BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Masih Daneshvari (1879–1957): The First Specialist in Pulmonary Medicine in Iran

Matin Sadat Eslahi (Ph.D. Candidate)[1]

1- Iranian History after Islam, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran

Correspondence:
Matin Sadat Eslahi
Iranian History after Islam, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran

e-mail: eslahimatin6@gmail.com

Introduction

The prevalence of tuberculosis during the Qajar era was considerably alarming. At that time, due to the lack of advanced medical facilities and limited knowledge about diseases, tuberculosis became one of the most common and fatal illnesses. The disease was primarily widespread in densely populated, impoverished areas and in places where basic hygiene practices were neglected. The absence of effective treatments and an inadequate public health system exacerbated the issue, claiming the lives of many individuals. Additionally, the lack of public awareness regarding disease prevention and transmission further worsened the situation. Willem Floor notes that tuberculosis was prevalent in Tehran and other cities across Iran during the Qajar period and was recognized as one of the leading causes of death in the 1300s AH (Floor, 2007, p. 25). Around the same time, Joseph Désiré Tholozan, a court physician for Naser al-Din

Received: 30 Jun 2026; Accepted: 12 Oct 2026; Online published: 1 Nov 2026
Research on History of Medicine/ 2026 Nov; 15(4): 397-406.

Copyright: © Journal of Research on History of Medicine. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported License, (http://creativecommons.org/ licenses/by-nc/4.0/) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited non-commercially.

Citation:
Eslahi, M.S., 2026. Dr. Masih Daneshvari (1879–1957): The First Specialist in Pulmonary Medicine in Iran. *Res Hist Med*, 15(4), pp. 397-406. doi: 10.30476/rhm.2026.112079.1457.

Shah, wrote in his travelogues that pulmonary tuberculosis could not be considered an endemic disease in Iran. He also observed that this illness was more common in Azerbaijan and the Caspian Sea coastal areas (Polak, 1989, p. 487).

One of the valuable initiatives during the Qajar period to combat infectious diseases, including tuberculosis, was the publication of the book *Ma'rifat al-Sal*, which translates to "*The Knowledge of Tuberculosis*." Authored by Éliseé Débague, a French physician, this work was translated into Persian by Mirza Reza Khan Na'ini, also known as Sadeq al-Hokama, who was among the first professionally trained dentists in Iran and a pioneer of modern medicine. The The translation was published in 1279 AH (1862 CE) and ranks among the earliest modern medical books in Persian. It was published during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar and amid the Dar ul-Funun school's broader efforts to translate and introduce Western knowledge to Iran. In the book's foreword, *Sadeq al-Hokama* emphasized that he aimed to familiarize Iranian physicians with the latest European medical discoveries on the causes, symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment of this deadly disease. The significance of Ma'rifat al-Sal illustrates that the medical community of that era was not passive but actively sought to utilize global knowledge to address its most pressing public health challenges. (Abbasi, 2005, p. 8)

Biography of Dr. Masih Daneshvari

Dr. Masih Daneshvari, the first specialist in pulmonary diseases in Iran, was born in 1899 in Tarshiz, Neyshabur. His father, Seyed Ali Daneshvari, known as "*Hafez al-Sehhe Mojd al-Hokama*," was a prominent figure of his time. When Masih was three years old, his family moved to Tarshiz (now Kashmar), where he began his primary education. He continued his studies there until the sixth grade, after which his father sent him to Mashhad to further his education. Two years later, Masih transferred to the French school "*Saint Louis*" in Tehran, where he studied until the age of 17. At that time, the school, along with "*Jeanne d'Arc*," was run by French missionaries.

