

In Memory of the Late Alireza Afzalipour, the Founder of the Kerman University

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Alireza Afzalipour

"Happiness in life is to be loved by others and in order to be loved; one must love and help others." Alireza Afzalipour

Introduction

The city of Kerman is located in southeast Iran. Kerman University (now called Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman) was founded on December 25, 1974, relatively later than the establishment of academic centers in other provinces of Iran.

Historically, the first modern higher educational center in Iran, the Dar al-Fonun School, was established in 1851, ushering in a new era of education in Iran. Over the subsequent decades, Tehran University was founded in 1934 and the universities of Isfahan, Tabriz, Shiraz, Mashhad and Ahvaz were established in the 1940s and 1950s. However, there was no higher educational center in Kerman except the "Razi Nursery School" founded in 1962, "Madreseh-ye Omur-e Edari va Bazargani" (the School of Administration and Commerce) in 1970 and "Daneshsaraye Aali Fanni" (the Higher School of Technology) in 1975. The forerunner of the University of Kerman initiated its activity in the academic year of 1974 with 50 students in chemistry, physics, electronic and the English language.²

The history of establishments of modern non-governmental hospitals in Kerman dates back to the beginning of the 20th century with "Morsalin Hospital" created by the British Church Missionary Society in 1901,³ "Nourieh Hospital" in 1919, "Razieh-

ye Firooz Hospital" in 1948 and "Arjomand Hospital" in 1953. A non-governmental hospital named "Khodadad-e Mehrabi Hospital" was founded in 1970.²



Figure 1. Nourieh Hospital founded in Kerman in 1919. (Source of photo: <http://nourieh.com/index.php/79-slider/82-vintage>)

The first governmental hospital in Kerman was founded in 1949 and the second one, the Shafa Hospital was established in 1961 for TB patients. In 1969, a psychiatric hospital and, in due course, Taamin Ejtemai Hospital (Social Security Organization Hospital, now Kashani Hospital) were founded in 1970. In 1989, a burn hospital was also established by the government. The first educational hospital (Kerman Darman) was originally a private hospital which was transferred to the Medical School of Kerman in 1981.²

The forerunner of the current University of Medical Sciences of Kerman was established in 1978, when the Ministry of Science and Higher Education approved the initiation of medical schools in six cities including Kerman. The new buildings of the Kerman University were established by Mr. Alireza Afzalipour and inaugurated in 1985. Five years later, the school of medicine was also founded.² The latter, in subsequent years had a profound impact on propagation of modern medicine and promotion of public health standards in Kerman.

A biography of Alireza Afzalipour (1909 – 1993)

Alireza Afzalipour (Figure 2) was born in Tehran on March 26, 1909. He was raised in an educated family and attended the Ashrafieh, Aghdasieh and Sirous schools and graduated from the Sharf High School in 1931. In the same year, he was sent to France by the government, where in 1932, he enrolled at the University of Bordeaux and received his B.Sc. in chemistry and subsequently his M.Sc. in agricultural chemistry from Lille University. He returned home in 1938. Later, he established a successful business which made him a wealthy man.⁴

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Figure 2. The late Alireza Afzalipour.⁴



Figure 3. A Persian handwriting of the Late Afzalipour in which he describes his incentive for the foundation of the Kerman University.⁴

