

The Rose Journey

Kawther Mahdi Al-Zwelef

Associate Professor, Faculty of Arts
Zarqa University, Jordan
P.O. Box: 132222, Zarqa – 13132, Jordan
E-mail: kawther48@yahoo.com

(Received: 10-4-13 / Accepted: 21-5-13)

Abstract

This paper will deal primarily with the 'Rose' and its compelling journey on earth. It will discuss the rose's unique place not only as an ornamental plant that poets of all nations and ages sung its praises, but as an entity that has become deeply ingrained in our memories, culture and beliefs. The rose held a unique position that can be read on many levels, and initiated a colorful pageantry that accumulated for centuries. It is used to commemorate birth and death, and appeared in myths and legends, poetry and music, religion and mystic systems, literature and philosophy, festivities and wars, medicine and beauty purposes and in symbolism and associations; that all contributed to the lure of this world. No other flower has been so immortalized and integrated into daily life as the rose. It has been the sweetheart flower of both mundane lovers and intellectuals. This paper will trace the manner in which the rose has been handled and the meanings bestowed on it in all the above fields.

Keywords: The position of the rose in life, myths, religion and literature, The literal, mythical and symbolic connotations of the 'rose' everywhere.

1. Introduction:

As a flower, the 'Rose' has long been known to man, and celebrated for its undeniable grace, gentle charm and benefits. Yet, as for its aesthetic value, the rose continued relentlessly and throughout the ages to delight man's heart with its superior beauty, captivate his senses with its sweet aroma and please his soul with its attractive form, astounding colour, and elevated implications.

The rose was honoured by all cultures throughout the history of civilization, and was highly appreciated for the purposes of enjoyment, cosmetics, medicine, religion and art. Its fragrant heritage swept myths and legends and world literature, while its symbolism and associations encompassed transcendental ancient poetry, just as it acts in contemporary poetry and prose.

Man's association with the rose is quite old; that it might date back as far as 35 million years ago (urbanext.illinois.edu/roses/history.cfm). The first written record of the rose dates back some 3,000 years to Sumerian and Babylonian records discovered in Mesopotamia; or what is

now known as Iraq (www.britishmuseum.org). The Babylonians decorated 'The Hanging Gardens' with roses; turning these gardens into one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

The first painting of the rose was found in Crete and dates back to 1500-1600 BC (www.theflowerexpert.com/content). The colour of roses, the season of bloom, their number and habitat, and the inspirational story behind each rose might assume a multiplicity of meanings, implications and signs.

The rose is loaded with layers of rich symbolism. It could be an emblem of beauty, spring, earthly or divine love and even confidentiality. In some traditions and at certain periods, each rose used to carry a special implication; and a full dictionary of rose language can show us what each signifies or says. Paradoxically, the withering rose, or flower, may represent the swift fleet of youth and time, the transient nature of life, and sometimes even decay and death.

2. The Rose Myths and Legends:

The rose was sacred to some ancient goddesses, and there are several interesting stories that associate these goddesses with the rose. The rose was a favourite flower in Greek mythology; that there were roses created in the likenesses of their goddesses. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, was identified with the rose, and she was the one who gave this flower its name. The myth states that Chloris, the goddess of flowers, created the rose out of the dead body of a nymph which she found one day in the forest. She asked the goddess of love Aphrodite to give the nymph beauty; Dionysus, the god of wine, to give her sweet fragrance, and the three volunteered the additional legendary attributes of charm, brightness and joy (Rosalyn, 2013).

Roman mythology abounds, as well, with stories and incidents of roses. One of these myths remarks that when a bee stung Cupid- Venus's son- he shot arrows by mistake into a rose garden. The sting of the arrow was believed to grow thorns to the rose. Walking through the garden, a thorn pricked Venus' foot; and it was the dripping of her blood that turned the roses red (<http://www.ehow.com>). According to *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, the rose was created from Venus's tears and the blood of her lover; Adonis (Garth's translation, Book X: ll.1180-1189).

In addition to being a symbol of love and beauty, the rose began to stand for 'secrecy' for the Romans. Cupid used to bribe the god of silence with a rose, to hush Venus's passionate adventures (www.theflowerexpert.com). Hence the decoration of the Roman meeting or dining rooms with roses hanging from the ceiling as a gesture of confidentiality -Sub Rosa-, reminding the members or guests that what has been said during the gathering should remain secret (www.theflowerexpert.com).

William Paul states in *The Rose Garden* (part 7, 1863, <http://books.google.com>) that there is a Latin floral goddess called 'Flora', and goes on reporting another Roman legend of the exceptionally beautiful Rhodanthe, who was exhausted by the persistent chase of her lovers, that she sought protection in the temple of the goddess Diana. The infatuated lovers smashed into the temple to get close to their beloved, which made Apollo enraged by the invaders' violation of his sister's temple; that he turned Rhodanthe into a rose and her suitors into thorns (Paul, 12).

The Roman emperor Nero, is said to have showered his dinner guests once with tons of rose petals (Paul, 8). The same source mentions that newlywed Roman couples were usually crowned with roses, and upper class women used rose petals for cosmetic purposes.

The rose had found its unique place and reverence in old Iraqi mythology; specifically in the epic of *Gilgamesh*, tablet 11, ll. 268-271. The wondrous plant that Utanabishitim reveals to

Gilgamesh is described as a flower that has thorns; just like those of a rose, and that this legendary flower can make human beings immortal (Labatt, 1970, p.263).

