Renaissance in Iran

General

In early thirteenth/nineteenth century, Iran presented a gloomy picture of political and social decline. After the collapse of the Salafid power (907/1501–1125/1722) it was never able to regain its old glory. The military achievements and political consolidation under Nāṣir Shāh (1149/1736–1160/1747) were short-lived, and the admirable efforts of Karim Khan Zand (1164/1756–1193/1779), to restore the country's old prestige did not produce lasting results. A new dynasty was founded in 1211/1796 by Aqa Muhammad Qajar, a great despot and a sadder of the worst type. It was under this new dynasty that Iran was reduced to a mere shadow of its past. The disaster came through internal disorder and foreign interference. During this period the Anglo-French rivalry in Europe and Napoleon's grandiose plan to conquer India in early thirteenth/nineteenth century dragged Iran into the orbit of international diplomacy. Again, the new Western influences awakened the people to their miserable plight and led them to the assertion of their basic rights.

An offensive and defensive alliance was concluded between Iran and France in 1222/1807, mainly by the efforts of General Gardanne, which put Great Britain on the alert. By this time the states in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent had become so vital that any threat to her interests there was bound to have repercussions in Europe. Consequently, Iran was wooed with equal vigour by both France and England and was, thus, dragged into international politics in sinister circumstances. The story of Iran had touched the history of Europe at many points right from Darius and Xerxes in the sixth century B.C. to brick diplomatic contacts between European Powers and the Safawids in the tenth/sixteenth century, but never before had Iran played the minor role. In the new set-up it had primarily to play the part of a victim. A political era was now initiated in which Iran had much to suffer and learn. After the downfall of Napoleon, the Anglo-French rivalry in Iran was substituted by the expansionist policy of the Czarist Russia. This led to disastrous and prolonged military campaigns which ended in the treaties of Gulistan and Turkmenchay in 1228/1813 and 1244/1828 respectively. These compelled Iran to part with some of the richest territories in the north. Then started the world story of the Anglo-Russian intrigues and encroachments and a race by these powers for extorting economic and political concessions which at times deprived the country of nearly all its resources.

The tale of internal administration is no less sombre. The Shāh of Iran was absolute and his decisions were unquestionable. "The taxes were collected,

1 L. P. Elwell-Sutton, Modern Iran, p. 69.
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of upper classes and provided the Government with diplomats, administrators, and military officers. To begin with, it had one hundred students on its rolls and its curriculum included courses on infantry, cavalry, and artillery tactics, medicine, geometry, engineering, chemistry, pharmacy, geology, French, English, and Russian. Music and painting were added later. The year 1272/1855 witnessed the formation of the Ministry of Education. Forty-two students were sent to Europe in 1275/1858 in spite of the opposition of the Ulama, who had once remarked that an ideal Persian was one who did not know whether Brussels was a city or a cabbage. In 1280/1862, a school of languages known as Maktab-i Maqārīshī was opened under the supervision of Muhammad Hasan Khān Pīrīmād al-Sultanēh. In addition to languages, it provided facilities for the teaching of different subjects in arts and sciences. A college was inaugurated in Tabriz in 1280/1863 with both Iranian and European teachers on its staff. This was followed by military colleges in Tehran and Isfahān in 1301/1883 and 1304/1886 respectively. The first school for girls was opened in Chālatan near Kirmān in 1313/1895. The focus was for the express purpose of co-ordinating the working of various schools as well as for the unification of educational standards. A school of political science was founded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1317/1899. This was followed by a school of agriculture in 1318/1900. That is how Iran was slowly struggling ahead in the field of education.

Along with the educational efforts of the State the Western Christian missions too had been active in opening schools in Iran. The French Lazarite mission was the first to start a school at Tabriz in 1256/1839. In co-operation with the Missions de la Charité, the Lazarites established, during the next three quarters of a century, a chain of seventy-six schools for boys and girls in various towns. These schools played a substantial part in making the Government decide in 1218/1901 to recognize schools in the country run after the French model. The American Presbyterian Mission also established in Tehran two schools, one in 1280/1862 for boys, and another in 1314/1896 for girls. The British Church Missionary Society founded the Stewar Memorial College at Isfahān in 1322/1904. Amongst the non-missionary foreign schools may be included those founded by the Alliance Française and the Alliance Israelite Universelle. The Germans established a technical college in Tehran, and the Russians opened a commercial school in 1320/1911. This was followed by more Russian schools at Tabriz and other towns in northern Iran.

