of the Seljuk sultan Muhammad there once lay a colossal idol of a god. Some sultan had brought it from India. Its weight was about a thousand maunds.

In the latter part of the tenth century, Emperor Shah Abbas moved his capital here from Ardabil. This Shah Abbas, of the Safavid dynasty, is among the memorable figures of the world's kings.

When he ascended the throne he was sixteen years old; he died at sixty. His reign began amid war and revolution. The unification of the whole of Persia was his great achievement. His fame for justice, generosity, and splendour spread everywhere. His magnanimity was much like that of Delhi's Emperor Akbar. They were, indeed, contemporaries. Under his rule there was no persecution of communities of other religions. Not only in matters of governance—under his reign, architecture and

other arts in Persia rose to their highest point. After forty-three years of reign, he died.

With his death ended his glory too. At length, one of his last descendants, Shah Sultan Hossein, bowing before the throne of Sultan Mahmud, the conqueror of Persia, said: "Son, since the Lord of the Universe no longer wills my reign, I therefore hereby surrender my empire into your hands."

After this came Afghan rule. Murders and assassinations advanced among the rulers. Plunder and destruction on every side. Isfahan was torn asunder by tyranny.

At last came Nadir Shah. In childhood he herded goats; at last, one day, through fortune's whim, driving out both Afghans and Turks, this shepherd mounted the throne of Shah Abbas. His victory-banner flew as far as Delhi. When he returned to his own kingdom, he brought back with him plundered treasure worth many crores of rupees, and the Peacock Throne. In his last years his temper turned violent; he had his own eldest son's eyes gouged out. Madness overtook his brain. At last he met his death, asleep in his tent, by the dagger-thrust of one of his own attendants; thus ended the victorious royal glory upon an ignoble deathbed.

After this, for half a century, there was seizing and counter-seizing, murder upon murder, blinding upon blinding. In the whirlpool of revolution, the blood-soaked royal crown rose and burst again and again like a red bubble, moment by moment. From somewhere came the Qajar Turk, Agha Muhammad Khan. Killing, plundering, taking thousands of women and children captive, he raised the pinnacle of his bestiality at the city of Kerman, taking, by count, seventy thousand gouged-out eyes of the townspeople as tribute. The ultimate achievement of Muhammad Khan's brigandry lay in Khorasan, where sat as king Nadir Shah's ill-fated blind son, Shah Rukh. To extract from the secret royal treasury the priceless plunder Nadir Shah had brought from Hindustan, the chief of the bandits began daily torturing Shah Rukh. At last one day they fitted a cap around Shah Rukh's head and poured molten lead into it. Thus were both Shah Rukh's life and his ancestral treasure obtained. After this, gradually, the merchant-traders of Europe came upon Asia, and another chapter of history began in the conflict of East and West. As Persia's cyclical fortunes began spiraling anew, that same Qajar dynasty's king sat upon the

throne. Entangling the country in the coils of foreign debt, he was drunk with pleasure-seeking; the royal sceptre in his feeble hand was moved by the beckoning finger of the foreigner.

At such a time appeared Reza Shah. Persia's decrepit, tattered state-power has today, everywhere, become bright and renewed. Today, looking at the Isfahan before me, much of the long-accumulated dark fog has cleared from over it. It is evident that the grace of Isfahan has not been destroyed despite this long era of calamity.

The astonishing thing is that Persia has repeatedly been crushed—at the hands of the Arab, the Turk, the Mongol, the Afghan—yet its life-force has been able to reveal itself again and again. It seems to me the chief reason for this is that under the Achaemenid, Sassanid, and Safavid kings, Persia's overall unity has repeatedly been strongly reinforced. Persia is completely one; in its civilisation there exists no crack of divisive tendency in any form. When struck, it suffers, but it does not split. Russia and England together once sat down to divide its state-existence into two. Had there been internal division within it, it would not have taken long for Europe's blows to break it into pieces. But the very moment a powerful national leader came forward with a modest force of troops and issued his call, the whole country did not delay in acknowledging him; it was quickly shown that Persia is one.

That Persia is one, inwardly and utterly, has its chief proof visible in the history of its art. In the art and sculpture that flourished in Persia during the Achaemenid age, there is evidence of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Egyptian influence. Indeed, in works like the construction of palaces of that time, craftsmen of many nationalities within that vast empire were employed. But that varied influence attained distinctive unity through the Persian temperament. I quote here what Roger Fry has said on this matter:

"This extreme adaptability is, I think, a constant trait in Persian art. … We tend, perhaps, at the present time to exaggerate the importance of originality in an art; we admire in it the expression of an independent and self-contained people, forgetting that originality may arise from a want of flexibility in the artist's make-up as well as from a new imaginative outlook."

Various influences come from every direction; a rigid intellect resists them, while a conscious intelligence receives them, giving them unity within itself. If there exists within oneself a living principle of unity, one can transform the manifold of the outside world into oneself. Persia, in its history and in its art, has assimilated external influences into itself.

One day in the history of Persia, when the Arabs came, a fundamental change occurred quite suddenly in its character. It should be remembered that the practice of forcibly imposing religious conversion had not yet been adopted by the Arabs at that time. In the early period of Arab rule, people of various communities lived together in Persia, and individual artistic freedom of taste was not obstructed. In Persia, Islam gradually converted the inhabitants in accordance with their own free will. Before this, as in India, social class-division in Persia had been rigid, and correspondingly, class-based injustice and humiliation had certainly caused suffering to the common people. There is no doubt that the equal right to worship God among one's own community, and the intimate kinship among fellow believers, drew the hearts of the subjects toward this religion. Under the influence of this religion, as Persian art's form changed, linear ornamentation and floral design gained prominence. After that, the Turks came and shattered the Arab Empire and, along with it, its many monuments; finally came the Mongol. Let these destroyers of monuments cause whatever devastation they might at first; gradually, artistic zeal came to spread even among themselves. Thus, despite being repeatedly shattered from age to age, new eras of art have come again and again to Persia. Through the successive periods of Achaemenid, Sassanid, Arab, Seljuk, Mongol, and finally Safavid rule, the stream of art has bent and turned time and again, and yet has never been lost—such an example is, I believe, to be seen in no other country.

