Red Flower Symbolism with Emphasize on Iranian Culture and Art

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Abstract
Among the flowers, rose, Suri rose, “Golab” or Mohammadi flower is more popular among Iranians and Golab has been known since ancient times, being used in religious ceremonies and for medical purposes from the past to the present. At celebrations and mourning, people still pass around Golab. The aim of this study, while studying the symbolic concepts of red rose in the culture of Iran and other ethnic groups, is to find out whether red rose and its derivatives can be seen in illustrated manuscripts and works of art of Iran, as much as what we can see in Persian poetry and literature, relying on the symbolic concepts or its applications? This qualitative and fundamental research has been done by relying on the analytical-descriptive method and its information has been collected through the library and electronic study methods. Due to the ancient antiquity of rose and its main product, Golab, in Iran and the use of different parts of this plant in cooking, medicine, and various ceremonies, the existence of Golabdaan and Golabpash leftover from past eras and despite the emphasis of numerous written sources of Persian literature on Rose, Mohammadi, and Golab, the present study found a few illustrated designs and copies on the subject of rose and Golab making and its applications. However, decorative aspects such as flower and bird paintings of the Qajar period can be found in abundance. The result of this study showed that from a symbolic point of view, the rose is a symbol in the context of the studied cultures with common characteristics such as love and beauty, divine perfection, mysticism, light, purification, infinity.

Keywords: Rose, Suri, Mohammadi, Golab, Symbolism.

Introduction
The history of using fragrant roses in Iran dates back to more than 2500 years ago. Documents show that fragrant roses were used in Sassanid gardens, and to treat diseases, the petals of these flowers were placed in fats, and then its extract was used (Rastegar, 2012). The origin of the rose has long been proven by fossils, and records show that in China it was used for decoration around 600 BC. Rose petals have been used for edible purposes for centuries. The use of roses and Golab¹ is seen in many pre-Islamic ceremonies,

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especially Zoroastrian rituals and celebrations, and in the Islamic era, roses and Golab have a special status and became imminent with the Prophet of Islam. The present article, while briefly discussing the symbolic meanings of roses in other cultures, due to the long history of roses and Golab making in Iran, focuses on the meanings of this flower on Iranian works of art and tries to answer the question that Is rose and its derivatives, as it waves in Persian poetry and literature, seen in illustrated manuscripts and works of art of Iran based on symbolic concepts or their uses?

**On the typology and medicinal properties of the rose plant**

In the Golsorkhian family, with about 200 plant species and 18000 cultivars, only a limited number have volatile and aromatic substances and are used in the preparation of extracts. To prepare the extract from this small number, the Mohammadi flower is the main product and its extract is used in the health, pharmaceutical, and food industries. The origin of this plant is not yet clear, but most researchers believe that its origin is Iran, Bulgaria, Turkey, and India. In general, it seems that the Mohammadi flower, like other rose species, has been brought to Europe from the Middle East. This flower was taken from Iran to Damascus around 1254-1276 AD and from there to Europe, which is why it is known and called “damascena” in the world (Fig. 1). The shrub of this small plant has many branches and small thorns, shiny green leaves, and furry back. Pale and very fragrant pink flowers bloom in spring. In Iran, this flower can be found especially in Kashan, Ghamsar, Ravand, Meymand, Semnan, Azerbaijan and Qazvin, Kerman, Bam, Sirjan, Delijan, Golpayegan, and Natanz (same). Its properties are as follows: It is a combination of the blue and earthy gem, spicy and receptive, bitter, and collecting. If they wash with the rose in the heat, it eliminates the sweat of the body, and flesh grows in the perforated and eaten wounds (Daryab Najafi, 2007, 218). “Ward Ahmar Bustani” is rose, and “Ma Alvard” is Golab (the extract of rose) in Persian (Aqili Alavi Khorasani Shirazi, 1953, 4 & 1696).

