

Find adventure, tranquility in Shemshak

Iranica Desk

For many people, hearing the name Shemshak immediately brings images of snow-covered mountains and ski slopes to mind — a destination where athletes and winter enthusiasts travel every year for skiing, sledding, and enjoying the white landscapes of the Alborz Mountains. Yet Shemshak is not only a winter destination. This mountainous region on the southern slopes of the Alborz reveals another face in spring and summer: a green, cool, and peaceful retreat from Tehran's heat.

The village of Shemsh and the wider Shemshak area offer a unique combination of mountain landscapes, local history, clear springs, and refreshing weather. From old mines to an international ski resort, from the well-known Aftab Nadideh Spring to a Safavid-era shrine, every corner of the region reflects the long relationship between local communities and their mountainous environment, according to IRNA.

Located northeast of Tehran, Shemshak lies along the scenic Lavasan–Fasham–Meygun–Shemshak–Darbandsar route, one of the most beautiful mountain roads in Tehran Province. The winding road offers different landscapes throughout the year, with each season bringing its own colors and atmosphere. The Shemshak area consists of several villages and neighborhoods, each with its own natural attractions and character.

However, they all share common features: clean air, towering mountains, clear springs, and welcoming local communities.



Among these settlements, Shemsh is considered one of the oldest and most traditional villages in the area. The name “Shemshak” is believed to be linked to the word “Shemsh,” which historically referred to mines or valuable stones and metals. The region has long been associated with mining activities, and traces of this heritage remain part of the area's identity.

In the not-so-distant past, Shemshak was a destination for miners and mountaineers who came to the highlands for work or recreation. Although little remains of the old mining sites to-

day, the region's pristine nature and numerous springs continue to attract visitors. Shemshak can be described as a land with two distinct faces: a

winter landscape of snow, ice, and skiing, and a summer landscape of springs, gardens, and cool mountain air.

During winter, the mountains are covered with snow, and the Shemshak and Darbandsar ski resorts welcome professional athletes and tourists. These slopes are among Iran's best-known ski destinations and offer spectacular views during the snowy season.

With the arrival of spring and summer, however, the snow melts and the springs come alive. During these seasons, village gardens, the sound of streams, and the cool moun-

tain breeze provide a peaceful refuge for those seeking relief from the heat and congestion of the capital.

Shemshak and its surrounding



● IRNA

villages are home to numerous small and large springs emerging from the mountains and flowing toward the valleys. Each spring has its own story, but one of the most famous is the Aftab Nadideh Spring, meaning “the spring that has never seen sunlight.”

According to local accounts, a spring once existed northeast of Shemshak that remained permanently in the shadow of the mountains, receiving no direct sunlight. Residents named it Aftab Nadideh Spring as a reference to this unusual natural feature.

Over the years, natural chang-

es and construction altered the surrounding landscape, allowing sunlight to reach the spring. However, the traditional name has remained unchanged. Visi-

cated in Shemshak, this shrine dates back to the Safavid period. Set in a peaceful green area, it is registered as a national heritage site.

Shemshak and Sefidestan gardens: During summer, these traditional garden alleys, with stone walls and walnut, apple, and red plum trees, create a picturesque landscape.

Culture and people of Shemshak The people of Shemshak are among the long-established inhabitants of the mountainous areas of Shemiranat. Their lives have traditionally been closely connected with nature, from agriculture and livestock farming to tourism and skiing.

Stories of the mining era and harsh winters of the past are still shared by local elders. The residents are known for their hospitality, and visitors who engage with them can often hear memories of snowy days gone by over a cup of warm tea.

In the villages of Shemshak, traditional features such as stone houses, sloped roofs, wood-burning stoves, and the sound of livestock bells can still be found. Despite its proximity to Tehran, the area has preserved much of its traditional character.

Ultimately, just a short distance from the busy streets of Tehran, Shemshak allows visitors to enjoy fresh air and listen to the sounds of nature. Whether for skiing in winter or walking through green gardens in summer, Shemshak remains a memorable mountain escape throughout the year.

Reading Room

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Ancient Persian literature continues to offer contemporary readers fresh narratives and thought-provoking ideas. The book *Patient as a Winter Seed*, a selection of stories from Al-Faraj ba'da al-Shiddah (Relief After Hardship) by Qazi Abu Ali Mohsen al-Tanukhi, seeks to build a connection between today's readers and one of the valuable works of classical literature.