IN PERSIA VII

29 April. We set out from Isfahan toward Tehran. Even beyond the city, green fields stretched far into the distance, with trees and running water. Villages appeared now and then, some of them abandoned. The mud walls and ruined buildings stood in various postures of decay, their roofs gone, nothing left above the walls. In one place, before just such a deserted, ruined village, lay the skeleton of a camel by the roadside. That broken dwelling and this creature's ribs seemed to speak the same truth. The beasts that once bore the burdens of life remain for a time, lifeless, mute, and then the breath departs, leaving them to the kites. The mud houses here are like mud tents—raised in hasty answer to immediate need, and once that need has passed, their worth is spent. I watch, and I think: this, perhaps, is well. To build is easy, and to abandon is just as easy. There is no burden of binding oneself and an unfamiliar tomorrow to one dwelling.

If man had but a single body to serve, generation after generation—one official body for fourteen generations, built sturdily of elephant bone and seven-ply hide of the rhinoceros, well-suited, more or less, to many, but not ideally fitted to any one person—surely that ill-fitting frame would not please the living soul. To try to make one's dwelling-house permanent across generations goes against the very nature of life. An old house, before it has even outlived its own age, is bound to become a ruin. The new generation, disregarding the wasted labour of the forefathers, goes off to build afresh in a new quarter. What is strange is that even this new generation, in order to create the very same ruin for some future age, begins laying an immovable foundation measured for ten generations to come. That is to say, even in dying, it remains enchanted by the fancy that it will go on living in its own house across all the ages yet unborn. It seems to me that buildings meant not for private use but for offices charged with lasting duty are the proper place for such architecture of permanence.

Going on a little further, that same barren, dry earth appeared again, wrapped in its ochre shawl, unadorned in its detachment. By midday we reached Delijan. The Governor of Isfahan had pitched a tent here and arranged rest for us. We took our meal in this tent. Qum is some further distance from here; our road runs past it. From afar could be seen the gold-crowned dome of its famous mosque.

By five in the afternoon the car reached the outskirts of Tehran, and our first acquaintance with the city began. Before we entered, we saw, like some clattering herald of the present age, a factory building—a sugar refinery. In an adjoining house, a group of Zoroastrians came down to receive me. In deference to my weary body, I had to take my leave quickly. After that, I entered a great tent to receive the welcome of the citizens of Tehran. The Minister of Education presided over the gathering. When, after tea, the ceremony of welcome came to an end, the chairman took me to a great garden-house. Its lawns were embroidered with flowers of every hue. The air was suffused with the sweetness of roses; here and there were pools and fountains, and a rich variety of shade-giving trees in cool array. I never had the chance to offer my gratitude to the one who had vacated this house for us and gone elsewhere. One of his relations, Agha Assadi, has taken charge of looking after us. He is a graduate of Columbia University in New York and well acquainted with the whole of my English writing. He served as the bridge of my conversation with the guests.

A few days ago King Faisal of Iraq arrived here, and the secretaries here are extremely occupied with him. Today, as I sat in the garden in the mild afternoon sun,

two ambassadors of Iraq came to see me. They said the King wished to speak with me. I told them that on my way back to India, I would pay my respects to the King at Baghdad.

This evening a gentleman came, and from him I heard Persian music on the violin. He played one melody that differed hardly at all from our own Bhairon-Ramkeli. He played with such tenderness, the ornamentations at every turn so varied yet so restrained and measured, that a deep sweetness settled into my heart. It was plain that he was a master, not a mere tradesman. In trade, skill grows, but the sense of feeling diminishes—as the confectioner loses his taste for sweets by the very trade he practises. Our own singers and musicians at home seldom remember that the chief law of art is proportion, for its task is to give clear expression to form. Form becomes true through due limit; to exceed that limit is excess, and excess is distortion. If a man's nose, forsaking its proper dignity, begins to stretch toward the

trunk of an elephant, if his neck grows desperate to rival the giraffe's and stiffens accordingly—then such extravagance increases mere bulk, not beauty. Ordinarily, in our musical gatherings this monstrous excess runs riot like a drunken elephant trampling through a lotus-pond. Most of its ornaments are simple repetitions, trifling variations repeated again and again in many places. This piles up bulk, and beauty is destroyed. It is like draping a slender, graceful woman in a thousand coiling wraps of skirt and veil. That veil may be costly, yet it ill becomes it to claim the audacity of surpassing beauty itself. The reason for such a strange perversion of taste is this: our masters have settled it that the chief aim of music is not to express the whole song in its own harmonious wholeness, but to whip the raga into a foaming frenzy of heroic excess—not to make the edifice of music stand firm and well-proportioned upon its foundation, but to fire off brick and mortar in salvoes from the mouth of the throat's own cannon.

They forget that the fullness of art lies precisely within well-measured completeness. Between the one who composes a song and the one who performs it there may be, perhaps, some kinship of temperament, but an equality of creative power between the two is not commonly possible. If the Creator, having made the mere skeletal frame of His living creation, had then taken His leave, leaving it to whoever held authority to pile as much flesh and fat upon that skeleton as he pleased, surely that would have amounted to an act of uncreation. Yet in our country the singer, at every turn, assumes the authority of a creator; then he mounts upon the shoulders of the Maker Himself and proclaims the prowess of a mere gymnast. Someone may answer: but it pleases. Yet the pleasure of the belly and the pleasure of true taste are not the same thing. What pleases is itself a matter for debate. The confectioner who makes the syrup-ball supplies, of his own accord, syrup in due proportion to the sweet. The one who merely serves cannot fashion the sweet, but it is easy enough for him to pour on an excess of sugar syrup. That sugar syrup pleases many; let it be so—still, that mere pleasure is no true measure of art.

Meanwhile an old-style master came and played some music for me, from which I understood that here too evening falls upon the path of song, and the fear of the tiger arises; that here too, whoever wishes may, upon the veena of Saraswati,

stretch Ravana's own string and, merely by force of the throat, drag it out longer and longer.

Today I had my first meeting with the King of Persia. In the great carpeted hall of the palace there is scarcely any ostentation of furnishing. The King wore a khaki military uniform. In an extremely short span of time, with a swift hand, he has rescued the Persian kingdom from the depths of misfortune and now sits enthroned in its heart. In such a situation a man is prone to proclaim, with excessive pomp, the new dignity he has newly won. But he bears his royal majesty with the utmost ease. He is a man of very simple greatness; in the set of his face there is a powerful firmness, and in the gaze of his eyes a generous largeness of spirit. Upon the throne

he had neither hereditary right nor claim of noble birth; yet no sooner had he taken his seat upon the throne than his place was instantly acknowledged in the hearts of his subjects. He has been king a mere ten years, yet the throne's surrounding hedge of apprehension and unease has not grown thorny with excessive caution. The other day I heard that a new road was being built, and the King himself stood on the road, without any pomp, engaged in inspecting the work.

