Chapter 2

Saffron and religion

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2.1 Introduction

Studying the role and status of an agricultural product in any religion may at first seem strange. However, having recalled the fact that religion, as an important dimension of culture, is related to all aspects of individual and collective life and plays a role in all daily life shows it is easy to see how saffron has deviated from its mere agricultural function and has acquired a bold cultural hue in the history of some regions.

In the present chapter, considering the subject and geographical region, we focus on three groups of religions. The first group is the Persian religions, which consist of Zoroastrian, Manichaean, and Mazdakite. However, due to lack of evidence related to the role and status of saffron in Manichaeism and Mazdakism, inevitably they are not discussed. In Zoroastrianism, saffron is discussed based on Avesta references and other Zoroastrian texts. Due to the widespread use of saffron in various aspects of the culture of Iran, which may well reflect the long history of the role of this aromatic plant in Iranian social and religious life, the use of saffron in the Zoroastrian religion is discussed in the section "Saffron in pre-Islamic Iran" in Chapter 3, Saffron in the Ancient history of Iran, of this book.

The second group is the Indian religions, which are comprised of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism.

The third group is the Semitic religions, the religions of Abraham, which include Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Among these three religions, saffron is solely mentioned in the religious texts of Judaism, and has appeared in both the original sacred text of Judaism, the Old Testament, and also in its expositions, especially in Talmudic texts. However, saffron is not mentioned in the original sacred texts of Christianity and Islam. Indeed, the Jews, whether at the time of writing and compiling the Old Testament or in the later periods, had an especial connection to the East particularly to Iran. The later flourishing of Christianity occurred in places where saffron was not popular, which is probably why it does not in the sacred texts and culture of the religion. While there is no mention of saffron in the Islamic text the Quran there are many references to it in the *hadiths* (Islamic traditions), indicating its prevalence in Iranian society and culture. Despite the fact that this sudden and abundant attention given to saffron in *hadith* texts helps the researcher become familiar with the various angles of cultural, social, and religious uses of saffron, it breeds concern that since it is away from the beginning of Islam in terms of time and from its origin in terms of place, the probability of

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misrepresentation and forgery of later *hadiths* increases. For this reason, here we only briefly mention the *hadiths*. Since the review and analysis of this process, as well as distinguishing the valid *hadiths* from the invalid ones are not discussed in this study, there has been only a brief mention of these *hadiths*.

2.2 Saffron in Indian religions

In the Sanskrit language, saffron is called kesaravara (केसरवर) and in the Hindi language it is called kesar () from the Sanskrit root word kesara (), which means hair and eyebrow, and refers to thin strands of saffron. Another Sanskrit word for saffron is kaśmīrajanman (कश्मीरजन्मन्). The suffix janman () means bearing and origin, so kaśmīrajanman means born in Kashmir or Kashmiri origin, which is sufficient proof that Kashmir was believed to be the birthplace of saffron. Sometimes saffron is referred to as crocus (फूल) in Hindi, which of course means ornamental saffron, a plant from the Iridaceae family.

Saffron has applications in India and all Indian religions (Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and especially Hinduism), in their temples (from Mandir to Gurdwara), religious costumes, rituals, medicine and therapies, cooking and preparing of food, and clothes. Saffron is also mentioned in prominent Hindu books such as *Mahabharata* and *Ramayan*. In Indian medical texts on traditional medicine called the *Ayurveda* saffron is used as an antidepressant and to treat muscle cramps (spasm), bronchitis, sore throats, headaches, fever, and to raise the body temperature of pregnant women as well as a sexual stimulant (Swami, 2005, p. 111). Because of its stimulating effect, it was used by grooms at the time of consummation. It is a popular alternative medicine and has a thriving lucrative market in India. Of course, saffron was also used to dye important garments. Of course, saffron was also used to dye important garments. However, these are the prevalent uses of saffron and are more or less common in most cultures, and what is more important is its application in rituals and rites

2.2.1 Saffron symbols

One of the most important ritual applications of saffron is to paint the forehead and hair part of women as a religious symbol. If this saffron dot is on the forehead, it is called tīlaka (तलिक) in Sanskrit and tīkā (टीका) in Hindi, and is an indication of religious, sectarian, and spiritual affiliations.

