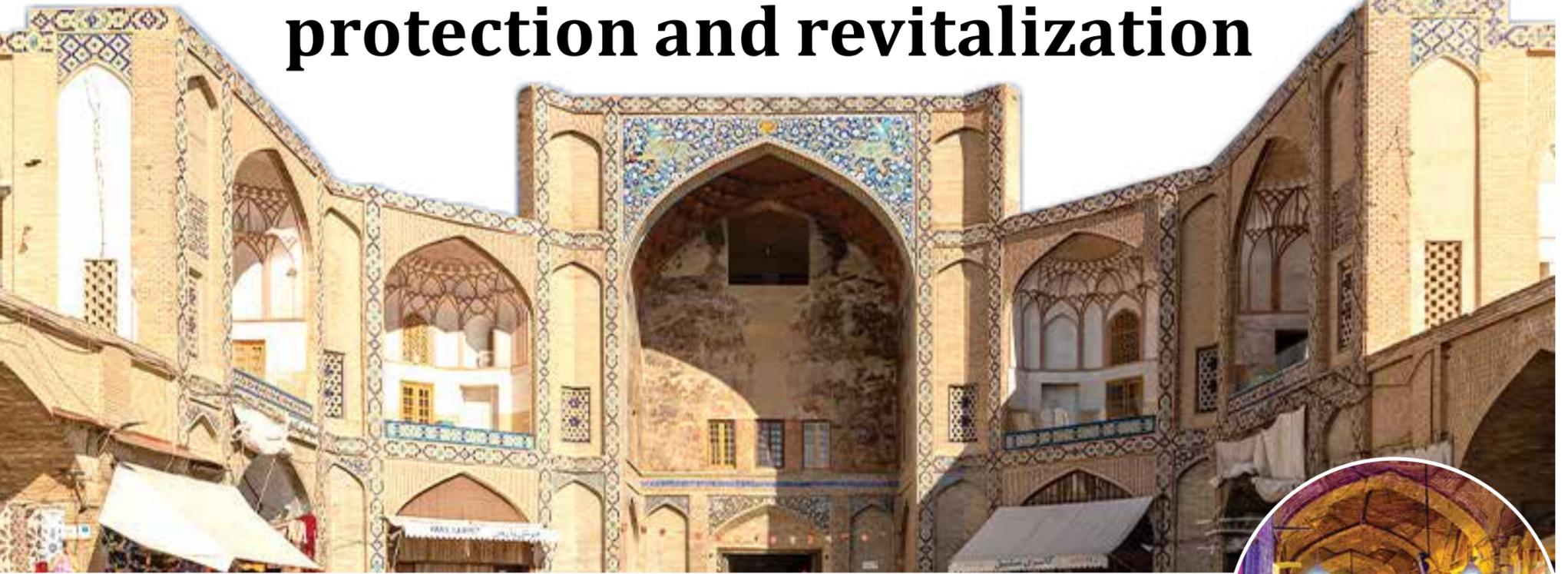


Isfahan Bazaar in need of protection and revitalization



Iranica Desk

The Isfahan bazaar is considered one of the largest historical bazaars in Iran and the world, with a history dating back over a thousand years, especially in the northern part of the city around the ancient Jaame Mosque. Reports from travelers, especially in the travelogue of Naser Khosrow, have detailed the prosperity of this market in the fourth and fifth centuries AH.

Amir Karamzadeh, the director general of Isfahan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization, wrote in a note: During the Safavid period when Isfahan was chosen as the third capital, one of the main axes connecting the old city with the new one was the Isfahan bazaar. This grand historical bazaar gradually expanded, with its extent reaching over eight kilometers with the construction of thousands of commercial complexes including caravanserais, mosques, baths, religious schools, water reservoirs, wa-

tering places, market alleys, four-sided markets, inns, caravanserais, and even transportation hubs connecting to various neighborhoods.

Currently, more than 8,500 commercial units are active in this complex, making it one of the most important commercial centers with over a thousand years of history, serving as a hub for the old and new Isfahan, and a place of passage for thousands of people and tourists.

Currently, one of the primary concerns for both provincial authorities and market traders is the safeguarding and security of this grand and historic bazaar. Initial evaluations of the market highlight the urgent need for a comprehensive cleaning plan.

Furthermore, given the market's centuries-old existence, the safety of the market is a pressing issue due to the installation of non-standard facilities, particularly concerning electrical setups, necessitating careful attention and reassessment. This is exacerbated by the market's pre-

dominantly covered and winding structure, which hinders the passage of fire and emergency vehicles. Consequently, in the event of emergencies such as fires, the provision of services becomes practically unfeasible. It is imperative to address the outdated electrical system of the market, which, despite market traders' efforts in installing various high-voltage cooling and heating devices, compromises the aesthetic appeal of this historic market.

