



## KĀZEM RAŠTI, MALEK-AL-AṬEBBĀ'

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**KĀZEM RAŠTI** (Gilāni), **Malek-al-Aṭebbā'** Filsuf-al-Dawla (b. ca. 1820, d. 1905), one of the high-ranking traditional physicians in 19th-century Iran and the personal physician of Nāṣer-al-Din Shah Qājār. His full name was Mohammad-Kāzem, by which he is sometimes referred to in the sources.

Rašti's date of birth is not known. But, based on a conversation about him between Nāṣer-al-Din Shah (r. 1848-96) and Moḥammad-Ḥasan Khan E'temād-al-Salṭana in Šawwāl 1305/June 1888, where they estimate his age to be between sixty and sixty-five [lunar] years (E'temād-al-Salṭana, 1977, p. 576), and considering his long court career as physician, he must have been born about 1235/1820. Mahdi Bāmdād's statement that he was born in 1163 Š./1784 (Bāmdād, V, p. 181) is hardly tenable. According to the journal *Irān-e ṣolṭāni* (no. 10, 29 July 1905, repr., p. 342), Mirzā Mohammad Kāzem Rašti, after studying the sciences of his time and acquiring expertise in medical theory and practice, entered the court service in 1255/1839 under Moḥammad Shah Qājār (r. 1834-48). In 1262/1846 he became the personal physician to the queen mother, Maḥd-e 'Olyā, and received the village of Maḥmudābād, a crown property (*kāleša*), as a grant (*toyul*). In an intentionally demeaning account of him, E'temād-al-Salṭana (1977, p. 134) states that, before his position as the court physician in Tehran, Rašti was the pantryman (*šarbatdār*) of 'Isā Khan E'temād-al-Dawla, the governor of Gilān.



Rašti is also reported to have been accustomed to displaying his skills in Arabic, religion, and Hadith (E'temād-al-Salṭana, 1977, pp. 576, 670), the fields of knowledge studied at the traditional Islamic colleges (*madrasa*). In his treatise on hygienics, *Ḥefẓ al-ṣeḥḥa-ye nāṣeri*, written in Persian, from time to time he lapses, apparently deliberately, into Arabic. E'temād-al-Salṭana, on the other hand, not only contradicts Rašti's claim to religious knowledge, but also criticizes him for lacking the requisite medical expertise (1977, pp. 212, 670; cf. idem, 1984-88, I, p. 264). This betrays more E'temād-al-Salṭana's deaf hostility toward Rašti than anything else, not least because the claim by the latter to be skilled in all sciences constituted part of his attempts to further his status and influence within the court. Rašti was in fact able to strengthen his court position under Nāṣer-al-Din-Shah: In September 1872, he was awarded with the title Malek-al-Aṭebbā' (E'temād-al-Salṭana, 1984-88, IV, p. 1934; *Ruz-nāma-ye Irān*, no. 125, 24 Rajab 1289/28 September 1872, repr. ed., I, p. 498; *Tarbiat*, no. 343, 15 December 1904, repr. ed., II, p. 1658). According to Mahdi Bāmdād (III, p. 139), he received this title in 1289/1872 after the death of Malek-al-Aṭebbā' Ḥāji Āqā Bābā Rašti, the personal physician (*ḥakim-bāši*) of Nāṣer-al-Din Shah.

In 1878, in acknowledgement for his medical services to the court, Nāṣer-al-Din-Shah established by a written order that, as from the following year, Malek-al-Aṭebbā' was to be paid a pension of 1,000 tomans par year (*Ruz-nāma-ye Irān*, no. 346, 25 Ṣafar 1295/28 February 1878, repr., II, p. 1385). In February 1888, he received also the title Filsuf-al-Dawla (*Ruz-nāma-ye Irān*, no. 649, 26 Jomādā I 1305/9 February 1888, repr., IV, p. 2615). E'temād-al-Salṭana (1977, p. 576; idem, 1984-89, I, p. 264, II, p. 553) claims that this title was given to him by Nāṣer-al-Din Shah upon his own request, for having written the book *Ḥefẓ al-ṣeḥḥa-ye nāṣeri*. In this case, the reward would have come almost thirty years after the book was written, that is, between Rabi' II and Rajab 1276/November 1859-February 1860, when he was in Anzali in the service of Majd-al-Dawla Amir Aṣlān Khan, the maternal uncle of Nāṣer-al-Din-Shah and governor of Gilān, probably to assist the army at the frontier of Anzali (Tehran, National Library, manuscript no. 439, or 5-10439, fols. 24, 316; Bāmdād, II, 305, 328, 437). Since the lithograph edition of the book was published in 1304/1887-88, it is possible that its publication played a role in the award of the title Filsuf-al-Dawla. Nevertheless, Rašti continued to be called Malek-al-Aṭebbā' more often than Filsuf-al-Dawla (e.g., see Amin(-e) Laškar, pp. 247, 360; Nāṣer-al-Din Shah, 1999, p. 42; idem, 2005, p. 39).