Amongst the educative influences the role of the Press cannot be underestimated. It admirably discharged the vital function of formulating public opinion in the country and finally bringing about a revolutionary change in people's attitude towards national problems. It accentuated and revitalized the patriotic feeling which had never died down in the country, thanks to the immense influence and unique popularity of the national epic, namely,

7 V. Sheean, op. cit., p. 10.

Firuzâbâd's Shahnameh, as well as the lively sense of nearness which the nation has always had with its mighty past. The first ever newspaper was published in Teheran in 1253/1837 by Mirza Saleh Shirazi who was, incidentally, a member of the first batch of students sent to England in 1238/1820. The next newspaper, Fārānābād'ī Waqīyāt-i Hīdajatīghāy appeared in 1257/1839. The second half of the thirteenth/nineteenth century witnessed remarkable activity in the field of journalism. The newspapers gradually became more outspoken in their comments. The despotic and corrupt government in the country could hardly tolerate independent criticism of its short-sighted policies, with the result that some patriots started independent Persian newspapers outside the country. Important amongst those which helped bring about a new political and social consciousness in Iran were the Aghān published in Istanbul in 1292/1875, the Qātūn, founded in London in 1307/1889, the Hilmiat, printed in Cairo in 1310/1892, and the Iḥādi al-Ma'in, started in Cutch in 1311/1893. Their entry into Iran was prohibited from time to time and yet they were smuggled into the country enclosed in envelopes or books9 and commanded an ardent readership. By the turn of the century the tone of the Iranian newspapers had grown more bitter, even fierce. Some of those were suppressed. One of the editors of the Sān'ān 'Ilmī, Mirza Jahangīr Khān Shirazi, was put to death. The Press played a vital role in the campaign for constitutional government. So much so that the joly-graph publications known as Shah Nāmeš used to circulate from hand to hand in those days of official terrorism. Undoubtedly, the Iranian Press brought the dream of renaissance nearer realization.

Amongst the modernizing influences in Iran one cannot ignore the part played by the telegraph line. The Iranian Government, conscious of the role of telegraph in modern communications, built the first line in 1275/1858 between Teheran and Sultanābād. This was later extended to Tabriz and Julfa. The British Government was interested in the extension of telegraph lines in Iran because it lay on the direct route between Europe and India and formed a vital link in the new international telegraphic network. Three conventions were therefore, signed between Iran and Great Britain between 1280/1863 and 1290/1873 for the extension and improvement of telegraph lines between Europe and India. According to one of these signed, in 1287/1870, the Indo-European Telegraph Company completed a line between Teheran and London via Tabriz, Tiflis, Warsaw, and Berlin. By the end of
creative genius. Most of the future leaders of the Iranian revolution in its early phase were inspired by him. Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn’s eloquent sermons created amongst the Iranians a devotional attachment to him. He awakened them to a sense of dignity and freedom and to the dangers of internal despotism and foreign exploitation. Even when he was treacherously expelled from the country, people still continued to receive guidance from him from London where he had started a newspaper called Dī‘ al-Khāfsūnā with the help of Mirzâ Mallom Khān. In his newspaper Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn wrote his historic letter to the Iranian ‘ālam” in this letter he appealed to the divines to rise to a man to save the independence of their country. The effect was miraculous. The famous tobacco riots followed and shook royal absolutism. The real success of this revolutionary figure lay in winning over the ‘ālam” who wielded immense influence on the masses. The seeds of revolution were thus sown. The political discontent which found its first open expression in the tobacco riots of 1309/1891 culminated in the revolution of 1324/1906.

