

Nader Shah's tomb in Mashhad; symbol of power, history, tribal heritage



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EXCLUSIVE

Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Razavi Province, is a city abundant in religious, natural, recreational, and tourist attractions, providing an ideal environment for visitors to enjoy memorable and pleasant experiences. As one of Iran's major cities, it was once the capital of the Afsharids. Before the martyrdom of Imam Reza (PBUH), there was no sign of Mashhad, and the current city was merely a village called Sanabad. This village was part of Noghan, which at that time was one of the largest towns in Tus. The name Mashhad is derived from the meaning place of witness or martyrdom. During the reign of Shah Teimur Safavid and by his order, the city gradually grew in prosperity and size. People from Tus migrated to Mashhad, and the name Mashhad became permanently etched in Iranian history. Today, this city is a major center of religious tourism for Shi'a Muslims worldwide. With its rich historical legacy, after visiting the holy shrine of Imam Reza (PBUH), exploring Mashhad's numerous historical sites is highly recommended. These sites, distinguished by their unique architecture and compelling stories from the past, are especially appealing to history enthusiasts. One of Mashhad's most icon-

ic landmarks that visitors must not miss is the tomb of Nader Shah. Visiting this site involves exploring a significant historical complex that includes Naderi Garden, the Naderi Museum, and Nader Shah's mausoleum. For history buffs, this complex offers a fascinating glimpse into the past, housing a wide array of artifacts, buildings, and relics such as weapons from before the Qajar period, military equipment from Nader Shah's era, a tall tower with a statue of Nader Shah, and the tomb hall. Kourosh Rahimi, a guide working at this complex, provided a brief overview of Nader Shah's life, along with insights into the architectural features of this cultural and historical site, summarized as follows: Nader Shah was born on November 22, 1688, in Abivard village of Dargaz, in Khorasan. His father was from Azarbaijan, and his mother was Kurdish. Nader's mother was the daughter of an ancient ruler of Mazandaran, making him part Mazandarani. At the age of eighteen, Nader lost his father. During the invasion of Iran by the Uzbeks, he was captured along with his mother and brother. During captivity, he lost his mother but managed to escape. In Abivard, he was highly admired for his bravery. He married the daughter of the ruler of Abivard and had three sons and three daughters. Notably, none of his children suc-

ceeded him as ruler of Iran. Nader Shah is regarded as one of Iran's most illustrious kings in many ways; he is the only monarch who fought in approximately 1,250 battles without a single defeat. Although he sometimes felt weakened during his campaigns and needed to recover his strength, he ultimately achieved victory. In his youth, he was famously called Shir Atak (Lion of Atak), as «Atak» in Turkish means slope, referring to the mountain's steep incline. Professor Hoshang Seyhoun, the father of Iranian architecture, was born in Dolatabad, Tehran. Construction of this mausoleum began in 1956 by him, and it was officially opened in 1963. This historic building is precisely modeled after Nader's life story. If we observe the exterior carefully, it has a sloped form, like a mountain slope, which symbolizes that he was born in the mountainous region. The bars around the entire complex are like the Nader Shah Afshar's Tabrizin (battle ax). If we turn the columns of the complex upside down, they resemble the hats of Nader's soldiers. Nader's tomb is located in one corner; it is not in the middle because he usually stood in a corner of his tent to see everyone around. It is made to be unseen from the outside. The tombstone of Nader is exactly like Kuh-e Noor Diamond which Nader Shah brought from India. The stairs leading up are

about thirteen in number. This roughly indicates that Nader's approximately thirteen years of reign over Iran, and the building's design resembles a nomadic tent. Nader Shah is the only king born in a tent and also died in a tent, maintaining his tribal heritage throughout his life. Nader Shah was a very grand and high-spirited personality. That's why "Salam Stair" (Greetings Stair) was built in front of his mausoleum. These stairs symbolize respect; when entering Nader's tomb, you must step on these stairs and show reverence. You might not realize that the carved edges around the building are actually called "Salam Stair" architecture. Such edges are common in every historic structure; remember that when a person's character is important, they deserve respect. People who go to the Zorkhaneh (traditional Iranian gymnasium) know that upon entering, they should bow slightly as a sign of respect. Likewise, when entering Nader's mausoleum, your knees should bend and your head should bow down. Nader Shah was Shi'a Muslim. He gifted 222 kilograms of gold to the holy shrine of Imam Reza (PBUH), and the dome and minarets of the shrine are decorated with this gold. During the time when Muhammad Gorkani, the king of India, was defeated in a plain, Nader Shah only brought 1,150 camels load-

ed with jewels from India, which was equivalent to about sixty tons. This wealth made Iranian exempt from taxes, symbolizing the country's regional power. However, after Nader's assassination, many of his jewels were looted. The most valuable among these jewels is the Kuh-e Noor Diamond, which Nader's minister stole from Iran. Over a span of 75 years, these jewels traveled through eight cities, and ultimately, they were set into the crown of Queen Victoria, the Queen of Britain. The remaining jewels of Nader are kept in the Treasury of National Jewels in Tehran. But, at the end of his life, Nader Shah suffered from a liver disease. His close associates betrayed him and conspired against him; his commands were no longer pleasing to them. The plot to kill Nader was devised by his nephew, he was attacked in his tent. Nader rose and fought back, striking several opponents, but his foot got caught on a tent pole, and he fell to the ground. Nader's head was cut off by one of his ministers, with a trick played by his nephew, when he was 59 years old. He, who was the most illustrious, lived for fifty-nine years, spent eleven of those years riding a horse, and reigned over Iran for about thirteen years. The tomb of Nader Shah Afshar has been registered as a National Heritage Site of Iran.