Masih Daneshvari's passion for medicine led him to travel to France in 1923 to study in this field. After graduating with a specialization in pulmonary diseases and tuberculosis, he returned to Iran and, in 1937, founded the Shahabad Tuberculosis Sanatorium at what is now the Masih Daneshvari Hospital. Under his continuous efforts, the facility grew into a leading center for tuberculosis treatment. Placing a high priority on treating patients with tuberculosis, Dr. Daneshvari made significant efforts to bring prominent pulmonary surgeons like Dr. Sadegh Ghazi from abroad to improve medical services in Iran. The Shahabad Sanatorium provided state-of-the-art treatments for its time and met contemporary medical standards.

Following the completion of his education in France, Dr. Daneshvari returned to Iran with a strong resolve to improve care for respiratory illnesses. He revitalized a building originally recommended by French doctors during the Mozaffar ad-Din Shah's reign as a treatment center for lung diseases. This facility, which had fallen out of use during the reign of Reza Shah, became the focal point of his career efforts. Through relentless dedication, he transformed the space into a fully functioning sanatorium for tuberculosis patients. The center officially opened on August 17, 1937, and later also hosted a nursing school.

Dr. Daneshvari dedicated his life to treating patients and cemented his legacy as one

of Iran's most distinguished physicians. He passed away in Tehran in 1977. One notable historical footnote is that Mozaffar ad-Din Shah himself suffered from tuberculosis due to contaminated water in Tehran. French doctors had recommended that he reside in a healthy and well-ventilated area—ultimately leading to the establishment of the location that later became central to Dr. Daneshvari's work (Abbasi, 2005, p. 10). (Figure 1)



Figure 1. Dr. Masih Daneshvari (*Abbasi, 2005, p. 5*)

Materials and Methods

This study employs a descriptive-analytical approach, relying on library resources as well as the review of archival documents and recent newspapers. The methodology follows the framework of historical research. The study provides a general overview of contemporary medicine in Iran, serving as a foundation for critical examination of Dr. Masih Daneshvari's scientific contributions

Shahabad Sanatorium and Medical Services

1- Establishment and Architectural Setting of Shahabad Sanatorium

The first sanatorium in Iran was inaugurated on August 15, 1937, in the Shahabad region of Shemiran. Initially, the facility accommodated 50 patients. Today, however, the number of patients receiving care at the sanatorium has surpassed 100. Since its establishment, more than 200 individuals suffering from tuberculosis have been admitted and treated at this place (Hejazi, 1932, p. 24). Constructed in one of the finest mountainous and countryside areas of Shemiran, the facility has played a pivotal role in promoting public health and improving the conditions of patients affected by this disease. One of its key advantages lies in providing a natural environment conducive to treating respiratory conditions. Additionally, by isolating patients from crowded urban areas, the sanatorium significantly curbed the spread of the illness to others. This medical center, staffed by a team of health specialists including physicians, nurses, and experts trained in tuberculosis management, provided comprehensive and personalized care to patients visiting Shahabad Hospital. (Hejazi, 1932, p. 26). The services were specifically designed to effectively combat tuberculosis. The facility focused on diagnosis, treatment, and patient care, offering services such as tuberculosis testing, medication management, and respiratory therapies for those affected.

Additionally, the center included isolated wards to prevent the spread of infection and ensure the safety of both other patients and staff. For accurate diagnosis and treatment monitoring, specialized tests like sputum analysis and chest X-rays were conducted. One notable measure employed by the facility was the use of a device called a pneumothorax machine, which compressed the disease-affected lungs to alleviate symptoms and control the severity of the condition (Hejazi, 1932, p. 23). (Figure 2) Overall, this hospital functioned as a specialized center for tuberculosis treatment, consistently advancing its approach by integrating modern therapeutic methods and cutting-edge medical technologies to mitigate challenges posed by the disease. Shahabad Sanatorium played a pivotal role in managing and alleviating issues related to tuberculosis while also controlling its spread, offering a combination of medical treatments, close monitoring, and comprehensive support.



