

Original Research Article**The Possibility of Representation in Persian Music Based on Peter Kivy's Theory
(Case Study: Dastgah-e Chahargah from the Perspective of Ruhollah Khaleqi)***Parisa Mehralizadeh¹, Hamid Askari Rabori^{2**}, Shahla Eslami¹

1. Department of Philosophy, SR.C., Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

2. Department of World Music Playing, Faculty of Music, Iran University of Art, Tehran, Iran

Received: 07/06/2026

Accepted: 08/07/2026

Available online: 01/10/2026

Abstract

Within the philosophy of Western music, Peter Kivy's contour theory emphasizes structural resemblance between musical sound patterns and expressive bodily patterns associated with human emotions, while maintaining that literal representation of abstract concepts is possible only through cultural convention. In contrast, Ruhollah Khaleqi characterizes Dastgah-e Chahargah as an epic, forward-driving mode embodying qualities such as courage, yet his claims have not been examined within a systematic framework of analytical philosophy. Addressing this gap, this study investigates the extent to which Khaleqi's account of Chahargah can be analyzed, supported, or critically evaluated through Kivy's contour theory and enhanced formalism. Its principal objective is to clarify the relationship between representation and expressiveness in the Persian dastgah tradition while assessing the cross-cultural applicability of Kivy's theory. The study addresses the lack of research directly connecting the analytical philosophy of music with indigenous theories of musical representation in the Persian tradition, particularly Khaleqi's account. Employing a qualitative, analytical-critical methodology based on documentary sources, it examines Dastgah-e Chahargah and Khaleqi's theoretical writings as its primary case study. The findings indicate that the ascending contours of Chahargah's daramad and the intervallic tension produced by augmented intervals in Gusheh-ye Mokhalef establish a limited structural resemblance to bodily movement patterns associated with heroism and courage. Nevertheless, Khaleqi's attribution of an epic character, personification of the ideal human being, and mystical-nationalist interpretations extend beyond Kivy's enhanced formalism and derive primarily from cultural conventions, performance contexts, and Chahargah's historical association with zurkhaneh rituals and Shahnameh recitation. The study concludes that Kivy's theory usefully explains the formal dimension of musical representation but remains insufficient for accounting for *hal* in Persian music, whose intervallic organization differs substantially from Western music and whose performance practice is fundamentally improvisatory. This limitation underscores the need for further development of an intercultural philosophy of music.

Keywords: *Musical Representation, Peter Kivy, Enhanced Formalism, Contour Theory, Dastgah-e Chahargah, Ruhollah Khaleqi*

*The article is extracted from Ph.D thesis of "Parisa Mehralizadeh" entitled "The Possibility and Limits of Representation in Persian Classical Music: With an Emphasis on the Philosophical Views of Peter Kivy" that under supervision of Dr "Hamid Askari Rabori"

and in consultation of Dr "Shahla Eslami" which has been done at Department of Philosophy, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran in 2025.

** Corresponding author: h.askari@art.ac.ir; 0989122405574

Introduction

Within the Western philosophy of music, the question of music's representational capacity—particularly in relation to absolute music—has remained one of the enduring concerns of philosophical inquiry. From the Platonic distinction between imitation and inspiration, through Eduard Hanslick's critique of emotional expressivism, to contemporary analytical formulations, philosophers have continuously debated the extent to which music is capable not merely of expressing emotions but also of epistemically representing the external world, abstract concepts, or events (Davies, 1993, 16). Kivy (1984), one of the most influential philosophers of music of the past half-century, developed this debate in his major works, including *Sound and Semblance: Reflections on Musical Representation*, by advancing Contour Theory and defending enhanced formalism, thereby delineating the limits of music's representational capacities (Alperson, 1992, 217). According to Kivy, absolute music evokes emotional states through structural resemblance between musical patterns—such as melodic contour, rhythm, and dynamic motion—and the bodily patterns associated with human emotional behavior. However, it lacks the capacity for the literal representation of narratives, characters, or abstract concepts such as justice and courage, except insofar as such meanings are established through cultural conventions (Howard, 1993, 11).

Adopting an interdisciplinary approach that brings together the analytical philosophy of music and the musicology of the Persian dastgah tradition, the present study investigates the possibility of musical representation within the context of Persian classical music. Its primary focus is a case study of the Dastgah-e Chahargah as interpreted by Ruhollah Khaleqi. As a leading modern nationalist thinker of Persian music, Khaleqi, in works such as *Nazari be Musiqi* (A View on Music), describes Chahargah not merely as an authentic and ancient scale but as a dastgah distinguished by structural and expressive superiority, capable of conveying heroic character, courage, and a sense of forward-directed motion. He refers to Chahargah as "The foremost of the Persian modal system," suggesting that nature itself has gathered within it the finest qualities of the other dastgahs

(Khaleqi, 1962, 235, 248–249). Such a perspective is deeply rooted in the cultural-nationalist discourse of the early twentieth century in Iran and invites philosophical re-examination.