The mythical significance of the rose to the ancient Egyptians is undeniable. In Egyptian myths, roses were sacrificed to the goddess Isis (Nuraishah, FlowerAdvisor.com.sg). The Royal Egyptian tombs were decorated with images of roses, and well preserved rose buds were found buried beside the mummies of ancient Egypt as a sign of the roses' spiritual value (Holston, www.shenandoahrosesociety.org). It is said that Cleopatra used to cover her bed daily with fresh roses (Paul, 8). The rose became a symbol for the Old Egyptian king Horus; later known as the 'god of silence' (Atsma, www.theoi.com)

Arabic mythology has its incredibly romantic story about the creation of the red rose. It suggests that all roses were white at first, but one day a nightingale fell deeply in love with a white rose; that its beauty provoked the coveting common song of the impulsive nightingale; turning it into a sweet melodious one. But when he cuddled the rose, its thorns stabbed his heart and his blood turned its colour red (www.theflowerexpert.com).

3. The Rose in Religions:

Curiously, the Holy Books have only few references to the rose, although there are many allusions or references to other species of flowers.

The 'rose' is mentioned only few times in Scriptures; explicitly or utilized as a symbol. Although the verse "I am the rose of Sharon" (Song of Solomon 2:1) is not stated in the New Testament, yet, symbolically, Jesus was referred to by many as the 'Rose of Sharon' ; ascribing to Jesus thus, all the perfect attributes of the rose such as beauty, grace, loveliness, sweet fragrance and purity . William B. Hallman states that the "Rose of Sharon", is sometimes called "The Flower of the Field" since it grows so abundantly on the Plain of Sharon that extends from Mt. Carmel to Jaffa (acts 2828. org/ resources / Flowers _and _Birds_of_the_Bible.pdf).

Another instance of referring to the rose appears in the following lines:

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad
For them; and the desert shall rejoice
And blossom as the rose.

(Isaiah 35:1)

The deuteron-canonical books contain further references to the rose. The second chapter of the "Wisdom of Solomon", verses 7 and 8 contain such references as: "Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments: and let no flower of the spring pass by us: / Let us crown ourselves with rosebuds, before they be withered" (ww.kingjamesbibleonline.org). In Ecclesiasticus Chapter 24, there is another reference to the rose in "I was exalted like a palm tree in Cades, and as a rose plant in Jericho". Still, another implied reference to the rose appears in chapter 12: "as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhode". The name 'Rhoda' literally means 'rose', and could refer to the Hebrew word for the true rose "Rhodus"; which is used in both the "Wisdom of Solomon" and 'Ecclesiasticus'.

'Ruth', in "The Song of Ruth 1:17" might refer to the 'rose' as well; since the name 'Ruth' is derived from the Hebrew word for 'rose' (Ruth , © 1995, ww.biblegateway.com). The story of Ruth goes like this: the Jewish family of Elimelech leaves its region due to a severe famine and takes refuge in the heathen land of Moab. The family consisted of the father Elimelech,

his two sons and their mother Naomi. Elimelech dies soon after their arrival in Moab, and his sons marry and die there; therefore Naomi decides to return home. Out of love and loyalty to Naomi and the holy atmosphere of her family, Ruth; one of Naomi's daughters'-in-law, decides to accompany her. Naomi refuses this proposal out of love to Ruth; because she does not want her young daughters- in-law to "shut 'themselves' up." The unmistakable indication of a 'rose' that closes up is very obvious in this story. Solomon also speaks of such "young roses" (Song of Solomon 4:5) as exceptionally beautiful and fragrant flowers.

Some old Christian sects also identify the five petals of the rose with the five wounds of Christ, while the modern sects correlate the rose with the blood of martyrs (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rose). Hallman says "In the Song of Songs we have the rose as a type of Christ and it is only Christ that will make the desert and the wilderness as the rose again". The rose has become a privileged symbol of Christ in the German Christmas song written by Goethe "Es Ist ein 'Rose' Entsprungen" ("Lo How a Rose E'er Blooming You have sprung like a rose") (©2013 About.com, "German Christmas Carols). As a symbol of purity, the rose became entwined with the Virgin Mary as well (Koehler, 2009 www.udayton.edu/mary/rosarymarkings36.html), and she was considered to be the Rosa mystica (Johnson, 2012, p=335, bettyjohnson.com/blog).

Although Hallman states that the 'Flower of the Field' is very likely the same 'rose', Yet, he warns later not to mix between the 'flower of the field' and the rose; because the former is an insignificant flower that is referred to sometimes as 'the flower of the grass'! In a certain way, he is not totally mistaken; for sometimes flowers afford an emblem for the transitory nature of human life: " He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: He fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not."(Job14:2).

The idea of connecting the rose with death is not new; it appeared in Greco-Roman culture, just as in Christian faith. Roses were frequently, and still are, planted at or placed on the graves of dead people. In addition to being associated with all the gorgeous, venerable and joyful things in life, the rose stands for "the fleetness of time, and consequently inferred death and the next world" (Samaha, 2008, <http://campus.udayton.edu>). The combination of its delicate beauty with the annoying thorns is an indication of this duality; which has been one of the greatest topics in literature throughout the ages.