Nābir al-Dīn Shīb was assassinated in 1319/1896 by Mirzâ Reza Khānī and was succeeded by Muṣaffar al-Dīn Shīb (1319/1896-1324/1906). At this time Iran presented a sordid picture of heartless exploitation by Western nations. The new Shīb had a paradoxical character. He was sympathetic to the peoples’ political aspirations but he was weak and fickle-minded and played in the hands of corrupt and ambitious ministers who dissipated revenues and mortgaged national resources for foreign loans. The Russian influence had now reached its peak. Russia advanced loans to Iran, established a bank in Tehran as a rival institution to the British Imperial Bank, while marked increase was registered in Russian trade with the country. By 1324/ 1906 Iran owed seven and a half million pounds sterling to Russia, mainly spent on the Shīb’s travels to Europe and on his corrupt ministers. In return for the Russian and British-Indian loans almost the entire customs revenues of the country had been mortgaged to the two powers. The financial chaos had been accompanied by administrative crisis which drove people to organize an anti-government movement in the country. A secret society was formed by the name of Iṣlāḥ Taḥbāhī or “the reformists” under the leadership of Sayyid Muḥammad Taḥbāhī, which rendered considerable service to the cause of freedom. Along with Taḥbāhī the other most prominent religious leader was Sayyid ‘Abd Allah Bābābāhī 14. The orators like Malīk al-Mutakab- limin and Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn Wā‘iq Ḩusnānī tried to awaken people by fiery speeches.15 At this time an originally minor incident took place which was to touch off a big national movement aiming at the constitutional government. Encouraged by the policy of the Prime Minister ‘Āin al-Daulah to terrorize
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the divines and merchants who were in the vanguard of the movement, the Governor of Teheran found a pretext to bastinado a well-known merchant. This provided the people with an excuse to intensify the political movement. The market was closed down and a stormy meeting was held in the Masjid-i Shah. The same night the 'adlān' decided to lodge the customary form of protest, that is, to take "bāsīf" in the sanctuary of Şah 'Abd al-'Azīm in the outskirts of Teheran. The scheme to launch a revolutionary movement was almost complete. This incident hastened its implementation by three months. It was Sāyyid Muhammad Taṣṭābţāl who had prevailed upon the 'umma' to start immediately the movement which, according to an earlier decision, was to be launched three months hence.17

About two thousand persons now took refuge in the above-mentioned sanctuary to condemn the high-handedness of the Governor. This move had the desired effect. The Şah agreed to dismiss the Governor of Teheran as well as the Belgian head of the Customs18 Department and to institute the 'Adilāt Khāneh aimed at restricting the powers of the government and the nobility. The promise was not kept and the purposes were not fulfilled and as a consequence the agitation gained momentum. Meanwhile reports had been pouring into Teheran about the repressive measures adopted by the Governors of Fars and Khūsān and the consequent riot at Meshed and the closing down of the bazaar at Qāşqāz for one full month. One can have an idea of the financial crisis in the country and of the blatant disregard of human rights by the government officials from an incident revealed by Aqa Tabātabā'ī in one of his public speeches. When, due to abject poverty, the people of a certain locality failed to pay wheat-tax the local officer forcibly rounded up three hundred girls and sold them off to Turkomans for thirty-six kilograms of wheat per head.19 Such inhuman conditions drove a people to desperation. It was the arrest of one of the divines, viz., Şhīqāl Muhammad Wāqī, and the consequent mass agitation and shooting by the army which led some 'ulamā' and merchants to take refuge in the Jāmī' Masjid and to demand the dismissal of the Governor of Teheran. Not content with this form of protest, the 'ulamā' led a mass migration movement known as khamās-i kahra to the holy city of Qūm, about a hundred miles south of the capital. This further gave rise to a movement amongst the divines, merchants, and representatives of other classes in the town to seek refuge in the British embassy, a move helped by the political tussle between England and Russia. The Russian influence had become paramount through the granting of tea loans, the foundation of a Russian bank, and the winning over of the Prime Minister.

17 'Abd Allah Rāśī, op. cit., p. 509.
18 During the thirteenth/nineteenth century, when the capitalist financial ideas of the British and Russian imperialists dominated the history of Iran, certain small European nations also came forward to share the grab-scramble, so that Belgium succeeded in taking over the management of the Customs in 1836/1899.
19 'Abd Allah Rāśī, op. cit., p. 512.