Persian dastgah music, grounded in the Radif and its collection of gushehs characterized by distinctive modal and performance relationships, is fundamentally non-programmatic and centered on improvisation. Within this tradition, musical meaning emerges primarily through *hal* (musical-spiritual state) and the cultural-performance context rather than through a direct structural correspondence between musical sound and external objects. Previous scholarship has focused predominantly on the structural description of the Radif (Farhat, 2001), historical accounts, or hermeneutic and identity-oriented analyses, while relatively little attention has been devoted to developing a systematic theoretical account of musical representation. Although Khaleqi's views on the heroic and emotional representational capacities of the dastgahs are rich and influential, they lack a rigorous analytical-philosophical framework and have largely remained at the level of cultural description.

The present study seeks to address this theoretical gap. Its central question is as follows: To what extent can Khaleqi's representational claims concerning Chahargah—particularly its heroic character—be analyzed, supported, or critically evaluated through Kivy's Contour Theory and his conception of enhanced formalism? More specifically, to what extent can the melodic contours of Chahargah—including its powerful ascending gestures, the dynamic tensions of the Zabol and Mokhalef gushehs, and the expressive force of its augmented intervals—be understood as exhibiting structural resemblance to bodily movement patterns associated with courage and heroism? Conversely, to what extent are such representational attributions primarily products of cultural discourse, performance practice, and historical convention rather than intrinsic musical structure?

Literature Review

A review of the existing literature indicates that, within the philosophy of music, previous studies have approached

the issues of representation and expressiveness from various perspectives; however, none has directly addressed the central question of the present research. Among Persian-language studies, one investigation examining the representation of Persian music in European travelogues focuses primarily on cultural encounters and the meaningful construction of travelers' descriptions (Ahrar & Zaker Jafari, 2025). Nevertheless, this study is unrelated to the structural analysis of musical sound or to philosophical theories of representation in absolute music. Another article, addressing the ontology of expression and expressiveness in music with reference to Iranian-Islamic musical thought, adopts a predominantly review-based approach and examines the roles of authorial intention and audience perception (Saraii, 2011), yet it lacks a concrete case analysis. Similarly, a subsequent study on the bibliographic foundations of representation in music is limited to compiling thematic sources (Saraii, 2022) and does not propose a new theoretical framework. Within structural studies of the Dastgah-e Chahargah, a comparative analysis of Abolhasan Saba's Radif and the Radif attributed to Habib Sama'i (as transmitted by Tali'eh Kamran), focusing on the Daramad, Zabol, and Hesar gushehs (Saraii et al., 2024), remains exclusively structuralist and does not consider the emotional or heroic significance of melodic contours. Furthermore, a study examining the anthem "Ey Iran" as a vehicle for reconstructing Iranian national identity concentrates on a functional patriotic composition with explicit verbal text (Azizi, 2024), rather than offering a philosophical analysis of representational theories concerning an instrumental dastgah such as Chahargah.

The non-Persian literature likewise contains a substantial body of research in the analytical philosophy of music, in which several influential theorists have directly addressed the issue of musical representation. Although these studies offer considerable theoretical sophistication, they remain removed from the central concern of the present research. Among the most significant are the following. In *Sound and Semblance*, Kivy (1984) defends the possibility of musical representation by distinguishing between musical

depiction and convention-based representation, arguing that music can refer to objects either through audible resemblance or through culturally established conventions. His analysis, however, remains confined to the context of Western tonal and programmatic music and does not extend to Eastern modal and improvisation-based traditions. In *Languages of Art*, Goodman (1968) develops a systematic theory of symbols, employing the concepts of denotation and exemplification to analyze artistic systems and defining representation as a referential relation within symbolic systems. Yet, owing to the strict nominalism of his approach, his theory proves inadequate for explaining metaphorical perception and the phenomenon of ḥāl in music. Scruton (1997), in *The Aesthetics of Music*, emphasizes the fundamental distinction between sound and tone, together with the indispensable metaphors of space, movement, and life in musical perception, thereby rejecting linguistic and semiotic models of musical meaning. Nevertheless, his account likewise remains situated within the Western classical-romantic tradition and does not address the role of ḥāl in improvisation-based musical systems.