**Literature review**

Many articles have been written about the rose or Mohammadi so far, which can be generally divided into two botanical and agricultural, and Persian
literature spectrums. In the meantime, there is less research specifically on this flower and its symbolic meanings in the field of art media. Among them, we can refer to the book Comparative Symbolism of Plants written by Heidar Shojaei, published by Shahr Pedram (2017), which in sections such as allusions, allegories, symbolism, ancient rituals, religions, and religious beliefs, art, dreams, and poetry and literature, has gained information about plants and roses with the method of Collecting and library studies. In the group of botanical articles, there is an article on the effect of boric acid on germination and pollen tube growth of some of the best genotypes of Mohammadi flower by Ahmad Moeini (2014) which is beyond the scope of this study.

In the field of Persian literature, Mehdi Sharifian and Yousef Darbidi in their article on the study of symbols of apple, dove, rose and lotus in the poems of Sohrab Sepehri, (2007), pointed out that Sohrab Sepehri used the symbol among with literary arrays, and also he pointed to the cultural similarities between Christianity, India and ancient China in examining the symbols of his poems. The article “Red Rose in Saadi’s View” by Masoumeh Eslami (2009) referred to the place of flowers and plants in Persian literature, and considered flowers and plants as representing the inner state of the poet, and also considered Saadi’s poems to be the most frequent in the use of words related to flowers and plants.

**Theoretical foundations and research methods**

Plants and trees in Iran have long been respected and considered and have always had a special place in human life. As some rituals and celebrations have been held in nature. Among these, qualities such as beauty, greenness, fruitfulness, or fruitlessness of plants have been mixed with special concepts and have become a theme and symbol in Iranian culture (Kafshchian Moghadam & Yahaghi, 2011, 71). A symbol of the tangible that signifies the sensible. Charles Sanders Pierce says: In symbols, the sign is not similar to its subject, but refers to the subject based on arbitrary or completely conventional relations and is connected with meaning through the application (Pierce, 2018, 25). The present study is of qualitative and fundamental type and tries to describe the relationship between use and discovery of the meaning of rose motifs on works of art, especially in Iran based on the analytical-descriptive method. This study, which collects data by the library and electronic methods, while focusing on the symbolism of the rose in Iran, also examines its symbolic meanings in other cultures. “Rose” has long been cultivated in Iran and has long been considered a strategic plant. The compound word of Golab (Gol + Aab) refers to “Gol” which means red flower or Suri rose, and in Persian literature, it usually refers more to Suri rose, and different forms of this word in pre-Islamic times also mean red flower. Wherever the flower leaf is mentioned, it means the rose petal (Farahvashi, 2000, 128). The word Sur means red in Dehkhoda dictionary. In his book Bandesh (Zoroastrian encyclopedia), Gul and Nastaran are mentioned with respect (Bahar, 2016, 87). Rose also has a special place in Iranian literature. From the devotion of Shiraz Sheikh, Sa’adi suffices as much as he named his book Golestan and spoke of the companionship of mud and flowers and brought it in the preface of Golestan: In the season of Rabi, when the power of coldness rested and the time of the flowers had arrived:

*You are the essence of the glorified may*

*An eloquent nightingale on the way*

*On the red red rose, you are*

*Like the sweat sat on that fairy face, so far*

*Onsori also mentioned in the fifty-eight ode in praise of Sultan Mahmud:*

*I murmured what an everlasting garden you have*

*She said: roses are no strangers, playing as a salve*

*May I pick a bunch of flowers from here?*

*Oh, you can’t do it dear*
Your garden rained bloody blood, o you fairy face!
From the rose arises the perfume, that’s the case
My eyes flooded with those pearls
This is the true way of those stuck in the whirls
Although the word Golestan generally refers to a
garden full of flowers, by relying on the etymology
of the word Gol (flower) and emphasizing the ancient
Persian literature on the relationship between roses
and Golab, in a special sense, it refers to the rose
garden. Before Islam, the word “Gol” was a special
name for the red rose, which with the arrival of
Islam in Iran and familiarity with the Mohammadi
temperament and emphasis on the symbolic aspect of
roses and Golab instead of the image of the Prophet
in anecdotes and narrations, gradually other names
In Iran, gave way to Mohammadi name and the word
“Gol” has been used in the generic name ever since (Farahvashi, 2000, 128).