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It suited the British Government to help patriots in dislodging the Premier and fighting the Russian influence. Hence the British embassy offered all facilities to the political refugees whose number had swelled to nearly fourteen thousand. They refused to leave until the constitution was granted. Their original stand for the dismissal of the local Governor now culminated in the demand for a constitutional government and the dismissal of the Prime Minister. The Şah had to concede to the irresistible popular demand. The Governor had to go. The 'ulumā' made a triumphant return from Qūm and on Jamālī al-Dīn 14, 1324/August 5, 1906, the Şah issued orders for the establishment of the National Parliament. The nation succeeded in attaining its goal after a relatively short struggle. Elections were soon held and the Şah inaugurated the Majlis (Parliament) in Eshīnān/October of the same year. It did not take long to draw up and ratify the constitution. Thus, the Iranians won the unique distinction of becoming the first nation in the East to attain the parliamentary form of government.20 A nation which had been deserved for about two thousand and five hundred years to the theory of the divine right of kings, under the impact of the new democratic urge, threw away the yoke of monarchic absolutism. The process, however, was not so smooth as it promised to be at first. Mazaffar al-Dīn Şah died within five months of the granting of the constitution and his successor Muhammad 'Ali Şah, himself an ambitious despot, was persuaded by the Russians to overthrow the constitution. He bomed the Parliament building in 1326/1908 and set upon a policy of repression. But the nationalists rose in revolt in ʿĀḥbarbājān and Isfahān, and ultimately the Bakhtiyāri tribes from Isfahān marched in Teheran under the leadership of Sāradīz-i Anʿād. This victory in Jamālī al-Dīn 1327/July 1909 sealed the fate of Muhammad 'Ali Şah who had to abdicate in favour of his twelve-year-old son Ahmad Şah, destined to be the last of the Qūmān, while he himself took refuge at Odessa in Russia. He struggled to stage a come-back in 1329/1911, but failed. Muhammad 'Ali Şah's abdication brought an end to what is known as Jāmālī-š Şanah or the smaller tyranny in Iranian history. But Iran was not destined to reap the benefits of constitutional freedom for many years. As early as 1325/1907 it had been divided into spheres of influence by the Russian and British Governments under an agreement which was the direct result of the Triple Entente concluded in Europe on the one hand and of the growing confidence of Iranians in an independent, democratic form of government on the other. The Parliament could not work with freedom, as was amply proved by the resignation in 1329/1911 of Morgan Shuster, the American financial adviser, who had been engaged by the Iranian Government to reorganize the finances of the country. The riots which followed and the demonstration of three hundred women in front of the Parliament building in which they brandished revolvers out of their veils and threatened to kill
their husbands and sons if they yielded to pressure and compromised with the national honour. 22 showed that Iran was now pulsating with a new spirit and a new urge for freedom. The First World War which came soon after, however, stifled the new aspirations. Iran was overwhelmed by the sweep of international events. It was occupied by the Russians in the north and the British in the south. Aghbarajian had to suffer the havoc of war on a large scale. 23 After the October Revolution of 1917/1918, however, the Russian policy completely changed. The Russian forces withdrew from Iran and the new government gave up all territorial claims and all economic concessions except fishery rights in the Caspian Sea. The vacuum created by the departure of the Russian troops was immediately filled up by the British army. In 1918/ 1919 the British concluded an agreement with the Iranian Government headed by Wajih al-Din Danieh, which virtually meant the complete political and economic domination of Iran by Great Britain. The Parliament, however, refused to ratify the agreement and be a party to surrendering the sovereign rights of the nation. This showed that the Iranian survival had triumphed even in the worst hour of political crisis. The proposed agreement aroused strong feeling in foreign countries and even amongst the British people, especially in view of the scandalous circumstances in which it had been negotiated. 24 The world opinion stirred up against the British role, the withdrawal of the Russian forces, the offer to Iran of a pact of friendship by the Soviet Government, and the lack of enthusiasm amongst the war-weary British people to undertake new imperialistic ventures—all contributed to the cause of Iranian freedom. The most determining factor in the situation was the people themselves who jealously safeguarded the spirit of freedom even in their darkest hour of trial—another evidence of the historical truth that Iran has always survived the greatest political crises, owing to the virile national spirit of the people which never completely died down and which had by now found a symbol, however weak, in the resistance put up by the Iranian Parliament.

It was at this stage that Reza Khan, a colonel in the Cossack Brigade, 25 appeared on the scene. In collaboration with Sayyid Dî'î al-Dîn Tabâbahî, editor of the Tehran newspaper Ra'd, Reza Khan staged a coup d'état on April 21, 1921. He arrested members of the Cabinet and formed a new Government of which Sayyid Dî'î al-Dîn was selected the Prime Minister. Reza Khan himself took over as the Minister of War and Commander-in-Chief of the army. Five days later, the Parliament rejected the Anglo-Persian Agreement which it had so long resisted. To provide an element of dramatic surprise the new Iranian Government signed on the same day a pact of friendship with Soviet Russia, by which the Soviet Government revoked all the concessions which had been granted earlier to the Qajarist Government. "All debts were cancelled and the Russian bank, railways, roads, and posts were handed back to Iran; Russian rights under the capitulations were also abolished. 26 After this pact with the Russians the Iranian Government became bold. Now that it had rejected the agreement it ordered the British officers and advisers out of the country.