Mohammad Shams Langeroudi, the compiler of the volume, and Farshid Parsikia, the book's illustrator, discussed the collection, the importance of revisiting classical literature, and the process of illustration in an interview with IRNA.

The book *Patient as a Winter Seed*, translated by Hossein ibn As'ad Dehestani, selected by Shams Langeroudi, and illustrated by Farshid Parsikia, has been published in 286 pages by Vazn-e Donya Publications. It is the fourth title in the publisher's classical literature series, following *Avarde-and ke...* (One Thousand and One Nights as narrated by Mahmoud Dowlatabadi), *The Tale of Abu Fazl: Tarikh-e Beyhaqi* Selected and Introduced by Mahmoud Dowlatabadi, and *Nowruznameh* by Hakim Omar Khayyam Neyshabouri with an Introduction by Ali Dehbashi.

In the interview, Langeroudi described Al-Faraj ba'da

al-Shiddah as one of the most engaging and instructive works of classical literature. He said the book is a collection of stories that, in addition to their narrative appeal, provide a picture of the social conditions of their era — a period when violence and crime were sometimes portrayed as ordinary events, with the author presenting them without particular emphasis.

He added that the central theme of the work is hope, as the stories show that relief and salvation can follow hardship. According to Langeroudi, these narratives remind readers that human beings do not have a complete understanding of the path of life and the events that await them.

Explaining his reason for selecting stories from Al-Faraj ba'da al-Shiddah for contemporary readers, the poet said his aim was not simply to return to classical literature by revisiting the past, but rather to take a renewed look at this literary heritage. He stressed that literature and art do not follow a path of evolution; rather, they undergo transformations over time, and transformation does not necessarily mean improvement.

Referring to the changes brought to modern Persian literature by figures such as Sadeq Hedayat and Nima Yushij, Langeroudi said language remains the most important tool of writers and poets, and its roots should be



Mohammad Shams Langeroudi

sought in classical literature. He noted that a precise understanding of words and their subtle differences in meaning can be achieved through studying classical texts, adding that writers should recognize the fine distinctions between words that may appear similar at first glance.

He also rejected the idea that contemporary readers can easily understand all classical texts, saying that works from past periods are highly diverse and that some literary and ornate texts remain difficult even for today's readers. Referring to the differences between works such as *Kalila and Dimna* and *The Tales of Bidpai*, Langeroudi said that even works translated from the same source during a similar historical period can differ greatly in language and level of difficulty.

According to him, both the richness of the Persian language and the historical conditions of society have influenced the way modern readers engage with classical texts. However, the fact that some elements of the

language have remained unchanged does not mean that all works from the past are easy for contemporary readers to understand.

Discussing the relationship between today's audiences and poetry and fiction, Langeroudi said that although some people have a stronger preference for poetry, stories — especially popular fiction — generally attract wider audiences. However, Al-Faraj ba'da al-Shiddah is not a popular work and is more significant for those with a serious interest in literature.

Regarding similarities between the period when Al-Faraj ba'da al-Shiddah was written and the present day, he said that there are parallels between the past and today in issues such as corruption and crime, although the outward appearance and forms of life have changed. In his view, the essence of history has not changed significantly, while mainly its external forms have been transformed.

Farshid Parsikia, the book's illustrator, also explained the process behind creating the artwork, saying that the designs were developed through research into the text and consultation with specialists. He said the process begins with studying the texts and gathering information, followed by identifying key concepts and keywords and transforming them into visual elements. He described illustration



as a process different from painting, explaining that in painting an artist mainly expresses personal ideas and perceptions, while in illustration the artist must understand and visually convey a concept created by the writer or another creator. For this reason, illustrating a book can sometimes take two to three months.

Parsikia added that illustrations were designed specifically for different sections of the book based on the content of each story, ranging from portraits of characters to battle scenes and narrative settings. Typography for certain words and titles was also designed to strengthen the reader's connection with the text.

He emphasized that the il-

lustrations were not created merely to enhance the book's beauty but also to improve the understanding of its concepts. According to Parsikia, Vazn-e Donya Publications seeks to strengthen contemporary readers' — particularly younger generations' — connection with Iran's classical literary heritage through innovative approaches to book design.

Parsikia also explained that the colors chosen for the covers of the series are selected based on the content and atmosphere of each work, giving the collection a distinct visual identity and making the reading experience of classical texts, which can sometimes be challenging and dense, more appealing to audiences.