The etymology of the word Rose flower
This word in the form of “Versa” has been mentioned
several times in Avesta, in Vandidad Fargard 16,
paragraph 2. In ancient Persian “Varda”, and in
Middle Persian and Sassanid Pahlavi “Vard” and
“Vart”, and it remained in Persian dictionaries as
“Vard”. The word Vard meaning flower, remains in
the name of many Iranian settlements. Vard-avard, a
village near Tehran, meaning flower bringer, and the
name “Suhravard”, the birthplace of Ishraq Sheikh
in Zanjan, is of the same origin. The first part of “
Suhravard “, Suhrd/Suxr, which is the correct form
of the word Surx “red”, which when combined
means “red flower”. Vart went to Armenia during the
Parthian period. On the other hand, it has found its
way into Aramaic and from there into other Semitic
languages, including Arabic.
Baba Tahir has used the word “Vol” to mean flower:
The jungle of wavy hairs on your round face
Twisting both heart and soul just with a gaze
As soon as you flew those birds in the air
The weary heart fell in love, unaware

In later periods, the word Val and Vel were said as
“Gol”, and “Gel” in the dialects. Thus the Persian
flower of the ancient Avestan word “Versa”, and its
Avestan form gravitate from east to west, and around
the Black Sea and the Mediterranean is so common
that the Greeks call it “ Wroson”, And later by
deleting «w» as «Roson» (Fig. 2). The Greek word
Rhodon turns to Rose when the “n” drops, and then
every European countries called it, Rose. The name of
Mehrdad I’s daughter in Ardeshir Plutarch’s book is
“Rhodgune”, which means flower-like or rose-like,
or the person whose cheeks are res like flowers, and
“Rhodogune” by the classic French poet Cornet,
became famous in French literature with the famous
play “Rhodogun”. Thus, from the Avestan word
Varda, the words Vard, Vel, Gol, and Rose, meaning
red flower found their way into all the languages of
the civilized world, and this is an example of a golden
leaf from our ancient civilization (ibid.).

Rose extraction spread in Iran from centuries ago,
than to the Ottoman Empire and Minor Asia in the
eighth century. According to historians, Golab is
one of Iran’s commercial items that was exported to
China and India. Ibn Khaldun mentions in his book
Al-Abr that the tribute of Iran included 30,000 bottles
of Golab (Rastegar, 2012), (Fig. 3).

Rituals related to flowers and Golab In Iran
For a long time, dried flowers and Golab were used in
most Zoroastrian ceremonies, including Nowruz and
and the tradition of Golab and mirrors, cloak wearing,
 Weddings, occasions, and Mehrgan. Fragrancing
the hands and face with Golab, sprinkling Golab on
each other, and drinking Golab syrup are the features
of this ceremony. The ancient Iranians cherished
the four elements of water, soil, air, and fire, all of
which were purifiers, and tried to avoid polluting
them. Thus, they considered a type of food for each.
Feeding each of them has been a worthy deed. The
Iranians fed water, in a part of the Avesta, a hymn
called “Abzour” And «Aban Yasht” that is recited
when praying for “Ordoviser Anahita” (Pure rising water), and along with it, a little milk with dried rose and thyme leaves was added to the running water so that the seepage of water would remain growing. The Iranians also fed the soil, sowing seeds in the ground, cultivating the land, and choosing an agricultural profession were of good deeds. They fed the fire and constantly added dry and fragrant wood to keep the fire burning. Our ancestors also fed the air. The air should not be polluted but it should be fragrant and pleasant so that everyone can enjoy it for good and be happy. That’s why fragrant substances such as “Golab” were sprinkled in the air, or they put “incense and frankincense” on the fire to spread its pleasant smell in the air. In one of the Zoroastrian traditions, when guests entered the house, a little “Golab” was poured from the sprinkler on the palms of the guests, and among showing the “mirror” in front of their faces, newcomers were welcomed, so that the best offer and present at the arrival would be the fragrant air and watching their faces (Niknam, n.d.).
**Flower throwing**
In the history of Bayhaqi, it is stated: One day, on the time of flower blossoming, Tahir threw out flowers, so that no property ever could, as there were dinars and dermis between the leaves of the flower, which they overthrew and all its predecessors were near him and rewarded everyone. When they returned, he let loose with his slaves and special companions, and went to the place of ridicule, where he said that they brought golden and silver wine pots and covered it in the silk, and tied it up like a waist and a woven crown, and decorated with Suri flowers, putting them on his head, and danced (Beyhaqi, 2010, 615). According to this narration from the history of Bayhaqi, the time of flower is May, and the meaning of the flower leaf is the fragrant petals of the rose because in the end it refers to the Suri flower and it can be considered as a confirmation of the use of the word Gol alone instead of the red flower.

