

Music and Tasnif during the Constitutional Revolution

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Detailed description of music and song during the late Qajar period,
including a focus on 'Aref Qazvini
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Music and Tasnif during the Constitutional Revolution

In Persian music the term tasnif commonly refers to a type of vocal composition. Tasnif, a word of Arabic origin, was incorporated into Persian terminology in or around the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and came into common usage during the sixteenth century. It succeeded the terms gol and ghazal which had been in use during the first period after Islam. The term originally referred to literary composition and then later also referred specifically to literary-musical composition, for which it is better known today.

The tasnif during the late Qajar period often functioned as a political force in addition to serving as entertainment.

Prior to the introduction of the word tasnif as a term for vocal composition, other terms of Persian origin were used to refer to vocal forms, such as tarane, chame, and sorud. Later the vocal suite nowbat-e moratab, according to Maraghi, was a tasnif comprised of the four forms: gol, ghazal, tarane, and forudasht. These compositions (tasnifs) were based on the rhythmic systems of both poetry ('aruz), and music (iqā) and existed along with folk poetry and music, which was based on the syllabic system of rhythm of pre-Arabic origin (heja'i). After the Safavid period, 'aruz and iqā were no longer required as a rhythmic basis for tasnif composition. Mallah states that all the specific terms encompassed by the generic term of tasnif had disappeared from usage by the end of the nineteenth century. There is, however, still a variety of forms. At least three other terms for metric song are currently in use: tarane, sorud, and zarbi (also ghazal).

Tasnif: composed metric song. now applies to composition of the professional musicians of the court and aristocracy. poetry of tasnif originally intended to be composed with music.

Classical tasnif: composed between 1875 and 1925.

verse and refrain with words and music composed by one person.

melody based on the radif.

rhythm slow and regular

poetry from ghazal or from old music masters of the court

best known: Sheyda, 'Aref, and Amir Jahed

Tarane: much older Persian musical term than tasnif and has been used to describe any type of folk or regional poetry, whether its composer be known or unknown, whether it be metric or non-metric. now used to describe popular urban metric songs. sometimes used interchangeably with tasnif for more classical songs. specifically associated with the quatrain, dobeyti (folk) and roba'i. fahlaviiyyat before Islam. Tarane connotes a folk or popular origin, tasnif a literary, aristocratic one.

Sorud: oldest form of Persian poetry, began as Zoroastrian hymn singing. now national, institutional, and instructional anthems are also called soruds. meant to be sung by a group.

Ghazal: lyric, 5-17 lines of paired hemistichs, amatory. central to dastgah form of music, unifies musical elements, both formal and rhythmic-thematic. ghazal set to music was once considered as part of the tasnif form nowbat-e moratab. According to Neyyer Sina, most of the tasnifs of the Safavid Era were musical compositions on qete's and ghazals. Older tasnifs of the 19th century also use portions of classical poetry for the verse part of the composition. Zarbi's in the dastgah may be an older form of tasnif.

The zarbi and the classical tasnif share the following characteristics:

- relatively fixed melodic framework
- a slow and regular rhythm
- classical poetry
- a melodic basis in the radif
- performance for the aristocracy
- may be sung alone or as part of dastgah performance

Zarbi improvisation may have been one of the ways of composing tasnif.

Differences:

- zarbi is part of the radif
- zarbi conforms to the gushes of the radif, tasnif may go outside of the confines of the gushe
- tasnif often has a refrain
- tasnif usually has a known composer
- zarbi uses classical 'aruz poetry, while tasnif is not confined to that
- melody fits the poetry form of the zarbi, while tasnif may be composed as a musico-poetic unit where music has a more influential role in composition.

Tasnif is a flexible form and can conform more closely to classical norms or to popular norms. In the past, performance styles were solo-oriented and non-standardized. Currently a more ensemble-oriented performance is considered typical. As part of a dastgah performance:

pishdaramad
chaharmezrab
avaz
tasnif
reng

Tasnif changes the mood and creates motion and excitement that contrasts with the non-metric rhythm of the avaz.

Was part of a new arrangement of the dastgah for radio called Golha. Also may be sung outside of the dastgah format.