Although the rose is seldom mentioned in The Holy Quran, yet, it still functions as a sacred symbol in Islam. The famous 'Oily Rose' as referred to in The Quran chapter (55): Surat ar-Rahman, could be the most arresting reference to the rose. Surat ar-Rahman states: "37. When the sky splits and becomes like a tanned red rose 38. Then which of the favours of your Lord you deny?". These lines discuss a phenomena expected to take place during the final hour of the lifecycle of our universe; when suddenly the sky will explode and melt away, forming an oily red rose nebula; a description that "bears close similarity to red celestial bodies with a plicate appearance, especially the 'Rosette Nebula'" (Yahya, p.53, harunyahya.com/en/Books/47517/miracles-of-the-quran)

The Red Rose is not only regarded as a blessed and noble flower by Muslims, but "the light of every plant"(Danyaal, 2012, seekerofthesacredknowledge.wordpress.com); for its connection with Prophet Mohammed (PBUH); who loved roses and used them and their oil in his daily spiritual practices.

4. The Rose in Mystic Traditions:

All mystic writings are marked by profound spiritual feelings, and the rose operates impressively in most of these traditions to evoke a variety of connotations that convey these sentiments literally or symbolically. Almost all systems that have spiritual inclinations have ascribed some mystic qualities to the rose because they perceived it as a perfect symbol of beauty and integrity

In the Sufi wisdom, the rose could be:

“A symbol of the soul. Like the development of our own souls in this world, roses bloom amidst thorns. The rose fragrance is the ethereal connection with our Higher selves. Many Sufis of the Rose Crescent tradition choose to anoint themselves with rose oil prior to performing their daily prayer, dabbing a bit of oil behind the ear, on the back of the hands and in the middle of the forehead” (rose-sufi-crescent.blogspot.com, 2006).

The spiritual quest of the Sufi soul for the union with God, indicates an escape in the name of divine love, to maintain the desired union with the Beloved; God. The famous 13th century Sufi poet Jalaluddin Rumi writes the following memorable lines:

Like the rose I am laughing with all my body,
Not only with my mouth,
Because I am without myself,
Alone with the king of the world.

(Poem 11, ll. 1-4)

Blooming roses and flowers echo with the tenderly stimulated heart, and "naturally symbolize 'enlightenment'; or the unfolding of awareness and the opening of the heart" (Poetry Chaikhana, 2012, www.poetry-chaikhana.com/Themes/Perfume/index.html).

When God takes residence within the human heart, the illuminated mind opens, and the soul reaches ecstasy; which makes the heart blossoms like a rose. The 11th century Sufi poet Hakim Sanai expresses such an elevating radiant feeling in "Bloom Like a Rose" (www.poetry-chaikhana.com/Poets/S/SanaiHakim):

Your heartrending fire
Made me bloom like a rose.
I died at Your feet
And returned fast to life.

(ll. 3-6)

The 700-year-old Sufi classic poem 'The Secret Rose Garden' by Shabistari, remains with us today vital and beautiful, the garden was planted with roses of Love and Adoration, of Reason and of Spiritual Illumination, of Knowledge and of Faith. In the center is a rose-tree of unequalled splendor, the tree the author planted with all his heart's adoration--the description of the perfect face of the Beloved (Sanity Island, 1989, www.sanityisland.com).

The Sufi reference to the 'Rose Garden', thus, could involve the awareness of God's presence within one's heart; that turns this heart into a spiritual garden. Rumi sings "And you—if you have no foot, choose to journey into yourself" (poem 146), and the 15th century mystic poet Kabir writes these inspiring lines in "Do not go to the garden of flowers" (*One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, 2005):

Do not go to the garden of flowers!
 O friend! Go not there;
 In your body is the garden of flowers.

(ll. 1-4)

The Sufi 'garden' has become synonymous to a mystic inner refuge; while its flowers are the spiritual qualities that have bloomed within the heart enabling it to open to God's love. The following are Jalaluddin Rumi's enlightening lines on the attributes of this garden:

Bird of heart, fly amidst the garden of its beauty,

 There is a gift in the midst of your body's loans;
 Search in the middle of the soul for the gift of Giver.

 Since you quitted the clay, you forthright entered the garden
 Of the heart; so from that side is there naught but concert

 Since you left the salt marsh of the body for the garden of the soul,
 Is there naught but rose and basil, tulip and fountains of water?

(Poem 279, ll. 11-20)

This is the mystic experience of opening the heart to embrace the Divine Beloved. It is a garden where the tranquil soul contemplates and feels the active presence of God. In this sense, the Sufi garden could be identical to Heavenly 'Paradise'.

In other occasions the Sufis couple the rose with the nightingale in a spiritual love relationship; where the Rose is the Beloved /God, and the nightingale is the Sufi/ soul lost in its love of the Rose. Sadi writes in his book *Gulistan* [or *The Rose Garden*] (1823, chapter 11, 97):

All things thou seest still declare His praise;
 The attentive heart can hear their secret lays.
 Hymns to the rose the nightingale His name;
 Each thorn's a tongue His marvels to proclaim.

(ll. 1-4)

In such a case, the garden would represent the soul contemplating in the attendance of the Divine.

One of the most important Sufi treatises was *Alchemy of Happiness*, written by Al Ghazali (1058 A.D). What concerns us here is not the issue of compatibility of Islamic law and Sufi doctrine (Wikipedia, "Sufism) discussed in this book; but the fundamental symbol of the Rose employed in the Sufi *Alchemy*, and its influence on Europe. Under this Sufi influence, the European 'Alchemist Guild' appeared, and chose the Sufi rose as its symbol; believing "the gardens of philosophy are planted with many roses" and affirming:

"This popular flower has a complicated symbology with paradoxical meanings. It is at once a symbol of both purity and passion; both heavenly perfection and earthly desire; both virginity and fertility; both death and life" (www.alchemyguild.memberlodge.org).

