

1. Composition

“The *radif* is the principal emblem and the heart of Persian music” (Nūr Ali Borūmand, (Talaī, 2000)). The classical repertoire called ‘*radif*’ of Persian music encompasses more than two hundred short elastic and flexible melodic movements called ‘*gūsheh*’, which are classified into 12 modal systems, 7 primary called ‘*dastgāh*’ and 5 secondary called ‘*āvāz*’ (Figure 1, Figure 2). It comprises of several modal levels beginning from the **lowest register** and rising to **the highest register**.

Dastgāh: **Cyclic** **multi-modal** **scales** evolved from a previous less complex *maqām* system over centuries (\approx 17th century). It comprises of several modal levels beginning from the lowest register and rising to the highest.

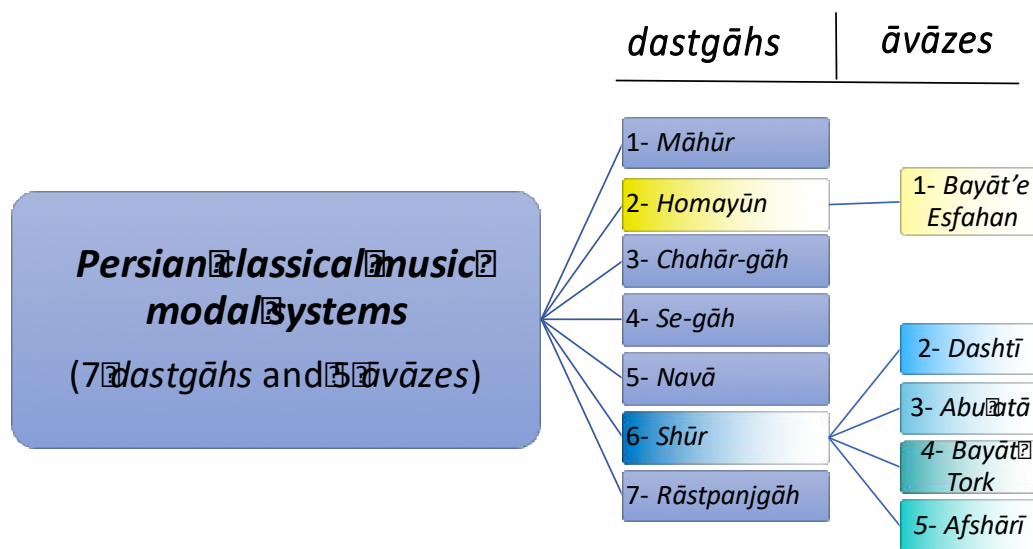


Figure 1. An overview of the structure of Persian traditional music

There is no definite classification for *gūshehs*. There are some differences in the number and names of a few of them in different versions of the *radif* analysis by different masters and musicologists. One of the recent analysis by Asadi (2014) has been used to select some fixed *gūshehs* in the preparation of practical materials.

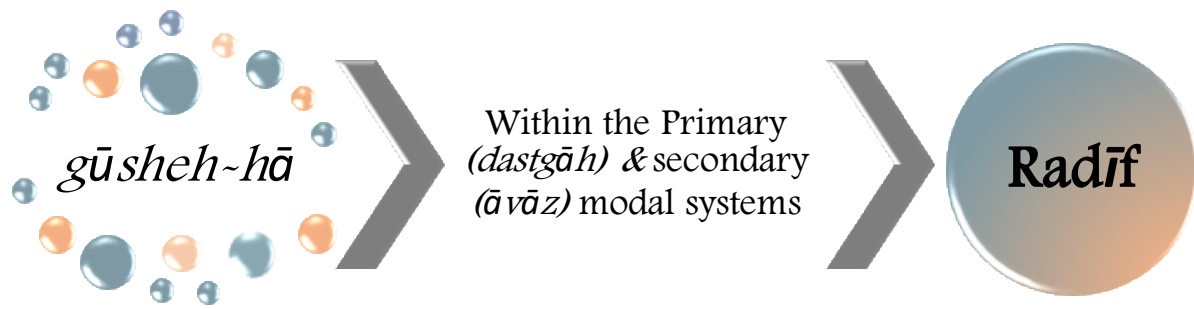


Figure 2. An illustration of the concept of radīf relative to dastgāh, āvāz and gūsheh

Within each *dastgāh*, there are two main types of *gūshehs*: primary *gūshehs* that possess an identified mode exclusive to the *dastgāh* they belong to and are called ‘foundational *gūshehs*’. The other type includes ‘transitional *gūshehs*’ which in contrast to flexible *gūshehs* are found in different *dastgāhs*, the difference is in their mode. It is noteworthy that for improvisation and composition, mainly foundational *gūshehs* are used since transitional *gūshehs* have limitations wither in their meter, rhythmic or melodic patterns and the composer/performer has less flexibility in creation.

2. Structure

The fundamental structure of Persian traditional music can be viewed based on three major patterns: 1- Modal patterns and scales; 2- Melodic patterns; and 3- Rhythmic patterns (Asadi, 2014). In contrast to Western art music, which is played exactly as written, the *radīf* is comprised of flexible traditional melodies, many of which derived from folk sources with obscured origin (Talai, 1993). It is also crucial to distinguish the Persian modal systems from western ‘mode’, Indian *raga* and Turko-Arabian *maqām* (Mitchel & Trelease, 2008). Notably, “a mode is not a mere assortment of pitches and the resultant intervals. Far more important is the function of the tones in the creation of music” (Hormoz Farhat, 1990, P.28).