Song in Persian music has functioned as an important and integrating agent in Persian society. There was at one time no craft or occupation that did not have its song that regulated and lightened th work. Songs marked special occasions, religious festivals, and leisure activities, and served in many instances to give voice to sentiments critical against those in power.

Context

But one needs the setting of the Orient to realize what these songs are: the warm, clear Persian night; the lamps and lanterns shining on the glowing colours of native dresses; the surrounding darkness where dusky shadows hover; the strange sounds of music; voices sometimes so beautiful, rising and falling in persistent monotony--all this is untranslatable, but the impression left on one is so vivid and so full of enchantment that one longs to preserve it in some form. Fairchild, 1904

The secular music, including songs, of the Qajar period were performed at dinner parties, evening entertainments (bazm), picnics, weddings, and on other special occasions. Entertainers at these events might include instrumentalists, singers, dancers, actors, jugglers, fire-eaters, and wrestlers. Actual accounts of music during the dinner parties commonly mention the presence of a musical ensemble usually consisting of two melody instruments--typically tar (plucked lute) and possibly kamanche (spiked fiddle)--and a drum, dayere (single-skin frame-drum) or dombak (goblet-shaped drum).

Khaleqi states that the drummer was often also the singer, particularly of tasnif. The total ensemble described in these parties was male, with the dancers dressed up as women. A notable characteristics of this period was that entertainment ensembles were typically either all male or all female.

Excerpt from a dinner party given in Esfahan in 1876, Arnold, traveller's narative:

In a rectangular recess, three musicians, sitting on the floor, discoursed strange songs and music. One had a wiry instrument, resembling a small guitar; another produced short screams from a sort of flageolet; and the third, who also contributed the chief part of the vocal entertainment, had a small drum. In the centre of the room, there was a Persian carpet of many and beautiful colours; round the sides were felts, nearly half an inch thick, and five feet wide, upon which most

of the guests sat or reclined...The Khan was roaring, the singers twanging, piping, drumming, and shouting monotonous love-songs, when the first "dish" was served. A servant walked round the room carrying a large bottle of arrack in one hand, and wine in the other....Another servant followed with a plate, in which was laid about half of a sheet of Persian bread, thin, tough, and flabby. Upon the bread was a heap of kababs....For three hours this was the form of entertainment; the talk and the music went on while the kababs, the arrack, and the wine circulated. About ten o'clock the real dinner began....For nearly an hour there was little talk, much eating and drinking; then some coffee, and after that the guests were hoisted on to the high saddles of their steady, patient mules, and jogged homewards through the narrow streets, lighted only by the lanterns of their attendants.

The music of the court was of two types, that of the private gatherings and that of the official occasions and holidays, the latter using a military band, or nagare khane. The military band was used for public announcements, the signaling of sunrise and sunset, the closing of shops, and for religious dramas and processions. During Naser al-Din Shah's reign Western military music was introduced, and this all but replaced traditional Persian military music.

In addition, some other Western instruments were imported, including the piano and the violin. Eventually the school of music established to train military musicians led to other music conservatories, both Persian and Western. Indeed, the influence of Western military bands and training on Persian musicians such as Darvish Khan and Vaziri led to great changes in the composition and orchestration of Persian music and consequently in the composition and performance of tasnif.

Musicians who performed for private court gatherings include majles-e taglid and "court musicians" 'amalejat-e tarab (khas). Court orchestra most probably included a santur, 1-2 tar, 1-2 kamanche, and a dombak, possibly a dayere. Settings would be the biruni and anderun of the home, courtyards, summer quarters.

In the Qajar court there were two separate groups of musicians, groups of male musicians for the activities of the biruni and outdoor events and female groups for the events in the women's quarters. The court musicians played for private gatherings in the biruni. They were the masters of the radif, the repertoire of traditional music. In addition to the events in the court, they performed for the shah when he went outside the city. On his yearly trips to the summer quarters, he took from 7,000 to 10,000 people, including half of his wives. On his return he stopped at a place called Sorkh-e Hesar, for the Ruz-e Tabkh-e

Ash, which customarily took place during the month of Mehr (September-October) and was formerly held in Shahrestanak. Princes and members of the aristocracy were invited to that event, and entertainers were brought in the form of groups of clowns and jesters and court musicians.