In addition, this Sufi rose ensured for European alchemists and hermetic organizations, the original symbolic implication of secrecy:

“Because of its association with the workings of the heart, the rose in alchemy has come to symbolize secrets of the heart of things that cannot be spoken or an oath of silence in general. In the folded structure of the rose, the flower seems to be concealing a secret inner core. "Mystery glows in the rose bed and the secret is hidden in the rose, wrote the twelfth-century Persian alchemist Faridu ud-din Attar" (Ibid.).

It is possible that 'silence' was also utilized by the Sufis when we take into consideration the fact that mystic love is something to be kept secretive lest the profane should ridicule, as in Rumi's line: "Close the door of speech and open the heart's window"(poem 233).

The Sufi Rose symbol is approached sometimes in an extraordinary manner, and given far-fetched interpretations. Idries Shah, for instance, "states that the Arabic word *wird* (meaning dervish exercise, i.e., the Work) was used poetically as Ward (rose)" (www.sanityisland.com).

Buddhism is said to include many references to the rose as well. Both Sufism and Buddhism use the same symbol of the 'unfolding flower' as an emblem to the 'opening of the illuminated mind', as Yousef Daoud affirms (Xlibris Corporation, 2009, p.22). Although the 'Lotus' is the Buddhist flower and not particularly the rose, yet, these two great wisdom traditions share the same mystical perception of equating the human heart with the flower. Just as the flower blossoms and leads a fragrant life, the mystic heart blooms and takes nourishment from its spiritual quest for enlightenment.

To manifest the significance of the rose, the Buddhist teacher Osho introduced the "Symbol of the Mystic Rose" and the "Mystic Rose meditative Therapy" ([http:// www. messagefrommasters. com](http://www.messagefrommasters.com)), instructing his followers "unless your rose opens within your own being, you are just a commodity" (Ibid.).

He even reported a story of how Buddha came one morning carrying a rose to his daily sermon, and gave it to his disciple Mahakashyap; who became later the founder of the Zen tradition (Ibid.). Buddha's justification of giving this rose to Mahakashyap was: "what I cannot give in words I am transferring to Mahakashyap" (Ibid.). In doing so, Buddha was declaring his choice of this disciple as his successor, and was transferring to him, symbolically through the rose, his innermost spiritual experience and his responsibilities. This procedure is called in Buddhism "the transmission of the light, the opening of the mystic rose" (Ibid.).

Another ancient Hindu story relates that the protector of the world; the god Vishnu regarded the 'rose' as the most beautiful flower in the world, while the creator of the world; the god Brahma, backed the lotus as the most beautiful. Upon seeing the rose for the first time, Brahma immediately acknowledged its supremacy, and rewarded Vishnu by creating him a bride -called Lakshmi -from 108 large and 1,008 small rose petals (www.a1puneflowers.com)

Another Buddhist fundamental perspective is the belief in the transitory nature of life. And here the rose can again serve the purpose perfectly. For Buddhists, man is born as a seed that has incredible potential for development; yet, he will fade and wither just like a rose, unless he accomplishes his supreme fulfillment and flourishes into a mystic rose (Osho, "Symbol of Mystic Rose"). In attaining this state of full awareness, the heart will flower and open all its petals, and the human being will be part of the perpetual soul.

Even the form of the rose, in Buddhism and Hinduism, has the primary function of suggesting "the cup of life or the center of Mandala, a configuration of geometric shapes, which symbolize a meditational path to Nirvana." (Marien © LillysRoseGarden.com)

5. The Rose in Literature:

Literature from the East to the West and from Ancient times to the Modern Age is infused with the scent of roses, although no one knows exactly what fabulous journey the rose has taken. Whether indulged for its beauty, gentleness, sweet aroma, universality and artistic merits, or for the rich emblematic connotations it enfolds, writers kept finding it worthy of their adoration and each viewed it from a different angle.

The rose has been an old soul that has found its way to Sumerian and Babylonian cultures thousands years ago. The Babylonian author Huna (C.216-297 AD) wrote "A rose, bent by the wind and pricked by the thorns, yet has its heart turned upwards" (Sutton, www.helpmefind.com). Sappho, the Greek talented poetess, crowned the rose as the 'Queen of Flowers' in her "Ode to the Rose" (www.shelovesgod.com):

Would Jove a Queen of Flowers ordain,
The Rose, the Queen of Flowers, should reign
What flower is half lovely found,
As when, with full-blown beauties crowned
The Rose, the Queen of Flowers should be.

(ll. 1-5)

The Greek poet Anacreon celebrated the rose in many of his odds, addressing it as: "Woo thee, Rose; thy harms inspire/ All the raptoros of the lyre"(Paul, 4), and idolizes it as:

While spring with lavish flow'rets glows,
From the gay wreath Ill pick the Rose,
The queen of fragrance will display.

(ll. 1-3)

Homer referred to the rose frequently in both the Iliad and the Odyssey (Ibid, 3).

The Roman poet Virgil, among many other Roman poets, displayed his generous admiration of the rose in many of his poems; especially his "Fifth Pastoral"(Ibid, 7).

The rose was the favourite flower among the English poets, and they kept singing its praises for centuries. Shakespeare has mentioned the rose over fifty times throughout his writings. In one of his most beautiful sonnets he wrote "The Rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem/ For that sweet odour which doth in it live" (absoluteshakespeare.com) The Scottish poet Allan Cunningham pays the rose tribute: "A little rose that laughs upon its stem, /In value soars above an eastern gem" (Sutton, www.helpmefind.com).

