



‘ĀREF QAZVĪNĪ II. ‘AREF’S MUSIC

‘Āref was the most influential *taṣnīf* (song) composer and performer of the period of the Constitutional Revolution. His works are among the best representatives of the classical *taṣnīf* style of the late Qajar period and are considered an important part of the currently performed traditional repertoire of Persian classical music. In responding to the economic and political events of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, ‘Āref mainly composed political *taṣnīfs*, which he used as effective vehicles to mobilize pro-revolutionary sentiment.

At the age of thirteen, ‘Āref studied music with Ḥājjī Šādeq Kārrāzī for a period of fourteen months. Under pressure from his father to become a *rawza-kvān* (professional reciter of the martyrdom of Ḥosayn b. ‘Alī) ‘Āref sang *nawḥa* (religious threnodies) for two to three years, accompanying the sermons of Mīrzā Ḥosayn Wā‘eẓ Qazvīnī, his religious instructor. This period of training gave ‘Āref a background in both classical music and traditional *rawza-kvānī*. In his compositions he used traditional themes and forms in order to reach his audience, make them cry, and persuade them to act on whatever event or situation he set out to portray. In a nation attuned to the poetic theme of the lover-and-his-beloved, he portrays the nation as the beloved and the people as its lovers.

After moving to Tehran in 1898, ‘Āref found favor as an entertainer in



aristocratic circles. He eventually joined the supporters of the constitutional movement. At the time of the granting of the constitution (1324/1906), however, he had not yet written songs for the revolution. It was the events following Moḥammad-‘Alī Shah’s bombarding and closing of the parliament (1908) that precipitated ‘Āref’s political song writing. When in 1909 revolutionary forces entered Tehran and deposed the shah, he composed his first song “Ey amān” with political overtones. Often accompanied by Šokrallāh Khan on the *tār* (long-necked lute, q.v.), he began to sing his *ġazals* and *tašnīfs* in demonstrations and in revolutionary meetings, traveling from town to town.

One of his best-known *tašnīfs*, “Az kūn-e javānān-e waṭan,” was written in the mode of Daštī during the period of the Second Parliament (1909-11). This particular piece combines traditional metaphors with an emotional call to action. In form it is typical of many of ‘Āref’s *tašnīfs*, which are stanzaic with a recurring refrain.

1. ‘Āref – Namidānam
2. Elahe-A-(d)hengam mey

The *Kollīyāt-e dīvān* attributes twenty-nine *tašnīfs* to ‘Āref, although at least two were actually composed by others (Koşzamīr, pp. 21-22). These *tašnīfs* reflect the events of his life—his fluctuating causes, loves, and moods. Exhortative revolutionary *tašnīfs* are mixed with those which complain bitterly of defeats and injustice. They portray and react to events of the first years of the constitutional period; pointing out conditions of oppression, injustice, corrupting foreign influence, imperialism, and loss of national pride. For example, “Nang ān kāna” (1911) was written because of the Russian ultimatum to dismiss the American Morgan Shuster, who had been hired by the Second Parliament. ‘Āref wrote “Āre šūhrā” (1917-18) to warn Iran of Turkey’s intention to annex Azarbaijan. “Gerya kon” (1921/22) commemorates the death of Colonel Moḥammad-Taqī Khan Pesyān whom ‘Āref considered to be the last real defender of the rights of Iran (*Kollīyāt-e dīvān*, p. 394).

For a music sample, see [‘Āref – Namidānam](#).



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