Taken together, these studies—whether Persian-language research on travel literature, musical ontology, bibliography, structural analysis, and national anthems, or the international theoretical contributions of Goodman, Kivy, and Scruton—remain confined to the domains of content-based, textual, cultural, structural, or socio-political representation. None investigates the possibility of representation through the formal and sonic organization of music itself within the framework of analytical philosophy of music. More specifically, no previous study has employed Peter Kivy's Contour Theory and enhanced formalism to examine the relationship between the sonic structure of the Dastgah-e Chahargah and qualities such as heroism, courage, and forward-directed motion. Likewise, no research has subjected Ruḥollah Khaleqi's representational claims to theoretical scrutiny through Kivy's distinction between literal representation and representation mediated by cultural convention. The principal contribution of the present study, therefore, lies in bringing, for the first time,

a philosophical theory from the Western analytical tradition into dialogue with a representational theory rooted in the Persian musical tradition. In doing so, it seeks both to clarify the boundaries of representational possibility within the Persian dastgah tradition and to assess the cross-cultural limitations of Kivy's philosophical framework.

Research Method

The present study is applied in terms of its objective and qualitative in nature, employing a critical analytical approach. This methodological framework was selected because the principal concern of the study—namely, the critical examination of representational theories in Persian music through the philosophical framework developed by Peter Kivy—is fundamentally theoretical. Rather than generating empirical or field-based data, the study requires the reinterpretation, reconstruction, and critical evaluation of arguments presented in philosophical and musicological sources. Accordingly, all data utilized in this research were collected through documentary research, comprising the full range of philosophical, musicological, and related scholarly sources relevant to the study.

Data analysis was conducted by systematically correlating Kivy's theoretical concepts with both the structural characteristics of the Dastgah-e Chahargah and the corresponding musicological descriptions found in the relevant literature. This analytical procedure made it possible to assess the extent to which Kivy's Contour Theory and enhanced formalism can account for Khaleqi's representational interpretations of Chahargah and to identify the explanatory strengths and limitations of Kivy's framework within the context of Persian dastgah music.

Theoretical Framework

In his major works, particularly *Sound and Semblance: Reflections on Musical Representation and Music Alone*, Kivy (1984; 1991) develops a systematic account of expressiveness and representation in absolute music. According to Kivy, absolute music lacks subject matter, narrative, and direct reference to the external world, a characteristic that has rendered it one of the central problems

of post-eighteenth-century aesthetics (Kivy, 2021, 52). Rejecting both the Arousal Theory and the Persona Theory, Kivy argues that each reduces musical experience to factors external to the music itself. In their place, he advances Contour Theory as the core of his philosophical account (Howard, 1993, 11).

According to Contour Theory, musical expressiveness arises through structural resemblance between musical patterns—such as melodic contour, rhythm, dynamic shaping, and the tension created by augmented intervals—and the bodily movement patterns associated with human emotional behavior. Music evokes emotional qualities not by directly producing emotions or by literally representing them, but through this formal correspondence. This position leads Kivy to defend enhanced formalism, according to which absolute music is devoid of literal representational content while nevertheless possessing expressive qualities that are perceived as intrinsic to its sonic form (Solie & Spelman, 1986, 193).

With respect to musical representation, Kivy introduces a series of important conceptual distinctions. He argues that representation in music is generally assisted by text, titles, and cultural conventions (Vermazen, 1985, 273–274), distinguishing among pictorial representation, structural representation, and conventional representation (Solie & Spelman, 1986, 193–194). Music is only rarely capable of the literal representation of narratives, characters, or abstract concepts—such as justice or courage—and even then only through cultural conventions and the listener's interpretive attribution (Vermazen, 1985, 274). Moreover, much of what listeners experience as representation is fundamentally performance-dependent, emerging through the interaction between performer and audience within a particular cultural context (Zoller, 1997, 639–640).

The present case study employs this theoretical framework to examine Ruḥollah Khaleqi's interpretation of the Dastgah-e Chahargah. Khaleqi characterizes Chahargah as an epic, forward-driving dastgah embodying courage and heroic qualities. The central analytical question, therefore, is the following: To what extent can the melodic contours

of Chahargah—including its powerful ascending gestures, the dynamic tensions of the Zabol and Mokhalef gushehs, and the expressive force of its augmented intervals—be understood as exhibiting structural resemblance to bodily movement patterns associated with courage and heroism? Conversely, to what extent are these representational attributions primarily products of cultural discourse, performance practice, and historically contingent conventions?

Recognizing the cross-cultural limitations of Kivy's framework—particularly its primary orientation toward Western tonal music—the present study places his theory in dialogue with the Persian concept of *ḥāl* in order to clarify the boundaries of musical representation within the Persian *dastgah* tradition. The objective is not simply to validate either Kivy's or Khaleqi's position, but rather to develop a more precise analytical understanding of the relationship between representation and musical expressiveness in Persian classical music.

Representation in the Dastgah-e Chahargah

Persian traditional music is generally classified into two principal categories: regional (folk and local) music and urban classical music. The latter comprises an organized corpus of musical pieces collectively known as the *Radif* of Persian Music (Farhat, 2001, 15). The fundamental structural basis of Persian classical music is the *dastgah* (Sedaqat-Kish, 2025, 50). The *Radif* refers to the ordered arrangement of gushehs (melodic entities) and melodic materials, typically beginning with the lowest-register introductory melody (*daramad*), after which the remaining gushehs are systematically organized (Fakhr al-Dini, 2013, 30; Talaei, 2000, 11). A *dastgah*, in turn, constitutes a collection of gushehs organized within a multi-modal cycle, in which the identity of each modal entity acquires its meaning through its position within the larger *dastgah* system (Pourtorab et al., 2007, 81).

