227982 - Ruling on using perfume mixed with saffron

the question

What is the ruling on using oil-based perfume, if it contains some saffron, for men? What is the ruling on using perfume made only of saffron, for men?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Saffron is a plant that has many uses. It is a spice that gives a pleasant flavour to food, and it is also used as a dye for cloth, giving it a bright yellow colour. It has a pleasant fragrance, hence it is used as a perfume.

See: al-Mu‘jam al-Waseet (1/394); al-Mawsoo‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah al-‘Aalamiyyah: Za‘faraan.

With regard to using saffron as a perfume – nowadays – it is used in two ways:

1. Men apply it to their bodies, as women do, so that the colour and fragrance of saffron appear on the body.

This is haraam, because it comes under the heading of imitating women and using perfumes that are only for women, and there are reports which indicate that this is not allowed.

It was narrated by al-Bukhaari in his Saheeh (5846) and Muslim in his Saheeh (2101) that Anas said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) forbade men to use saffron.

At-Tirmidhi said: What is meant by it being disliked for a man to use saffron is for him to perfume himself with saffron."(Sunan at-Tirmidhi 4/418)

Imam ash-Shaafa‘i said: We do not allow men, under any circumstances, to use saffron, and if a man does use saffron, we instruct him to wash the saffron from his body."(Ma‘rifat as-Sunan wa’l-

Athaar 2/455)

Ibn Hubayrah said:

From this hadith, we learn that saffron is a perfume for women, and it is not a perfume for men."(Al-Ifsaah ‘an Ma‘aani as-Sihaah 5/261)

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

With regard to the prohibition on men using saffron, what is meant is applying it to the body as perfume [the word used in the original Arabic is derived from a term that refers to a kind of perfume containing saffron]. Acceptable perfume for men is that in which has a fragrance is strong and no colour."(Sharh ‘Umdat al-Fiqh (p. 383). See also: Taaj al-‘Uroos 25/260)

Al-Mubaarakfoori said:

The apparent meaning of his words, “The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) forbade men to use saffron” is that it is prohibited for them to use saffron in all cases, whether in small or great amounts, on the body or (as a dye) for clothing."(Tuhfat al-Ahwadhi 8/82).

It was also narrated from Anas that it is prohibited to wear clothing dyed with saffron. See the answer to question no. 72878

2.

The fragrance only is extracted from saffron and mixed with other oils, as is done by perfumers today.

There is nothing wrong with that, because the prohibition on perfuming oneself with saffron only has to do with the colour, not the fragrance. Fragrance is the main characteristic with regard to perfume for men, rather than the colour, as it was narrated from ‘Imraan ibn Husayn that the Prophet of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Perfume for men should have a scent and no colour, and perfume for women should have a colour and no scent.”

Narrated by Abu Dawood (4048); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani.

An-Nawawi said:

That is only because of its colour, not its scent. It is liked for men’s perfume to have a scent."(Al-Majmoo‘ Sharh al-Muhadhdhab 1/295)

In al-Haawi li’l-Fataawi by as-Suyooti (1/74) it says:

An-Nawawi said: The reason for the prohibition [on saffron] is the colour, not the scent."(Kashf al-Mushkil min Hadith as-Saheehayn 3/271).

The hadiths which speak of the prohibition on men using saffron are to be interpreted as referring to applying it to the body for both colour and scent, as is the custom among women.

However, these fragrances that are extracted from the saffron flower (Crocus sativus) and mixed with other oils are no longer described as saffron in the sense in which the word is used in the hadiths which prohibit using it.

And Allah knows best.