

# Delaram: Village of physicians, where knowledge and care flourish



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## Iranica Desk

In the vicinity of Tafresh, a city in Markazi Province, lies the renowned village of Delaram, widely celebrated as the 'Village of Physicians'. The village entrance proudly showcases the birthplace of Professor Ardeshir Qavamzadeh, the father of neurosurgery and bone marrow transplantation in Iran.

As you approach the village along the secondary road, you'll be greeted by a picturesque sight of lush walnut and almond trees adorning both sides. Gradually, the rural houses begin to reveal themselves, each street and alley bearing the name of a distinguished physician.

A prominent sign adorns the middle of the road, proclaiming: "Welcome to Delaram village, the esteemed Village of Physicians, where an impressive 175 doctors have emerged from its 180 households, bringing great recognition to this remarkable place."

Among the village's bustling grape vines, a villager who had climbed onto the wall of a house to pick grapes shared, "This

very house is the birthplace of several doctors, specializing in various fields such as pharmacy and radiology."

A woman who is the relative of one of Iran's esteemed gynecologists, spoke of Delaram's pleasant climate, organic products, and the tranquility that envelops the area. She proudly said that the village's inhabitants have consistently valued knowledge and education, nurturing the progress of their future generations.

Mehrdad Parsa, a Ph.D. holder in genetics, revealed that his father was born there and migrated to Tehran in his youth. During the Iran-Iraq war, the family returned to Delaram village briefly, allowing Mehrdad and his brother Mehdi, now a pharmacist, to attend the village's sole school. Interestingly, the oldest school in Tafresh is also located in Delaram, dating back to 1926.

Mehrdad expressed his desire for the restoration of this historic school, where many scientific figures from Delaram village have received their education. He believed that transforming it into a

tourist attraction would greatly benefit the village, although presently it rests in ruins.

Presently, Delaram village boasts 70 doctors, 40 non-medical Ph.D. graduates, and 30 engineers who have become active professionals across the country. However, for the sake of rural development and ensuring equal access to health care, medical services, and welfare facilities, it is vital to establish favorable conditions that encourage the next generation to receive an education in their hometown and serve their community. A young doctor likened the entrance to heaven's gate and exclaimed, "The interwoven, lush trees that grace the beginning of the village path are absolutely enchanting!"

He also referred to the presence of three ancient walnut trees within the village, one of which is over a thousand years old. Witnessing these majestic trees is indeed a delightful experience. So ancient are they that their branches have grown from the ground, often mistaken by people as roots.

Among the plethora of physician names seen on signs scattered throughout the village streets and alleys, Dr. Mahasti Karimi stands out as an internist. Moved by her late father's wishes, she chose to remain in Tafresh, dedicating herself to serving those in need. Even without her father's influence, Dr. Karimi's deep affection for the people of Tafresh would have made it her chosen home.

After 16 years of practicing medicine in Tafresh, she temporarily relocated to Tehran to accompany her husband during his advanced medical studies. They eventually returned to Tafresh, continuing their service to the community.

Dr. Karimi also mentioned a super specialist in blood and oncology from their family who occasionally visits Tafresh to treat patients in the area.

Another notable individual born and educated in Delaram village happens to be one of the first dentists in Iran. He even founded the Dentistry Department at the University of Tehran. After moving to Tehran, he graciously accommodat-

ed patients in his own two-story house, personally covering their food and other necessities.

"He was a remarkable person and a true role model for my work and life, but sadly, he passed away at the young age of 40," she added, a touch of sorrow evident in her voice.

Regrettably, the lack of educational facilities for the children of physicians and low incomes have decreased the motivation for specialist doctors to remain in the town.

Professor Ardeshir Ghavamzadeh, esteemed pioneer of bone marrow transplantation in Iran, was among the remarkable specialists born in Delaram village.

Zahra Ganjali, a rural manager, expressed hope that this renowned doctor, along with some of his students, would continue their periodic visits to Tafresh and the surrounding villages, providing free medical care to patients. She eagerly anticipated the transformation of Dr. Ghavamzadeh's old house into a tourist destination in the near future.