Meanwhile, one day I met the Prime Minister. I told him: I am glad to see that you have softened the fierce prejudices of long ages and rendered communal hatred harmless in this kingdom.

He said: We have not yet achieved success to the degree we wish. We are all human beings after all; it is strange indeed that humane and gracious relations among us should not come easily.

When I said that Persia's present striving toward progress might one day serve as an example for India, he replied: There is a vast difference between India and Persia as to their political condition. One must remember that Persia's population is one crore twenty lakhs, while India's is over thirty crores—and that thirty crores is divided in countless ways. Persia's problem is far simpler, for we are one people in race and in religion, one in language. Our chief task is to render the machinery of governance faultless and thoroughly fit for purpose.

I said: the very vastness of a country's extent is its greatest enemy. China and India are proof of that. Japan, being small, has grown great so quickly. Naturally, the political wisdom of other civilised nations, bound as they are by unity, will not serve for India. The particular policy suited here must arise, through the working of many conflicts, from within this land itself.

When he had gone, I sat and fell to thinking that unity is the very first thing, and the thing most needed, in our country—and yet the obstacles to unity are lodged in our very bones. The bigotry of the Indian Muslim binds his own society tightly and exclusively within itself, keeping the outside at a distance; the bigotry of the Hindu divides his own society within itself into a thousand fragments, and beyond that, holds itself apart even from what lies outside. Our country is made up of these two communities of opposite temperament. It is as though two twin brothers were bound back to back; the movement of the one's foot is bound to obstruct the movement of the other's. Neither can the two be wholly severed, nor can they wholly be made one.

A few Mullahs came to see me. The chief Mullah put a question: the various scriptures of various peoples point in various directions—by what means can one determine, from among them, the path of truth?

I said: if someone, with the doors and windows of the room all shut, should ask, "By what means shall I get light?"—one man answers by striking a flint; one speaks of an oil lamp, one of a wax candle, one lights an electric lamp. All these instruments and methods are of many kinds, and their cost varies greatly, and their effect is not equal. Those who do not speak with scripture set before them, whose wisdom is simple and direct, say: open the door. Be good, love, do good—this alone is the path. Where scripture and doctrine and the rigours of ritual observance hold sway, there the zeal of the pious, beginning with wrangling over words, ends by reaching the cutting of throats.

The Mullah's ardour for argument was not yet spent, but I had no more time to give.

IN PERSIA VIII

Today, the 5th of May, I gave my first address at the public gathering in Tehran.

When the assembly broke up, we were taken to the house of a musician of this place. We entered through a small lane into the house. There was a stone-paved courtyard, with a small pool of water in its midst, roses growing on trees, small tables set out with tea things. In front stood a veranda, where a band of musicians waited. Among the instruments were a stringed instrument, a flute, and several violins besides. When we had taken our seats there, the chief musician said: I know you wish that the true form of our country's traditional art should not be lost. We too wish the same. While preserving the native distinctiveness of our music, we try to unite with it something of the European theory of harmony.

I said: History shows that the Persians possess a great capacity for assimilation. In almost every country of Asia today, a mingling of Western thought with Eastern thought is taking place. In this mingling lies the possibility of new creation. In the first stage of such a union, the difference in hue between the two currents remains distinct, and the force of mere imitation does not die away. But gradual, inward union comes to pass if there is living vitality within that union; as with the graft upon the mango tree, the distinction between the new and the old is absorbed and lost, and a particular richness of flavour is born within the fruit. This has happened in our modern literature; I do not see why it should not happen in music as well. We are waiting for that state of mind through which such a union becomes possible. If European music-appreciation were to spread as widely among the educated classes of the East as European literary culture has spread over a long time among many, then, without doubt, a new infusion of strength would come to the expression of feeling in Eastern music. It has already been seen how the influence of Eastern painting has been carried into modern European painting;

by this its own identity is not overcome, but rather it grows richer and more vigorous in its variety.

After this he played a single melody alone upon his stringed instrument. It was pure Bhairavi, and it entered into the heart of every listener present. He said: I know that a melody of this kind moves us in one particular way, but a thing of quite another kind also has its own special worth. To let jealousy grow between the two, and reject the one for love of the other, is to bring loss upon oneself.

Who can say—if this man has the strength, then the new commerce he is fostering in Persian music may, in time, perhaps prove a gain to the whole realm of art. No one can say with certainty that our raga-based system of melody, even while acknowledging European harmony, is utterly incapable of preserving its own self intact. What sport the power of creation may yet play, no fixed rule of ours can determine its bounds beforehand. But to give creation a new form is possible only through a poet of particular power, and is not the work of the unskilled or the mediocre. Just as European literature has its great treasure, so too has its music. If we cannot understand it, that is the poverty of our own understanding; but if it should prove wholly impossible to receive it, that in itself is no proof of nobility.

Today is the 6th of May. By the European calendar this is my birthday. My Persian friends have been showering flowers since morning in honour of this day. All around me lies heaped the spring's flowers of every hue, roses above all. Gifts too have been arriving, of many kinds. I have received a medal from the government here, and along with it a royal decree. I told my friends: I was first born in my own country, and on that day only my kinsfolk acknowledged me. Later, the day on which you all acknowledged me—that day my birth became the birth of all the world entire; I am twice-born.

In the afternoon there was an invitation to a tea gathering at the house of the Minister of Education. At that gathering many of this country's leading men, as well as diplomatic representatives of foreign nations, were present. There, in conversation with a Persian gentleman, the subject arose of how, despite receiving, again and again over long ages, the most cruel blows at the hands of foreign invaders—the Mongols and Afghans especially—Persia has nevertheless kept her genius alive; this, he said, is a matter of great wonder. He said: it is the language and literature, flowing on and sheltering the whole people, whose unbroken continuity has kept Persia alive. When the harshness of drought scorched her from

without, her inward resource was her own river. This has not only preserved Persia's essential self, but those very peoples who came to destroy Persia received, in turn, new life from her—from the Arabs onward to the Mongols. The Arabs, the Turks, the Mongols came with empty hands, bearing nothing but weapons. The Arab gave Persia religion, but Persia gave the Arab her manifold learning, her arts, her wealth of civilisation. Persia has made Islam rich and splendid.