**Nowruz Anhar**
In the works of the Al-Baghiyeh Biruni, it is stated: The nineteenth day, the day of Farvardin, which is called Nowruz Anhar, and perfumes and Golab is poured in the running waters (Biruni, 2007, 357). In fact, in Farvardin, a holiday called Nowruz Anhar, it is customary to go to the plains and deserts and places where there are flowing streams and springs and sprinkle perfume and rose water in the water during ceremonies (Razi, 1980, 690). This ancient custom also refers to the sanctity and purification of flowers and Golab among Iranians. The poet Nezami says:

*On the moon’s countenance, they poured flower spray
In the Kong’s stable, they tied up the horse together with a dray*

**Flower Rolling Ritual**
Gol Ghalltan National and Religious Festival is a hundred-year-old ritual that was held in the city of Amirieh, Damghan, and is the second spiritual work of the country after Nowruz that has been nationally registered. This ceremony is also held in Kashan. According to the locals, rolling the body of a baby under one year old among Mohammadi petals helps the baby be fresh and vibrant, as well as keeping the baby safe during the years of his life, in the face of seasonal allergies related to pollen and plants (Fig. 4).

**Red Flower in the Islamic era**
After Islam in Iran and other Islamic lands, the rose appears with similar concepts and appears in the body of literature, art, and mysticism. Hassan Ibn Munther says: When the Prophet (PBUH) was taken to Mi’raj, the earth became sad from the distance of the prophet and the Asif tree grew, and when the Prophet returned to the earth, the earth was happy and the red flower grew. Therefore, whoever wants to smell the scent of the Prophet (PBUH), smell the rose. The Prophet (PBUH) said: The white flower was created from my sweat on the night of Mi’raj, the red flower from Gabriel’s sweat, and the yellow flower from Buraq sweat. It is also narrated from Imam Hassan (AS) that the Prophet filled his two hands with flowers and gave them to me and said: This is the flower of this world and the hereafter (Tabarsi, 1986, 44 & 45). A kind of sanctity governs the meaning of rose or Mohammadi in Islamic culture, which, based on the principle of aversion to the art of this period, the rose appears as a symbol of the Prophet (PBUH). An example of this analogy can be found in the surviving calligraphy of the Ottoman period (Fig. 5).

Fig. 4. Gol-ghaltan ritual, Semnan province, 2019. Source: www.ima.ir.
In the Qur’an, in the thirty-seventh verse of Ar-Rahman Surah, it is stated: “When the sky disintegrates and turns like a red (rosy) flower.” This verse refers to the explosion of the star “Einat al-Qut”, cat-eye nebula or celestial rose (Fig. 6), a planetary nebula in the constellation of the Dragon. Regarding the relationship between mysticism and red rose, Sa’adi brings Golestan to the meaning of passion and ecstasy: I remembered that when I reach the flower tree, I would fill my skirt with it, the gift for the companions, but when I arrived, the smell of the flower made me so drunk that I lost my skirt. This interpretation has been mentioned in the description of Suleiman’s sonnets by Christian mystics about Sharon’s rose (Chevalier & Gerbaran, 2007, 744). Roozbehavan Baqli says about the symbolic sayings of the Sufis: The red rose is the price of God, whoever wants to look at the price of God, look at the red flower (Baqli, 1965, 153).