If this symbol is on the hairline and part, it is called sindūra () in Sanskrit and sindūra (सिन्दूर) in Hindi, which means red color and is a sign of marriage. The other sign appears between the two eyebrows and is called bindu (बिंदु) in Sanskrit and bindi (बिंदी) in Hindi and means dot or mole, referring to the third eye of Shiva (one of the triple Indian Gods who is the manifestation of God's glory and invincibility and the God of mort), which he opens at the time of the destruction of this world drowned in darkness for a fresh start. This mole is a sign of insight, which is mostly regarded as a symbol of women's beauty. These moles and signs are as old as Hinduism and other Indian religions. In ancient historical and literary Persian works, they are referred to in various ways, such as mole and *ghashghah* (*1. a dark spot a horse's forehead 2. A sign put on the forehead*) and their applications in religious rituals are noted (Dehkhoda, 1963). In addition, Indian and Iranian Persian poets have used these signs to describe themes. In the 10th CE, to describe the saffron signs of Hindu clergymen (Brahmans), Masoudi says: "Male and female Brahmans hang yellow strings like sword belt on their necks to be distinguished from other Hindus" (Masoudi,1968, vol. 1, p. 71).

Unsuri Balkhi (CE 9th and 10th) in the mention of a saffron ornament worn by Indians says:

No one grows saffron in India/ since its dignity is to be used as ornament.

Because your solemnity gives dignity/ every year without saffron breeds a pale look.

Onsori Balkhi (1984, p. 43)

Describing a good-looking Hindu boy at the time of Timurid dynasty, when the ritual of rubbing saffron on the body was common, Ashraf Mazandarani (17th CE) says:

Similar to Iris, abir is sprayed from bosom to navel/resembling narcissus, pleated skirt full of saffron to waist.

Ashraf Mazandarani (1994, p. 265)

In CE 16th in Jahangir, the Indian Gurkani King, while visiting Koubandval in India, noted that: "There was a Hindu named Erjen dressed up as an old virtuous sheikh who rubbed a pinch of saffron, which is called *ghashghah* and believed to be auspicious by Indians, on a king's forehead" (Jahangir Gurkanid, 1980, p. 42).

In some travelogues of people who had traveled to Isfahan (in Iran) and the area of Oulala in India in CE 17th and also in Persian poems of that century and the following centuries there were mentions of this role of saffron (Abrishami, 2002, p. 341).

One of the most famous references to this sign is in Hafiz's poem (Hafez,1992), which says:

That beautiful Shirazi Turk took control and my heart stole/I'll give Samarkand and Bukhara, for her Hindu beautiful mole.

One of its meanings is the beautiful mole, which originally belongs to the Indians, between the eyebrows. Apparently, even at the time of Hafiz when Shiraz had maritime business exchanges with India the Indian mole was used to express the beauty of women.

Banyans, the Indian merchants, used saffron in their customs and traditions. For example, Pietro Della Valle in 1025 AH (CE 1617) in describing their ceremonies says: "Banyans are all dressed in white from head to foot at the time of their celebrations. However, their costumes are painted dark yellow on the chest with saffron and their turbans are dyed with the same substance. Inside the yellow color, red spots have been put using a sandal and they are so fond of these two colors that they have even put them on their foreheads using the same style"(Della Valle, 1969, p. 72).

2.2.2 Saffron in Tantara rites

Applying saffron in one of the well-known Indian religious rites called Tantara and performing its rites to awaken hidden power and bodily strength (kundalini) is a necessity. Tantara symbolism is very important and mysterious. "One common element of Tantara is using sacred geometric cosmological designs named "yantra" and "mandala." In Tantara Buddhism, which has propagated sophisticated designs, the expression of Mandala, which means circle of influence, is seen repeatedly. Yantaras are tools and devices designed to preserve and visualize divine power. Yantaras might be designs drawn on paper, etched in stone and iron, or preserved in other things. They may also be 3D visualizations. In many temples of Tantara, the "true" symbol of God is a Yantara embedded in the interior shrine that is not visible and accessible to everyone. Typically, Yantara has a central point called the "bindu." This is the symbol of degradation of the high world in the circle of manifestation. . . .Sometimes Bīja Mintara whose Yantara is God, may appear under Bindu. . . .The upward triangle in this symbol is a sign of masculinity (linga) and the downward triangle implies femininity (yoni). . . . The well-known Yantara consists of five downward and four upward intersecting triangles and is essentially viewed as the symbol for unity of feminine and masculine essence. The same as a drop of water, which causes an outward ripple when it drops on the surface of a pond, the petals can also be seen as the sparkle of creation and flourishment of germinated seeds (Bīja). Therefore Yantara is considered the position of God" (Rodriguez, 2006, pp. 266−267). Saffron is commonly used to paint these important religious symbols.