Figure 2. Exterior View of Shahabad Sanatorium (*IHejazi, 1932, pp. 23-26*)

2- Needs of Patients at Shahabad Sanatorium

The needs of patients at the Shahabad Sanatorium reflect a wide range of challenges stemming from their unique physical or mental conditions. These needs may include better access to medical facilities (Figure 3), more specialized care (Figure 4), and even improvements to the sanatorium environment. Each of these concerns highlights the daily struggles or specific requirements of the residents. Paying careful and appropriate attention to these issues not only significantly enhances the quality of life for patients but also plays a crucial role in improving their satisfaction and mental well-being.



Figure 3. Treatment of Tuberculosis Patients by Physicians at Shahabad Sanatorium (Iran-e Emrooz Magazine, 1319, Vol. 2, No. 6, p. 23)



Figure 4. Operating Room of Shahabad Sanatorium (Iran-e Emrooz Magazine, 1319, Vol. 2, No. 6, p. 23)

Documented requests provide clear examples of these needs. In 1941, a group of patients at the Shahabad Sanatorium (now Masih Daneshvari Hospital) submitted a petition to the Crown Prince's office, requesting access to newly discovered medicines and vaccines from Japan. This appeal was forwarded to the Prime Minister's Office and the General Health Administration for review and potential action (Manuscript No. 310/16721, n.d.). Similarly, in 1946, another group of patients lodged a complaint with the Prime Minister's Office regarding inadequate food and medicine in the sanatorium. This issue was investigated by the Inspection Department of the Ministry of Health, which prepared a related report (Manuscript No. 310/42624, n.d.)

3- Infrastructure Upgrades and Administrative Actions

Over time and through various administrative interactions, the Shahabad Sanitarium has undergone multiple changes. In 1953, the then Minister of Health, Dr. Jahanshah Saleh, formally requested the Ministry of Roads to pave the road between Sahebqaraniyeh and the Shahabad Sanitarium. This was due to the lack of asphalt, which caused excessive dust and resulted in dissatisfaction among visitors and disruptions to ambulance traffic (Manuscript No. 230/5882, n.d.).

In 1963, the Minister of Health petitioned the Prime Minister to form a committee to assess flood damages to the Shahabad Sanitarium in Shemiran and allocate funds for its reconstruction (Manuscript No. 230/30843, n.d.). Later, in 1966, the head of the Non-Inalienable Properties Department corresponded with the General Accounting Department of the Khalesajat Organization. The communication requested the submission of a formal report for transferring land related to the Shahabad Sanitarium to the Ministry of Water and Power. This land was necessary for installing a high-voltage power station (Manuscript No. 230/54332, n.d.). (Figure 5)

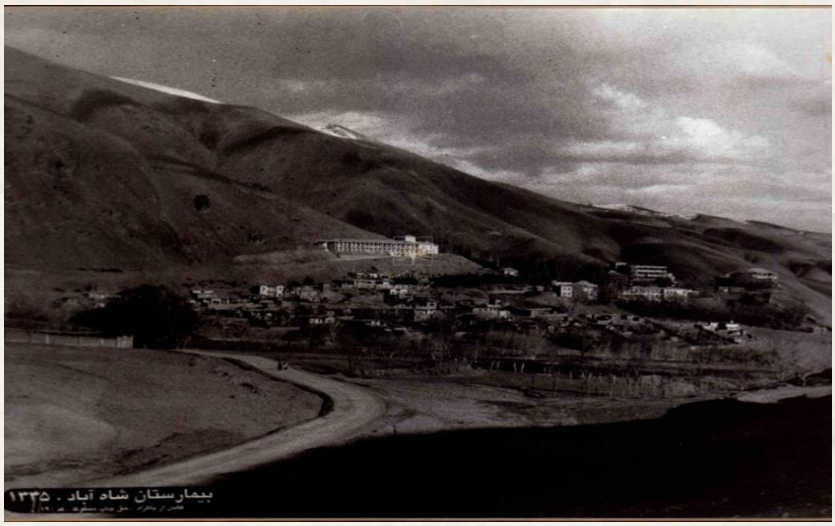


Figure 5. Exterior View of Shahabad Hospital (Manuscript No. 998/818, n.d.)