In the new set-up the British troops which had occupied parts of the country so long had to withdraw. This withdrawal was effected in stages so that the last outpost in the south-eastern desert was evacuated in 1343/1924. Soon after, the last of the Soviet troops, still stationed in Gilan, also left the country. For the first time in about twenty years the Iranian soil was now free from the presence of foreign troops.

A new wave of national resurgence now swept the whole country, which, although still lacking the wounds of the many inglorious years of misery and humiliation, yet aspired to conquer hunger, disease, governmental inefficacy, and the large-scale devastation wrought by World War I. It must be repeated that even in their darkest hour of frustration the people of Iran never abandoned the democratic ideals of the revolution of 1324/1906, and even in the face of the heaviest odds, and perhaps because of these, the national spirit continued to gather force and momentum. 27

Reza Khan was the first Asian dictator of the post-war world. As the Commander-in-Chief of the army and the Minister of War, he became the virtual ruler of the country. He was born in 1290/1878 at Alisht in Sāvād Kūh in the Caspian province of Māzandarān. He inherited the military profession from his father, Major 'Abbâs 'Ali Khan, and joined in 1318/1900 the Cossack Brigade in which he served with distinction and attracted the attention of some of the British officers who had replaced the Russians after the October Revolution. To be able to exercise greater independence in his new position, he got certain sources of revenue transferred from the Ministry of Finance to the Ministry of War. Sayyid Dî'î al-Dîn, who was a known Anglophile, soon came to realize who the real power in the Cabinet was and had to go within a hundred days of his installation as the first Prime Minister after the coup. He was followed by a number of premiers, all overshadowed by the dominant and fierce personality of Reza Khan, who eventually stepped into the office of the Prime Minister in 1342/1923. Shortly afterwards Ahmad Shah, who

22 Modern Iran, p. 60.

23 Modern Iran, p. 60.
was destined to be the last Qajar ruler, left for France never to come back to his country.

Immediately after the coup, Reza Khan set out to re-establish law and order with an iron hand and to unify the country under a strong central government. He first proceeded against Mirza Kuchik Khan, who had established an independent republic in Gilan, and defeated him in 1340/1921. In 1342/1923 he liquidated the power of the Kurd leader Ismail ‘Ali Seneque, who was planning to establish himself in Ardabiljan and had become dangerously strong for the central government. Next, he turned his attention to Sheikh Khan’s of Mohammern, who posed the greatest threat in the oil-rich region of the south-west. Very soon he was able to bring the Sheikhs into complete submission. Different turbulent tribes including the Bakhtiyari and the Lurs were also pacified by 1344/1925.

These successful military campaigns and the consequent establishment of law and order in the strife-torn country won the support of the people, as Reza Khan was known in those days, immense popularity, which was enhanced by the ability he showed in unifying and reorganising the army. He absorbed the South Persia Rifles, a force raised by the British during World War I, and the panarmy created by Morgan Shafter into the Cossak Brigade and formed a compact national army. Adequate resources were diverted to re-equip and modernise it.

Reza Khan, the dictator, was now faced with the question of the future constitution. In spite of 2,000 years of its monarchical traditions, the Iranian nation, or at least a section of it, was now seriously advocating the establishment of a republic. After World War I the ideas of political democracy swept the whole world and the Iranians who had won constitutional government much earlier were now thrilled at the prospect of a republican form of government. Ahmad Shah had made an exit. The example of Turkey, where the Caliphate had been abolished in 1343/1924, gave great impetus to this idea. But at this moment opposition came from the most unexpected quarters. The Iranian divines who had played a highly important role in the constitutional struggle were alarmed at the extinction of the religious authority of the ‘ulama’ in Turkey. The apprehension that a republic would fare no better led them to oppose the new demand. In April 1924, Reza Khan forbade any discussion on the republican form of government. In February 1925, he was officially given dictatorial powers; on October 31, Ahmad Shah was deposed and on December 12 Reza Shah was chosen the Shah of Iran by a majority vote in the Parliament. On April 25, 1925, the coronation of the new Shah took place amidst scenes of pomp and festivity. He now became the founder of the new royal dynasty of the Pahlavis.