2.2.3 Saffron for laundering Gods

Another application of saffron is for laundering the idols. As the conquest of Sumanat and breaking of the idol "Manat" by Mahmud Ghaznavi has been described in Persian sources, this Hindu tradition is referred to as well (Abrishami, 2002, p. 343).

In Hinduism, the renowned idols of Shiva, Barhama, Vishnu, and female goddesses like Kali and Mahadiu are decorated with flowers and smeared with saffron and aromatized with fragrance and musk in various ceremonies, particularly Shaktis (a sect of Shiva worshippers) (Kay Khosrow Esfandiar, 1983, vol. 1, p. 167). Smearing the Hindu God's idols with saffron colored the faces and heads of the followers. As Mohammad Fadaei (CE 18th) in the verse story of "Khoram and Ziba" while referring to ceremonies in idol houses says: ". . .he smeared saffron on the forehead and ear/ like a Hindu coming from the idol house"(Fadaei, 2015, p. 79).

On rubbing saffron on the groom's body at the wedding, the Iranian Aqa Mohammad Behbahani during his journey in India between 1902 and 1907 wrote: "On Indian wedding. . . at the time of wedding, a few days before henna ceremony, saffron and turmeric are rubbed on the bride and groom's bodies and they are dressed in yellow costume and then are seated in a secluded place, during this time they do not leave the place very much" (Kermanshahi, 1993, p. 111).

2.2.4 Saffron color in India's flag

India's flag consists of three colors, which are similar to Iran's flag with a difference in the arrangement of colors, which are in reverse order, and saffron color is used instead of red. In India, which is dominated by Hindus (80%), the saffron color is one of the three colors and seemingly the symbol and representative of Hindu population, whereas the

other two colors are green and white. In India's flag, saffron is on top, green is at the bottom, and white is in between, which is an indication of superiority and domination. But Ali Asghar Hekmat who was the Iranian ambassador to India in 1957 on selecting the colors for India's flag writes:

"In accordance with the constitution, India's flag is comprised of three colors, saffron, white and green arranged horizontally from top to bottom, merged equally... there is an entertaining anecdote behind selecting these colors and that is, in 1921 the general committee (assembly) of the congress party chaired by Mahatma Gandhi was held, meanwhile a young man from that region conferred upon Gandhi a flag consisting of red and green symbolizing Hindu and Muslim. This appealed to Gandhi and he added a white part to the flag to be the representative of other Indian religions, also he added the image of wheel, which is the secret of movement and progress. Later, in 1931, when the general committee of the congress party agreed on these three colors to be the national flag, it was stated that the colors did not have anything to do with religious titles, but that saffron is the sign of bravery, white is the sign of honesty and peace, and green is the sign of faith" (Hekmat, 1958, p. 403).

2.2.5 Saffron, the color of religious costumes

The color saffron and its derivatives is the most common religious and ritual color in India. The costumes of students, disciples, fakirs, religious, and sacred figures and even political personalities are saffron. The flags of religious groups are also the same color. This color seems to be widely accepted by the general public and is even used by religious and Islamic political figures as well as in ethnic rituals in India.

Some Muslim mystics who traveled to India and resided there wore yellowish saffron attire. Lali Badakhshi in a biography about Nour Al-din Malek Yar Parran, a settler in Delhi (died in CE 1281), noted that: "He is originally from Lar and a follower of Sheikh Danial Khalaji ... at the time of King Ghiyas Al-din Balban he came to Delhi.... He used to wear yellow clothes at all times" (Lali Badakhshi, 1990, p. 1023).

Moreover, some local Indian kings, following older customs, drew signs and drawings on their bodies and clothes with saffron. This tradition was common until CE 18th, and even the beautiful yellow color was considered a royal sign (Abrishami, 2002, p. 347).