During the reign of Fath 'Ali Shah there was a large group of 50 female entertainers, that is, instrumentalists, singers, dancers, and actresses attached to the anderun. They were in the charge of the shah's wives and lived in a separate building. The women of the anderun were educated to sing and dance by the best masters.

The ensembles of the male group and of the female were similar in composition, including performers of tar, kamanche, santur, and dombak; a singer; one or two dancers; and a number of actors. Little is known about their music. In addition to the music, dancing, and other entertainments that were part of the daily life of the anderun, evening entertainment took place in the large hall of the anderun, in the garden, or in the apartment of one of the shah's wives.

About eight or nine p.m. summer was usually served in the anderun. Mostowfi states that in spring and summer this was from one to two hours after sunset and in winter from two to three hours after sunset. The shah ate alone or with Anis al-Dowle, his principal wife. After supper the shah went visiting the women in the anderun and then went to his own hall to write letters, where the wives also gathered. They would eat fruit and have amusements, such as music. Anis al-Dowle had a piano in her apartment, which the mother of Ma'yer al-Malek played in the evenings on the occasions when the shah was visiting Anis al-Dowle. Other women crowded around and would sing tasnifs.

Some nights, the shah closed off the audience hall, and he and the women of the household would eat dinner in the garden, where musicians would also be played, and afterwards go to the building ('emarat) at the end of the garden where the women sat on one side of the room and the musicians on another, the shah watching both. Aqa Jan, the father of Soma' Hozur, who played a special type of kamanche, was also there.

On occasion, a corner of the large hall of the anderun was closed off by a screen and the male musicians were led in blindfold to this enclosure, and then had their blindfolds removed, so as to allow them to play for the gatherings of the shah within the anderun. In addition there were two groups of musicians, having both males and females, the males being blind. The Daste-ye Kurha, or Blind Ensemble, consisted of four men and two women: with tar, kamanche, dombak, two daf, and singer; and the group Daste-ye Mo'men Kur consisted of four people; a man, his wife, and two daughters; with dayere, dombak, and hand-organ. The man

and one daughter sang and the wife and the other daughter danced.

Early in the spring, the shah held an ash (soup) party for his wives and the wives of the aristocracy. They ate out in a garden, where the women musicians and blind musicians were interspersed playing music.

In the anderun at the end of the evening, it was customary for the court musicians to be present at the time the shah went to bed. The shah's sleeping quarters had four doors, one of which opened onto a place where the male court musicians would play.

Professional musicians were drawn from different groups of people, including religious minorities, members of tribes, and lutis, and in the words of one observer others of low social standing in society. According to Khaleqi, the musician was known by the term 'amale-ye tarab or 'amalejat-e tarab, merriment maker, which he considered an indication of the low status of the musician. This status was greatly influenced by the negative attitude generally held toward secular music by the followers of Shi'e Islam. The life of a musician under these circumstances was difficult and sometimes dangerous, and the music of the radif particularly became a cloistered and closely guarded tradition.

The status of the musician was generally low and unstable, due in part to the predominantly anti-musical attitudes among the orthodox Shi'i Moslems. Music of the radif, while fostered in the environment of the court, became a closely guarded tradition. Practiced for centuries by members of the Islamic craft guilds associated with the Sufi brotherhoods, music was treated as a sacred trust and the passing of the tradition from master to student was done with great care and caution. Musicians played for and relied upon the patronage and protection of nobles and princes until political and social changes during the late nineteenth century brought music to the general public.

Chardin states that among the entourage of governors of large provinces are their bands of musicians and their bands of dancers. Although this statement was written in the eighteenth century, it apparently held good at least through the reign of Mozaffar al-Din Shah (to 1907), since the master of tar, Darvish Khan, was employed in such a capacity. Mallah states that, for purposes of patronage and protection, musicians were often forced to go the mystic societies or to wealthy and powerful patrons such as the princes or rulers, where they were retained as part of the patron's retinue and not allowed to perform outside for others.

Changes in the traditional system of patronage and private instruction began occurring in the mid-1800's when Western music-making was introduced in the form of a French bandmaster and military band. Military music instruction was established and

this expanded later into a conservatory of music. The political and social changes of that time took Persian music gradually into more public arenas and made it more widely available.