7th May. This morning I went to call upon the Prime Minister. A vast, grand drawing room, adorned with crystal, somewhat worn in places now. The Minister is elderly, of my own age. I told him that the climate of India has exacted a far heavier toll upon our manner of living than it does here.

He said: age's claim does no such great harm as does the excess and disorder of diet and habit. In former times our habits of living were suited to our way of life; now new foreign habits have come in, creating disharmony.

Let me give an example. To lay carpets upon the floor has always been our custom, and joined with that custom is the habit of removing one's shoes before entering the house. Nowadays, in the European fashion, we drag the very shoe from the street, dust and all, into the room. The carpet becomes unwholesome. Once we sat upon the carpeted floor; now, for the sake of sofas and chairs, we have given the worth and dignity of costly, richly varied carpets over to be trampled underfoot.

From there we went to the house of the Speaker of Parliament. These are thoughtful, learned, experienced men; there is much to speak of with them, but conversation does not flow. To converse through translation is like cutting a path forward step by step with a spade. I met the one who had translated my poem "Yesterday" into Persian verse and metre. He was cheerful, round-faced, overflowing with warmth of heart. He recited the poem in a resonant voice, with great animation, gesturing vigorously. As I was leaving, the chairman presented me with a beautifully calligraphed volume of the poems of the poet Anwari.

At night I went to the theatre to see a play performed. Drama and dramatic performance are a recent importation into Persia. It has not yet quite settled into the people's hearts. Hence the whole affair still had a somewhat raw quality. The

plot of the play was taken from the Shahnameh. As in the plays of our own country, songs were interspersed here and there, and, I think, there was an outpouring of patriotic sentiment. I was surprised to see that most of the women's roles were taken by Muslim women.

In the afternoon there was a foundation-laying ceremony for a Zoroastrian school. Returning from that duty, I found, in our garden, beneath the trees, a great crowd waiting around a pool. All had been invited by the literary society here. My part was

to give an address in English on the theory of literature, while theirs was to build, here and there throughout it, a bridge of Persian translation.

Like a wayfarer walking his road, I have gone on today seeing the pictures of this place as I passed. There is no time to see anything fully. The impressions forming in my mind are impressions of swift glimpses—not understanding reached through deliberation, but merely the sensation of a mental hand passing lightly over things. As, for instance, the other day I had a sudden brief conversation with a certain man. A kind of shadow-picture has remained in my mind, caught in a flash of light. He was a scholar of astronomy and mathematics. Serene was his bearing, and his face showed the clarity of an untroubled mind. His dress was that of a Mullah, but his intellect was free from the bondage of superstition; he is modern, and yet eternally Persian. In this man, glimpsed but for a moment, I saw the self-contained, native-rooted image of Persia—that Persia which once produced Avicenna, matchless master of science and philosophy, and in which Jalaluddin gave voice, through the sweetest of music, to the profoundest self-realisation. I have already spoken of Professor Foroughi. He too has drawn, in my mind, a picture—the picture of a man of true Persian soul. That is to say, this man's native character is easily manifest even to a foreigner. The man who is narrowly, exclusively bound within mere patriotism does not truly express his country, for though an image be shaped from the very soil of one's own land, the light that will reveal it is, of necessity, universal.

The day came for taking leave of Tehran. The chief ministers came and bade me farewell.

IN PERSIA IX

At half past two we set out on our journey. Leaving Tehran, at first the stark, desolate face of Persia showed itself again, but not for long. The scenery changed. Green fields ripe with crops, here and there clusters of trees, everywhere the restless flow of water, villages of mud houses by no means rare. On the horizon, snow-touched mountain peaks stood as though lightly brushed by fingers.

At sunset we reached the town of Qazvin. Lodging had been arranged for us here at a hotel. As Asansol is the chief railway junction in Bengal, so Qazvin is the meeting-point of many motor roads.

Qazvin is a city of the Sassanid era, founded by Shapur the Second. The second Safavid king, Tahmasp, established his capital in this city. The fugitive Mughal emperor Humayun of Delhi spent ten years here under his protection.

It was here that the two English brothers, Anthony and Robert Sherley, met the famous Shah Abbas of the Safavid dynasty. Popular tradition holds that it was they who trained the Shah's soldiers in modern warfare, with the help of cannon and other weaponry. Be that as it may, at present nothing of the dignity of a former capital catches the eye in this small town.

At dawn we set out for the direction of Hamadan. Our car climbed along an ascending road. On both sides the land was rich and fertile, with great villages here and there, winding rivers, vineyards, the flowering exuberance of the poppy. By noon we reached Hamadan and found shelter

in a lovely garden house—through the gaps between the poplar-groves one could see snow-streaked mountains.

It had begun to grow hot in Tehran, but here it was cold. This city stands six thousand feet above sea level. Its site lies at the foot of Mount Alvand. Once the capital of the Achaemenid empire stood here. The ancient name of that capital, famous in history, was Ecbatana; today almost nothing remains of its ruins.

After food and rest, I went out in the evening to see the town. First we were taken along a lane through dense forest to the front of an old, large building. They said that from its upper storey one could see an unobstructed view in every direction. My companions went up to see, but I had not the courage. Sitting in the car, I watched a group of people who had come to the edge of the forest for a picnic. Women were among them, wrapped in black shawls; yet I noticed they showed no hesitation in walking about freely, out in the open, along the road.

Today is the Muharram holiday, and everyone has come out to enjoy the day off. A few years ago the Muharram holiday used to turn bloody, with many dying in the fierceness of self-mortification. Under the present King's rule, that intensity has been gradually diminishing.

