



KĀSEMI, NOṢRAT-ALLĀH

KĀSEMI, NOṢRAT-ALLĀH (b. Tehran, 1908; d. Tehran 1996; [Figure 1](#)), physician, poet, writer, orator, and politician. The first of three children born to Mirzā Asad-Allāh Khan Kāsemi, a court official and head of a landowning family in Mazandaran, he earned a diploma from Dār al-Fonun (q.v.) in 1929, and graduated from Tehran medical school in 1935 with a first order national science medallion (‘Āqeli, III, p. 1252; Movahhedi, p. 56).

Academic and medical careers. After graduating from the medical school and military service in 1936, Kāsemi was commissioned by ‘Ali-Aṣḡar Ḥekmat (q.v.), the minister of education, to translate a well-known book on healthcare and medical ethics by the noted French surgeon Victor Pauchet (1869-1936; *Le chemin du bonheur (la rééducation de soi-même)*, Paris, 1930) as *Rāh-e košbaḳti* (Path of happiness, 1937). This well-received book was one of the first modern self-help health guides published in Iran with the younger generation as its main target (‘Āqeli, III, p. 1252). In 1937, with the aid of several other medical colleagues, he published a monthly medical journal called *Darmān* (“Healing”; Movahhedi, pp. 57-60). In 1938, he started his academic career as an associate professor in the newly reorganized Faculty of Medicine at the University of Tehran (see [FACULTIES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEHRAN i](#)). He taught a course on “General disease” (Bimārihā-ye ‘omumi) and headed the school’s library and publications office, where he published a book entitled *Rāhnemā-ye pezeški* (“Medical guide”) for young physicians (Kāsemi, 2007, pp. 6-7; ‘Āqeli, III, p. 1252).

Kāsemi’s tenure at the University of Tehran lasted 30 years (1938-68). During



this time, he was promoted to full professor (1946) and served as the chair of Endocrinology. Kāsemi taught endocrinology in the department of medicine and taught general disease, healthcare, medical history, and medical ethics in the pharmacology and dentistry departments (Movaḥḥedi, pp. 74-75). He also authored a two-volume book on endocrinology entitled *Bimārihā-ye ḡoddad-e moetraššeḥ-e dāḳeli* (“Endocrinological diseases”) that formed the foundation of his course. Thus, Kāsemi became one of the first professors to teach from his own Persian textbook rather than from the French textbooks commonly used at the time. In 1942, he started the *Majalle-ye ‘elmi-e Daneškada-ye pezeški* (Scientific journal of the medical school). Later, he also published a journal, *Nāmeḥā-ye pezeški-e Irān* (Medical letters of Iran). These periodicals not only presented the latest news of the medical school, but also provided the latest national and international medical findings for the benefit of the entire Iranian medical community (Movaḥḥedi, p. 77; ‘Āqeli, III, p. 1254).

Kāsemi was a permanent member of the Iranian Medical Congress. He organized a commission of distinguished professors to find Persian equivalents for the various French, English, and Latin medical terminologies. This proved to be a passion that he pursued both single-handedly and with others until the end of his life. His meticulous efforts in this area culminated in an unfinished volume entitled *Farhang-e vāḡehā-ye pezeški* (Dictionary of medical terminologies) published posthumously in 2007 (Mortazavi, p. 351).

In 1946, the shah founded the Imperial Organization for Social Services (IOSS; *Sāzmān-e šāhanšāhi-e ḳadamāt-e ejtemā’i*), and the two reformers from Faculty of Medicine of the University of Tehran, Javād Āštiāni and Noşrat-Allāh Kāsemi, were appointed to serve as its managing director and deputy managing director, respectively. Through their tireless efforts, this organization eventually built and operated close to 250 medical clinics and seven major hospitals covering both major cities and the remotest villages of the country. They also established Iran’s first and much needed *Madrasa-ye parastāri* (Nursing School; ‘Āqeli, III, p. 1253). Kāsemi served in IOSS in one position or another until the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

Political career. Kāsemi’s political career was intimately connected with his close friendship with the shah’s confidant and influential statesman, Manučehr Eqbāl (q.v.). He started his political career in 1949 when Eqbāl served as the powerful minister of interior. Cooperating with ‘Abd-al-Ḥosayn Hażir (q.v.), then the court minister, Eqbāl’s main task was to prevent the election of “undesired elements” to the Constituent Assembly (Majles-e



mo'assesān), the Sixteenth Majles, and the First Senate. Capitalizing on his family's stature and reputation in Mazandaran, Kāsemi was elected to the Constituent Assembly, which met in May 1949 and empowered the shah to dissolve the Majles. Less than a year later in February, he was also elected to the 16th session of the Majles. Kāsemi was elected to the Majles Special Oil Commission, which prepared the bill for nationalization of Iran's oil industry on 8 March 1951 (Komisiun-e kâşş-e naft; Ḥaqiqat, 2003, p. 418; 'Āqeli, III, p. 1254).

In 1957, at the urging of the United States, the shah initiated a two-party system. On his orders, Prime Minister Eqbāl founded the government majority party, *Hezb-e melliun* (Nationalists' party), and another confidant, Amīr Asad-Allāh 'Ālam, formed the loyal opposition, minority party, *Hezb-e mardom* (People's party; 'Āqeli, III, p. 1254). In the same year, Eqbāl appointed Kāsemi as the secretary general (*Dabir-e koll*) of the Melliun party, and a year later Kāsemi joined the cabinet as a minister without portfolio (*Vazir mošāver*; 'Āqeli, III, pp. 1254-55). Tightly controlled elections by the Eqbāl government and his Melliun Party for the 20th Majles in the summer of 1960 led to increasing criticism by the recently revived National Front and a number of independent and pro-American political figures; this forced the shah to dismiss the prime minister on 28 August and to call for the resignation of all elected Majles deputies three days later. This event marked the end of Kāsemi's political career (Şafā'i, p. 317; Gasirowski, pp. 175-87).