The other Scottish poet Robert Burns entwines his beloved with the rose in "O my love's like a red, red rose/ That's newly sprung in June" (ll.1-2). Thomas Hood proclaims his preference of the rose, writing "The cowslip is a country wench, the violet is a nun, / But I will woo the dainty rose, the queen of every one." Many other poets alluded to their beloveds utilizing the traditional symbol of the rose as the incarnation of love, splendor and feminism. Others expressed their longing for the unending spring rose garden -paradise- where they sought a kind of spiritual presence and union with God; as George Herbert sings in his poem "The Flower":

These are thy wonders, Lord of love,

To make us see we are but flowers that glide:
 Which when we once can find and prove,
 Thou hast a garden for us, where to bide.

(ll .43-46)

Flowers embodied a full mode of communication, and 'floral messages' became well-known all over the world. A full glossary of flower language developed into a delicate and fragrant mode of communication (Ingram, 1887, books.google.com).

However, some poets identified the rose with the human short lifespan. The poet Sadi wrote "Those roses but five days or six will bloom; / This garden ne'er will yield to winter's gloom" (*Gulistan*, Preface 14). And with all the cheerfulness and agility of Robert Herrick's poem "To the Virgins", his colourful rose imagery was intended to handle the same theme of the transitory nature of human life and the fleetness of youth:

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
 Old time is still a-flying:
 And this same flower that smiles today,
 To-morrow will be dying.

(ll. 1-4)

However, Herrick could be artistically articulating here another eternal question; that of how many opportunities might we waste by suspending our plans?

The rose obtained a different symbolic implication in Yeats' early 'Rose' poetry. Under the mystical and supernatural influence of the second type of the Golden Dawn society -called the "Inner" order- with its Rosicrucian symbol of the Ruby Rose and Cross of Gold, Yeats became interested in excessive mystic themes and began to associate the rose with the "world soul" (Hyde, p. 70, www.clemson.edu). The interest in mythology and the influence of the occult systems culminated in composing "The Secret Rose"(Ibid, p.72), where Yeats addresses the rose as both an individual and universal inspiration Muse; as a hoard of legendary heroes such as Cuchulain and transcendental lovers:

FAR- OFF, most secret, and inviolate Rose,
 Enfold me in my hour of hours.....

Thy great leaves enfold
 The ancient beards, the helms of ruby and gold
 Of the crowned Magi; and the king whose eyes
 Saw the pierced Hands and Rood of elder rise
 In Druid vapour and make the torches dim.

(ll. 1-11)

In many poems, Yeats identifies the rose with Ireland, and personifies it in "To Ireland in the Coming Times" as a lover with a "red-rose- bordered hem" (Ibid, p.78).

Under the possible spiritual influence of Yeats, D. H. Lawrence wrote in "I Am Like a Rose"(Ibid, p.72):

Here I am all myself. No rose-bush heaving
 Its limpid sap to culmination has brought
 Itself more sheer and naked out of the green

In stark-clear roses, than I to myself am brought.

(ll. 5-8)

Lawrence actually seems to deal here with the illuminating spiritual awareness of the self; an experience that couldn't have been possible to maintain its significance without the 'rose' symbol. Lawrence announces here his joy for the fulfillment of his self; which opens freely and content just like a rose. One feels Lawrence has gone through the same illuminating experience the Sufi poet Rumi has gone through when he wrote: "The lord of beauty and quintessence of loveliness entered the soul /And mind as a man will stroll in the garden at spring" (poem 394).

Just like Yeats, Lawrence identifies England with the rose in his story collection "England My England", that tells of an English man who dies in World War 1 for England's sake and is described as "a born rose", a "pink rose" (Lawrence, 2011 .www.readbookonline.net).

The rose symbol dominates T. S. Eliot's later mystical poetry and obtains new implications; specifically in poems like the *Hollow Men* and the *Four Quartets*. Critics who are not acquainted with the Sufi mystic tradition might reasonably relate Eliot's rose to the Christian religious rose symbol discussed above, and his rose garden to Dante's 'earthly paradise', or even to the Medieval rose garden that " symbolizes an early sexual awakening" (Azizmohamadi and Afrougheh, 2011).

However, Eliot communicated his mystic experience in expressions and symbols very close to those employed by the Sufis; particularly of the rose and rose garden.

In the *Four Quartets*, Eliot approaches the central philosophical theme of exploring the truth, where the poet "seeks assurance that religion can fortify man against seductive earthly delights and against potent instruments of despair" (Maxwell, 1960, pp. 156-180). In "Burnt Norton", the first part of the *Four Quartets* (T. S. Eliot, *Athenaeum library of Philosophy*, Jud Evans), Eliot creates three rose gardens; one of the road to the past which he laments not taking, another of the present formal garden, and the last of the future mystical rose garden; where the undividable present time joins past and future and results in a unified spiritual experience:

Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden. My words echo
Thus, in your mind.
But to what purpose
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves
I do not know.
Other echoes inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?
Quick, said the bird, find them, find them,
Round the corner. Through the first gate,
Into our first world, shall we follow

.....
And the bird called, in response to
The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery,
And the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses
Had the look of flowers that are looked at.