Coming out of the forest, we went into the town. Today the shops and market were closed, but the crowd of holiday-makers was thick. Since coming to Persia it has been our habit to see few people, so the sight of so many people on the road struck our eyes as something new. This town too struck me as new—I have not seen a town of quite this appearance anywhere else. Through the middle of it ran a narrow, capricious stream, flowing with a murmuring sound in all manner of postures—here falling from above in a cascade, there

its level current sparkling in the sunlight; heaps of stones along its banks, small bridges here and there crossing from one side to the other; the winding of the stream matched by the winding of the road; the work of man mingling intimately with the play of nature; the open courtyards of the houses shared in common, some on the upper level, some on the lower, this way and that. In its many places various groups sat gathered. Along the crooked streets went motor cars, horse-carriages, even motor-buses filled with parties of holiday-makers. The horses of the carriages were handsome and well-fed. In this festival of leisure I saw nothing of excess or riot; all around was a picture of calm ease, here where forest, mountain, and stream have merged into one.

The Governor had invited us to tea that afternoon in the forest outside the town. On the left stood the mountain, on the right, in the dark shade of the dense forest,

a waterfall came tumbling down. With great effort the car made its way up the mountain path. Taking tea amid this forest, once roamed by shepherds of ages past, we returned to our lodging as evening fell. The image of Hamadan lives on forever—for century after century the nightingale has sung on here; it has not vanished along with the plunder that Alexander carried off, but by the roadside, lying neglected in the wilderness, is a block of stone—this degraded remnant of the lion that once guarded the emperor's gate.

After eating and resting, we set off from Hamadan in the afternoon. We were to go to Kermanshah. By then a stormy wind was raising dust; clouds were gathering in the sky. We travelled by the Asadabad pass. On both sides green fields lay full of crops, forest tracts here and there nurtured by streams of water. Sheep grazed in the meadows. The mountains drew close, standing with their rocky breasts bared. Now and then a shower of rain fell, subduing the dust. I could only think of the line, "Meghairmedura-ambara-vana-bhuvah shyamah"—

not tamala trees, I do not know exactly which trees these were, but on this overcast day there was no harm in calling them, for the moment, tamala trees.

Somewhere near the road we travelled runs the famous battlefield of Nihavand, where the Sassanid empire met its final end at the hands of the Arabs. On that day, a wholly new chapter suddenly began in the long history of ancient Persia.

At last our road arrived at Behistun. Here, on the face of a rock, is carved the inscription of Darius's triumph, in the Old Persian and Babylonian tongues. Above this inscribed text stands the figure of Darius. Before this figure, in the guise of captives, stand the images of ten rebels, who had opposed his ascent to the throne. Cambyses (the Persian pronunciation is Kambujiya), Darius's predecessor, had, out of jealousy, secretly had his brother Smerdis put to death. When he was away on his Egyptian campaign, a certain man, taking advantage of his absence, proclaimed himself as Smerdis under that name and usurped the throne. Cambyses died on his way back from Egypt. Then Darius, of a collateral branch of the Achaemenid line, defeated the false king and took him captive. In the sculpture, upon the prostrate figure lying on the ground, Darius's foot rests upon its chest, while the captive, arms

raised above his head, begs for mercy. Above Darius's head is the figure of Ahura Mazda.

Professor Herzfeld says that an inscription recently discovered has Darius declaring that when he ascended the throne, both his father and grandfather were still living. No account has been found of how this seemingly impossible situation could have come to pass.

Here and there in the sea one sees an island formed by the hand of an earthquake, its whole surface bearing traces of molten metal and volcanic fire. Just so, over long ages,

Persia has been born of history's earthquakes and outpourings of fire. From ancient times, empire has arisen out of Persia. The oldest great empire in human history was established by Cyrus, and even after him, for a long time, the field of Persian history was marked by imperial conflict. The chief reason for this is that on every side of Persia stood great ancient seats of royal power. Either she must subdue them all and hold them in check, or one or another of them would come and swallow Persia whole. It is from this ceaseless conflict with many peoples that Persia's historical consciousness, her historical being, has grown so powerful. India has created society; she has not created the history of a great nation. The conflict between Aryan and non-Aryan was chiefly social. The relatively few Aryans, set amid the vastly more numerous non-Aryans, sought to preserve their own society. The war of Rama against Ravana was not for conquest of a kingdom, but for the protection of society—Sita is the symbol of that social order. Ravana abducted Sita; he did not seize the kingdom. In the Mahabharata too, the conflict is essentially one of social order: one party acknowledged Krishna, staking Krishna at their dice-game, while the other party refused to acknowledge Krishna and heaped insult upon Krishna. In the Shahnameh is found the substance of true history, the tale of national heroes, the conflict between the Iranians and the Turanians. There, philosophical discourse of the kind found in the Bhagavad Gita, or moral teaching such as fills the Shanti Parva, does not take precedence.

Persia, standing again and again against alien peoples, has striven to make firm and to make victorious her own Persian unity. Under the Gupta kings, India once had

the opportunity to feel her own imperial oneness, but its influence was neither deep nor lasting. The chief reason for this is that India remained, at her very core, divided between Aryan and non-Aryan; imperial unity could not lay its foundation upon social unity. Darius, upon the rock-face, proclaimed his victory in such a way as to make it eternal. But this proclamation of victory was, in truth, historical; Darius constructed a vast seat for the Persian national being—just as Cyrus, so too, resting upon Darius,

Persia was enabled to feel her own boundless majesty in a role of splendour vast. Age after age, in Persia, this awakening of national consciousness has risen again, transcending defeat, and today too its awakening has come once more. What the Prime Minister here told me comes, in substance, to this: that India's problem is to remove the causes of weakness lodged within her own society, while Persia's problem is to remedy the imperfections of her own governance. Persia has set herself to that task; India has not yet applied herself, with full reverence and dedication, to her own proper work.

We left Behistun. Not far off, on the mountain of Taq-e Bostan, are carved figures—about four miles from the town. The Governor's messenger came out to meet us on the road and took us there. Even from a distance one could see a figure carved deep within a rock-cave, before which artificial ponds received a flow of falling water. Two figures stand there, and beneath their feet, trampled, lies a captive. No inscription is to be found, but from the style of dress and adornment one can tell these are Sassanid. Within the mountain, carved out to form a domed chamber, in its upper part stands the goddess of victory, wings spread, holding in her left hand a vessel of consecration and in her right a garland; below her stands another figure, and below that, an armoured horseman. On the adjoining wall are scenes of hunting. These figures give expression to an extraordinary power; to look upon them stuns the mind into stillness.

Let me briefly explain what is meant by the Sassanid age.

