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Manouchehr Tayyab

Photos: Asad Naghshbandi, Manouchehr Tayyab



*Journeys
in Iran 2*

Along With the Wind in the Solitude of the

D e s e r t



Ketab-e-Khorshid Publication

Along With the Wind in the Solitude of the Desert

Manouchehr Tayyab

Photos: Asad Naghshbandi, Manouchehr Tayyab

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A Note from the Publisher

The formation of the collection *Journeys in Iran* began life fourteen years ago with the handwritten notes of Manouchehr Tayyab, the prominent Iranian documentary-maker. Supported by fifty years of travelling and research, it has now reached fruition in the shape of four books.

With pen and camera, the writing of these books created stunning, memorable images; through the careful copy-editing of the Persian text, as well as the English translation, we have tried to preserve the flavour and the style of the original.

The series *Journeys in Iran*, consisting of 1-*Persian Sea* 2-*Along With the Wind in the Solitude of the Desert* 3-*Zagros Cradle of an old Civilization* 4-*Alborz Birthplace of a Culture as old as History*, define the scope of Iran's geographical and cultural borders, from prehistoric times until the present.

Along With the Wind in the Solitude of the Desert, the second book in this series, containing delightful factual stories illustrated by beautiful, expressive photographs and a map of the journeys, opens up new landscapes onto the history, the natural beauty, the culture, and the customs and habits of our homeland.

I now hope that the publication of all four books both in Persian and English will meet the expectations of both Mr Tayyab and our colleagues at Ketab-e-Khorshid. Every book is also accompanied with its documentary film, directed by Manouchehr Tayyab.

The series *Journeys in Iran* is dedicated to all those born of Iran.

Masoud Kazari
General Director

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Dedicated to the Community of Documentary Film Makers

For some forty years that I have been travelling across Iran for the preparation of a variety of documentary films or in order to arrange cultural or study programmes, I happened to pass around the borders of the *Kavir* (desert) or through the *Kavir* itself many many times. Every time I wondered, what sort of land is this?

Of course, for Iranians, the *Kavir* is a place of no profit, so why should they go there? In olden times if you saw a non-*kavir* person in the *Kavir*, he was either a civil servant, who had to be posted to serve there, or a teacher or doctor, whose zeal and humanitarian sentiments compelled him to teach the deprived children of the *Kavir*, or treat their illnesses. If you tarried a little longer and looked curious, somebody or other would turn up and ask who you are, where you come from and what you are doing? Of course, that is apart from those who really believe that you know of a hidden treasure in this world of ochrous and salty soil, and would demand their share! Anyhow, I do not know what happened that I was suddenly drawn to this *Kavir*. One keeps searching, either for thousand and one reasons for love or none at all. So this became one of my wishes to find out the secret of this land of isolation.

Ever since my first acquaintance with the *Kavir*, the land that covers one-third of this country, or according to Sir Percy Sykes "The Dead-Heart of Persia", I carried out various studies in the fields of architecture, town-planning, the way of life, work and income, agriculture and prehistoric remains of the land such as *Tepe Sialk* and *Tepe Hessar*, and I also got to know and study existing literary works such as the travelogues of Nasser -Khosrow, Ibn Howqal, Marco Polo, Hamdollah Mostowfi, Ata-Malik Juvayni, Gio: ofat Barbaro and others that has been helpful in my documentary film making, and also in my lecturing work at the university.

But my serious studies on the *Kavir* began when I got to know the works of scholars like the Swedish Sven Hedin, the Russian Nikolai Khanikov, and especially Dr. Alfons Gabriel from Austria, who had crossed the *Kavir* meter by meter. These books contain extensive information on the *Kavir*; in particular, the beautiful, memorable works by Alfons Gabriel, made me enchanted by the *Kavir* and took me a couple of years that I had the opportunity to study them in the National Library of Vienna.

In short, such was the impression that these works had on me that on a cold winter night, with half a meter of snowfall in Vienna, and looking at the blinking yellowish lights of the nearby park in the distance, I made my final decision to follow on the footsteps of the great *Kavir* scholars, and with the information that I had gained, I would have a look at the attractive, remote and at times scary parts of the *Kavir*. And this was just the beginning of the adventure.