18 E. Gerochos, op. cit., p. 124. In the words of William S. Haoe, "It is at least doubtful whether Reza Khan was ever attracted to republicanism, despite the example of Mustafa Kemal. Reza’s ambition and idea of power fitted better with a monarhy" (Irons, p. 142).
link all important towns with Teheran and by constructing a spectacular railway line which connected the Caspian Sea with the Persian Gulf in 1356/1937 at a cost of £20,000,000, and while it implemented many industrial and financial projects, it was never forgetful of the all-important question of education. Extensive reforms were carried out in this field. The number of elementary and secondary schools was still very limited. After the revolution in 1324/1906, an effort was made to reorganize the educational system of the country. For the first time interest was taken by the Government in women's education. To foster an independent national outlook in children, the employment of foreign teachers was forbidden in elementary schools. The progress, however, was still very slow. It was left to Reza Shah’s Government to make a fundamental departure from the old system both in its organization and scope. In 1346/1927 there were only two colleges in Teheran, both run by foreign missions. Reza Shah set out to make amends for the deficiencies of the past, first by unifying the sporadic activities into a national system of education and then by gradually expanding its scope. Modern educational methods were adopted. Elementary education was made free and compulsory. Separate secondary schools for boys and girls were established. The buildings of these schools in Teheran are very impressive and symbolic of the new spirit of progress and development. Rightly enough, some of these schools have been named after great Persian poets. Secondary education is not compulsory in the country but tuition fees are low. The secondary school certificate is treated as equal to matriculation by the German, French, and some British and American universities. These schools generally branch off into liberal arts and sciences after three years. There is a number of technical, vocational, industrial, agricultural, medical, and other schools which prepare students for higher university education as well as for specific occupations. To give an idea of progress in the spread of education it would suffice to say that the number of elementary and secondary schools, which at the end of World War I was nearly three hundred, was raised to five thousand in the next decade and a half. Ever since it has made rapid strides forward. In 1357/1937, there were 7,301 elementary and 942 secondary schools in the country with 910,000 and 163,000 students respectively. The stress now is on village schools and on manual and technical training. A special Act was passed by the Parliament in 1347/1928 according to which one hundred students were sent to Europe annually for further studies by the Ministry of Education at State expense. This was particularly welcome as no university existed in the country. Besides, the Ministries of War, Posts and Telegraphs, and the Departments of Agriculture, Justice, Finance, and Industries also sent abroad a number of students to ensure the supply of trained personnel. To have an idea of expansion in higher education, it may be noted that the number of students studying abroad in 1376/1957 was about four thousand. During the new regime education was practically brought under State control. After 1351/1932 no foreign school was permitted to admit students of Iranian nationality. In 1360/1941 the Government took over all foreign schools. The Teheran University Act was passed on May 3, 1934. The foundation-stone of the University campus was laid by the Shah on February 5, 1935. Soon elegant and spacious buildings began to rise with Mount Alburz in the background. The University had five faculties to begin with, namely, Arts, Science, Law, Medicine, and Engineering. The faculties of Fine Arts and Divinity were added afterwards. The campus of Teheran University enjoys a site of great natural beauty. Although new universities have been founded at Tabriz, Isfahan, Shiraz, and Mashad during recent years, they are as yet in their infancy. Teheran University has come to enjoy a unique position in the intellectual life of the country. It can now accommodate hundreds of students who would otherwise go to Western universities for higher studies. It runs post-graduate classes in Persian literature and offers facilities for the doctor’s degree. The names of most of the eminent Iranian scholars are associated with the University academic staff. The literary output of the academic staff is by no means inconsiderable. Persian being the medium of instruction, the task of rendering important works of arts and sciences from Western languages into Persian engaged immediate attention. Several hundred books have been translated or originally written by the University professors. In order to popularize the Persian language and literature and to familiarize the foreign students of Persian with the latest trends in the language, the University runs a special class for scholars from foreign countries.