Darvish Khan is a transitional figure who grew up under the patronage system. As a member of a prince's retinue, he was obliged to travel with the prince and to be at his sole disposal. He eventually broke with this tradition and established his own orchestra under the auspices of the Anjoman-e Okovat (Society of Brothers), a dervish order. He organized the first concerts and brought the music within reach of the general public.

He has both preserved tradition and innovated, bringing about changes in performance style, composition, and instrument construction.

He first learned to play music in the Western music school directed by Lemaire. He later studied tar with the master Aqa Hoseynqoli. He joined the retinue of one of the Qajar princes. He began supplementing his income by playing for other people and the prince threatened DK a number of times. Finally DK took refuge in the British Embassy, where the ambassador persuaded the prince to relieve DK of his obligation.

DK increased his music classes and continued to play for private gatherings. He joined the Sufi order of Safa and became director of the orchestra for Anjoman Okhovat. The Society sponsored a public performance in 1906, considered the first modern concert. Aside from the concerts of the Society, Darvish Khan also gave concerts in the hall of the Grand Hotel.

DK is often credited as the originator of the musical form, pishdaramad. Although there were antecedents to this form, DK was the one who actually popularized it. Before that time, a dastgah performance began with a non-metric avaz or a chaharmezrab. Musical ensembles were small with solo instrumentalists taking turns playing alone or accompanying a singer and perhaps playing together as an ensemble at the end of the dastgah for the tasnif, and reng. The classical radif itself included only a few metric pieces, most of them of short duration.

The creation and popularization of the pishdaramad is attributed to the influence of Western music in Iran, with its emphasis on large orchestras and concert format. Musicians such as DK brought together a greater number of performers for their orchestras, which encouraged the creation of more ensemble pieces. He composed pishdaramad, reng, and tasnifs.

DK is the transitional figure between traditional performance and modernization in Persian classical music. He influenced the development of Persian music in the twentieth century by

increasing the number, variety and length of metric pieces. He was instrumental in increasing the size of the orchestra and helping to change the performance environment to include many levels of society. He became an independent musician, contrary to the custom of his time, and paved the way for other musicians to have more freedom and respect.

Tasnif Composers and Performers of the Late Qajar Period

According to Lotfi and Davami, the older tasnifs were performed for the aristocracy and not for the people. Lotfi states that 'Aref was the first person to bring this type of music to the people.

'Ali Akbar Sheyda: Borumand and Karimi bot felt that Sheyda's are the best examples of old tasnif, in both poetry and music and in the relationship between the two. 'Aref also praises Sheyda's tasnifs in his Divan.

Badi'i states that the language of Sheyda's tasnifs was close to the language of the common people and for that reason was easy for them to grasp. As to his style, Badi'i states that at first Sheyda composed tunes on poems and ghazals already in existence, mostly those of Sa'di. He also wrote tasnifs in Sa'di's style or that used a line from Sa'di. Most of his tasnifs start with a slow tempo and after a full cadence the second part starts on a different them with a fast tempo.

At the beginning of Qajar rule, Iran was a feudal society with agriiculture as the chief form of production and a class divison between peasants and landlords, the latter of whom held the economic and political power. Keddie: "During their reign Persian was transformed from a medieval Islamic monarchy...into a constitutional monarchy....The crucial factor bringing about this change was the contact which developed between Persian and Western Europe and Russia in the nineteenth century."

Naser al-Din Shah, as a crown prince, had in 1816-17 intorudced into Tabriz the first printing press in Iran. In 1851 his minister, Amir Kabir, open the Dar al-Fonun, which taught modern science and foreign languages. The printing office of this school published the manuals that represented the first translations from European languages into Persian. Also in 1851 the first newspaper, Ruzname-ye Vagaye'-ye Ettefaqiye, was published.

One of the initial results of publication for a mass audience was to simplify the language style and to introduce translations of Western literary forms such as the novel: this resulted eventually in the production of new Persian literary forms. As mentioned earlier, Sheyda's tasnifs are examples of the development towards simplification and the use of spoken

language.

