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An Apology for Flowers

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Abstract

Prompting critical reflection on the common claim that flowers are always symbolic of female sexuality, the present article intends to explore symbolic roles of flowers in Persian literature and provide examples, mainly from Persian poetry, with the aim of refuting the claim. The writer, in fact, attempts to highlight overshadowed facets of flower symbolism by overshadowing carnal and ignoble readings of it. The reason why Persian literature has come into the focus of this study is that flowers have always had a prominent role in Iranian culture and Persian literature; however, those delving into flower symbolism have never paid due attention to the significance of flowers in Persian literature, otherwise they would have never placed undue emphasis on the sexuality of flowers.

Keywords: Persian Poetry, Female Sexuality, Flower Symbolism

1. Flower Symbolism and Female Sexuality

In the second part of the thesis entitled *Flower symbolism as female sexual metaphor* (2010), the American artist Andrea Frownfelter, renamed Andrea Arbit, explores the way flower symbolism has been used historically, mythologically, and artistically. Her fundamental position is that "flowers have always represented female sexuality throughout history, and in almost every area of the world, with the possible exception of Africa" (p. 21). Similarly, the English professor Carole-Anne Tyler writes in *Female impersonation* (2003), "There is a long iconographic tradition of associating female sexuality with flowers" (p. 83). It is likewise asserted that traditions which link flowers and female sexuality are a lot, "from Linnaean botanical classification to biomedical analogies explaining human in terms of plan reproduction" (Matus, 1995, p. 76). For example, to Romantics, women were part of flower symbolism. For them, flowers were symbolic of a pure, intense love appealing to higher instincts rather than baser passions (Mosse, 1985, p. 99). The attitude is often carried even to extremes so that it is claimed that "both women and flowers are seen by men as beautiful, frail, and useless" and, accordingly, "flowers are appropriate names for women (particularly in Victorian times) but never for men" (Riley, 1990, p. 67). Consistent with Arbit's position, it is also remarked that there is "a long tradition of homoerotically-inclined women using flowers to code female sexuality, women's genitalia and same-sex love" (Ehnenn, 2008, p. 83). In line with this, it is said that men have traditionally perceived women as "inhabiting the realm of Flora—Flora herself being a female deity" because there was a belief that women "shared with flowers the attributes of beauty, fragility, idleness, ornamentality, and passivity. Equally pervasive was the association of the female sexual organs with the flower, either physiologically (as the art of Georgia O'Keefe has made abundantly clear) or verbally, in the notion of sexual 'defloration' or the linking of menses with 'flowers'" (Bewell, 2010, p. 175). According to Arbit, flower symbols are categorized into positive and negative, suggesting the presence or absence of sexuality. She contends:

> Most negative symbolism uses a flower (most often a rose or white lily) or enclosed garden to mean a lack of female sexuality—sexual innocence, virginity, and/or chastity, characteristics which also describe the Western stereotype of the ideal woman, one with the appropriate degree of femininity. Positive uses include drawing parallels between certain flowers and aspects of female sexual anatomy, such as vulvas, labia, vaginas, and wombs, and using flowers to depict and celebrate sexual acts or preferences. Furthermore, female puberty, menstruation, first sexual experience, fertility, pregnancy, motherhood, and menopause can be described with floral terminology, from enclosed buds and ripe blossoms to mature plants and wilted flowers. (2010, p. 21)

In fact, she embeds flower symbolism in a gender-biased structure run by binary oppositions such as negative/positive and lack/presence. Such an approach derives from the fact that "every culture organizes its view of the world through pairs of opposites," as the French anthropologist and structuralist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009) said (D'Alleva, 2005, p. 133).

Before commenting on the claims made by those who associate flowers with female sexuality, in the following sections, I will first refer to some relevant facts about Persian literature, the significance of symbolism as well as symbols, and the importance of flowers in Persian literature. Next, I will study the symbolic function of ten flowers in Persian poetry. Finally, I will offer my critical observations on the claims.