(I.II.11- 22 & 27-30)

The door that Eliot did not venture to open could be the same door that leads to paradise, which Rumi refers to in:

Hark, for I am at the door! Open the door; to bar the door is
Not the sign of good pleasure.
In the heart of every atom is a courtyard for You; until You
Unbar it, it will remain in concealment.

(Poem 31, ll.1-4)

Eliot then pays tribute to the same Sufi rose and bird. Entwining both and placing them in the rose garden brings to the mind the exquisite experience that Rumi communicates in:

The springtime of lovers has come, that this dust bowl may
Become a garden; the proclamation of heaven has come, that
The bird of the soul might rise in flight.

(Poem 65, ll.1-3)

We are not affirming that Eliot was directly or consciously influenced by the Sufi poets, but one cannot help noticing the resemblance between the recurring symbols, the identical expressions and the comparable universal philosophy Eliot adapts and the Sufis'. It is interesting how smoothly Eliot's opening lines of "Burnt Norton" could lend themselves to a mystic interpretation. As a spiritual vision, one may say that Eliot regrets not being able, or trying hard to enter the rose garden; because there used to be a veil that hinders his soul from entering God's paradise and enjoy its bliss. There was not enough divine light inside his heart that could transfer him from the unreal shadowy physical world, to the real spiritual rose garden/ paradise. Now he is aware of the presence of the Garden of Eden and the bird/ Sufi soul that sings at all times the praises of its Beloved/God, he decides to lose himself to the devotion of the Unchangeable. This could be the spiritual awakening call that will steer his eternal quest in search of the bliss of timeless brief moments of illumination; ecstasy and rapture of Divine grace.

On the other hand, the bird Eliot introduces here could be an allusion to Omar Al Khayyam's bird in the lines: "The Bird of Time has but a little way, / To flutter and the Bird is on the wing". The poet might be properly linking the themes of the temporary nature of life's pleasures, to that of the passage of time.

6. The Medical and Cosmetic Properties of the Rose:

The history of the rose witnesses not only for the aesthetic delight people find in it; but for the medical and cosmetic qualities it possess. Experimentation proved roses to be a valuable source for medical treatments. During the Medieval period rose pharmacological industry flourished near the city of Provins in France; jelly, oil and powder were extracted from roses and used to treat a variety of external and internal diseases as William Paul remarks (Paul, 11). He lists countless medical benefits of roses that include strengthening the heart, refreshing the spirit, fighting insomnia, moving the bowels, lowering the fever and mitigating the inflammation. He even adds the rose's use in preparing certain foods and sweets, affirming that People used to put rose petals in wine because they believed its concentration would wipe out drunkenness (Ibid, 8).

Some people seem even positive that the rose hip generates vitamin 'C' more than any other fruit or vegetable! (www.800florals.com).

In addition to its attractive colour, the sweet perfume of the rose could be its other compelling quality. It was, and still is, a main source of extracting perfumes; whether used for religious or cosmetic purposes. The scent of roses and rose incense has even been evoked as one of the symbols of the spiritual journey towards enlightenment.

The rose has been cultivated since ancient times; not only for the aesthetic delight it brings to human life and soul, but because it was in demand for its cosmetic qualities, as well. The rose water and oil perfumes were used in many cultures. Some people used to, and still, splash themselves with scented rose water, fill their fountains and swimming pools with it, or use it as a facial cleanser.

Many cultures used roses' garlands as accessories to decorate themselves with, or to surround victorious heroes' necks (Ingram).

7. The Rose as a Symbol of Some Countries and Societies:

Although each rose colour symbolizes a different passion or conveys a particular meaning, yet, the rose of any colour has been proclaimed by many countries as their national flower. President Ronald Regan picked the Rose in 1986 to be the national flower of America (Holston), since then it became the flower of many American states as well. The English King Henry VII introduced the Tudor rose as a symbol of the unity of England after winning the civil "Wars of the Roses"; combining thus, the Lancaster red rose with the York white rose (Wikipedia, "Rose Symbolism"). Wikipedia states that:

“A red rose (often held in a hand) is a symbol of socialism or social democracy; it is used as a symbol by British, Irish, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, Finnish, Brazilian, Bulgarian and other European labour, socialist or social democratic parties, mostly adopted in the period after World War II “ (Ibid.) .

In the old cards of the Tarot, the rose had its symbolic position as well:

Seeking symbolic meaning of the rose from an esoteric perspective, we can look at the Tarot, in which the rose is considered a symbol of balance. Here the beauty of the rose expresses promise, new beginnings and hope. This beauty is contrasted with its thorns which represent defense, physicality, loss and thoughtlessness. The rose is seen in the major arcana as: “Magician, Strength, Death and Fool cards. All of these cards hold strong meanings of balance and equilibrium“ (Phelps, www.easy-oil-painting-techniques.org).

Alchemy guild also chose the rose as its emblem through which the guild transmits messages to its members and announces the issues that will be raised in the meetings; through the colour, position and degree of bloom of the roses presented at each of their meetings (© Alchemy Guild, “Guild Rose Symbol”).

The Sufi thinker Abdul Qadir Al-Gilani "is known as 'the Rose of Baghdad' and his order, the Qadiriyya, uses the rose as its symbol." (Wikipedia, “Rose Symbolism”).

8. Conclusion

There is scarcely any period of human existence on earth that is devoid of a reference to the rose. All civilizations have revered and complimented this beautiful creation of God by exquisite poems, stories and treaties that were woven in its praise.