The period of the Constitutional Revolution can be said to include the time period from the tobacco concession to the coup d'etat of Reza Khan (1890-1921), with the granting of the Constitution in August 5, 1906 as the turning point. Journals at this time became the form for the revolutionary cause, for the spreading of information and for the airing of grievances. At the time of the revolution many poets wrote for journals and also founded journals, addressing their poetry to revolutionary issues. They wrote poems soon after events and provided information, expressed grievances, or direct public emotion and action. In Iran, since the ninth century, poetry has been the "main conveyer of artistic creativity" Soroudi states that: "Poetry was used to educate and excite the people, thus assuming a topical and exhortative nature. The change of content and the exhortative character resulted in a fertile interaction between the hitherto highly ornamented poetic language and the living, colloquial language."

Further, she states: "Poets were revolutionary mainly in their political and social ideas, classical minded in their poetry":

The Revolution deprived the court of its supremacy in favor of the people. No longer dependent on the court, the poet addressed his poetry to the vast number of people rather than to a limited circle of courtiers. As a result, the traditional subjects--especially panegyric--were pushed aside and new themes of social and political concern gained prominence....The demands and conditions of the Revolution did not favor drastic changes in poetics. Therefore familiar elements of Persian poetry on its different levels were emphasized. Poetic language was simplified and even approached the colloquial, to suit the needs of the people. Rigid classical forms and styles lost their prominence, at least temporarily, and folk forms, genres, and styles, especially ballads, became popular.

Tasnif and tarane played an important part in the process of struggle. Many poets of this period wrote both in conventional poetic forms, particularly the ghazal, and in song form, tasnif, publishing the texts of tasnifs and soruds in their journals and in separate song-sheets as well as performing them or having them performed. The tasnifs were performed in revolutionary societies (anjomans), at informal gatherings, and in concert halls in the major cities, particularly in the theater of the Grand Hotel on Lalezar Street in Tehran.

The most popular poet of this time, who also wrote tasnifs, was Seyyed Ashraf al-Din Hoseyni (1871-1931). He published a one-man newspaper, Nasim-e Shomal, which appeared between 1907 and 1911.

Second to him in popularity was Abolqasem 'Aref Qazvini, famous for his tasnif composition, but who also composed ghazals, some of which he sang in his musical performances. It was in 'Aref's tasnifs that Sheyda's lyrical tasnif joined with topical popular song and was used in the exhortative manner of the rest of the body of nationalistic, revolutionary poetry. In 'Aref's tasnifs, moreover, some of the major events of the revolution can be followed.

The tasnif composer Abolqasem 'Aref-e Qazvini (1882-1934) drew upon the traditions of classical, popular, epic, and religious song to reinforce and prepare his direct political appeals. He puts his country in the place of the beloved and uses traditional themes to arouse patriotic sentiments in his audience. As 'Aref was the most influential tasnif composer and performer of the period of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, his works were learned and repeated and had a great impact upon the sympathies of the people; they are remembered and performed today.

He was trained to become a rowzeh-khan and worked for two or three years as a religious singer. His period of religious and musical training gave 'Aref a background in the traditions of both classical and religious music and poetry. The religious theme of opposing forces of good and evil, was used in songs meant to arouse emotion against a corrupt regime. Soroudi states that during "periods of struggle, especially during the Constitutional Revolution, the king and the ruling class were frequently identified as the wicked Shemr and Yazid, and the struggle against them was considered as the second battle of Karbala. The function of the religious singers was to portray the injustice and oppression of the innocent in such a way that the audience would be overcome with grief and emotion.

In 'Aref's political tasnifs, he went one step further and after drawing out an emotional response to the injustices of his time exhorted his audience to action against their oppressors. The radif musicians relied on patronage by members of the court and aristocracy or sometimes spiritual groups such as dervish orders.

From his classical music training, 'Aref learned the art of ghazal composition and performance. The ghazal, a lyric poetic form, became popular during the revolutionary period because of its tradition of musical performance and the practice of interspersing lines of social commentary in between philosophical and erotic subjects.

'Aref began composing his own songs at the age of 14. His early tasnifs were love songs. Love songs: Didan Sanami, Shane Bar Zolf.

After moving to Tehran in 1898, 'Aref found favor as an

entertainer in artistocratic circles and was offered a position at the court, which he refused. He eventually joined the supporters of the revolutionary movements. He applied his whole talent and energy to whatever appeared to him to free his countrymen from oppression. At the time of the granting of the Constitution in 1906, 'Aref was not yet writing tasnifs for the revolution. It was the events following, where Mohammad 'Ali Shah succeeded in 1908 with Russian intervention in bombarding and closing the parliament, that precipitated 'Aref's political tasnif writing. In his tasnifs, he substituted the nation for the beloved and its people as its lovers.