## Qanat system and cultural heritage in Qasemabad of Hamedan

The village of Qasemabad belongs to Hamedan, Hamedan Province in western Iran. Qanat system is the most important water source in this village, which is a holdover from thousands of years of sedentary livelihood in the region. Qanat consists of some shaft wells interconnected by a subterranean tunnel that drains out the groundwater seepage and conveys it onto the earth surface using the height difference between the two ends of the tunnel. Over the past centuries, various ethnicities dwelled in this area and left behind some vestiges of their culture. Hence, a wealth of cultural elements has been amassed over time, which is manifest in water and irrigation culture in this village.

Qasemabad has long been irrigated by two qanats that were the only water sources for both domestic and agricultural uses. The village has had no access to any surface streams like permanent rivers. Like the city of Hamedan itself, Qasemabad nestles on an alluvial fan in Zagros Mountains whose peaks receive a considerable annual precipitation. Airport meteorological station that is only 6km from Qasemabad has recorded an annual precipitation of 206.3 mm

on average (Hamedan Meteorological Organization 2017), whereas this number reaches between 400 and 500 mm mostly in the shape of snowfall at the top of the mountains overlooking the village.

Therefore, such a disparity in precipitation types and amounts along with topographical and geological conditions has set the stage for qanat system in this region.

In the elevated areas, the melting of the winter snows plays a vital role in replenishing groundwater reserves that have formed inside the alluvial fans and sediments of Alvand Mountains. In fact, the qanat of Qasemabad could have proved to be a solution to the region's uneven distribution of vital production factors like water and soil. At higher altitudes, water is abundant but arable soil is at a premium, and the climate does not lend itself to agriculture. On the contrary, at lower altitudes, water is in short supply but fertile soil is ample and the climate is well suited to agricultural activities. Hence, qanat can somehow even out such resources by bringing water from higher altitudes to the less elevated lands where suitable soil and climate allow a lucrative agriculture but

in the presence of water.

The village of Qasemabad actually enjoys two qanats named Emamzadeh and Bozorg. Emamzadeh qanat with a length of 2km appears on the surface close to a shrine, and its water is used for irrigating a vast area of orchards and ash trees. In 2017, this qanat was completely out of water due to years of negligence, collapse and tunnel obstruction. The water shareholders have turned to other water sources like tube wells in the area to irrigate their orchards.

They have to rent some water shares from those tube wells as a last resort. Although Emamzadeh qanat has been abandoned nowadays, the exit point of this qanat used to be one of the best places for recreation in the village in the past. Qasemabad's shrine is much revered, since it is a Shia saint' tomb, named Ghasem ibn Mohammad Bahtayi that descended from Imam Hossein (PBUH). The village has probably been named after that same shrine, and some historical records give credence to the fact that the village was known by the same name at least at the time of Mongolian invasion.

Building a sacred place like Qasemabad's shrine close to a qanat flow is



Emamzadeh qanat

rooted in the ancient culture of the region. Before Islam, it was quite common to build fire temples near a spring or qanat water as a sacred element that was highly venerated by Zoroastrians, and the same custom lived on later in the shape of Islamic shrines or mosques. For example, in Baneh, Kurdistan Province, Pir Morad tomb situated close to a natural spring has once been a fire temple that retained its religious function even after the inhabitants converted from Zoroastrianism to Islam. Also, such shrines as Zobeydeh Kha-

toon in Naraq, Emamzadeh Ebrahim in Karaj, Chartaghi in the village of Nashlaj in Niyasar in Kashan, and Emamzadeh Hamzeh in Ab-Ali were all probably Sassanid fire temples that were converted to the Islamic sacred places and continued to be revered in a new ideological system. Therefore, proximity of Qasemabad's shrine to the qanat exit point is expressive of an enduring influence that Iran's ancient culture exerts, regarding spiritual relationship between water and sacred places.