2. A Few Salient Facts about Persian Literature

The present article aims to draw on Persian literature, chiefly poetry, and present examples which attempt to contradict such claims that flowers always represent female sexuality. It is worth noting that Persian literature is "international in character and not confined to the nation-state of Iran. Some of the great masters of Persian literature had no real connection with Iran at all, but rather lived in Anatolia, India, or central Asia" (Daniel & Mahdi, 2006, p. 65). Furthermore, Persian literature has been "the standard bearer for aesthetic and cultural norms of the literature of the [E]astern regions of the Islamic world from about the 12[th] century," has enormously impacted on "literatures of Ottoman Turkey, Muslim India[,] and Turkic Central Asia," has inspired such figures as "Goethe, Emerson, Matthew Arnold, and Jorge Luis Borges," and has been adored by "William Jones, Tagore, E. M. Forster, and many more" (Yarshater, 2010, pp. xxi-xxii).

Moreover, the Persian language and literature, especially Persian poetry, abounds in flowers and floral images and it was in Persia, as well as Constantinople, in the 1600s that the "language of flowers was developed" (Triefeldt, 2008, p. 29). According to Elizabeth Gamble Wirt (1784-1857), "people of the East see something more in [flowers] than mere objects of admiration. In the hands of these primitive and interesting people, they become flowers of rhetoric and speak their feelings with far more tenderness and force than words can impart" (1832, p. 3). The common example is the red rose, which represents, or is symbolic of, love. It must be remembered that, most of the time, love has metaphysical connotations in Persian literature, particularly in mystic poetry, where love goes beyond this world and possesses a "divine attribute" and ultimately becomes "identical with the divine Essence" (Pourjavady, 2012, p. 129).

It is noteworthy that, indisputably, "the greater part of Islamic mystic and gnostic literature" originates in the Persian language. As a matter of fact, the official religion of Iran is Islam. It is a religious country although its "version of Islam has historically been esoteric, mystical, rational, and humanistic rather than legalistic" (Amir Mahallati, 2016, p. 6). Thus, religion, particularly Shia Islam, has had a significant influence on Iranian culture and Persian literature.

3. The Significance of Symbolism and Symbol

In the present paper, symbolism refers to the utilization of symbols, particularly in literature and art, to represent qualities and ideas. Generally speaking, symbolism deals with "the production of meaning through the use of symbols. It involves the linking of a sign to a referent by some ordering principle" (Van Maanen, Manning, & Miller, 1996, p. v). Psychoanalytically, infants' "identification of one object with another is described as the forerunner of symbolism." Due to this, the Austrian-born British psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (1882-1960) regarded symbolism as "the basis of all talents" (Milner, 2005, p. 62). From a sociological perspective, symbolism is necessary for any community of human beings and is considered to be their basic need. It is also asserted that "symbol-making is the fundamental process of the human mind, as fundamental as primary activities like eating or tool-making" (Haarmann, 1997, p. 668).

Symbol is something that represents or stands for something else beyond it. Like metaphor and simile, it means more than it says. However, unlike them, it means both something else and itself. Symbols deepen writing (Dean, 2006, p. 50). For example, a dove symbolizes peace. If we were reading a story about a war in a country where its soldiers fight against enemies and the story ends with a description of a dove in the sky, we would know that peace will prevail soon. In this story, the dove is a dove but it is also the symbol of peace. Nevertheless, when we say, for example, "That politician is a dove," it never means that he is a bird! We only mean that he prefers peace to war. This is an example of metaphor.

Metaphor and symbol can be distinguished by the extent to which they reveal the ground of their comparison. Metaphor reveals it more but symbol less (Stephens & Waterhouse, 1990, pp. 219-20). Furthermore, whereas "metaphor has only a local existence within the poem, the symbol informs the whole poem and can subsume it, rather as a title does" (Scott, 1990, p. 209). According to the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), "metaphor means to treat a thing as another that is recognized as similar in some respect." He also defines symbol as "the transposition of one thing into another completely different sphere" (as cited in Lossi, 2010, p. 211).

Origins of some symbols go back to a writer's or poet's imagination and mentality. Basically, literary symbols are understood in their contexts. A common symbol might carry an uncommon meaning in a different context (Dad, 2001, p. 301). As a result, the role of the context should not be disregarded in exploring symbols. A symbol could have multiple meanings and become very interpretable (Sharifi, 2008, p. 1428). A literary symbol can combine "an image with a concept (words themselves are a kind of symbol)" and may be "public or private, universal or local" (Cuddon, 1999, p. 885) and universal symbols could be differently interpreted in different cultures. As for flowers, a moderate attitude is that flowers "almost universally symbolize beauty, spring, youth and gentleness—but often also innocence, peace, spiritual perfection, the brevity of life or the joys of paradise" (Tresidder, 2006, p. 90). According to the American poet Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82),

> Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact. Every appearance in nature corresponds to some state of the mind, and that state of the mind can only be described by presenting that natural appearance as its picture. An enraged man is a lion, a cunning man is a fox, a firm man is a rock, a learned man is a torch. A lamb is innocence; a snake is subtle spite; flowers express to us the delicate affections. (2001, p. 32)

When an object is symbolized, it gains a new value, transcends the immediate reality, and enters into "the dialectic of hierophany." In other words, it "becomes sacred while remaining just the same as it is." Symbolism removes what

isolates objects and therefore no object is isolated from other objects; "everything is held together by a compact system of correspondences and likenesses" (Eliade, 1961, p. 178).

Expanding on the idea that religious language communicates religious experiences through symbols, the German-born American philosopher and theologian Paul Tillich (1886-1965) claimed, "symbols go beyond the external world to what he described as their 'internal reality'. Religious symbols 'open up levels of reality which otherwise were closed to us'." However, the Austrian-American moral philosopher Paul Edwards (1923-2004) had no belief in the potency of symbols to offer a factual knowledge and considered them meaningless (Jordan, Lockyer, & Tate, 2002, pp. 18-19).

4. Flowers in Persian Literature

Persian poetry is based on a complicated system of signs and symbols. In order to fully enjoy this poetry, one needs to be familiar with them. At the same time, one must also get familiar with roots of Islamic history and culture. Furthermore, in Persian poetry, one "single expression could conjure up a whole story and one single word may evoke a plethora of related meanings" (Schimmel, 1992, p. 2).

Flowers have a great value in not only Persian literature but also Iranian culture and history. Even in Persian gardens, each flower evokes a meaning and image (Messervy, 2007, p. 113). There are renowned reliefs on north doorways of the throne hall in Persepolis, also called *Takht-e Jamshid* (Persian, "Throne of Jamshid"), an ancient capital of Padshahs of the Achaemenid dynasty in Persia, now known as Iran. They illustrate a royal audience with the Padshah on his throne in profile with a lotus, or pomegranate flower, in his left hand and a long staff in his right hand. Behind him stands another royal figure gesturing with his right hand and holding a similar flower in his left hand (Carter, 2005, p. 11). The flower is the "lotus of kingship" (Chwalkowski, 2016, p. 248). In addition, according to ancient Persian legendary stories, Fereydoon, a great mythical Shah, famous for justice, victory, mercy, generosity, and wisdom (Sharifi, 2008, p. 1093), introduced the rose into Persia (Subtelny, 2007, p. 13). Furthermore, in order to describe the spring, classical Persian poets have often referred to flowers, including the *arghavan* (Persian, "Judas-tree blossoms"), hyacinth, jasmine, tulip, lily, narcissus, nenuphar, violet, and wallflower (A'lam, 2003, p. 49).

Flowers are also depicted on Persian carpets and rugs. It is said that Persian garden rugs "are replicas of the walled gardens of ancient Persia." These rugs are composed of "a series of squares or rectangles, each containing a design with outdoor scenes of trees, flowers, birds on branches, and fish in pools" (Nielson, 2007, p. 274). This derives in the fact that Iranians are always passionate about flowers and would love to have them not only in their gardens but also rugs and carpets. Their wedding dresses also have floral designs.

5. Examples from Persian Literature

In this section, ten flowers are studied. They have a symbolic function in these examples, which are from Persian poetry. It must be remembered that a flower might symbolize more than one idea or thing. However, I will explore just one of them unless I find it necessary to expand on other ideas and referents as well.

5.1 Lotus

Niloofar is a Persian word which means either lotus or water-lily in English. The difference between these aquatic plants is that lotus leaves and flowers are emergent, i.e. rise above the water surface, but water-lily leaves and flowers float on the water surface (Chwalkowski, 2016, p. 248, note 61). The lotus is from the genus *Nelumbo* and the water-lily from *Nymphaea* (Berman, 2009, p. 88). They survive in still and calm, not moving, water and require full sunlight. It is said that the lotus originates in the East but the water-lily in the West (Hargrove, 2012, p. 56). The lotus "begins its life in the mud at the bottom of a pond, and rises to the surface of the water to flower. The flower is not spoiled by the mud in which it grows." The lotus opens when the sun rises and closes at sunset, which links "it also to the sun, itself a divine source of life" (Hall, 1994, p. 149). Symbolically, according to Buddhists, people can rise above their unsatisfactory situation in the same way in life and achieve "Enlightenment" (Penney, 1995, p. 7). Accordingly, influenced by Buddhism, the lotus often symbolizes spiritual sublimity in Persian literature (Sharifi, 2008, p. 1446). In a poem entitled "Chand" (Persian, "Some"), Sohrab Sepehri (1928-1980), a modern Persian poet, writes:

آنجا نیلوفرهاست, به بهشت, به خدا درهاست. (1998, line 3)

There are lotuses there; to Heaven, to God, there are gates.

5.2 Narcissus

In Persian poetry, the *narges* (Persian, "narcissus") symbolizes eyes or "beautiful eyes" (Chwalkowski, 2016, p. 221). Molana Jalal ad-Din Mohammad (1207-1273), also known as Molavi or Rumi, was a Persian poet, preacher, and mystic. In Ghazal 570, he writes:

همی زد چشمک آن نرگس بسوی گل که خندانی / بدو گفتا که: «خندانم که یار اندر کنار آمد» (2008, couplet 6)

That narcissus kept winking at the flower, [saying] that you are laughing!
To it, [the flower] said, "I am laughing because the beloved came to me."

5.3 Rose

As one of the most important symbols of Islam, the rose is mainly symbolic of "both divine beauty and the Prophet Mohammad" (Chwalkowski, 2016, p. 214). The following example is from Ghazal 369 by the 13th-century Persian poet Sa'di Shirazi. The red rose represents beauty here.

تو اگر چنین لطیف از در بوستان در آئی / گل سرخ شرم دارد که چرا همی شکفتم (n.d., couplet 2)

If you enter from the door of the garden with such grace,
The red rose will regret [and say,] "Why indeed did I bloom?"

5.4 Tulip

Iran's national emblem and flower, the tulip basically symbolizes martyrdom (Cartlidge, 2002, p. 39). This flower is also of significance in poetry. In Ghazal 101, referring to Farhad and his beloved Shirin (Persian female name meaning "Sweet"), the Persian poet Shams ad-Din Mohammad Hafez Shirazi, known as Hafez or Hafiz, (c. 1325-c.1389) writes:

ز حسرت لب شیرین هنوز می‌بینم / که لاله می‌دمد از خون دیده فرهاد (2009, couplet 6)

Out of [his] yearning for Shirin's lip[s], I still see
That a tulip is springing from the blood of Farhad's eye[s].

5.5 Common Poppy

In a poem entitled "Dar Golestaneh" (Persian, "In Golestaneh"), Sepehri says:

تا شقایق هست زندگی باید کرد. (1998, line 31)

So long as the shaqayeq exists, it behooves [us] to live on.

The *shaqayeq* (Persian, "common poppy") is also called *laleh-ye daghdar* (Persian, "bereaved tulip"). Like the *laleh* (Persian, "tulip"), it symbolizes the pain of love, the beloved's broken heart, or the beloved's countenance (Sharifi, 2008, p. 1230). The *shaqayeq* is different from the *shaqayeq-e namani* (Persian, "anemone").

5.6 Violet

The violet, called *banafsheh* in Persian, is the "symbol of humility and modesty" in Christianity (Hall, 1994, p. 160). It also often symbolizes modesty and humility in Persian literature. In the following lines from Quatrain 171, Mahsati Ganjavi, known as Mahsati, a 12th-century Persian poetess, writes:

چون دانستي كه دل بگل مي ندهم
رفتي و بنفشه را شفيع آوردي (1985, lines 3-4)

When you realized that I did not give the heart to [i.e. fall in love with] the flower,
You went and brought the violet [as] an intercessor.

The violet is symbolic of hair and tresses as well (Anvari, 2009, p. 373). Addressing the beloved, Hafez in Ghazal 411 states:

تاب بنفشه مي دهد، طُرّه ي مشك ساي تو / پرده ي غنچه مي درد، خنده ي دلگشاي تو (2009, couplet 1)

Your fragrant tresses curlicue [/upset] the violet;
Your heartsome laughter unveils [the secret of] the bud [/makes the bud burst].

