



AŠRAF GĪLĀNĪ

AŠRAF GĪLĀNĪ (اسراف گیلانی), SAYYED AŠRAF-AL-DĪN ḤOSAYNĪ QAZVĪNĪ, poet and leading journalist of the Constitutional era. Born in Qazvīn in 1287/1870, he lost his father, Sayyed Aḥmad Ḥosaynī, when he was only six months old. His childhood was spent in poverty and in his early youth he spent some time in Karbalā and Naḥaf, presumably to pursue religious studies. On returning to Iran, he went first to Qazvīn and then at the age of twenty-two to Tabrīz (where he studied geography, Arabic, grammar, logic, etc.) before settling down in Rašt. In Rašt he published the paper *Nasīm-e šemāl*, which appeared with irregular intervals from 1325/1907 to 1330/1911. This paper was reckoned among the most popular journals of its time. Subsequently, the poet moved to Tehran, and revived the publication of his paper in 1333/1914-15. He died in 1313 Š./1934.

Ašraf's most significant literary output consisted of politico-satirical poems which appeared, sometimes under the pen-name of "Faḡīr," in the pages of the *Nasīm-e šemāl* during the early part of his journalistic career. The subject of these poems constituted striking comments on the political and social conditions of the time, while their mood alternated between despair and hope depending upon the vicissitudinous course of events. In these poems Ašraf was greatly influenced by the poems of 'Alī-Akbar Ṭāherzāda Šāber, whose works were published in the satirical Turkish paper *Mollā Naṣr-al-dīn*. Sometimes Ašraf resorted to outright translation of Šāber's works without acknowledging his source. Ašraf's main criticism was reserved for reactionary politicians and clergy. His satirical verse, written in simple, colloquial



language, and often using slang expressions, enjoyed wide appeal. He employed certain poetic forms, such as the *mostazād* and the ballad (*taşnīf*), with special effectiveness. A selection of his poetry (*Bāḡ-e behešt*), said to comprise about 20,000 verses, has been published several times in Bombay and Tehran. See also [Nasīm-e Şemāl](#).

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