Alexander's invasion brought the Achaemenid kingship to its end. The people who afterward seized Persia by force were called the Parthians. They were probably of Scythian stock; at first they came under Greek influence, but later adopted Persian

civilisation. At last, in 226 AD, Ardashir, grandson of Sasan, wrested Persia from the Parthian king and once more established an empire of pure Persian

stock. The most powerful emperor of their time was Shapur, who defeated and took captive the Roman emperor Valerian.

The religion of the Achaemenids was Zoroastrianism; under the Sassanids this faith was, once again, revived with great fervour.

We travelled along a straight, broad, newly-built road. Not far ahead, on the flank of the mountain, the town of Kermanshah came into view. On both sides of the road were fields of crops, poppy-fields covered in bloom; from behind the clouds the light of the setting sun fell, and the freshly-washed leaves of the trees glistened and stirred.

We entered the town. Along both sides of the clean streets were shops selling goods of every kind. Water-carriers were sprinkling water from skins to lay the dust of the road. Our lodging stood amid a lovely garden. The Governor of this place stood waiting near the door. He took us in and had tea served. The owner of this clean, well-appointed new house had left it for our use and gone elsewhere himself.

IN PERSIA X

We set out from Kermanshah. Today we were to reach Qasr-i-Shirin, near the Persian frontier. After that would come Khanaqin, the railway station on the Arab border.

The dreary face that Persia had shown us on our entry is gone. Along both sides of the mountain road the fields have filled with crops, and the villages come more thickly. For the first time, too, we saw cattle grazing, and the sight of peasants at their ploughing met our eyes.

After a couple of hours we reached Shahabad. A palace has lately been built here for the king. The governor seated us in the shade of the trees and gave us tea. He then accompanied us to a place called Kerind, where he gave us luncheon as a parting courtesy. It is a lovely village. Its dwellings shelter in the lap of hills dense with shade, and here and there a stream comes leaping over the stones. A crooked, uneven road winds between the shops, and a curious crowd had gathered.

From there on, the earth turned once more to its image of parched despair. We were descending from the Persian uplands. Everyone had warned us that we should find the heat extreme, but we saw no sign of it; the air was like the month of Magh in our own country. When we reached the last frontier of Persia, it appeared that many had come from Baghdad to welcome us. Some were government officials, some editors of newspapers, and many were men of letters; there were Indians living abroad as well. A few of them knew English. One of them had heard me lecture in New York, where he had completed his studies in the science of education, and he now serves in the education department here. We sat down to tea in the station's dining room. One of them said that those who had come to welcome me belonged to many different communities. "We are all one," he said. "Why the Indian Muslims should create such strife in the name of religion, we cannot understand at all." The Indians, too, said: "Between ourselves and the Muslims here there is not the slightest want of cordiality." It is plain that in Egypt, in Turkey, in Iraq, in Persia, religion everywhere yields the road to humanity. Only in India, in the very middle of the path, do thorn-bushes spring up thick, on the

Hindu's boundary and on the Muslim's. Is this envy nursed in the desert-poverty of bondage, or is it the witlessness born of India's un-Aryan temper?
Among the welcoming party was an aged poet, a year or two younger than I. He had become a cripple, a gentle, silent man, his face rapt in meditation. I was told that among the poets of Iraq he is the greatest.

After many days we left the motor-car and boarded a railway carriage. The carriages were comfortable. All along the road the body had been jolted and shaken, and could not forget itself for a moment; now its ceaseless quarrel with the vehicle was over.

Outside the window there were still, now and then, faint signs of harvest, as though water were brought by channels and ditches. But the soil here, hard under the wheel, was of a dusty grey.
At the larger stations we passed through crowds that had gathered to greet us. Even when we were told that Baghdad lay but fifteen minutes away, there was still no warning of it, and the empty fields stretched on, scorched and silent.

At last the train drew up at Baghdad. The crowd at the station was beyond counting. Delegates of every sort came to do me honour, and the Indians garlanded me.

Two tiny girls handed me a bouquet. Among the crowd of girls I saw even a Bengali girl. The road of Baghdad is somewhat like the bazaar-lined road of a town in our own land. It has one peculiarity: here and there along the wayside wooden benches are set out, places for drinking tea and for company. They are like little clubs, and assemblies gather there. Men of each class claim a place of their own, and trade goes on beside the talk. In a city such a centre for social intercourse is, no doubt, a real necessity. In earlier days there were professional storytellers, and they would recite their tales in these wayside gatherings. As with us, where the storyteller's trade has almost died out, so it is with them. This art could not hold its own against the printed book. Man is selling his native power to the machines of his own making.

We have been lodged in a hotel on the bank of the Tigris. Before my room is a great terrace, from which one can watch the river. The Tigris is nearly as broad as the

Ganges; on the farther shore stand rows of dense trees, groves of date-palms, and here and there a building. To our right a bridge crosses the river. This wooden bridge for the passage of troops was built as a temporary work by General Maude during the late war.

I try to rest, but there is little hope of it. The list of ceremonies grows longer. In the morning I went to see the museum, which is newly founded and not very large, and of which a German professor is director. He showed us the relics of a very ancient age that have been dug out from beneath the earth, the remains of five or six thousand years ago. The women's ornaments, vessels of daily use, and the like were made and adorned by skilful hands. The professor said that there is no coarseness in work of this kind; everything is delicate and most exquisitely finished. Such art could not have arisen without the discipline of a long preceding age. We do not know their story; only traces remain. So much we can understand: they were not barbarians.

Through the days and nights, these men and women, now dropped from the memory of history, passed through the round of joy and sorrow just as we do. In religion, in work, in common dealings, their life too had problems, economic and spiritual, of infinite variety. At last, in what shape I cannot tell, some final problem rose before them in colossal form. Their sages, their men of action, their priests, their soldiers, their king, could find no answer to it. In the end they left behind some portion of the stores of life, abandoned to the earth's keeping, and all had to depart. Where went their language? Where went all their poets? The pain of their every day has been gathered into no verse anywhere. If, at the far end of eight or ten thousand years, I could stand in some time to come and lend an ear to the voice of man's present day, would any sound reach me? And if it did, should I understand anything of its meaning?

This afternoon I was invited by the men of letters of this place. We were seated in the shade of the trees in a garden, with tea laid out on small tables among the company. When one speaker after another had finished reading out his welcome, the aged poet recited a poem of his own. Deep as thunder was the flow of his verse, and unbridled his gesture. I told them that the meaning of such poetry needed no

explaining; it was like the voice of a tossing, storm-driven sea, or the ancient chant of a forest bough beaten by the gale.