In responding to the economic and political events of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries 'Aref was joining a number of other poets who used poetry and tasnif as effective political vehicles for mobilizing pro-revolutionary sentiment. When revolutionary forces combined and entered Tehran and deposed the shah in 1909, 'Aref composed his first tasnif with political overtones, "Ey Aman az Faraqat." He began to sing in demonstrations and in revolutionary meetings, traveling from town to town performing his ghazals and tasnifs. Both Davami and Ney Davud mentioned that he performed in the theater of the Grand Hotel. In general, Shokrollah Khan was his accompanist on tar, but Ney Davud also mentions that occasionally he and Darvish Khan accompanied 'Aref at the performances where he sang avaz and his own tasnif compositions.

One of his best tasnifs, "Hengam'e Mey", was written during the period of the Second Parliament (1909-1911) and dedicated to Heydar Khan 'Amoghli, a revolutionary figure. This work is a good example of the combination of ghazal metaphor, emotional appeal, and call to action.

Throughout the rest of the period of the revolution, 'Aref continued to write and perform songs protesting different events and injustices, reflecting his moods, and championing his personal causes. At one time he took up residence in Istanbul (ca. 1914-1919), supporting the unity of Islam under Ottoman rule. In 1918, when he became aware of Turkey's intentions to annex the Iranian province of Azarbaijan, he became extremely disillusioned and wrote "Che Shurha" as a warning to Iran.

Other occasions inspiring his songs:

Del Havas: 1911 Shah tried to regain the throne

Nang An Khane: 1911: Russian ultimatum to dismiss Morgan Shuster, who had been hired by the Second Parliament as Treasurer-General to bring order into Persian finances

Geriye Ra Be Masti: 1911 contained critical references to Naser al-Molk, Regent to Ahmad Shah

[Az Kafam Raha: 1911, after separation from friend Ostad 'Ali Mohammad Me'mar Bashi, written in Qom and Esfahan.]

Geriye Kon: 1921 written to protest the death of Colonel Mohammad Taqi Khan at the hands of a terrorist.

Soroudi mentions the number of times 'Aref set his hopes on causes and was crushed when they were defeated. A number of his tasnifs are songs of disillusionment and depression. After his last cause, the republication movement, was suppressed and Reza Khan was crowned shah (1925), 'Aref once again became disillusioned and retired to Hamadan where he lived in poverty and seclusion till his death in 1933-34.

29 tasnifs attributed to him in his Divan.

Those who have evaluated the man and his works try to make it clear that "'Aref was a patriot, but not a revolutionary", that he did not really understand the revolution and would follow any one or any cause that appeared to provide a solution. He successfully captured the sentiments of the people of that time, particularly in Hengam-e Mey, Nang An Khane, and Geriye Kon.

'Aref sang his tasnifs at public concerts where "he made his audience cry and provoked explosions of enthusiastic patriotism". Khaleqi mentions that it was common during 'Aref's time for some people to keep booklets which had copies of tasnifs commonly sung, including those of 'Aref, and during tasnif singing they would sing together.

'Aref's tasnifs served as news carriers and as emotional rallying points. He drew on traditional themes and forms to relate to his audience and direct them to act in behalf of the revolutionary cause. Machalski:

The work of 'Aref has truly enriched the literature of Iran, it has participated in reviving patriotism and constituted a true asset to the work of the Iranian revolution of 1906-1911.

'Aref remains a nationalist symbol to the Iranians and as such he and his tasnifs are venerated and performed as part of the continuing classical and national tradition of Persian music.

A number of poets at the time of the revolution wrote nationalistic songs, including Mirza Mohammad Taqi Malek al-Sho'ara "Bahar", who wrote the lyrics to a number of tasnifs, the most famous of which is the revolutionary "Morgh'e Sahar". Music composed by Morteza Ney Davud.

Amir Jahed: his numerous tasnifs include both nationalistic and lyrical themes.