4- Shahabad Sanatorium Staff

The staff of Shahabad sanatorium comprised a diverse and efficient team, each member dedicated to fulfilling specific roles and providing essential services. This team included skilled medical assistants who oversaw patients' health, administrative staff managing organizational and logistical tasks, nurses responsible for daily patient care, and a gardener who maintained the calming greenery of the facility. A cook played a pivotal role in nutrition by preparing wholesome, high-quality meals, while cleaners ensured the environment remained tidy and organized. Tailors handled the preparation of clothing and fabric needs, and a storekeeper managed the storage and distribution of necessary supplies. Additionally, a pharmacist ensured the accurate and appropriate provision of medications. Overseeing it all was a head nurse who provided supervision and coordination, ensuring seamless collaboration among all team members (Table 1).

Table 1: Names of the Staff of Shahabad Nursing Home (Shemiran)

1	*Najmieh Kargar Maslaki Haghi*	Physician (Manuscript No. 251/14433, n.d.)
2	*Om-olbanin Gol-Mohammad*	Staff (Manuscript No. 251/1700, n.d.)
3	*Hassan Salmanpour*	Staff (Manuscript No. 251/21907, n.d.)
4	*Iran Taj-Jahan*	Nurse (Manuscript No. 251/19519, n.d.)
5	*Anvar al-Malouk*	Nurse (Manuscript No. 251/16894, n.d.)
6	*Roqieh Khodadad Ghasemi*	Nurse (Manuscript No. 251/15428, n.d.)
7	*Fatemeh Sadeghi*	Nurse (Manuscript No. 251/17013, n.d.)
8	*Hossein Haji-Vand*	Nurse (Manuscript No. 251/4247, n.d.)
9	*Zahra Khosrovani Nazar*	Nurse (Manuscript No. 251/4208, n.d.)
10	*Abbas Arouji*	Nurse (Manuscript No. 251/13886, n.d.)
11	*Fatemeh Mashhadi-Nejat*	Nurse (Manuscript No. 251/6803, n.d.)
12	*Nozhat-ol-Sadat Shahabi*	Nurse (Manuscript No. 251/14059, n.d.)
13	*Shaban Ghayedi*	Gardener (Manuscript No. 251/16447, n.d.)
14	*Heydar Jaloodar*	Cook (Manuscript No. 251/9846, n.d.)
15	Khadijeh Vafaei	Housekeeper (Ironing) (Manuscript No. 251/5938, n.d.)
16	Zahra Karbalaei	Tailor (Manuscript No. 251/14463, n.d.)
17	*Ali-Mahmood Mirehadi*	Warehouse Keeper (Manuscript No. 251/11675, n.d.)
18	*Gol-Nasae Fooladi*	Attendant (Manuscript No. 251/6848, n.d.)
19	*Gholamreza Afshar*	Attendant (Manuscript No. 251/7641, n.d.)
20	*Mohammad Yazdi*	Technical Manager (Manuscript No. 251/8548, n.d.)
21	Kazem Ghanatchi	Pharmacist (Manuscript No. 251/19219, n.d.)
22	Taj Nahid	Head Nurse (Manuscript No. 251/15992, n.d.)