Among the seven principal *dastgahs*, Chahargah occupies a particularly distinguished position (Kiani, 1998, 98). Ruḥollah Khaleqi characterizes Chahargah as “the foremost of the Persian modal systems,” maintaining that it

incorporates the finest characteristics of all the other scales (Khaleqi, 1962, 229, 235). He further argues that this *dastgah*, more than any other, possesses the capacity to express the full spectrum of emotional states, human qualities, and expressive possibilities inherent in Persian music (*ibid.*, 235–238). Extending this characterization, Khaleqi describes Chahargah as the embodiment of the “complete human being,” encompassing joy and sorrow, pride and dignity, as well as a mystical mode of existence (*ibid.*, 249).

Structural Analysis and Melodic Contours

The present study conducts its analysis on three distinct yet complementary levels. The first is a formal analysis, grounded in Peter Kivy's Contour Theory, which focuses exclusively on the structural characteristics of the *Dastgah-e Chahargah*, including its melodic contour, modal relationships, patterns of motion, and sonic organization. At this level, the epistemological basis lies in the musical structure itself; that is, representational properties are inferred from the internal relationships of the musical work, and the validity of the analysis depends upon the correspondence between Kivy's theoretical concepts and these structural features.

The second level is a cultural analysis, which examines the historical and musicological position of Chahargah within the Persian musical tradition as well as the meanings constructed through its cultural context. Here, the epistemological foundation is not the musical structure itself but rather historical evidence, musicological tradition, and culturally established meanings. Consequently, the validity of this level of analysis rests upon documentary and historical evidence.

The third level is an interpretive analysis of the writings of Ruḥollah Khaleqi, whose descriptions are treated as historical and musicological interpretations rather than as conclusive evidence concerning the intrinsic properties of Chahargah. At this level, the epistemological basis is textual interpretation; knowledge is derived through the documented analysis of Khaleqi's views and the internal coherence of his interpretive framework rather than

through musical structure or historical evidence alone. Accordingly, Khaleqi's descriptions are examined as historical interpretations of musical experience rather than as components of the formal analysis or empirical evidence demonstrating the structural characteristics of the dastgah.

Distinguishing these three analytical levels is essential because each relies upon a different source of knowledge production and justification: musical structure, cultural tradition, and interpretive text, respectively. Consequently, each produces a distinct type of proposition. Formal analysis evaluates the structural properties of the music itself; cultural analysis addresses meanings and functions that have emerged within the musical tradition; and interpretive analysis reconstructs and explains the views of a historically significant musical thinker. Each level therefore answers a different analytical question and possesses its own criteria of validity. Their conclusions are neither reducible to one another nor capable of independently substituting for or validating those reached at the other levels. Rather than serving as mutually confirmatory forms of evidence, these three analytical perspectives function as complementary approaches: formal analysis investigates the possibility of representation from the standpoint of musical structure; cultural analysis clarifies the historical and semantic contexts within which such representation acquires significance; and interpretive analysis demonstrates how this representational potential was conceptualized in the thought of one of the foremost theorists of Persian music. Only through the integration of these three analytical perspectives can a comprehensive account of representation in the Dastgah-e Chahargah be achieved.

Within the framework of Kivy's Contour Theory, the analysis begins with the structural characteristics of the dastgah, since the possibility of musical representation is grounded in the formal relationships among musical elements. Accordingly, the modal and melodic organization of Chahargah is first outlined.

The scale degrees of Chahargah relative to the tonic C consist of a neutral second, major third, perfect fourth, perfect fifth, neutral sixth, major seventh, and perfect octave (Fakhr al-Dini, 2013, 344). Its principal tetrachord

is composed of a small neutral interval, an augmented second, and a minor second (Farhat, 2001, 97). The melodic range of the daramad spans approximately a minor seventh and is constructed from two tetrachords separated by intervals of a neutral second, an augmented major second, and a minor second (Fakhr al-Dini, 2013, 342). The principal gushehs include the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Daramad, Naghmeh, Kereshmeh, Zang-e Shotor, Zabol, Basteh-Negar, Hesar, Pas-Hesar, Mokhalef, Haji Hasani, Maghlub, Hazin, Haddi, Pahlavi, Rajaz, Mansuri, together with the rhythmic pieces Lezgi and Shahrashub (Kiani, 1998, 3).