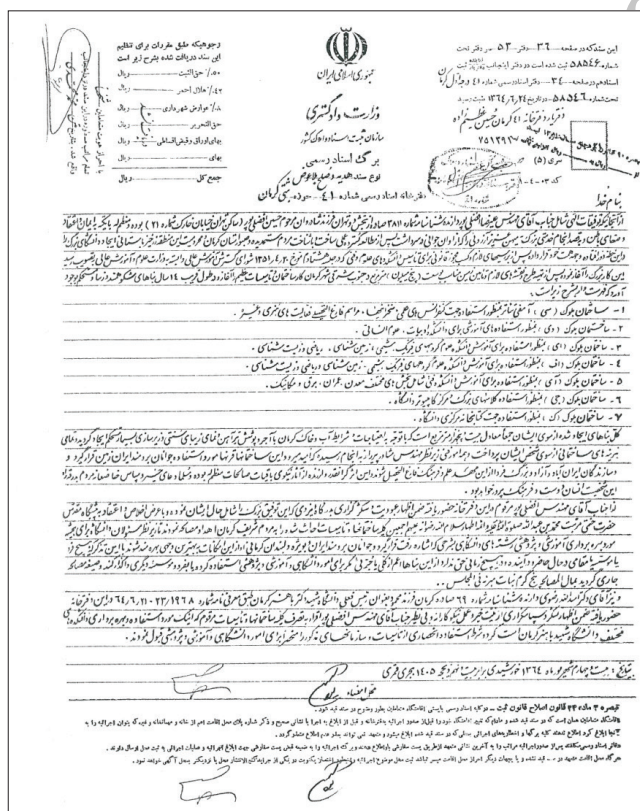


Figure 4. The official document of donation of the Late Afzalipour, Kerman 1985.⁴

The Foundation of Kerman University

In 1972, Mr. Afzalipour decided to construct a university; accordingly, he initially visited several universities in Europe and Iran and lastly he selected Kerman for construction of a university and requested the authorities of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education to support him and assign an appropriate piece of land in Kerman. Consequently, the government allocated 50 hectares of land in the south eastern area of Kerman. With his donation of 500,000,000 Rials (at the time equivalent to 7.1 million \$), the construction of the university was initiated on December 25, 1974 and it was completed and officially inaugurated on September 15, 1985. When the construction of the buildings was finished, he believed that the university's ground should not be enclosed so that it would be visible and accessible to the public.⁴

Afzalipour had explained his incentive for establishment of Kerman University which clearly indicates his profound interest as a science lover and patriot as well as his great humanistic beliefs (Figure 3).

In 1985, he officially donated all buildings with an area of 25,000 square meters which were constructed on a 5 million square meter piece of land to the people of Kerman (Figure 4).⁴

This was indicative of generosity of Mr. Afzalipour and his wife, Mrs. Fakhreh Saba, which recalls to mind this line from Saadi, the great Iranian poet of 13th century C.E.: *"Human beings are members of a whole, in creation of one essence and soul. If one member is afflicted with pain, other members uneasy will remain."*⁵

The first President of Kerman University, from 1973 to 1979 was Mohammad Ali Mirzaee, PhD in Biochemistry (Figures 5 and 6).⁶



Figure 5. The first president of Kerman University, Professor Mohammad Ali Mirzaee.⁶



Figure 6. Professor Mohammad Ali Mirzaee (left), Mr. Afzalipour (middle), Dr. Shahriar Dabiri (right).

Mr. Afzalipour's wife (Figure 7), Mrs. Fakhreh Saba (1920–2007), played a major role in the foundation of Kerman University as a sincere companion. Her father's cousin, Abolhassan Saba, was the famous musician who initially taught her music and then she continued her higher education in the same subject in France.⁷ She went to France in April 1947 and enrolled at the Paris Conservatory (Conservatoire de Paris).⁸ On her return, she became a university music lecturer and was the first lady opera singer in Iran. She married Alireza Afzalipour in 1970.^{4,7}



Figure 7. Mrs. Fakhreh Saba (1920–2007) (Source of photo: Available from: URL: <http://www.uk.ac.ir/UK/pageId/130/AboatSaba/>).



Figure 8. Two photos of the construction of the Kerman University in 1970s.⁶



Figure 9. Mr. Afzalipour in the School of Medicine of Kerman.⁴

At present, the Kerman University has 15 faculties and 4 research centers and over 20,000 students who study in various disciplines and is one of the major universities of Iran. The School of Medicine and a 350-bed hospital in Kerman are named after him: Afzalipour School of Medicine and Afzalipour Medical Center (Figures 10 and 11).⁶



Figure 10. Afzalipour Medical Center.⁶

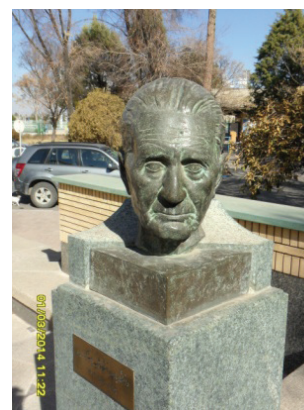


Figure 11. The statue of Afzalipour in Kerman University.

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