Technical education comes within the purview of the Ministry of Industries, which maintains a college for mining, metallurgy, chemistry, etc. Besides, there is a chain of art and craft schools where pure and utilitarian arts are taught including those traditionally associated with Iran like miniature painting, book illumination, enamel-work, and carpet-making. Above these there is the Teheran College of Arts. Other Ministries also run their own colleges. The Ministry of Agriculture has an agricultural college at Karaj and a college of animal husbandry in Teheran; the Ministry of Education administers the Academy of Music. Some other Ministries like those of Posts and Telegraphs, Transport, and the Interior also have colleges to meet their own requirements. Scientific education is encouraged. Library facilities have been extended throughout the country. The Parliament Library and the National Library enjoy a pride of place in this rather elaborate network.

There is co-education in elementary schools and at the university stage. The doors of all the colleges have been flung open to girl students and today

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19 Modern Iran, p. 136.
20 Dr. N. Wilbert, Iran, Past and Present, p. 204.
21 Ibid., p. 206.
there is a large number of girls studying in various colleges, especially in the
departments of Medicine and Fine Arts.

As the curricula of educational institutions would suggest, the main object
of Iranian education is to produce good citizens imbued with a profound
sense of patriotism. All possible means are explored to strengthen the national
spirit and the national outlook.

Adult education is not ignored. In a country where the overwhelming
majority of people is illiterate, the importance of adult education cannot be
over-emphasized. In 1305/1926, steps were taken to establish adult education
centres in the country. The response was so spontaneous that within two
months seven hundred and fifty centres were opened with more than fifty-six
thousand adults on rolls. The demand increased so rapidly that the Ministry
of Education had to allocate increasingly large sums for adult education every
year.

With all the admirable progress made in the field of education one would
say that in view of the population and vast area of the country much work
still remains to be done to justify the possibility of a scientific and technical
revolution which is the dream of every educated citizen.

In the thirteenth/nineteenth century few facilities existed for the main-
tenance and improvement of public health. The British General Mission Board
and the American Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, were running
hospitals in a few cities by the middle of the century. The earliest to be built
by the Iranian Government, however, dates back to 1294/1877. Conscions of
the deplorable lack of medical facilities in the country, the new regime devoted
full attention to this vital problem so that now every big town has a well-
equipped hospital. There are several large hospitals each with the capacity of
five hundred beds. In addition to this, there is a large number of dispensaries
throughout the country. Apart from the spacious and magnificent medical
college in Teheran there is a number of medical institutions in the country.

There is no prejudice against nursing, and various colleges exist in Teheran
for the training of nurses. Teheran has all kinds of medical specialists, while
there are numerous clinics run by Iranian doctors who have qualified from
abroad or from the University of Teheran.

One of the fundamental changes in the Iranian society in recent history
has been the emancipation of women, who had for long been deprived of their
legitimate legal and social rights accorded to them by Islam. The late Shah,
inspired by the example set by Mustafa Kemal, whom he looked upon as his
model and whom he visited in 1933/1954, introduced far-reaching social
changes. The Shah had been gradually encouraging the fair sex to come out
and discard the veil. By 1934/1955 a favourable atmosphere had been created
for a big change. On January 8, 1936, the Shah provided a dramatic touch
to his policy of emancipating women when, accompanied by the Queen and his
22 'Abd Allah Râzî, op. cit., p. 365.

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stability, reassertion of the national spirit, and revival of the ancient glory of the country. There was a passionate desire to purify the Iranian society of its weaknesses and vices and to usher in an era of social justice and economic prosperity. Literature which till then was looked upon as a privilege of the few became a vehicle for the dissemination of social and moral values amongst the people at large. It showed a marked trend towards simplicity of style and expression to attain the widest appeal. The writers conveyed new aims and ideals through fiction and drama, and though Persian literature had no traditions in novel and short story in the modern sense, yet the writers made great efforts to catch up with Western literature.

The new Iranian writers and scholars have made rapid progress in the production of original literary works. Yet the output of translation excels creative writing. As the Iranians, like many other peoples in the East, made a later start after a long time of intellectual sloth and social degeneration, it was but natural for them to learn through translations the phenomenal advances which the West had made both in the field of arts and humanities and in natural sciences and technology. In order to understand Western thought the knowledge of one of the European languages was considered to be indispensable. Hence the Iranian schools made it compulsory for students to learn English, French, or German. Since the medium of instruction in Iranian schools and universities is Persian, it is imperative to write in and translate monumental works of arts and sciences into Persian. That is why translation of books has achieved singular importance in Iran.