From the perspective of Kivy's Contour Theory, these structural features lend themselves to philosophical analysis. The powerful and decisive ascending trajectory of the daramad, combined with its emphasis on the fifth degree and the tension generated by augmented intervals, establishes a limited structural resemblance to bodily movement patterns associated with heroic advancement and controlled courage. In traditional notation and performance, this ascending, tension-laden contour is typically accompanied by balanced durational values and predominantly stepwise motion, producing a pattern of gradual tension and release that bears a formal resemblance to embodied expressions of strength and forward movement.

The Zabol gusheh, characterized by its descending melodic profile and sustained emphasis on variable pitches, creates an introspective and contemplative contour of melancholy, a quality explicitly noted by Khaleqi (1962, 248). This descending and sustained structure exhibits structural similarities to bodily movement patterns associated with inner sorrow and mystical lamentation. Likewise, the Mokhalef gusheh, through its tension-filled augmented intervals and complex descending-ascending melodic motions, generates a contour suggestive of lamentation combined with resistance, one that may plausibly be associated with emotional states such as melancholic courage or emotional resilience. The gushehs Hesar and Rajaz, with their forward-driving and declamatory melodic gestures, further reinforce the heroic character of the overall contour.

Nevertheless, a substantial portion of Khaleqi's interpretation of Chahargah as inherently heroic rests not upon musical structure alone but upon culturally mediated attribution and performance-related factors. The extensive historical use of Chahargah in zurkhaneh rituals, Shahnameh recitation, traditional military music, and patriotic compositions such as Hezar Dastan by Amir Jahed (Khaleqi, 1962, 129, 148, 174; Marufi, 1995, 4) indicates that these representational associations have largely been established through cultural convention and the nationalist discourse of the modern period. From Kivy's perspective, such instances constitute assisted representation; without titles, texts, or an appropriate cultural context, they cannot be regarded as cases of literal musical representation.

This comparison demonstrates that the phenomenon of *hal* in the Persian dastgah tradition cannot be adequately explained solely through the structural correspondences proposed by Kivy's Contour Theory. Rather, it emerges from the complex interaction of musical structure, cultural convention, and performance context. Consequently, representation in Khaleqi's conception of Chahargah consists of a combination of limited structural resemblance—primarily evident in the daramad and other ascending gushehs—and strong cultural-performance attribution. This synthesis highlights the cross-cultural limitations of Kivy's theory when applied to the microtonal, improvisation-based tradition of Persian classical music.

Analysis and Discussion

• Formal analysis of the structural features of Chahargah in Khaleqi's thought

Khaleqi begins with a technical description of the scale structure of Chahargah, identifying three principal characteristics: (a) its capacity for simultaneous ascending and descending motion; (b) the presence of two leading tones resolving toward the tonic from opposite directions; and (c) the occurrence of augmented-second intervals within both tetrachords (Khaleqi, 1962, 232–235). From the perspective of Kivy's Contour Theory, these features should primarily be understood as formal structural

properties. The simultaneous potential for ascent and descent creates a bidirectional organization that exhibits structural resemblance to the human capacity to experience or alternate between contrasting emotional states—such as hope and sorrow, or strength and contemplation. Likewise, the presence of two leading tones establishes a dual pattern of tension and resolution analogous to the dynamic interplay of suspension and release found in complex emotional experience. Significantly, Khaleqi employs no explicitly affective terminology in this part of his discussion, restricting himself to a description of structural characteristics. This analytical approach closely corresponds to the initial stage of Kivy's Contour Theory, in which formal musical properties are identified prior to any attribution of emotional significance.

Khaleqi subsequently compares Chahargah with the Western major and minor scales, arguing that “Chahargah combines certain characteristics of the major scale with some qualities of the minor scale,” thereby constituting a modal system superior to either of them individually (*ibid.*, 234). From the standpoint of Kivy's enhanced formalism, this argument remains fundamentally formalist in orientation. The superiority of a modal system cannot be reduced to its psychological effects or extra-musical associations; rather, it may be understood in terms of the richness and diversity of its formal structural relationships. A modal framework capable of accommodating both ascending patterns associated with strength and forward movement and descending patterns suggestive of contemplation and melancholy encompasses a broader spectrum of expressive contours. Consequently, at this level of argumentation, Khaleqi implicitly moves toward a position compatible with enhanced formalism by locating the distinctive value of Chahargah within its intrinsic musical structure rather than in external psychological or cultural effects.

• Analysis of the Gushehs of Chahargah: From the Daramad to Mansuri

Khaleqi proceeds to describe the principal subdivisions of Chahargah, identifying seven principal points of repose (*ist*), each possessing a distinct name and expressive character (Fig. 1).

- The daramad of Chahargah (Tonic)

Khaleqi characterizes the daramad as dignified, composed, joyful, cheerful, and radiant (*ibid.*, 248). From the perspective of Kivy's Contour Theory, these qualities correspond to specific formal similarities. Dignity and composure are associated with a balanced tempo, relatively even note durations, and predominantly stepwise melodic motion, whereas joyfulness and brightness are related to ascending melodic movement and the prominence of larger intervals, particularly the major third. Khaleqi explicitly notes that the third degree of Chahargah is major, analogous to that of the Western major scale (*ibid.*, 232).