Muslim rulers, influenced by the dominant Hindu culture, wore saffron attire. Apparently, wearing a scarf dyed in saffron was common and it was reported that: "While Jahangir, the Timurid King of India, was wearing a saffron scarf around his neck, his Iranian wife Noor Jahan Beigom (Ghias Beig Tehrani's daughter) told him at his sight: "there is no saffron color on your bosom/ my face's yellow color has affected you"(Abrishami, 2002, p. 347).

2.2.6 Saffron celebrations and festivals

India has two major public holidays one of which is called "Houli" and is held at the beginning of spring and the other one called Diwali is held in the fall. These two celebrations are the biggest and most important festivals of India and Hindus. Houli is the celebration of colors, and is almost coincident with the Iranian celebration of Nowruz and both have a single root. In the Houli celebration a variety of colors are used and people participating in it become rapt in dance and rejoice, temporarily discarding class distinctions and splashing paint at each other. Although different types of colors are used in these celebrations, saffron color and its derivatives are used the most.

Throwing saffron during Iranian celebrations and Islamic festivals (Eids) in imitation of the Houli festival became widely prevalent at the time of Timurid, the Muslim rulers of India. In the 17th century Ashraf Mazandarani observed the Houli festival a (Abrishami, 2002, p. 382; Ashraf Mazandarani, 1994, pp. 152−153):

Hey butler, unveil the hijab/ and unmask the beauty of modesty.

So that I'll narrate the story of the Indian Holy/ and begin to explain about Indian Bolfozouli.

I entered the assembly like a Holy participant/ listen to me, I am reporting the event.

Once again the outburst of India's lust/ the tradition of frenzy manifested itself.

Occasionally, they paint each other's clothes by throwing red and saffron colors.

Other poets have written about the Indian tradition of saffron throwing at celebrations and eids. Monir Lahoori (died in CE 1644) (Monir Lahoori, n.d., p. 51), Gouya-ye Pinjabi Ghaznavi (died in CE 1704) (Gouya, 1963, p. 31), and Seraj Al-din Ali Arezoo (died in CE 1756) (Laleh Tik Chand, 2001, p. 1358) have written poems on the celebration of Holi and throwing saffron in it (see Abrishami, 2002, p. 383).

As Abd Al-latif Shooshtari (18th century) writes in his Indian travelogue: "Another great festival is Houli that coincides *Soltani* (royal) Nowruz and lasts for a month, ... they have a tool called twists (*pichkari*), whenever *abir*, water or something else is put and turned, the tool and whatever it contains go for several *zar* (a unit of measurement for length)... I heard that there were eighteen thousand twists (*pichkari*) made of gold and silver used for playing" (Shooshtari, 1984, p. 379). To explain the twisting, Abrishami says: "*pichkari* is a compound Persian word that is currently used in Afghanistan, which means syringe and injection. Certainly the Hindi spray device was similar to needle-free syringe"(Abrishami, 2002, p. 383).

As I witnessed myself (F. Gharaei, one of the authors of this chapter) in the Houli celebration in New Delhi, India in the year of 1996, small and big pumps were used to splash paint, which were sold in a variety of sizes and sometimes in sacks. In celebrations held at the time of Akbar Shah Gurkanid saffron was thrown. Sheikh Abul Fazl Mobarak Nagouri (killed in 1602 AH) in describing a celebration at Gurkanid palace held to celebrate Akbar Shah's birthday says: "In the seraglio of infallibility and dignity arrangements have been made for exhilaration... beautiful nurses gave new honor to enthusiasm by throwing gulab. Smiling wearers of amethyst clothes, while throwing saffron, covered gorgeous women with gold" (Nagouri, 1993, vol. 1, p. 36).

Shebli Nomani says: "One day on birthday celebration, saffron color was thrown on clothes and Sheikh Abd Al-nabi (very well esteemed by Akbar and served as a guru for him) had seen and got so furious that as a result hit him with his crane"(Nomani, 1984, p. 36).

2.2.7 Saffron color in Buddhism

When Buddha passed away, his corpse was wrapped in a cloak dyed in saffron and thus Buddhists also have a special interest in the saffron color. In addition, Buddhist monks' costumes are in saffron color or its derivatives and they believe that saffron clothes take them to the desired liberation point more swiftly. According to Buddhist legend, an Indian Buddhist monk named Madhyantika was the first person who planted saffron in Kashmir (Abrishami, 2002, p. 352). Buddhists use the Mandala sign, which consists of saffron and saffron colors as the main components, more than other Indian religions.