When my own turn came, I said: "I have come before you today with a petition. There was a time, in the age of Arabia's highest glory, when nearly half the earth, from east to west, lay under Arabian sway. Though in India that dominion no longer takes the form of political rule, yet in the form of learning and in the form of religion it endures, and holds fast the great Muslim community there. Calling that duty to mind, I ask you to send across the Arabian Sea the new message of Arabia once more to India, to those who are your brethren in faith, in the venerable name of your great prophet, for the safeguarding of the good name of your holy religion. Our sorrow is hard to bear, and our striving for deliverance fails at every step. Let the generous summons of your newly awakened spirit lead ill-starred India away from sectarian narrowness, from inhuman intolerance, from the dishonouring of a large-hearted faith, into the path of union between man and man, and into the path of freedom. Let those who were born within one country's lap be one, within and without."

The king had invited me to tea at a garden-house of his across the river. He is a man wholly without pomp, and most simple in manner. We sat on an open terrace, with the garden spread below us. The king's brother was with him. The Prime Minister was there, a young man; everyone here says he is the youngest minister in the world today. The man who was to serve as interpreter was present as well.

The king said that the quarrel between Hindus and Muslims in India must surely be a passing one. When awakening comes to any country, among all its communities, then in the first stage they become intensely conscious of their own distinctness, and their effort to preserve it grows strong. When this sudden fury has spent itself, the mind grows easy again. I said: "In the evidence we have seen today of the newly awakened peoples of Turkey, Egypt and Persia, I observed that the sense of distinctness, which is narrowly self-enclosed and hostile to others, has been deliberately mitigated in its violence. Otherwise, through that blindness, the nation's political judgment would be overcome. If in the awakening of India we could see the dawn of that wise and beneficent thought which works for the good of all, I should be at ease. But when we see that on both sides, Hindu and Muslim,

a self-destroying religious bigotry grows strong with education, and obstructs the union of the nation, then one cannot help despairing."

Beside the tea-table at the garden's edge, amid this easy talk, it was hard to call up a picture of that day when this same king, in the pathless desert, united many tribes of Bedouins under his leadership, and, advancing, bewildered and overthrew the combined expedition of Germany and Turkey. He had bought the glory of life at the price of death. Grim and terrible was that field of battle, and arduous that enterprise, in which victory and defeat hung ever in doubt. Now I have seen the captain of that untiring campaign. In the days and nights of that time, overshadowed by death, amid that dread, there was no possibility of my finding any place beside his camel-troops. Yet today I have sat down at tea-table beside this maker of a new chapter of history, and at ease; for I too, with other means, have given my strength to the making of man's history. If this hero had not understood the worth of that independent yet real co-operation, his victorious valour would have lost much of its value.

Colonel Lawrence has said that among the great men of Arabia, the place of King Faisal is next below Muhammad and Saladin. I have seen the plain image of this greatness in his unaffected hospitality, and I have saluted him. Among those who in present-day Asia have inaugurated a new age by the power of their strength, I have seen two within a brief interval. In the two of them a likeness of nature showed itself: in both it is plainly manifest, in a clear simplicity free of all display.

IN PERSIA XI

I took leave of this place at the reception given by the women students. The lane was narrow, long and winding; the old houses stood ranked along both sides, yet the life within cannot be seen at all from without. In the courtyard of the house where we were received, all the girls were seated. On one side a few of them had taken a place apart; they were wrapped in black cloth, though their faces were not covered. All the rest wore European dress, and made no attempt to sit still and hushed, and the assembly rang with laughter and chatter. The farther end of the courtyard was like the chandimandap of our own country, the pillared shrine-porch of a village. My seat fell upon that raised platform. On being pressed I had to say something, and when I had spoken, a few of the girls came up and asked me to recite my poetry. On other days they had heard recitations. I could remember nothing of my own writing. After much effort I recalled the first line of the poem "The Bird Was in a Golden Cage," and there I stuck, and filled out the metre with meaningless words.

Then came an invitation to dinner in the evening, arranged by the people of the education department. There was a great terrace on the side toward the river, where many persons sat beneath a garland of lights. The aged poet, too, was close beside me. When the dinner was over and my felicitations were done, I had to say something, for they wished to hear my views on education.

Weariness thickens upon me. To go about, looking and listening, has become impossible. It had been arranged that in the morning we should see the ruins of Ctesiphon. All of my party, except myself, went to see them. This city was once of extraordinary renown. The Parthians founded it, and for many years they ruled in Persia. The Romans were again and again defeated at their hands. I have said before that the Parthians were not true Persians. They are supposed to have been Turks, and to have received much of their learning and culture from the Greeks. In the year 228 A.D., Ardashir overcame the Parthians and once more united Persia under Persian rule and the Persian faith. He was the first king of the Sasanian line. After that came the repeated assaults of the Romans, and at last the onslaught of the Arabs, which overwhelmed the city. The Arabs, considering the place unhealthy, carried off all its materials and set up their capital at Baghdad. Ctesiphon crumbled into dust, and there remains only a fragment of the great palace, a single

vault. This palace was built originally by the command of Khosrow, and it is a most marvellous example of the great architecture of the Sasanian age.
In the evening I dined at the king's house. There was not the slightest effort anywhere to give proof of splendour. It is this unadorned gravity of the king that most deeply draws my heart. The courtiers who sat at table with us talked and laughed with him, and with them his relation is wholly easy. Even the common people of our country, at special feasts, commit a foolish excess in the quantity of food and in the preparations, as though to prove something; this I did not see at the king's table. A plain white cloth was spread along the length of the table, with a few bouquets placed sparingly upon it, and not a particle of glitter or show. In this one finds the true ease of hospitality.

My daughter-in-law went to visit the queen. She was received like the mistress of a respectable household, without any pomp, in a simple and unaffected manner, with no effort whatever to prove herself a queen.

Today I am invited to the tent of a Bedouin chieftain. At first I thought I could not go, and that it would be kinder to the body to decline. Then I remembered that long ago I had written, in a burst of bravado, "Rather would I be an Arab Bedouin than this." I was then close upon thirty, and that thirty is now almost lost over the back horizon. Be that as it may, I should have regretted it if I had not put the poem to some sort of test. I set out in the morning.