The motif of rose with emphasis on its practical aspect is rare in Iranian works of art. One of them is the manuscript of « Al-Jame fel-advieh Al-mofradeh » in the seventeenth century AD, which refers to the subject of pharmacology and herbal medicine, and in one page, it deals with the properties of the...
rose by drawing its shape. Other editions of “Nasir al-Din al-Shahi’s Ne’mat naameh” were written in Persian in India in 1469-1510 for Sultan Ghias al-Din Khalaji and his son Nasir al-Din, and include a variety of cooking instructions. On a page, the method of distilling flowers and preparing roses is illustrated. Although it is often said that there are rose bushes in Persian garden paintings, we rarely come across an accurate picture of the rose plant. One of the best examples is the painting “Rudabeh’s maids’ plan to meet Zal” in Tahmasebi Shahnameh, in which Rudabeh’s maidens are seen picking red roses in a flower-filled plain and filling their skirts with flower leaves. The nesting petals of the rose are easily visible in this picture, and the practice of picking the flowers itself emphasizes the ancient tradition of roses and Golab extraction in Iran (Fig. 7).

In the Safavid era, more or less red flower paintings can be seen, but the peak of drawing and using the red flower pattern is from the Qajar period, which led to the “flower and bird” painting method, and this pattern is used in abundance in paintings to decorating pens and tiles, Carpets, fabrics, and ... (Fig. 8).

It can be said that in this period, the use of the rose pattern emphasized its decorative aspect more, because it was repeated as a decorative motif on handicrafts and textiles, without seeking to create a special meaning, it was repeated more as a style in painting.

**Roses in the mythological belief**

Rose, which has played an important role in Iranian art, literature, and culture and is one of the important symbols in Iranian-Islamic motifs; It also had a high symbolic value in the beliefs of Eastern and Western myths. The rose is attributed to Vishnu in India and the flower of Venus in Greece, and in Rome, it adorns feasts (Fig. 9). In the novels of the Middle Ages in the West, the rose is an allegory of erotic and sometimes mystical love. In alchemy treatises, the diagram of the realization of great craft, creation is the loading of romantic intercourse (Sattari, 1995, 24).

It is said that the rose was originally white, but one day when Aphrodite rushed to his old friend (Adonis) ‘s aid after hearing the news of his injury, his foot was pricked and the blood on his foot turned the flowers of that plant red. Bion, a Greek poet of the third century BC quoted that: Aphrodite shed tears for the number of drops of blood that flowed from Adonis, from each drop of tears grew a rose, and from each drop of blood grew an anemone (Grimal, 2014, 24). Loading through the leaves, flowers, seeds, and fruits of the tree is seen in abundance in the myths of various nations, one of which is the classic examples in the folklore literature of the story of “Pentamerone”, where a young girl becomes pregnant by eating the leaves of a rose bush (Eliad, 1993, 290). Placing roses on graves was common among the ancient Greeks. Greek writers call this custom “Rosalia”. Every year in May, bouquets of roses were presented to the spirits of the dead. Hecate, Goddess Lady of Hell was sometimes depicted with a ring of five-feathered red roses on her head. The number five after four is the number of completeness and the sign of the beginning of a new era (Chevalier & Gerberan, 2007, 747).

**Roses in Christianity**

Due to its beauty and fragrance, the rose has symbolic features in the West, such as the prestige of Lotus in the East. In Christian iconography, the rose is the cup in which the blood of Christ is collected and symbolizes the wounds of Christ. This flower symbolizes the cross of the red rose, which is symbolized by five flowers, one in the center of the cross and the other four on the arms of the cross. The central rose, according to the followers of this sect, is located in the sacred heart of Christ.
Fig. 7. The rose motif with emphasis on its practical aspect in Iranian works of art.
B. Nasir al-Din al-Shahi’s Ne’mat naameh, the instruction to extract Golab, 1510 AD, India. Source: www.bl.uk
Fig. 8. The role of the rose in the Qajar period.
A. Bird and Flower painting, Mirza Agha Esfahani, 1865 AD. Source: British Museum.
B. Pen holder with Flower and bird pattern, 1780 AD. Source: Moghadam museum.

Fig. 9. The role of roses in the mythological.
A. The Birth of Venus, Sandro Botticelli, 1480 AD. Source: www.visituffizi.org
B. Heliogabalus Roses, Lawrence Alma-Tadema, 1888 AD. Source: www.rbkc.gov.uk

(PBUH). This symbol matches the “Rose candida” in the Divine Comedy and in a way reminiscent of the “Unfading Rose” in Maryam’s prayers (Fig. 10). The golden rose, which was consecrated by the pope in the Old Testament on the fourth Sunday of Christian fasting, was a symbol of spiritual power and teachings and a symbol of resurrection and immortality.