The work of translation started in the later half of the thirteenth/nineteenth century, and it had proceeded apace till it gained further impetus after 1940-1921. To begin with, this venture started in a rather haphazard manner and translations were rendered indiscriminately. Now, the University of Tehran is mainly responsible for the translation of works of classical importance. On the individual level, however, this work continues to be purely a matter of personal taste. Fiction and books of popular interest command the first position. Another organization called the Institute for Translation and Publication established under the Crown patronage in 1375/1956 has been accelerating the process of translation with special attention to the quality and importance of the books to be translated. The Institute specializes in the translation of Western classics.

As a result of these attempts hundreds of European books have been rendered into Persian. These books have been translated mainly from French which was, till the end of the last war, the second language of the country. This deep interest in the work of translation is a sign of sincere efforts to render into Persian what is regarded as valuable and fascinating in Western thought. There is a genuine desire to learn and derive benefit, and a stage is bound to come when creative approach to problems will take the place of

10 Safey, A General Survey of the Existing Situation in Persian Literature, p. 2.
conflict between the old and the new, the traditional and the modern, is bound to solve itself as the people of Iran recover from the first great impact of Western civilization. They have learnt through trial and error, and the time is not far when they will have resolved all their present conflicts, assimilated the best of Western thought, and upheld their own cultural and national individuality as a people of great gifts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Renaissance in Iran (Continued): Haji Mulla Hadi Sabizvari

Chapter LXXVIII

RENAISSANCE IN IRAN (Continued)

HAJI MULLA HADI SABIZWARI

A LIFE AND WORKS

After the death of Mulla 'Sadr, the school established by him found its most famous interpreter and expositor in Haji Mulla Hadi Sabizvari who was the greatest of the Ikhkans of the Qajar period in Persia. After a period of turmoil caused by the Afgani invasion, in which the spiritual as well as the political life of Persia was temporarily disturbed, traditional learning became once again established under the Qajar, and in the hands of Haji Mulla Hadi and his students the wisdom of Mulla 'Sadr began once again to flourish through the Shafi'i world. Thus from Sabizvari gained so much fame that soon he became endowed with the simple title of Haji by which he is still known in the traditional madrasa, and his Shahri Manzali became the most widely used book on Hikmat in Persia and has remained so until today.

Haji Mulla Hadi was born in 1212/1797-98 at Sabizvari in Khurasan, a city well known for its Sofia and also for Shafi'i tendencies even before the Safavid period, where he completed his early education in Arabic grammar and language. At the age of ten he went to Meshed where he continued his studies in jurisprudence (Fiqh), logic, mathematics, and Hikmat for another ten years. By now, his love for the intellectual sciences had become so great

1 Only the most eminent figures in the intellectual life of Islam have come to receive such simple designations. In Persia one can name only a few such luminaries, ibn Sina being called Shamsi; Nasir al-Din Tusi, Khajeh; Jalali al-Din Rumi, Mullab; ibn Arbini, Shahid al-Abadi; and Mulla 'Sadr, Shahri. In view of these designations it is easy to see what an exalted position has been accorded to Haji in Persia.

2 There is an account of the life of Haji by himself on which we have drawn much for our information. See M. Mudarrisi (Shahrehi), Tarihi i Falsafavi-i Islam, "Tani Press, Tehran, 1336-37-38 Solar, Vol. II, pp. 112ff.; and also by the same author Life and Philosophy of Haji Mulla Hadi Sabizvari, Taharni Bookshop, Tehran, 1930. The story of the life of Haji as related by his son as well as a summary of some of his doctrines not all of which, however, can be considered to be authentic is given by E. G. Browne, in his A Year Amongst the Persians, Adam & Charles Black, London, 1920, pp. 143-56. Accounts of his life are also found in the usual sources like the Qisas al-Anbiya; Majas al-Da'wah, and Night al-Adin, When Gohiavas visited Persia, Haji was alive and at the height of his fame; he is mentioned with great respect in Gohiavas writings; see Comte de Gohiavas, Les reliques et les philosophes dans l'Asie centrale, G. Gros et Cie, Paris, 1923, pp. 113-14. There are also references to Haji in A. M. A. Shadnawar, Oudadat of Islamic Culture, Bangalore, 1938, Vol. II, pp. 452-54; and in M. Iqbal, The Development of Metaphysics in Persia, Luzac & Co., London, 1968, pp. 172ff. 

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