According to Kivy, listeners perceive the daramad as joyful not because the music directly arouses feelings of happiness but because its formal organization exhibits structural resemblance to the bodily behavior of a joyful person—upward movement, an open bodily posture, and fluid motion. This resemblance is perceived rather than inferred. Khaleqi likewise reports this correspondence without appealing to an arousal-based explanation. Consequently, this aspect of his analysis demonstrates the strongest convergence with Kivy's conception of enhanced formalism.

- Zabol

Khaleqi identifies Zabol as the second principal point of repose, located on the central pitch of the third scale degree (*ibid.*, 236). He further remarks that “the melody of Zabol possesses the inward melancholy characteristic of many of our vocal traditions” (*ibid.*, 248). This inward melancholy represents a subdued and introspective emotional quality. From the perspective of Contour Theory, such a quality exhibits structural resemblance to gentle descending motion, relatively small intervals (particularly minor seconds and minor thirds), and a comparatively restrained tempo.

Significantly, Khaleqi does not claim that Zabol directly arouses sadness in the listener, as proposed by Arousal Theory, nor does he suggest that it represents a sorrowful

persona, as maintained by Persona Theory. Rather, he argues that melancholy is perceived within the musical form itself. This position closely corresponds to Kivy's enhanced formalism, according to which expressive qualities are understood as properties of the sonic organization itself rather than as referential content or externally generated emotional effects.

- Mokhalef

The third point of repose occurs on the dominant pitch and is known as Mokhalef, whose expressive character, according to Khaleqi, resembles that of Hodayun (*ibid.*, 236). He describes the melody of Mokhalef as plaintive, comparing it to “an experienced and capable counselor, like Hodayun” (*ibid.*, 248).

The quality of plaintiveness constitutes a complex expressive category that, within Persian music, is frequently associated with neutral-second intervals (approximately three-quarter tones). Khaleqi also emphasizes that Chahargah contains augmented-second intervals in both tetrachords and regards these intervallic relationships as entirely natural (*ibid.*, 234–235). From Kivy's perspective, these distinctive intervallic configurations may establish a structural resemblance to the experience of lamentation—a state combining elements of bitterness and gentleness, neither pure anger nor complete sorrow. Without attempting to formulate a theoretical explanation for the metaphor of the “experienced counselor,” Khaleqi reinforces this expressive association through comparison with Hodayun. This approach is consistent with Kivy's position, according to which it is unnecessary to specify the precise cognitive mechanism underlying expressive perception; it is sufficient that, within a given cultural tradition, such associations are perceived as immediate and intelligible.

- Mansuri

In Mansuri, the principal point of repose occurs on the leading tone, marking the climactic register of Chahargah. Khaleqi describes its expressive quality as profoundly sorrowful and mournful (*ibid.*, 236). The crucial analytical observation is that, as the melodic line approaches its climax, the expressive character gradually shifts from



Fig. 1. The sonic framework of Chahargah on C. Source: Pourtorab et al., 2007, 65.

the joyfulness of the daramad to the profound sadness associated with Mansuri.

From the standpoint of Contour Theory, melodic ascent occurring within an overall bidirectional or descending structural context may exhibit structural resemblance to the embodied expression of grief, comparable to an emotional cry or lament. Khaleqi also refers to the characteristic cadence of Chahargah, in which the leading tone ultimately resolves to the tonic. This movement from instability toward stability bears a formal resemblance to the process of emotional consolation following an intense experience of sorrow.

- Mueyh (Fourth Degree) and Hesar (Fifth Degree)- Modal modulation

Khaleqi identifies two important modal transitions within Chahargah: Mueyh, involving repose on the subdominant and modulation to the upper fourth, and Hesar, involving repose on the dominant and modulation to the upper fifth (*ibid.*, 236–237). He characterizes Mueyh as sorrowful and mournful (*ibid.*, 248).

From Kivy's perspective, modulation to another tonal center—particularly by means of a perfect fourth or perfect fifth—may itself establish a structural resemblance to a sudden transformation of emotional state. Khaleqi designates this gushah by the name Mueyh, literally connoting weeping or lamentation, yet he does not attempt to explain the mechanism by which it acquires its mournful quality; rather, he simply affirms the expressive association. This corresponds closely to what Kivy characterizes as the “black box” of musical expressiveness: we recognize the expressive outcome without requiring a complete account of the perceptual processes through which it is achieved (Kivy, 2021, 98–99).