On the way I was suddenly carried off into the midst of the boys of a training school, and had to say something to them. So many words have to be scattered along the road, not ripe fruit, but fallen leaves, flung down only to meet the claim of the dust.

Then our car ran on through the desert. It was not sandy waste but hard ground. Here and there channels had been cut to bring water from the river, so that in places there was a hint of crops. Along the road we saw our host, who had set out in another motor-car, and he was taken up into ours. He was a hard man, with piercing eyes, in Bedouin dress: that is, a piece of white cloth bound about the head, with a black band coiled around it like a ring; beneath it a long white tunic, and over that a thin black cloak. My companions said that though he has had no

schooling, he is of acute intelligence, and that he is a member of the parliament here.

The grey earth glared and shimmered in the sun, and in places far off mirages showed. In one place a shepherd was leading his flock, in another camels browsed, and in another horses. The wind swept on in gusts, and now and then whirlwinds sprang up, spinning and racing with columns of dust. After travelling a long way, we reached their camp. In a large open tent a company of men sat, coffee was being boiled, and they were drinking it, cup poured after cup.

We went and sat in a great house of mud. It was quite cool. On the floor lay a carpet, and at one end a mattress spread upon a raised platform. Down the middle of the room ran a row of wooden pillars, and upon long posts resting on them rose the mud roof. The kinsmen and friends sat about, and in one corner a man was drawing at a large glass hookah. A small cup was put into our hands, into which a little coffee was poured, thick, black and bitter.

The chieftain asked whether we wished to eat. To say "no" is not the custom, and I said yes, for there was also hunger within. Before the meal began there was a little prelude of music. On a crooked single-stringed instrument, made of a piece of wood somehow covered with leather, a man began to sing. There was no Bedouin vigour in it; it was a thin, high voice, all in a tone of plaintive weeping. One might call it the melody of some large species of insect. At last the washing-basin and water-vessel were brought. We washed our hands with soap and sat down. They spread a carpet on the floor. Then came huge round loaves, broad as the full moon, and a vast brass platter with handles, bearing a mountain of rice with an enormous boiled sheep, whole, upon the top. Two or three young men carried it in and set it down upon the floor. There was nothing in this feast, in shape or in temper, to match the gentle plaint of the music that came before it. The guests sat in a ring around the platter. From that one dish everyone took up the rice by the fistful and tore the meat apart, and so they fell to eating. Buttermilk was brought round to drink. Our host said that it is our custom that, while the guests are eating, we remain standing without eating ourselves, but for want of time today we cannot keep that custom. So another huge platter was set down not far off, and the members of his household sat round it. The guests of lesser honour received what was left by us. After this

came the demand for the dance. One man played a flute in a single strain, and the others kept time with it by leaping. To call it dancing is to say too much. Only the man who was the leader, who held a handkerchief and whirled it about as he danced in front, showed any small variety of gesture. Meanwhile my daughter-in-law went into their women's quarters, where the women showed her their dance. She said it was a dance in truth. It was plain that European dancers imitate these in the Eastern manner, but cannot give the full savour of it.

After this we came out and saw the war-dance. With sticks, knives, guns and swords they flourished and shouted, whirling round in a ring, and all the while, from the door of the women's quarters, the women cheered them on. By four o'clock the day was nearly spent, and we climbed into the car for our return, our host coming along with us.

These are children of the desert, a stern race, whose daily business is the struggle between life and death. They expect indulgence from no one, for the world has never indulged them. Biology speaks of selection by nature; here, life, by making its problem harsh, has made in earnest a rigorous selection among these very people. The weak have fallen away, and those who barely survived are the race we see. Death has winnowed them. Each of their bands is knit most closely; narrow is the compass of their motherland's bosom; the slender gifts of a life hemmed in by constant danger, these they share and enjoy in common. One great platter holds the food of all, and in it there is no room for choice or fastidious taste. They have divided the coarse loaf among themselves, and the claim to lay down one's life for another lies in this breaking of the one loaf. I, a child of Bengal, the land held in the embrace of rivers, sat among them eating and thinking: we two are men made in wholly different moulds. And yet the language of the deepest voice of humanity is one to which the hearts of us all respond. So, when this unlettered Bedouin chief said, "Our first Teacher taught that the true Muslim is he by whose word and deed no man need fear for his safety," those words startled my mind. He said that the strife between Hindus and Muslims in India, the root of that sin, lies in the minds of the educated there. Not long ago, he told me, certain educated Muslims from India had come here and tried to preach, in the name of Islam, a fierce spirit of division. He said: "I have no faith in their truthfulness, and so I declined the invitation to their feast. At least in the land of Arabia they have found no respect."

I said to him: "Once I wrote in a poem, 'Rather would I be an Arab Bedouin than this.' Today my heart has come very close to the heart of the Bedouin; truly, I have eaten a single meal with them, in the depths of the spirit."

Then, as our car moved on, the horsemen of the tribe, riding in the fields on either side, showed us their skill in racing their horses. It seemed that the whirling winds of the desert had taken bodily shape.

It seems that my journey ends here, with this "Arab Bedouin." Two or three days remain before I take the road home, but my body is so weary that I can do no more seeing and hearing in the meantime. So it is a fitting end that my travels should close in this companionship of the desert. I said to my Bedouin host: "I have known the Bedouin as host; but unless I come to know the Bedouin as robber, my experience will not be complete." He smiled and said there was one small obstacle. "Our robbers do not lay hands on the venerable learned. So, when merchants come through our desert with their wares, they often set an old man of grave and learned look upon a camel, to lead their caravan." I told him that when I travelled in China I had said to a Chinese friend, "I should like to fall once into the hands of Chinese brigands, to give colour to my account of China." He answered: "Chinese bandits will not do violence to an aged poet like you; they revere the ancient." At seventy one's youth can no longer be tried. The wanderings in many places are at an end; taking away some reverence from the stranger's hand, and with respect in my keeping, I shall return home, and then, I hope, at the close of work, the leisure of peace will come. It is between youth and youth that contest arises, and by the churning of that contest the distortions of the stream of worldly life are cleared away. When the robber pays reverence to an old man, he thrusts him far from his own world. It is with the young that a man's strength is tested; in the shock of that struggle strength stays vigorous. And so, across the wide distance that reverence sets, *pañcāśordhvaṁ vanaṁ vrajet*: after fifty, let a man betake himself to the forest.