The rose is the great Beatrice flower that gives to his faithful lover Dante in the last stage of heaven, both the rose and the color of the rose at the same time. Dante compares the heavenly love with the center of the rose: in the golden center of the eternal rose that opens step by step and spreads the fragrance of the evergreen worshipping sun: Beatrice will attract me (ibid., 748).
Like the mandala, the rose can be considered a spiritual center. Gothic rosettes in Europe, like the lotus in Asia had a symbolic passage of flowers in the shape of wheels and circles. According to Macrum, the English saint and historian, in the seventh year, the tomb of Jesus was painted with a combination of red and white. The color pink (rose), is derived from the combination of white and red with which, if examined with religious symbolic values, at both worldly and sacred levels, show the difference between the concepts of suffering and purity, transcendental love, and divine wisdom. White and red flowers, golden flowers of alchemy are the birthplace of the boy (Ibid., 747). The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom (Isaiah 35, 1). The seven-leaf rose is an allusion to the seven planets, the seven stages of transformation (Jung, 1994, 124), (Fig. 11).

**Conclusion**

Due to the ancient antiquity of rose and its products such as rose in Iran and the use of different parts of this plant in cooking, medicine, various ceremonies, the existence of rose pots and sprinklers left from the past, and countless emphases of written sources of Persian literature on roses and Golab, And the etiquettes attributed to it before and after Islam, this study should have been faced with more illustrated manuscripts and motifs with the subject of rose and Golab extraction, from different periods of Iran, but despite the analysis, it was faced with a few works, which requires another occasion to investigate its reasons. Medicinal Plants edition of «Al-Jame fel-advieh Al-mofradeh», “Nasir al-Din shahi’s Ne’mat naameh” and “drawing of Rudabeh maids’ plan to meet Zal” in Tahmasebi Shahnameh are the works found in this research that focus on the use of roses in Iran. Due to its frequent use, this motif can be seen abundantly in the Qajar era with the help of the foreign and flower and bird painting methods.
From tiles, carpets and textiles to rugs and lacquer pen holders. But from the symbolic point of view, rose faced with common features in the cultural context of pre-Islamic and post-Islamic Iran as well as other cultures. Meanings such as love and beauty, perfection, mysticism, light, purification, and infinity. A mysterious flower that is no less than a lotus, with a sequential structure and a dome

Fig. 11. A1. Vitra window pattern in Gothic Church, famous as Rosette, New design. Source: www.pinterest.com.
A2. Hand drawing of Rosette window.
B. The white and Red Flower pattern, Gothic church vitra. Source: www.royalcentral.co.uk
C. Madonna in a Rose Garden, 1420-34 AD. Source: www.museodicastelvecchio.comune.verona.it
D. Face Cover, Absolute virtue, Summum bonum, 1629 AD. Source: Jung’s psychology and Chemistry.
shape, whose wonder and twist reaches its peak in the center of the flower, in addition to the concepts that are evident from its face, its aroma, and taste also speak in the holy language.

Endnote
1. The Persian name for the extract of rose flower.
2. Rose Flower family (Rosaceae)
3. Meaning a garden of flowers
4. Spring
5. Vard in Arabic cultures means red flower, red color, or blossom and saffron flower and safflower horse. The word Vard in the Pahlavi language underwent various changes in the Middle Persian period, as well as in the Persian language and its various dialects. In Persian, “Verta” has been used as a word for “Zand and Pazand (Havzvarsh) in the decisive argument, and since this word was introduced into Aramaic during the Sassanid period, it has been considered Aramaic and has been included as a Hazarashi word. Another development of this word was in the early Parthian period, which remains in the Semnani and Varda has evolved into “Vall”. Later with the fall “a” From the end of the word, it has become “vol”, which in the decisive argument of vol, means blossom, and is often called the blossom of grapes.

6. On October 31, 1990, one of the famous space stations, through one of the large telescopes (Hubble), published an image of space that every viewer, at first glance, would see in the form of a completely red flower, with large red leaves and smaller shiny green leaves with a blue sepal in the middle, and there was no doubt about that. But that image was an explosion of a large star called Ein al-Qat, thirteen thousand light-years from Earth.

Reference list