• The relationship between Chahargah and Segah: the question of formal resemblance

Khaleqi describes Segah as the “diminutive” form of Chahargah, while regarding Chahargah as its expanded or “major” counterpart (*ibid.*, 242). This claim is fundamentally formalist in nature, insofar as the relationship is defined by the structural similarity of their internal intervallic organization rather than by their expressive content. Khaleqi demonstrates

that lowering the third, fifth, and seventh degrees of Chahargah by approximately a quarter-tone yields the modal structure of Segah. This transformation is entirely formal, establishing a mathematically defined relationship that does not depend upon any reference to the external world.

At the same time, because this intervallic modification also alters the expressive character of the resulting modal system, Khaleqi's analysis remains compatible with Kivy's Contour Theory. Changes in musical structure generate different patterns of structural resemblance, thereby making different expressive qualities available to perception. From this perspective, alterations in modal organization are not merely theoretical transformations but also reshape the formal conditions under which listeners perceive musical expressiveness.

It is nevertheless important to emphasize that the expressive distinction between Chahargah and Segah cannot be attributed solely to differences in intervallic structure. Performance practice, emphasis on particular scale degrees, cadential formulas, improvisational procedures, and the broader performance tradition all play decisive roles in shaping the perceived emotional qualities of these two *dastgahs*. Accordingly, the present analysis is intentionally confined to the theoretical structural level and does not claim to provide an exhaustive explanation of the multidimensional nature of musical listening or aesthetic experience.

• Chahargah as the “complete human being”

Khaleqi's most elaborate characterization of Chahargah appears in his description of the *dastgah* as the “complete human being,” possessing all the virtues of Eastern aesthetic sensibility and the noblest qualities of human emotion: at times joyful, at times sorrowful, embodying pride, dignity, composure, and nobility, while also expressing mystical life, patience, and the lamentations of love (*ibid.*, 249).

This metaphor occupies an intermediate position between Kivy's Contour Theory and Jerrold Levinson's Persona Theory. Kivy criticizes Persona Theory on several grounds, including its indeterminacy, lack of internal coherence, and inability to account satisfactorily for cases in which the listener's emotional experience diverges from that of the supposed musical persona (Kivy, 2021, 180). By

describing Chahargah as “like a complete human being” and emphasizing its various “states” and “qualities,” Khaleqi appears to invoke not an autonomous musical personality but rather the comprehensiveness of its formal expressive correspondences. In this respect, his account remains closer to the logic of structural resemblance than to a fully developed persona-based ontology of musical expression.

Nevertheless, expressions such as “embodies” and “engages in dialogue” introduce a degree of anthropomorphism that extends beyond the explanatory scope of Kivy’s enhanced formalism. Kivy would likely regard such formulations as philosophically unobjectionable so long as they are understood as metaphorical descriptions rather than literal ontological claims. At the same time, however, he repeatedly cautions against reifying these metaphors, arguing that questions such as “Which part of the music is actually speaking?” admit of no coherent philosophical answer (Kivy, 1980, 62). Consequently, while Khaleqi’s metaphor of the “complete human being” possesses considerable interpretive and rhetorical value within the discourse of Persian music, it cannot, from the standpoint of Kivy’s philosophy, be treated as evidence of literal musical representation. Instead, it is more plausibly understood as a culturally informed interpretive metaphor that articulates the breadth of expressive possibilities afforded by the formal organization of Chahargah.

• The value of absolute music

Kivy locates the value of absolute music in its autonomy and its capacity to provide a temporary release from the causal and motivational demands of everyday life (Solie & Spelman, 1986, 193). Khaleqi likewise portrays Chahargah as resilient in the face of hardship while at times reflecting the experience of disappointment (Khaleqi, 1962, 249). If this characterization is interpreted in terms of the listener’s engagement with the self-contained formal organization of Chahargah, it converges with Kivy’s account. Through immersion in the full expressive spectrum of Chahargah—embracing both joy and sorrow—the listener is momentarily liberated from the unidimensional pressures of ordinary existence. This temporary liberation corresponds closely to what Kivy metaphorically describes as a state analogous to the absence of pain.

Conclusion

Drawing upon Peter Kivy’s Contour Theory and his conception of enhanced formalism, this study has undertaken a systematic examination of Ruhollah Khaleqi’s representational interpretation of the dastgah Chahargah, particularly his characterization of it as a heroic, forward-moving modal system expressive of courage. The investigation addressed two interrelated questions: first, to what extent do the melodic contours of Chahargah exhibit structural resemblance to patterns associated with courage and heroism; and second, to what degree are these representational attributions fundamentally products of cultural discourse and performance practice?