5.7 Jonquil

The *nasrin* (Persian, "jonquil") could be symbolic of face and countenance, particularly "the beloved's countenance" (Anvari, 2009, p. 2432). In a qasideh (also called qasida, which is a type of ode), Parvin E'tesami (1907-1941), a modern Persian poetess, writes:

سترده شد فروغ روی نسرین / پریشان گشت چین زلف سوسن (n.d., couplet 7)

The luster of the jonquil's countenance went out;
The curl of the lily's tresses was ruffled.

5.8 Lily

The lily is called *soosan* in Persian. Since a lily petal is like a tongue, it is often symbolized as tongue and also oratory. Hafez in Ghazal 160 says:

به سان سوسن اگر ده زبان شود حافظ / چو غنچه پیش تواش مهر بر دهن باشد (2009, couplet 7)

Like the lily, although Hafez [may] become ten tongues [i.e. become articulate],
Like the bud, before you, [he] has a seal on the mouth [i.e. relapses into silence].

5.9 Blanket Flower

The *rana* (Persian, "blanket flower") is a flower that is red on the inside and yellow on the outside. Due to this, it represents two-facedness (Anvari, 2009, p. 1138). Kamal ad-Din Vahshi Bafqi, a 16th-century Persian poet, writes in Ghazal 260:

بلبل آن به که فریب گل رعنا نخورد / که دو روزیست وفاداری یاران دو رنگ (1963, couplet 4)

The nightingale had better not be beguiled by the rana;
Indeed, the loyalty of two-faced companions is short.

5.10 Pomegranate Flower

The *golnar* (Persian, "pomegranate flower") is red and, when used as an adjective, it means "red" in Persian (Anvari, 2009, p. 1940). It is therefore symbolic of red and redness. In Ghazal 51, Hafez writes:

باغبان همچو نسیمم ز در خویش مران / کاب گلزار تو از اشک چو گلنار منست (2009, couplet 6)

Gardner! Like the breeze, do not exclude me from your door.
Indeed, the water of your flower-bed is from my golnar-like tear[s].

6. In Defense of Flowers

The American literary theorist Kenneth Burke (1897-1993) once said, "Man is the symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal" (1966, p. 16). Therefore, with regard to symbols, there are three types of humans: those who make symbols, use symbols, and misuse symbols. The present article is an apology for flowers against misusers, or abusers, of flower symbolism, those who restrict symbolic referents of flowers not only to a particular gender but also the sexual organs. The argument of people who symbolically interpret flowers in the domain of sexuality or ~~sexuality~~ (i.e. non-sexuality, with connotations such as chastity, virginity, and modesty) is fallacious, in my opinion. (By the word ~~sexuality~~, I mean that the word still implies the presence of sexuality but, this time, in the background rather than the foreground.) The misusers' serious mistake is that they make gross generalizations. At least, they must have disregarded the facts that symbols are basically context-based and have the potential for multiple interpretations.

As seen in the examples from Persian poetry, no reference had been made to the female sexual anatomy, experience, or terminology. I never conclude that there is "a lack of female sexuality" in these poetic lines. As a matter of fact, the idea

of the presence or lack of sexuality is willy-nilly intended to build up a maze of binary oppositions, thereby precluding possibilities of interpreting flowers from a fresh perspective.

To me, the idea that flowers are linked to female sexuality is too carnal a reading and the emphasis on sexual or erotic interpretations of them lacks a holistic view, which ultimately results in the mutilation of flowers' true image. Moreover, drawing on what Eliade said, I think that such an approach to symbolism prevents flowers from being connected to other objects in the world and thus isolates them by limiting them to a particular set of similar ideas.

As discussed before, flowers could represent such things as the eye, hair, or face, rather than the genital organs. Misusers' position about flower symbolism is as shallow as that of the Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), to whom anything liquid or round represented the vagina and a female and anything hard, pointed, elongated, upright, flying (such as an airplane or a bird), or complexly shaped symbolized the penis and a male (Rieff, 1979, p. 176).

It must be remembered that the relationship between some things are arbitrary. A flower could be an appropriate name for a girl just because people have decided or have been conditioned to do so not because flowers have come to this world to be used as female names and represent female sexuality. Moreover, to some people, symbolizing, for example, the red rose as love could imply sexuality; however, I think such people have a very limited understanding of love and interpret love from the same narrow perspective that they symbolize flowers.