Discussion

The establishment of the "*Society for Combating Tuberculosis and Supporting Tuberculosis Patients*" took place on March 8, 1944, under the leadership of Seyyed Mohammad Sadeq Tabatabai, former Speaker of the National Consultative Assembly, with the participation of thirty philanthropists, including Dr. Masih Daneshvari. This initiative resulted in significant public contributions to support the treatment of tuberculosis patients and the creation of specialized healthcare facilities. Due to the increasing number of patients at Shahabad Sanatorium, the need for additional medical centers became apparent. On the recommendation of Dr. Masih Daneshvari and through the efforts of philanthropists such as Seyyed Firouzabadi, Haj Asami, and several benevolent merchants, another hospital was established in Shahr-e-Ray to accommodate tuberculosis patients. To formalize these efforts, the statute of the Society for Combating Tuberculosis and Supporting Tuberculosis Patients was drafted in 1944 (Manuscript No. 240/26820, n.d.) In 1946, the Ministry of Health further supported the cause by issuing postage stamps, allocating the revenue to aid tuberculosis patients (Manuscript No. 240/76607, n.d.). Additionally, fundraising labels were produced and distributed in various parts of the country, such as Bandar Abbas and Fars, to encourage public donations (Manuscript No. 293/50086, n.d.). (Figure 6)



Figure 6. Stamp of the Society for the Fight against Tuberculosis and Support of the Tuberculous (Manuscript No. 293/50086, n.d.)

Conclusion

With the contributions of Dr. Masih Daneshvari and the establishment of the Shahabad Sanatorium along with the Tuberculosis Combating Society, a significant transformation was achieved in improving the conditions of respiratory disease patients and providing support for them. His dedication to addressing respiratory illnesses was rooted in a profound understanding of the importance of health among patients, particularly in the field of tuberculosis. These efforts paved the way for a modern, scientific approach to combating tuberculosis and brought about fundamental changes in various aspects of this field. Throughout this journey, prioritizing tuberculosis was notably emphasized. Dr. Daneshvari's work encompassed diagnosing and treating various respiratory diseases, conducting research to advance medical knowledge, and training specialists in the best methods of treating such conditions. His unwavering commitment and innovative efforts brought remarkable advancements in the understanding and treatment of respiratory diseases in Iran. It is hoped that Iranian physicians will diligently continue this valuable path initiated by Dr. Masih Daneshvari in the study and treatment of respiratory illnesses.

This study demonstrates that Dr. Masih Daneshvari played a foundational role in modernizing and institutionalizing respiratory medicine in twentieth-century Iran. Confronting high mortality rates and the public health crisis of tuberculosis inherited from the Qajar and early Pahlavi eras, Daneshvar shifted the paradigm from traditional, fragmented approaches to structured, scientific phthisiology. The establishment of the Shahabad Sanatorium and the Tuberculosis Combat Association provided the necessary institutional infrastructure for clinical diagnosis, patient isolation, and specialized treatment. Furthermore, by initiating clinical research and training indigenous medical specialists, Daneshvar not only advanced pulmonary care but also laid the epidemiological and organizational bedrock for modern disease-control policies in Iran.

Funding
None.

Conflict of Interest
None.

References

Abbasi, A., 2005. *The History of the Emergence and Development of Thoracic Surgery in Iran*. Tehran: Academy of Medical Sciences of the Islamic Republic of Iran. [in Persian]

Floor, W., 2007. *People's Health in Qajar Iran*. Translated by I. Nabipour. Tehran: Tehran University of Medical Sciences and Health Services. [in Persian]

Hejazi, M., 1932. *Iran-e Emrooz Newspaper*. Year 2, No. 6. pp. 23-26. [in Persian]

Manuscript No. 230/5882, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 230/30843, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 230/54332, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 240/26820, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 240/76607, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 251/14433, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 251/1700, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 251/21907, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 251/19519, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 251/16894, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 251/15428, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 251/17013, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 251/4247, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 251/4208, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 251/13886, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 251/6803, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 251/14059, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library



Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 251/16447, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 251/9846, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 251/5938, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 251/14463, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 251/11675, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 251/6848, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 251/7641, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 251/8548, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 251/19219, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 251/15992, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 293/50086, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 310/16721, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 310/42624, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Manuscript No. 998/818, n.d. [Manuscript]. Held at: Tehran: National Documents and Library Organization (Sakma).

Polak, Y., 1989. *Polak's Travel Book*. Tehran: Khwarazmi. [in Persian]