Traditionally speaking, the tasnif was performed by a singer accompanied by a small ensemble, usually consisting of one or two melody instruments and a drum. Although Sheyda, 'Aref, and Amir Jahed all performed their own tasnifs, only 'Aref became known as a public performer. Among the most famous of singers of Sheyda's tasnifs in former times was Jamal Safavi. One of the earliest performers of 'Aref's tasnifs was 'Abdollah Davami. Banan

Tasnif composers of the late Qajar period are representatives of both traditional forms and of style and theme changes. One of the developments in the Iranian poetic style of the nineteenth century was the simplification of language designed to appeal to a new mass audience outside the circles of the court and aristocracy. Both Sheyda and 'Aref use language common to the people. While Sheyda's works were lyrics in their subject matter, 'Aref had both lyrical and topical tasnifs, and responded as others poets and composers did, to the events of the Constitutional Revolution. Later performers and arrangers have periodically revived their works and have kept them within the current classical performing tradition.

The Meaning of the Texts

Symbolism in classical tasnif poetry resembles that of the classical ghazal, using the same themes of the lover and his beloved, wine, and springtime. Borumand has stated that tasnifs are mostly based on the theme of love, whether it be love for a person, for God, for music, or for country. Both Machalski and Khoshzamid concur that the great majority of tasnifs are lyrical or amorous, the rest being divided among topical, satirical, and other themes. Arianpur has compared the amorous tasnif to the mystical ghazal in its emphasis on flowers, wine, beauty, and the unfaithfulness of the beloved.

Older tasnifs and those of Sheyda continue the tradition of love-oriented poetry using traditional symbols and metaphors.

The tasnif was used as a format for writers like 'Aref and Bahar to educate their audience politically. They drew upon traditional poetic symbols and themes, sometimes altering them to suit their purposes, and made open propaganda in ways not at all in accordance with the tradition of veiled allusion. Thus 'Aref may substitute nation for the beloved and suffering and mourning for its lovers, the oppressed peoples. He also broadcasts the corruption and thievery of high officials and openly insults his neighbors, the Turks.

'Aref's tasnifs illustrate a change in the tradition of classical poetry. He was responding to economic and political events of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Constitutional movement and the Iranian revolution at the time when a number of other poets used poetry and tasnif as effective

political vehicles to mobilize pro-revolutionary sentiment. The new political and patriotic themes include love of the motherland and recollection of past glories, vituperation of the Qajar dynasty, pan-Islamicism, communism, anti-Russian, pro-German, pro- and ... 'Aref as the most influential song composer and performer of the Constitutional Revolution. His works were learned and repeated and had a great impact upon the sympathies of the people.

'Aref used traditional themes in order to reach his audience, make them cry, and persuade them to act on whatever event or situation he set out to portray.

One of his best-known tasnifs, Az Khun-e Javanan-e Vatan, was written during the period of the Second Parliament (1909-1911). This particular work is an example of the combination of traditional metaphor, emotional appeal and call to action. Particularly well-known is the quatrain:

From the blood of the youth of the country, tulips have
grown.
From mourning their stature, the cypress is bent over.

In the shadow of the flower the nightingale is lying
hidden.
The flower, also like me in sorrow, tore its garment
for them.

As poets before have opened their poems with the exaltation of wine, flowers, and springtime, so does 'Aref. Springtime as the symbol of rejoicing and renewal, however, stands in marked contrast to the actual events and emotions that are part of 'Aref's Tehran that spring. 'Aref expresses sadness at the condition of his country. The second verse uses the traditional symbols to create a feeling of sympathy and grief over the conditions he explains in the following verses.

The following verses open says that the rulers have robbed the country and taken the rights from the poor and that people have to turn their grief to galvanize themselves into fighting back.

Che Shurha portrays the Turkish intentions of annexing the province of Azarbaijan. In his appeal he emphasizes the Persian language and the heroes and kings of the Shahname. He appeals to the sense of national pride, courage, and fighting skill. He warns them of deceit, reminds them of their Persian heritage. He uses symbols of mourning as a means of galvanizing sentiment.