Scientifically, a flower is the reproductive structure in angiosperms (i.e. plants with seeds in an ovary or fruit) (Walker, 2002, p. 460). In other words, it is "the seed-bearing part of a plant, consisting of reproductive organs (stamens and carpels) typically surrounded by brightly [color]ed petals (the corolla) and green sepals (the calyx)" (Stevenson & Waite, 2011, p. 547). Nevertheless, poetically, a flower does not necessarily have to represent reproductive or sexual organs.

As seen above, flowers are principally held in high esteem in Iranian culture. To reinforce the idea, I am presenting two more examples. Abolhasan Kesa'i Marvazi, a 10th-century Persian poet, regarding a flower as a gift from Heaven in a two-couplet poem, writes:

گل نعمتی است هدیه فرستاده از بهشت / مردم کریم تر شود اندر نعیم گل

ای گل فروش گل چه فروشی بجای سیم / وز گل عزیزتر چه ستانی بسیم گل؟ (1988, couplets 1-2)

The flower is a blessing [as] a gift sent from Heaven.
People become more generous with the grace of the flower.
O, Florist! Why do you sell the flower for a silver [coin]?
And what do you take [instead] to be more precious than the flower with the silver [coin] for the flower?

Considering that a flower has a unifying force, another 10th-century Persian poet, Abolhasan Ali Bahrami Sarakhsi says:

ما هر دو بتا گل دو رنگیم

بنگر به چه خواهمت صفت کرد

یك نیمه آن تویی به سرخی

وین نیم دیگر منم چنین زرد (as cited in Foroozanfar, 2008, p. 147)

O, Idol! We are both a two-colored flower.
Look how I am going to describe you:
One half of it is you in red
And the other half is I [who am] so yellow.

(Compare this example with the symbolic concept of the blanket flower above.) Indeed, one can find examples in Persian literature where a flower is not cherished. For example, looking down on the flower with the aim of idolizing the beloved, Hafez writes in Ghazal 117:

ز بنفشه تاب دارم که ز زلف او زند دم / تو سیاه کم بها بین که چه در دماغ دارد (2009, couplet 3)

I feel displeased with the violet, which brags [that its] tress[es] [are like] hers [i.e. the beloved's].
You, look at the worthless black [flower and] what it has in mind!

After all, unsurprisingly, a lover is always used to despising anything and anyone, expect for the beloved, while expressing her feelings to him just to put him at the center of attention.

Redirecting the focus from the lower part to the upper part of the body in symbolization and symbolism and providing a noble reading of flowers in Persian poetry remind me of the following hemistich from Ghazal 1674 by Molana:

ما ز بالاییم و بالا می رویم (2008, couplet 1, 1st hemistich)

We are from on high and ascending to on high.

This attitude is consistent with what Emerson said: "Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact" (2001, p. 32). As a matter of fact, I believe not only religious symbols (as Tillich assumed) but also flowers, by being symbolized, can open up to us levels of reality which will be otherwise hidden to us. The point is that we should never confine their referentiality.

7. Conclusion

The present article underscored the significance of flowers in Iranian culture and Persian literature since flowers have always been immensely important to Iranians although scholars exploring flower symbolism have never devoted due attention to their significance in this culture and literature. It then investigated symbolic roles of flowers through some examples from Persian poetry. According to the examples, flowers could symbolize spiritual sublimity, martyrdom, modesty, humility, beauty, countenance, eyes, tresses, love, pain, a particular color, oneness, and even two-facedness, among other things. The ultimate goal of the article was twofold, that is, to contradict the central traditional claim that flowers always represent and associate with female sexuality and to accentuate the presence of other entirely distinct symbolic interpretations of flowers. The interpretations stressed the upper rather than the lower part of the body and valued non-carnal instead of carnal aspects of flower symbolism. The article also criticized misusers of flower symbolism for generalizing about flowers and founding their reasoning on binary oppositions and a limited understanding of flower symbolism.

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Notes

I have translated all the Persian lines throughout the article. It must be mentioned that the Persian language is written and read from right to left. Furthermore, in classical Persian poetic forms such as ghazal, one *beyt* (similar to a "couplet" or "verse" in English) consists of two *mesras* (the same as "hemistiches" in English). The hemistiches of one couplet commonly come together in one line with a caesura between them. In Persian poetry, one couplet is regarded as one line with ample space between its hemistiches. In this paper, I have put a slash mark between hemistiches.