2.3 Semitic religions

2.3.1 Judaism

Throughout the entire Tanakh or the holy book of Jews, the Hebrew term *karkom* (כרכם) is used in only one place (Song of Songs 14.4). The term describes a beloved friend and among numerous metaphors used about the sweetheart she is likened to an enclosed garden in which, in addition to beautiful manifestations and value-adding factors of the garden, "precious fruits" grow as well. Along with valuable crops of this garden that the lover names, he mentions "spikenard, saffron, calamus [sugarcane], cinnamon and various trees such as frankincense, myrrh and aloes and all precious spices." Naming saffron beside sugarcane, which has a pleasant flavor and fragrances like frankincense, myrrh and incense indicate that saffron was considered as a freshener as well as a flavor. Its mention beside spikenard indicates its beauty, whether in the form of saffron flower or the beautiful color obtained from it.

In addition to the holy text the Old Testament, the term *karkom* has appeared in the collection of "Braita" when talking about the rules of burning incense in temples. Eleven substances have been mentioned in this instruction among which there are items similar to the ones in Songs of Solomon. The common points are frankincense, myrrh, spikenard, saffron, and cinnamon (Talmud, Krithoth, 6 A, Pitum Haketoret).

For a long time, based on the common tradition of understanding religious texts, Jews have considered the term *karkom* to be saffron. But some scholars are skeptical about this idea and have taken the word *karkom* to mean something else. Immanuel Löw (1854–1944), a Hungarian Rabbi and a specialist in Hebrew and Aramaic etymology of plants and also translator of Songs of Solomon to Hungarian, believes that since the fragrances mentioned in both lists are crops, which are originally from far tropical regions, *karkom* cannot be saffron, but rather is *Curcuma longa* or turmeric, which grows in tropical regions and was called Indian saffron (Löw, 1924, s.v.).

However, this idea cannot be accepted. Because turmeric is not considered as a fragrance and is mainly a color additive and food flavor, mentioning its name beside the other aforementioned fragrances is not relevant (Feliks, 2006, s.v.). On the other hand, mentioning saffron with spikenard, aside from its aroma, implies the beauty of its flower as well.

Another researcher skeptical about the implication of *karkom* for saffron in Songs of Solomon is Mohammad Hassan Abrishami (1939). He believes that mentioning the word saffron in Songs of Solomon is a mistake made by translators: "...the Yemeni saffron, which means *vars*ورس [reseda], and some earlier authors have mistakenly referred

to it as 'Yemeni saffron'… in all probability, this mistake has occurred in translating ancient Greek, Hebrew and Pahlavi texts to Arabic, while the word *qortom* قرطم [*carthamus*] and *Vars* (and also some plants or things that had similarities to saffron in one way or another) have been translated as saffron. The present author doubts whether the word *za'faran* in Persian translation of Song of Songs in Torah [sic.] …is the same as its original Persian and Arabic meaning. Rather, the same mistake must have happened in the translation of *qortom* and *vars* (plants grown in Egypt and Yemen) as saffron or Persian *karkom*. Because in the territory of prophets and kings of Israelites planting the original saffron was not common, and they used the Persian word *Karkom* for *vars*, *qortom* and *osfor* عصفر [*Carthamus tinctorios*]"(Abrishami, 1997, pp. 21–22).

Prior to mentioning this mistake, the author has provided a detailed and accurate description of the plants, which are the right replacement of saffron in Song of Songs and the reader may refer to his explanations. The main criticism of Abrishami's point of view is that he has assumed a principle as correct if a plant is mentioned in a text, including in the Old Testament, necessarily the cultivation place of that plant must be the region where the followers of that holy book lived. On the other hand, this scholar believes that the cultivation of saffron in the regions of Levant and Palestine was done by Iranian migrants after the advent of Islam (Abrishami, 1997, p. 111) and since the text of Song of Songs belongs to centuries before the advent of Islam and migration of Iranians to those regions, there is no possibility that saffron was cultivated at that time. We do not discuss this second opinion but only say that even the Jewish researchers themselves agree with Abrishami that Iran is the birthplace of saffron (Feliks, 2006, s.v.). However, more discussion and study is required on the transfer time, but concerning the first speculation, his point of view cannot be seen as acceptable, because, as it was mentioned, referring to a plant's name in a text does not mean that it was planted there too. In a verse from the book of Song of Songs, some fragrances like myrrh are mentioned, which were taken by merchants from southern Saudi Arabia to Canaan several centuries before the Common Era (Finkelstein and Silberman, 2015, p. 37). Moreover, we refer again to the point we mentioned in rejecting Löw's view, since the plants mentioned by Abrishami as the replacements for saffron do not have the same aroma, vividness, and beauty as saffron, and thus are not used in a romantic sonnet addressed to the sweetheart.