The findings indicate that only a limited portion of Khaleqi’s account is fully compatible with Kivy’s philosophical framework. Musical features such as the powerful ascending gestures of the daramad, the tension generated by augmented intervals in Mokhalef, the bidirectional ascending–descending potential of the scale, and the presence of dual leading tones resolving toward the tonic establish a degree of structural resemblance to bodily patterns associated with forward movement, controlled tension, and reflective determination. These characteristics—identified in the theoretical analyses of Fakhreddini and Farhat—are particularly evident in the daramad, Mokhalef, and Hesar and accord with Kivy’s claim that musical expressiveness arises from formal resemblance between musical organization and patterns of human bodily behavior. Nevertheless, this correspondence remains limited, context-dependent, and highly sensitive to performance practice. By contrast, Zabol and Mansuri, with their descending contours and sustained melodic motion, exhibit expressive affinities more closely associated with melancholy than with heroism.

Conversely, the greater part of Khaleqi’s heroic interpretation—including his anthropomorphic characterization of Chahargah as the “complete human being” and his mystical-nationalist attributions—extends beyond the explanatory boundaries of Kivy’s philosophy. The historical association of Chahargah with zurkhaneh rituals, Shahnameh recitation, traditional military music, and Constitutional-era patriotic songs such as Hezar Dastan

demonstrates that these representational meanings have largely been constituted through cultural convention and realized in performance. Three principal considerations support this conclusion. First, the repeated historical association of Chahargah with heroic contexts has enabled it to evoke heroism even independently of specific sonic features. Second, the improvisatory and context-dependent nature of *ḥāl* within the Persian *dastgāh* tradition permits the same *gusheh* to assume different expressive qualities across different performances. Third, Khaleqi himself gradually moves from an initially formalist description of musical structure toward increasingly anthropomorphic and personifying metaphors as his analysis develops.

This philosophical encounter yields three significant theoretical contributions. First, Khaleqi, particularly in his discussions of formal structure, intervallic organization, and modal relationships, operates—perhaps unintentionally—within a framework remarkably close to enhanced formalism. Second, in his attribution of expressive personality and especially in his depiction of Chahargah as the “complete human being,” he departs from Kivy’s position and approaches a conception akin to *Persona Theory*, a theory Kivy regards as philosophically inadequate. Third, and most importantly, the present study exposes the substantial cross-cultural limitations of Kivy’s framework. A philosophical model developed primarily in relation to Western tonal music cannot fully account for the phenomenon of *ḥāl* within the quarter-tone, modal, and improvisatory tradition of Persian classical music. In this tradition, *ḥāl* is not merely a formal expressive property but rather the product of a complex interaction among musical structure, cultural convention, and the performative moment—an interaction that lies beyond the explanatory horizon of Kivy’s original theory.

From Khaleqi’s perspective, representation in Chahargah is therefore neither reducible to structural resemblance nor entirely constituted by cultural convention. Instead, it emerges as a heterogeneous and hierarchically organized synthesis of both. Kivy’s philosophy provides a valuable analytical framework for understanding the formal dimension of musical expressiveness, yet it remains

insufficient for explaining the cultural, performative, and identity-forming dimensions of Chahargah. This limitation should not be regarded as a weakness of the present study but rather as evidence of the need for a genuinely intercultural philosophy of music—one capable of conceptualizing *ḥāl* as both an aesthetic and a culturally situated phenomenon while avoiding the uncritical imposition of Western theoretical models upon non-Western musical traditions. Such an approach simultaneously confirms Khaleqi’s significance as a thinker whose analyses implicitly move toward enhanced formalism and clarifies the philosophical limits of Kivy’s theory when applied beyond the Western tradition.

It should be noted that the present study is confined to a case study of the *dastgāh* Chahargah and to the writings of Ruḥollah Khaleqi. Consequently, its conclusions cannot automatically be generalized to other Persian *dastgāhs* or to other musical traditions. Furthermore, the analysis is based primarily on theoretical literature and textual interpretation rather than on empirical examination of multiple performances or systematic investigation of listeners’ perceptual responses. In addition, because Kivy’s *Contour Theory* was originally formulated with reference to Western tonal music, its application to Persian modal music necessarily requires theoretical caution.

Future research should therefore investigate the possibility of musical representation in other Persian *dastgāhs* and compare the resulting findings with those obtained for Chahargah. Further progress may also be achieved through the analysis of improvised performances, empirical studies of listener perception, and comparative philosophical examination of Kivy’s theory alongside the perspectives of Stephen Davies, Jerrold Levinson, and Roger Scruton. Such investigations would contribute substantially to the continued development of an intercultural philosophy of music.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding this study.

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HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Mehralizadeh, P., Askari Rabori, H., & Eslami, Sh. (2026). The Possibility of Representation in Persian Music Based on Peter Kivy's Theory (Case Study: Dastgah-e Chahargah from the Perspective of Ruḥollah Khaleqi). *Journal of Art & Civilization of the Orient*, 14(53), 48-59.

DOI: [10.22034/jaco.2026.585575.1543](https://doi.org/10.22034/jaco.2026.585575.1543)

URL: https://www.jaco-sj.com/article_247423.html?lang=en