The subsequent action involves establishing secure and standardized channels within the market floor for the passage of water and gas facilities, ensuring optimal services for traders while enhancing the safety for their operations. However, the issue of car and motorcycle traffic remains a persistent challenge in this historic market, tarnishing its reputation and leading to numerous difficulties, especially during tourist movements. Market traders have proactively taken steps to protect and promote the

historical market of Isfahan by working closely with the government. Their awareness of the market's value has led them to participate effectively in preserving its heritage and supporting its activities.

Undoubtedly, one of the most important objectives of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization of Isfahan Province is to first create convergence with all relevant government entities responsible for managing this large historic market, such as the municipality, located in the heart of the historical fabric and central axis of the city of Isfahan. Subsequently, efforts are made to engage people, especially market traders, in promoting the protection of this historic market. If we accept that this grand market is a place of transit and business for thousands of active members of the province, it can be acknowledged that the government alone cannot bear the responsibility of protecting this vast complex. The participation of market traders in this matter is essential.



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The father of Persian language

By Sahba Saffary
Guest contributor

Abul-Qasem Ferdowsi Tusi (940-1020 CE) is one of the undisputed giants of Persian literature. He holds a unique place in Persian history due to his significant contributions to reviving and regenerating the Persian language and cultural traditions. His works are widely recognized as crucial in maintaining the integrity and codification of the Persian language, ensuring its continuity and preservation over time. In this regard, Ferdowsi surpasses Nizami, Khayyam, and other Persian literary figures in his influence on Persian culture and language. Many modern Iranians regard him as the father of the modern Persian language.

Ferdowsi was born into a family of Iranian landowners in Paj village, near the city of Tus in Khorasan, which is situated in present-day Khorasan Razavi Province in northeastern Iran.

Little is known about Ferdowsi's early life. The poet had a wife who was likely literate and belonged to the dehqan class. The dehqans were landowning Iranian aristocrats who thrived under the Sassanid dynasty and maintained their influence into the Islamic era.

The dehqans were devoted to the pre-Islamic literary heritage, viewing it as their duty to preserve the pre-Isl-



amic cultural traditions, including tales of legendary kings.

It is possible that Ferdowsi wrote some early poems that have not survived. He started working on the Shahnameh around 977 with the intention of continuing the work of his fellow poet Daqiqi, who had been assassinated by his slave.

Like Daqiqi, Ferdowsi used the prose Shahnameh of Abd al-Razzaq as a source. He received generous patron-

age from the Samanid Prince Mansur and completed the first version of the Shahnameh in 994.

When the Turkic Ghaznavids replaced the Samanids, Ferdowsi persisted in working on the poem and revising sections to extol the Ghaznavid Sultan Mahmud. However, Mahmud may have shown less interest in narratives from Iranian history compared to the Samanids.

Mahmud's attitude towards Ferdowsi

and how well he rewarded the poet are subjects that have long been debated and have given rise to legendary tales about the poet and his patron.

According to the legend, Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni offered Ferdowsi a gold piece for every couplet of the Shahnameh he wrote. The poet agreed to receive the money as a lump sum when he had completed the epic. After thirty years of work, Ferdowsi finished his masterpiece.

The Sultan prepared to give him 60,000 gold pieces as agreed. However, the courtier whom Mahmud had entrusted with the money despised Ferdowsi, considering him a heretic, and he replaced the gold coins with silver.

Ferdowsi was in the bathhouse when he received the reward, only to discover it was silver instead of gold. In response, he gave the money to the bathkeeper. When the courtier informed the Sultan of Ferdowsi's actions, the Sultan was furious and threatened to execute him.

Eventually, the Sultan sent him a new gift of 60,000 gold pieces. However, as the caravan carrying the money entered the gates of Tus, a funeral procession emerged from the opposite side: The poet had passed away from a heart attack. He was laid to rest in his own garden. The tomb was reconstructed between 1928 and 1934 by the Society for National Heritage of Iran and has since become a revered national shrine.

Ferdowsi's Shahnameh is the most popular and influential national epic in Iran and other Persian-speaking nations.

The Shahnameh is the only surviving work by Ferdowsi regarded as indisputably genuine.

May 15 is National Commemoration Day of Ferdowsi, whose masterpiece, Shahnameh, preserved Persian identity, language, and heritage.