Another term used in ancient times, which is believed by some to be related to saffron, is "ziphron" in the Book of Numbers 34.9. James Hawkes has stated the following it in the glossary of Bible: "ziphron (fragrance) is a city at the border of northern estates of Israel…and is probably the Za'faranah a city mid-way between Homs and Hama…"(Hawkes, 1998, p. 443).

Abrishami in criticizing Hawkes's idea firstly denies the meaning that he suggests and thinks it is not based on a reliable source, since as we mentioned earlier he believes that the cultivation of saffron in Syria and Palestine was done after the advent of Islam and if there is a place named Za'faranah in that region, its background cannot precede Islam. Hence, the word Ziphron does not mean "good smell" and, based on this, it cannot be used as a proof that the city of Za'faranah existed when the Old Testament was written (Abrishami, 1997, pp. 53–54). Despite that, it should be noted that Hawkes is not alone in this sense and Ziphron, in the majority of related sources, has the same meaning. (Easton, 1897, s.v.). Interestingly, in Hebrew dictionaries and lexicons, the root of the term is not observed (Hayyim, 1981), which means it is based on speculation and probably even on the etymology of Arabic language (Jones, 1990, s.v.).

In the following eras, at the times of Mishnah and Talmud, the use of saffron was widespread in Palestine and Babylon. In Babylonian Talmud, in the Bava Kama treatise 81 A, which refers to the licenses needed for using pastures, springs, and roads, it is stated that people can "use plantations hedge, even farms full of saffron (*Karkom*)," indicating the value of a saffron farm since even walking past it and not necessarily entering it may have been allowed.

In the Islamic era, from the CE 9th century, *dhimmīs* had to have signs on their clothes to be distinguished from Muslims. This sign was called "*Ghyar*" in the Muslim world and it has been said that Jews, according to the Pope's command, had to paint the sign with saffron in the Middle Ages in Europe (Lewis, 1984, pp. 25, 27; Perlman, 1965, s.v.).

2.3.2 Islam

As noted earlier, Judaism, among the other three Abrahamic religions, which are Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, is the only religion that mentions saffron in its sacred text. The term *karkom* is not used in the Bible, which consists of the New and Old Testament, nor in the Holy Quran. But in Islam, while it is not mentioned in its holy text (Quran), it is mentioned in the *hadiths*. In one *hadith*, which is on the medicinal effects of saffron, much is said on the prohibition of smelling and eating food containing saffron during *Ihram* (pilgrimage). Also, there are disagreements regarding the use of clothing dyed with saffron in some texts of jurisprudence; from the point of view of some religious jurists, wearing clothing dyed with saffron is forbidden, but others believe that if the smell of saffron is removed, it is acceptable (Al-Hurr al-Aamili, 1995, vol. 12, pp. 442, 446, 449; Koleini, 1401, vol. 4, pp. 342–343 and 354–355; Moslem Ibn Hajjaj Neyshabouri, 1954, vol. 3, pp. 293–294).

However, the discussion on the authenticity of *hadiths* requires a more specialized and extensive look, and we offer this in Chapter 3, Saffron in the Ancient history of Iran, of this book.

2.4 Conclusion

Saffron is used commonly in Hinduism. In Persian literature of the Islamic period of India, there are also frequent references to saffron indicating its wide use in India especially among the Hindus. The reference to saffron in the Old Testament shows that the Jews were familiar with it and, considering some passages of the Talmud, we can conclude that at the time the plant was being cultivated in surrounding lands. In Islam, while there is no reference in the Quran, because of the Muslims' acquaintance with Iran's flora, the references to saffron and its various properties found their way into the many Islamic traditions (*hadiths*).

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