Mode is interpreted differently in different musical cultures. In Persian classical music, mode is an assortment of pitches and the resultant intervals together with function of the tones and melodic motions in the creation of that mode (Figure 3).

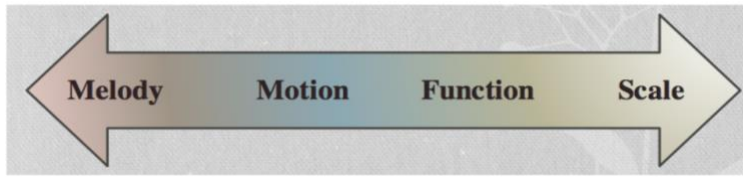




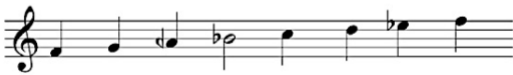







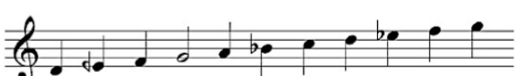

Figure 3. Different components of a mode in Persian classical music.

Among all *darāmad* is a key *gūsheh* and bears the base mode of a *dastgāh*. The modal interpretation of *darāmad* in different *dastgāhs* is shown.

3. Forms

There are different forms in terms of how to perform Persian traditional music such as *āvāz* (non-metric pieces literally means ‘singing’ derived from vocal improvisations but also used for instruments); *tasnīf* (ballad), A composed rhythmic song accompanied by a vocalist; *pīshdarāmad*, an overture with slow tempo, which is played at the beginning of a performance; *chāhārmezrāb*, which is usually a piece with fast tempo and demonstrates the virtuosity of the performer; and *reng*, an instrumental structure, which was performed at the end of a program with a moderately fast tempo and usually in 2/4 or 6/8. Improvisation is also a very important part of Persian traditional music performed in both rhythmic or rhythm-free forms.

Table 1. Modal interpretation of the *dastgāh* by Jean During based on the *radif* of Nūr ‘Ali Borumand.

	<i>dastgāhs</i>	<i>āvāzes</i>
1- <i>Shūr</i>		
2- <i>Abuātā</i>	→	
3- <i>Bayāt</i> <i>Tork</i>	→	
4- <i>Afshārī</i>	→	
5- <i>Dashtī</i>	→	
6- <i>Māhūr</i>		--
7- <i>Homayūn</i>		
8- <i>Bayāt'e</i> <i>Esfahan</i>	→	
4- <i>Se-gāh</i>		--
3- <i>Chahār-gāh</i>		--
5- <i>Navā</i>		--
7- <i>Rāst</i> <i>panjgāh</i>		--

4. Intervals

Intervals are important elements of a musical culture and considered the heart of the tradition. Despite being different in nature, intervals are connected to the *hāl*, meaning ethos or state of mind as well as inspiration. *Hāl* is a personal aesthetic experience, while intervals exist in the domain of commonality and consensus (Danielson, Marcus, & Reynolds, 2001).

Tetrachord or *dāng* has been the most important modal structural element since medieval period. According to Talaī, there are four main kinds of *dāngs* and all Persian modes are based on them. Tetrachord also corresponds to the fingering on the neck of some fretted Persian string instruments, for example, *ūd*, *tār* and *setār*. If we use a system where an octave is divided into 1200 cents, each *dāng* equal to a fourth is 500 cents. Intervals of the second and the third are variable and the size of the two variable pitches determines the character of the tetrachord (Talai, 1993).

There are five major identifiers for each *gūsheh* and are shown in Figure 4.

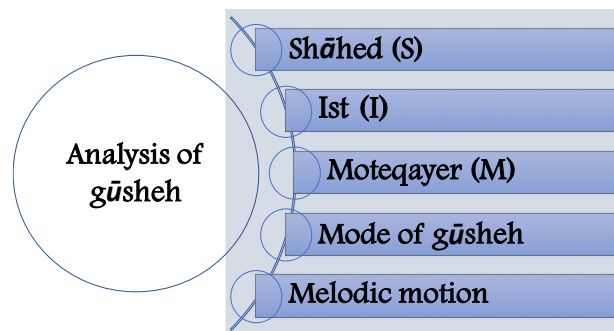


Figure 4. Analysis of each *gūsheh* based on five identifiers.

Among those, *shāhed* is emphasised herein as the most significant element to recognise a *gūsheh*. This was further discussed before and while practising the selected songs for that session. *Shāhed* has a similar role as tonal centre in other musical cultures with some differences. However, that is the best comparison to be made to conceptualise this term in the context of Persian classical music.

5. Harmony

Persian music was believed to be void of harmonic and vertical interpretation. However, in recent years there has been attempts in developing a modern style where polyphony, unique to that of Persian traditional music, is used by some renowned musicians such as Hossein Alizadeh and Ali Ghamsari (Ghamsari, 2013; Rezania, 2013).