On 4 Jomādā I 1303/8 February 1886 Nāṣer-al-Din Shah, upon the request of Malek-al-Aṭebbā' Rašti, gave the title Loqmān-al-Molk to Loqmān Mirzā, Rašti's son (E'temād-al-Salṭana, 1977, p. 407; idem, 1984-89, II, p. 553; Nāṣer-al-Din Shah, 2005, p. 461). Malek-al-Aṭebbā' also received from Moẓaffar-al-Din Shah (r. 1896-1906) the military grades of colonel (*sarhangi*) and *amir-tumāni* (commander of 1000 troops), as well as the Order of the Lion and the Sun (*Irān-e solṭāni*, no. 10, 29 July 1905, repr. p. 342).

Rašti's fame as one of the leading traditional court doctors was furthered after the establishment of modern medical institutions such as the *Dār al-Fonun* and the Sanitary councils (Majles-e ḥefẓ al-ṣeḥḥa), and especially after lithograph publication became increasingly available. By 1877, he was a member of the Sanitary council (*Ruz-nāma-ye 'elmi*, no. 3, 29 January 1877), and he could regularly publish his views in the journal *Elmi* (ibid., nos. 3-5).

Rašti may have written other tracts, but his major extant work is the *Ḥefẓ al-ṣeḥḥa-ye nāšeri*, whose key idea, summarized in the title, *Ḥefẓ al-ṣeḥḥa* (Preservation of health), is that diseases should be thwarted by taking prophylactic measures. Following Hippocratic medicine, Rašti divided medicine into two categories of preservation of health and treatment of disease (*'elm al-'elāj*), but he insisted that the former is the more important and vital in medical art, as the work of physician is useful and efficient when one is healthy and that the greatest benefit one can have from medicine is the preservation of health and not the treatment of disease (pp. 6-7, 16-17, 21)—hence the expression *ḥāfeẓ-al-ṣeḥḥa* (preserver of health), which he frequently uses instead of *ṭabīb* (physician). Thus, according to him, a physician should be consulted when one is healthy, whereas “often people think that they should go to the doctor only when they are ill” (pp. 6, 7, 17). The whole treatise of 316 pages long is devoted to describing the techniques of the preservation of health.

Nearly two-thirds of the entire text is devoted to explaining the most important of the techniques called the *setta-ye ẓaruriya* “the six non-naturals” in Hippocratic medicine. They are: (1) air and the study of the seasons and their influence on the body's humors (pp. 31 ff.); (2) food and drink (including alcohol, pp. 111–26), their temperaments, and their requisite quantity according to the need of the body in each person (pp. 66 ff.); (3) exercise and rest and their use in relation to the digestion of food (pp. 127-36); (4) mental states (pp. 137-38); (5) sleeping and waking (pp. 138-46); (6) retention and evacuation (*eḥtebās wa estefrāḡ*) and their different techniques, for instance,



taking a bath or having coitus (pp. 146-81). The rest of the book is devoted to the nature of foods, the temperament (*mezāj*) of the body in different people and at different ages, and what they need to observe or to eat according to their dominant humor (*mezāj*) in order to keep their bodies healthy, as well as to preserve the health of each organ of their bodies, such as the eyes, ears, teeth, liver, or stomach.