The rose took its first journey in this world as an ambassador of love, desire, beauty, grace, uniqueness, joy, purity, spiritual love, perfection, unity, friendship, jealousy, farewell, thankfulness, grief, silence or even death, but its expedition is not done yet. Scholars and laymen alike seem impressed, inspired and infatuated by the rose's charm and fragrance; yet,

many could not perceive its full complicated meanings and implications. Myths, legends, religions, spiritual orders, literature, medicine and cosmetics have exploited, adored, associated and interpreted the rose and its symbolic presence on different levels.

Sometimes it plays the role of the actual gorgeous flower; in other times its company implies a range of fundamental contextual or conventional symbols; that evoke a variety of ideas, suggestions and sentiments. However, its symbolic connotations utilized in spiritual systems and in literature seem the most interesting.

Just like a closed bud, the mystic soul gradually opens and becomes aware of this Elevated Truth and eventually falls in love with Him. According to such an interpretation, the rose journey of blooming amid the thorns that surround it, until it becomes a gorgeous sweet scented full rose, will stand for man's hard life's quest in search of discovery and full revelation of that Ultimate Truth. It is the process of losing one's self totally in the presence of that found Truth; which leads to attaining wholesomeness of the soul.

If the rose journey is observed as a method of spiritual contemplation on the significance of time, and a passage which treats this world as a dream-world, then it would definitely shed light on some mystic practices. In some mystic orders the rose represents the spiritual soul; that is born ignorant of any comprehension of the Higher Ideal; who administrates the world. In other instances of mystic Sufi handlings, the rose is adopted as a manifestation of a Higher Ideal reality, and in its aspiration to attain ecstasy of union with the Divine inebriation; the Sufi soul will take this inspirational journey.

However, seeking out a path towards His love and light for the Sufis takes a different turn. They, allegorically, equate the human soul sometimes with a nightingale that chooses to journey towards the beautiful rose in an attempt to attain inner perfection. Since the rose is a symbol of the beauty, glory and perfection of the Beloved, according to the Sufi dictionary, then the nightingale's unfulfilled longing and consuming devotion for reaching out to the rose, would represent the passion for union with eternal beauty; or the Absolute. The impassioned symbolic divine love song of the nightingale and the rose, alludes to the basic truth that the nightingale/spirit desires to take a pilgrimage back to its original pure sphere of the rose/ the Eternal ; turning love thus into a worship.

This mystical and philosophical experience that blends the romantic longing with the spiritual quest for the attainment of the divine, produced some pieces of the most enraptured poems and intense love songs.

Roses do not only wrap mystical literature with their odour, but all genres of world literature are saturated with powerful references and potent symbols of roses. The rose has a unique place whether seen from the perspective of botany or of literature. It has been the messenger of love in poetry throughout the ages; a diva that did not lose its charm or attraction at any stage of its precious transitory life; but secured its adorned pose for all levels of society at times of festivity and grief alike.

Roses will remain a source of joy and inspiration to the coming generations, as they were to the whole humanity before. They might even claim additional roles in human life or in art, or they might attain new advantages or attributes that we have not discovered yet.

References

- [1] Board of Trustees, *A History of the Rose*, (2013), Illinois: University of Illinois, urbanext.illinois.edu/roses/history.cfm.

- [2] Alchemy Guild, *Guild Rose Symbol*, www.alchemyguild.memberlodge.org/Default.aspx?pageId=311919
- [3] A.J. Arberry and E. Yarshater (ed.), *Mystical Poetry of Rumi*, (2009), Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, www.theflowerexpert.com/content/.../flowersandhistory/history-of-roses.
- [4] A.J. Atsma, *Harpocrates: God of Silence – Greek Mythology*, (2000 – 2011), New Zealand, www.theoi.com/Daimon/Harpocrates.html.
- [5] F. Azizmohamadi and S. Afrougheh, *Eliot's rose garden: A Sufi interpretation, Sarajevo: 1st International Conference on Foreign Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, (2011).
- [6] About.com, *German Christmas Carols*, (2013).
- [7] I. Dagan, *Sumerian Literary: Hymn to Inanna*, British Museum, www.britishmuseum.org/.../search_results.aspx.
- [8] www.kingjamesbibleonline.org
- [9] M. Danyaal, *The Light of Every Plant*, (2012), 'Journey of the Seeker of Sacred Knowledge' Publications, <http://seekerofthesacredknowledge.wordpress.com>.
- [10] Y. Daoud, *The Rose and the Lotus: Sufism and Buddhism*, (2009), Xlibris Corporation.
- [11] T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets I: Burnt Norton*, (1999), *Athenaeum Library of Philosophy*, Jud Evans, evans-experientialism.freewebspace.com/eliot_burnt.
- [12] W.B. Hallman, *Flowers and Birds of the Bible*, (2010), acts2828.org/resources/Flowers_and_Birds_of_the_Bible.pdf.
- [13] E.M. Haley, *Roses in Mythology*, (1999-2013), Demand Media, Inc., *Roses in Mythology*, eHow, http://www.ehow.com/info_8133441_rosesmythology.html#ixzz2TFucKMeW.
- [14] P. Holston, *A Brief History of the Rose*, (2013), Colonial District of the American Rose Society/ Staunton, Va. www.shenandoahrosesociety.org/.../abriefhistoryoftherose.pdf.
- [15] *History of Roses-Flowers and History*, (2013), The flower expert: Guide on flowers & gardening, www.theflowerexpert.com/.../history-of-roses.
- [16] V. Hyde, D.H. Lawrence, W.B. Yeats and the Rosa Mundi, *The South Carolina Review*, 35(1) (F 20002), 68-82.
- [17] J. Ingram, *The Language of Flowers*, (1887), London and New York: Frederick Warne And Co., books.google.com/books?isbn=0813915562.
- [18] B. Johnson, *The Symbol of the Rose*, (2012), Published in *Betty's Secrets: An Author's Insight.*, bettyjohnson.com/blog/.
- [19] Kabir, *One Hundred Poems of Kabir: Translated by Rabindranath Tagore*, (2005), Adamant Media Corporation, Elibron Classics Series.
- [20] *King James Bible Online - Official King James Version of 1611 KJV and 1769*, Online Bible. www.kingjamesbibleonline.org.
- [21] Rev. T.A. Koehler, *The Christian Symbolism of the Rose: Our Lady and the Rose*, (2002-2003), University of Dayton, Ohio, Retrieved from: www.udayton.edu/mary/rosarymarkings36.html.
- [22] R. Labat, *Les Religions Du Proche-Orient Asiatique*, (1970), Fayard/Dnoel, Translated by Abuna and Al-Jader, *Religious Beliefs in Mesopotamia/Chosen Babylonian Texts*, (1988), Baghdad: Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research.
- [23] D.H. Lawrence, *England My England*, From: D.H. Lawrence's Short Story: *England, My England*, (2011), www.readbookonline.net/readOnline/11030/.
- [24] C. Marien, *Language of Roses*, www.lillysrosegarden.com/rose-colors-symbolism.html.
- [25] D.E.S. Maxwell, *The Poetry of T.S. Eliot*, (1960), London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- [26] Myths Encyclopedia, *Flowers in Mythology*, (2013), Advameg. Inc., <http://www.mythencyclopedia.com/Fi-Go/Flowers-in-Mythology.html>.