Both amorous and political tasnifs use the same figures and concepts as do the classical poems. The anonymous tasnifs and those of Sheyda and Jahed tend to follow more closely the classical tradition while those of 'Aref and Bahar, and to a

certain extent that of Jahed, deviate from this tradition in that they emphasize certain concepts over others, substitute an ideal for a personal beloved, and urge change and action over forbearance and long-suffering. 'Aref particularly at times leaves the world of veiled allusion and classical turn of phrase to address current issues and conditions directly (Az Khun):

The representatives are asleep and the ministers are
corrupt;
They stole all the gold and silver of Iran.

They have left us only a ruined house.
Oh friend, take the rights of the poor from the
princes.

This directness of 'Aref provides a contrast between the tasnif and the ghazal. His tasnifs still allude to the themes of lover and beloved, love, and the heart, but substitute the nation for the beloved and its people as its oppressed lovers (?). 'Aref's tasnifs emphasize change and action as opposed to inactivity and blind suffering.

oppression as opposed to separation
personal transformation and change as opposed to self-
abnegation, entreaty, and endurance

If the nation is the beloved, then the lover is called to defend it rather than to suffer for it. The lover actually suffers at the hands of the enemy of his nation rather than from the nation itself.

The Forms

Social and cultural changes in the late Qajar period, including the Constitutional movement, created an environment that fostered interaction between the literary and colloquial language and artistic forms. This led to a simplification and diversification of the traditional classical forms. This applied to the areas of rhythm, language, theme, and formal structure.

It is difficult to place the classical tasnif in a distinct category of folk, urban popular, or classical poetic traditions as it has characteristics in common with those of all three categories. There are stanzaic and non-stanzaic types. The most common stanzaic type is verse-refrain, 1-2 lines verse.

The general tendency is for each section to have its characteristic rhyme, musical theme, poetic meter, and line length.

The most common rhyme scheme begins with aaba and all examples begin with aa. Musical themes match rhyme schemes, with the overriding consideration of a musically unifying cadence. With

this aaba form a higher pitch area on the b also tends to correspond with emotional expression.

In both avaz and tasnif, the overriding intonation patterns place the emotional and formal (both poetic and musical) climax at a place from half to three-quarters of the way through a piece. Formal and cognitive elements, then, combine to create the overall effect of a gradually heightening and then decreasing stress and release pattern, which takes the listener from a state of relaxation to one of tension where the crux of the emotional message is given, whereupon he is released and returned to his original state. In result, form is used as a device to increase the impression or impact of the poetic message upon the listener.

Tasnifs in my dissertation tend to employ poetry based mainly on syllable-length which, when associated with a musical composition, are subject to musical patterns, accents, and time-frame which may override poetic syllable-length and meter, particularly at the beginning of a line. Use meters found in the 'aruz system. One meter for verse. Later tasnifs employ different meters corresponding with different sections.

The tonal contour, ascending-descending, may occur on one or more levels, using periodic descending cadences to the original pitch or to a new pitch level in areas of modulation. These cadences are coordinated with musical-poetic phrases and lines, which are characterized by limited phrase ambit, conjunct motion, pitch relations of shahed and ist, and high degree of ornamentation and variation.

Summary

Tasnif was a flexible form of song composition that drew on classical themes and forms and during the period preceeding and during the Constitutional Revolution mixed with some folk and popular forms of expression to create songs of a topical nature designed to influence and sway people toward support the revolution.

The tasnifs of 'Aref-e Qazvini, in particular, documented and expressed many of the sentiments of the Constitutional Revolution. He publicized these sentiments by performing his tasnifs in different gatherings throughout Iran. His background in religious singing and chanting, gave him the ability to sway the emotions of people.

During this time, the music tradition itself began to change, partially influenced by Western music tradition and partly due to the greater independence of the musician and his greater orientation to a public outside of the aristocratic circles. Both 'Aref and Darvish Khan exemplify this change, bringing the music of the radif to the people and changing the forms

themselves to more nearly suit the mood of the times.

In addition to help establish the independence of the musician from dependency on the patronage of the court, Darvish Khan helped develop and promoted instrumental compositions that supported a larger group of performing musicians and expanded the performance format to appeal to and include a wider audience outside the traditional groups.

'Aref changed the mood of the tasnif from one of introspection and resignation in the face of blind fate to that of transformation and social change. His songs through the years have continued to be an energizing and activating force in the life of the Iranian people and have represented the spirit of love and sacrifice for one's country.