The fact that, in this treatise, Rašti is not concerned with the description of diseases and their treatments is consistent with his idea that the “preservation of health” is the noblest and the most fundamental part of medical art. For him, the body is naturally healthy, and the weakening or decrepitude of the body caused by age is not an illness. The duty of a genuine doctor is thus to bring a person to his maximum natural life, which should last 120 years through the techniques he had explained above (pp. 17, 30). In this way, physicians can maintain or even increase the population of the country and contribute to its prosperity (pp. 21, 27). What happened, on the contrary, is that, due to the lack of enough genuine physicians in Iran and the general ignorance of the population, most people, still in their 30s but already old and ill, die, causing the population to decrease (pp. 22-23). In the absence of enough skilled doctors to serve the entire population, Rašti suggested that the wealthy people should hire skilled physicians as health advisers.

Rašti’s idea that doctors’ primary and principal task is to maintain health rather than treat diseases finds an echo in the practice of the Qajar kings, who surrounded themselves with several physicians in their everyday life. In fact, Rašti devoted his work to only one branch of medicine, preservation of health, that corresponds to the third part (*goftār*) of the compendium *Dakira-ye k’ārazmšāhi* by Esmā’il Jorjāni; the other parts cover general medicine, pathology (*andar shenāktan-e amrāz*), the temperaments, the humors, anatomy (*tašriḥ*), surgery, and other subjects (Jorjāni, WMS Per. 281, pp. 2-4).

Rašti promoted traditional medicine, but unlike his contemporary counterpart, Mirzā Moḥammad-Taḳī Širāzi Malek-al-Aṭebbā’, who was a staunch opponent of modern medicine (Ebrahimnejad, p. 89; Mir, p. 50), he did not so much oppose modern medicine as consider it imperfect (Malek-al-Aṭebbā’, p. 22). In his mission to the Anzali Port, where he wrote his *Hefz al-ṣeḥḥa*, he refers to the European doctor of the army, who should be Dr. Johann Schlimmer, who had been sent to Gilān by Mirzā Taḳī Khan Amir(-e) Kabir in December 1849 (Adamiyat, p. 335). Rašti criticized the fact that the treatment of diseases in Europe as often limited to prescribing drugs, such as antimonyl



tartrate (a strong emetic), calomel (or mercurous chloride), and quinine. He did not explicitly reject the use of these drugs, but he stated that they should not be prescribed for certain diseases. He claimed that the European doctor prescribed antimony to soldiers affected by *dāt-al-janb* (pleurisy), and as a result they died (Malek al-Aṭebbā', pp. 24-25).

We cannot say to what extent knowledge and expertise, regardless of the kind of medical education, determined the social rank of the physicians. Rašti, however, adopting the terminology of the Shi'ite clerical hierarchy, classified the medical profession in two groups: the *mojtahed*, who reached *ejtehād* by mastering medical knowledge to perfection, and the *moqalled* (the followers), on the other hand, who had not reached, or were not able to attain, perfection and therefore had to seek advice from their *mojtahed* when treating patients. Accordingly, Rašti addressed his tracts to the practitioners and not to the lay people (*Ruz-nāma-ye 'elmi*, nos. 1 [8 January 1877] and 2 [15 January 1877]).

In December 1904, about six months before his death, Rašti, then called Filsuf-al-Dawla Amir Tumān, built a *madrassa* (Madrassa-ye Filduf-al-Dawla) and a mosque near the mausoleum of Emāmzāda Esmā'il in Tehran, and he established a pious endowment (*waqf*) covering a number of his properties for their expenses. The prayer leader (*emām*) of the mosque was Sayyed 'Abd-al-Karim Rašti, the son-in-law of Mollā 'Ali Kani, an influential prominent clergy of Tehran (*Tarbiat*, nos. 343 and 350, 15 December and 2 February 1905, pp. 1659, 1712). This seems to reflect Rašti's link with the religious establishment, and further explains his claims to religious knowledge and his idea on classifying physicians as *mojtaheds* and *moqalleds*.

Rašti died on 16 Šafar 1323/22 April 1905 in Tehran. After his death, his son Loqmān-al-Molk, who was the personal physician of Moḥammad-'Ali Mirzā, the heir apparent, received the title of Filsuf-al-Dawla together with related allowances and benefits (*rawāteb wa marsumāt*) from Moḥaffar-al-Din Shah (*Irān-e solṭāni*, no. 9, 5 July 1905, repr. ed., p. 338).



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