During the 1960s-80s, Kāsemi concentrated on cultural and literary projects. He wrote articles for various newspapers and news journals, often with critical political undertones. One of these articles, "Bāṭel al-seḥr-e ṭelesm-e fesād," published in the widely read *Māh-nāma-ye donyā* (11, 1974, pp. 85-98), criticized the prevailed corruption in the governmental apparatus. The article received wide publicity but resulted in the immediate confiscation of the journal (Hušangnia, p. 61).

Literary career. From a very young age, Kāsemi displayed a strong attraction to Persian literature and poetry. Along with his regular studies at Dār al-Fonun, he received seminary training in the classical areas of Persian and Arab literature and philosophy from such seminary instructors as Sheikh Yad-Allāh Pāknaẓar, Ayatollah Moḥammad-'Alī Lavāsāni, and Ayatollah Maḥdi Nuri (Kāsemi, 2007, p. 6; Ḥaqiqat, 2003, p. 418; Movahḥedi, pp. 39-41). In 1927 he joined the Iranian Literary Society (*Anjoman-e adabi-e Irān*), headed by Adib-al-Saltāna Sami'i, and often recited his own poems during the society's



regular meetings, where he soon was noticed and promoted by prominent literary and social figures such as Adib Pišāvari, ‘Etemād-al-Dawla Qaragozlu, and Mirzā Yaḥyā Khan Dawlatābādī (‘Āqeli, III, p. 1352; Kāsemi, 2007, pp. 5-6, Alamuti, *Nimruz*, 13 June 2003, p. 25). In 1932 he was commissioned by ‘Etemād-al-Dawla Qaragozlu, then the minister of education, to develop an eight-volume book series for elementary education, including two volumes on history and geography (Movaḥḥedi, pp. 47-48). During this time, he also produced one of his notable poems entitled *Čahār šad sāl ba’d az Ferdowsi* (Four hundred years after Ferdowsi), a *maṭnawī* that was published and widely distributed in 1934 by the government on the occasion of Ferdowsi’s millennium celebrations (see FERDOWSI iv; Ḥaqīqat, 2003, p. 419).

Kāsemi, however, is more known for his *qaṣīdas*, where he adopted the classical Kōrāsānī or Torkestānī style (‘Āqeli, p. 1255). His poems dealt with a variety of social, philosophical, historical, and personal issues. His *qaṣīdas* such as, *Zan čist?* (What is woman?), *Damāvand*, *Sa’di*, *Daryāča-ye Lemān* (Leman Lake), Vian (Vienna), and *Kāk-e Qawām-al-Saltāna* (The palace of Qawām-al-Saltāna) are powerful, colorful, and harmonious, successful in following the style of the great classical Persian poets (Mošaffā, pp. 21-22). He also wrote eloquent *maṭnawīs* and *ġazals*, such as *Meḥr-e mādar* (Love of mother, 1945), *Nur-e Koda dar ġār-e Herā* (Light of God in the cave of Hera, 1970), *‘Ali: Maḏhar-al-‘ajāyeb* (Ali: Manifestation of marvels, 1978), *Wa’da-ye penhān* (Hidden promise), *Šā’er agar ‘āšeḡ šavad* (If a poet falls in love), and *Mapors* (Don’t ask; Alamuti, *Nimruz*, 30 June 2003, p. 25; Mortaḏawī, p. 351).

Kāsemi was also a skillful writer and orator. His prose exhibited a reverential, lyrical style (*naṭr-e mosajja’*), which illustrated his mastery of both Persian and Arabic languages and their intricate literary structures (Mortaḏawī, 1996, p. 451). This learned style is exemplified by his numerous articles in the literary journal *Gowhar* (q.v.; 1973-78) as well as by other works such as *Farr-e izadi: rāz-e piruzi-e Irāniān bar Tāziān* (Divine glory: the secret of the Iranian’s victory over the Arabs, 1975), *Seh nāma* (Three letters, 1959), and *Gol* (Flower, 1954). But this style was also sometimes judged to belong to a different literary age and geared towards the erudite few (Mortaḏawī, 1996, p. 351) and thus uneasy to the unaccustomed modern ear. A compilation of most of Kāsemi’s poems and prose was published posthumously in 2006 (see below).

Kāsemi was a lifetime member of Farhangestān-e zabān-e fārsi (q.v.) and the secretary of its medical division. In 1973, the Nuriāni Foundation was established to serve Iranian cultural and literary interests (Alamuti, *Nimruz*,



30 June 2003, p. 25). Kāsemi served as the secretary general of this foundation in 1973-79 and published two major journals. The first was a monthly journal entitled *Gowhar* (1973-78, 72 issues), which presented literary articles covering Persian history, culture, and literature. The second was a monthly medical journal entitled *Kolāṣa-ye neveštahā-ye pezeški* (Summary of medical literature), which provided summaries of the latest medical articles.

After the revolution, Kāsemi devoted himself to work on his Persian medical dictionary (ʿĀqeli, III, p. 1255; Alamuti, *Nimruz*, 30 June 2003, p. 25).

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