In the spring of 1989, I bid farewell to my family and went to Iran, so if I were successful, I would cross new

routes and paths in this vast land, sixty years after Alfons Gabriel. Having arrived in *Tehran*, I tried to persuade some friends to accompany me on this journey, a few of them agreed. These journeys took some eight or nine years. It became my plan that I would go to Iran for a few months every year to travel in the Kavir. What Alfons Gabriel had said applied to me. He wrote:

"The Desert (Kavir) will never more set free the one who has been captivated by its magic."

It had been years that the idea of making a film about the Kavir had preyed on my mind and I was looking for an opportunity to make one or two of them.

The plan of the film and the photo album of the Kavir were making the rounds in the Farabi Cinema Foundation without getting anywhere, and eventually fell into oblivion, until the fruit ripened at last and fell from the tree of luck! But not in Farabi Foundation, in another place that I could not even dream of: Channel 1 production department of IRIB, the Iranian State Television. Two of the then heads of department working with the best intentions, aimed to present serious work in the field of documentary. Seeing the plan of the film, they approved of the production in IRIB. During the three cold winter months in Vienna, and with the heat of the Kavir a distant memory, I made the comprehensive plan of the film and sent it to Tehran. The decision to start work was set for the month of May 1997.

When I went to Tehran, I reviewed the plan with Hassan Yazdani (the Director of cinematography) and for couple of days we looked up the routes on the map, we looked at some photos and transparencies and I regularly reminded him of the difficulties of the work and the hardship of the journey, so that, as they say, he would not agree without thinking. He seemed determined and prepared to endure the separation from his family for a while, and in fact, at some point, he seemed even more enthusiastic than myself. Anyway, after a few meetings Yazdani was prepared to roll up sleeves and put together a useful team for this journey.

This project indeed needed a team whose members, besides having the expertise and the ability, should be willing men of work and travel, and travel in the Kavir, in particular. This is the place where the temperature is sometimes around 50° C and the dryness is beyond tolerance; a place where if you lose your way, you are finished; where you have no peace from snakes and reptiles; and where in its town of *Shahdad* the temperature at 11 pm is above 40° C. Here the body of the camera gets so hot that the flesh of your hands sticks to it; where after half an hour of rain, the land around you becomes a sticky dough, making it impossible to move. Here the sand storm can bodily lift your camera, your tripod and yourself. In short, this journey needs a man of challenge, ready to face every adversity. After a two-week experimental trip around the Kavir with the production manager and the assistant director, at last the group wholeheartedly and unanimously decided to go for it, so once all filming equipment was packed and ready, we were on our way.

The extent of eternity; the wavy sea of sands and wind
The sea bejeweled by the culture of this land, from the south of
Tehran to the north of Kerman
A sea, its port Kashan, the Bride of Cities of the World.
A sea, its port Zavareh, the Bezel of Elegance.
A sea, its island Khor, green by palm trees and colored by the sun.
A sea, its island Fin, green by cypresses and blue by its basaltic fountains,
which still have nightmares of the gruesome conspiracy,
behind the door that would fall and be led to the ground;
a blood bath; the blood of Amir-Kabir, the great governor; the burning blood of myths in the heart of
tekkiehs, in the alleys, in the depth of the solitude of the desert. Its patient people pass by on
their way to slake their desert thirst at the multireflecting mirrorwork of the tombs of their martyrs.
And Tayyab has passed through all these,
along with the wind, on the footsteps of Nasser-Khosrow, Marco Polo, Pierre Loti,
Hamdollah Mostowfi, Clavijo, Ibn Howqal...
And he has arrived at the present, a time of both legend and reality.
The legend of all our suffering, and the reality of all our culture.
Preserved in the Kavir, lost due to our lack of knowledge
And Tayyab has passed through this too
Like the rolling sands, dry and kind
Like the sparkle of qanat water
One moment, and then an image

Mohammad-Reza Aslani