- [27] Nuraishah, *Significance of Roses*, (1999), Street Directory Singapore, Retrieved From: FlowerAdvisor.com.sg.
- [28] W. Paul, *The Rose Garden*, (1863), London: Kent and Co, A Google Digital Copy: <http://books.google.com>.
- [29] G. Pease, Translation of Sappho, *Romantic and Religious Roses*, (2011), Mariene Pehrson, www.shelovesgod.com/library/article.cmf?articleid=4969.
- [30] D. Phelps, *History of the Rose: The World's Most Famous Flower!* (2008), www.easy-oil-painting-techniques.org/history-of-the-rose.html.
- [31] Poem Hunter, <http://www.poemhunter.com>.
- [32] Osho, *Symbol of Mystic Rose and Mystic Rose Meditative Therapy*, (1988), http://www.messagefrommasters.com/Therapy/Symbol_of_mystic_rose.htm.
- [33] Samuel Garth et al, *Ovid's Metamorphosis*, (1717), London, A Modernized Online Edition, Retrieved from: ovid.lib.virginia.edu.
- [34] Poetry Chaikhana, Mar 6 (2012), www.poetrychaikhana.com/Themes/Perfume/index.html
- [35] E. Rosalyn, *The More You Know: Red Roses*, February 14 (2013), The Hudsucker, thehudsucker.com/2013/02/14/the-more-you-know-red-roses/.
- [36] Roses-Flowers, A1 Pune Flowers, (2010), from: www.a1puneflowers.com/flowers/pune-roses-.
- [37] *Roses Trivia, Meanings and Myths*, (2013), Phillip's Flowers Shops, America's Online Florist, www.800florals.com/care/rose_trivia.asp.
- [38] N. Hengeveld, *Scripture References—The Book of Ruth, Matthew 1:5: Ruth - All the Women of the Bible - Bible Gateway*, (1995), Zondervan, www.biblegateway.com.
- [39] S. Muslihu'd-din Sa'di, *Gulistan (The Rose Garden)*, Translated into English by J. Ross, Esq. (1823), London: J.M. Richardson, 23, Cornhill, Opposite the Royal Exchange, Google Digital Copy.
- [40] Samaha and Brother M.S.M. John, *The Rose: A Marian Symbol*, (2008), International Marian Research Institute, Dayton, Ohio. <http://campus.udayton.edu>.
- [41] S. Hikim, *Chaikhana: Sacred Poetry from Around the World*, English version by David and Sabrineh Fideler, www.poetry-chaikhana.com/Poets/S/SanaHakim.
- [42] Sanity Island, *From FTE, A Newsletter for Women (and Interested Others)*, (Fall 1989), Retrieved from: © 2010 by Harmony Workshop, www.sanityisland.com/rose-symbolism.htm.
- [43] W. Shakespeare, *Sonnet 54*, (2010), Retrieved from: Shakespeare on line, ©1999-2010 Amanda Mabillard, www.shakespeare-online.com/sonnets/54.html.
- [44] A. Sutton, *History and Symbolism of the Rose, Rose Quotes*, (2013), Retrieved from: HelpMeFind.com, www.helpmefind.com/rose/ezine.php?publicationID=222&js=0.
- [45] The flower expert, *History of the Roses*, May 14 (2013), www.theflowerexpert.com/content/.../flowersandhistory/history-of-roses.
- [46] The Rose Sufi Crescent, *Meditation with the Rose Crescent*, August 06 (2006), rose-sufi-crescent.blogspot.com/2006/08/meditation.
- [47] Wikipedia.
- [48] H. Yahya, *Miracles of the Quran -3*, (2009), Turkey: Istanbul, Retrieved from: Yahya, harunyahya.com/en/Books/47517/miracles-of-the-quran.