



Study the Role of Color in Creating Poetic Images

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Abstract

The word "color" is an influential word in all cultures. In different languages, there are some words which are not associated with the meaning of the word "color", however, they represent it indirectly. For instance, words such as garnet, ruby, emerald and agate are used to describe various expressions of color, however, what does color mean by itself? Colors affect individuals' physical and mental states and many psychologists believe that there is a relation between the choice of color and individuals' physical, mental and psychological characteristics. The present paper is a qualitative analysis which studies the role of color in creating poetic images. Therefore, color is imagined as a sort of sensory element used for expressing abstract concepts. In lyrical poetry, colors appear in the form of symbolic concepts to reveal poet's imagination and represent the poem in a more beautiful framework to the reader or listener.

Keywords: Color, poetic images, lyrical poetry.

Introduction

The word "color" is considered as one of the most applied words in all languages. The reason is that the concept of color is present in all aspects of life, and humans are surrounded with various colorful objects. Moreover, since we watch and feel these colorful objects, determining symbols is necessary in order to interpret them. Words are symbolic forms for colors and they convey both the main concepts related to colors and some internal intuitions, they are symbolic signs of internal inspirations¹.

Variety of colors and also creating combined colors lead to creation of new words and combinations, consequently language always creates new words to express what is called "color" or what connotes to the concept of color, and then the language develops its colored variety of words. Persian language is not an exception either².

Many times, the physiological effects of color have been discussed. For instance, wearing white dresses in summer is suitable, because of the fact that white color reflects the sunlight. Conversely, wearing black dresses in winter is suitable and it is a fact accepted by people³. Furthermore, physiologists have found that the color red increases blood pressure and affects nervous system as well. Doctor Radar was from Geneva, he used colors to anesthetize his patients, to do so he made his patients stare at a dazzling blue light, after 10 minutes his patients would be anesthetized⁴. In majority of world's languages, color does not represent just its literal meaning; it finds a symbolic form which represents something else⁵. In symbolic application of color, personal experience, natural environment and social condition are all important. In fact, symbol refers to "a thing which is perceivable and could be

experienced via senses, however, it represents something intangible which is not perceivable and cannot be experienced by senses. Moreover, a concept represented by a symbol must not be a known concept, it needs not to be certain and unique⁶."

Wassily Kandinsky was the founder of abstract art; he emphasized the mental value of colors and believed that each color implied a special concept, even if it did not refer to a subject⁷. Moreover, Goethe in his "treatise on color" talked about the special effects of colors. Also, Will Durant declared that Australian natives applied colors to convey specific messages⁸.

Sometimes the mental concepts associated with colors are so deep that they refer to mythological concepts. The importance of color in "twelve towers" related to astrology, the colored imagination of days of week, the imagination of color for the soul of the dead are all examples reflecting the impact of color on collective unconscious⁹. Sociologists and anthropologists have found many mythological signs in societies in which machine dominance have not yet separated people from nature¹⁰.

Main body

In the oldest Persian dictionary, two meanings have been represented for the word "color", one is deceit and the other is wisdom. In Farhang-Jahangiri (a Persian dictionary) there are thirty one real and figurative meanings for the word "color" eight of which have sensory meanings and the rest have non-sensory meanings. In Burhan-I Qati (a Persian language dictionary) there are thirty three meanings for the word "color" among which only nine meanings are sensory¹¹. In Farhang-I Anandraj, not only the single meanings of this word are

considered, but also its compound structures are considered as well. In this dictionary, there are sixty verbal compounds¹². These verbal compounds clarify the evolution of this word from its real meaning to its figurative meaning. In terms of including various real and figurative meanings, Dehkhoda dictionary is the most comprehensive Persian dictionary ever published¹³. This dictionary represents different meanings of the word "color", and also discusses its physical features in the form of a short article¹⁴. Another advantage of this dictionary is that it represents various examples to show the concept of "color" from the previous times up to now. It also represents different forms of compounds related to the word "color"¹⁵.

In Persian language dictionary "color" has been defined in this way: "Color is the aspect of emergence of objects and lights, it is dependent on the spectral composition of light striking the retina of the eye, it also refers to the changes of this spectral composition in time and space"¹⁶. In English dictionary of Webster, color is defined in this way: "The sensation produced by the effect of light waves striking the retina of the eye"¹⁷. It depends mainly on certain wavelengths of light". Since the second definition defines color as a sensation, it is more compatible with the aim of the present research, because it is true to say that color must be sensed¹⁸.

Regarding the mentioned definitions, it is obvious that there is an affiliation between color and light, moreover, color cannot be perceived in the absence of light. The famous scientist, Newton (1642-1727) passed sunlight through a prism and gained seven colors, in this way, he developed human science toward the issue of "color"¹⁹.

According to definitions of "color", it is possible to say that the effect of colors on people is different, for instance, the effect of the color "green" on people living across the jungles is different from its effect on people living in deserts. Therefore, in different regions, cultures and civilizations, "colors" has specific symbolic meanings; however, there are some similarities among them as well. In other words, color have some unified symbolic meanings for all people around the world, for example "Red" is symbolic of Nature powers such as the sun or fire; it is also symbol of strength or wrath²⁰. Nowadays, communication and transportation developments have decreased the distance among human societies, hence colors travel from one society to another one and they find common unified symbolic meanings. Sometimes, a color has the same symbolic meaning for all people around the world. In the process of transferring these symbolic concepts to different nations, collective unconscious plays no role; in this case, impact of physiology of color is stronger than other social factors²¹. For instance, "green" for the physicians of surgery room has the unified meaning of a special mental state for all individuals. The theory of colors psychology helped the increase of common symbolic interpretations of colors, today, "blue" is imagined by approximately all people of the world as a symbol of absolute tranquility, deep reflection and immersion in the infinite, or "black" is imagined as

nothingness, sorrow and ambiguity, "white" implies peace, and faith, yellow implies hope, desire, and joy, red implies violence, anger and passion and finally, green implies life and vitality²². Presence of colorful images in Persian poetry shows that colors lead to poets' naturalistic view toward things. In the poems of 4th and 5th centuries, color had a concrete aspect and it was perceivable and comprehensible by external senses, but with the passage of time, poem gets closer to its nature as a poem and consequently poet needs a better means to express concepts inspired from the depth of soul²³. Metaphors find deeper meanings and colors turn into figurative means to express intuitive perceptions and represent something more than the concrete meaning of themselves²⁴.

Results and Discussion

Color is one of the most fundamental human motivations to create mental images. Mental images rely on personal experiences and color relies on experiences as well. In the absence of external motivations, mental image brings about dreams and artistic mental images. One of the important elements creating these sorts of images is color or colorful objects²⁵.

Color helps the poet highlight some scenes, reflect nearness or distance of objects, describe nature or reveal some mentalities and emotions²⁶. A talented poet takes advantage of color to express his emotions and emergence of concrete objects, because he knows that color is the best way to convey emotions to images²⁷.

Based on his cultural position and personal perception, a poet applies colors in their real meaning or figurative meaning. The poet chooses special colors to utter his internal state or intuitive perception²⁸. To some extent, the choice of color is influenced by poet's life environment; however, it is not obvious why a poet chooses a special color to describe his mental state. Anyway, it is obvious that the presence of colors in a poet's works is resulted from his psychological motivations, and psychological motivations are resulted from his unconscious. Goethe believes that it is possible to define the logic of colors and deep impact of each color based on rules of physics. This method may be useful in science, but not in the field of emotional states²⁹.

There are two methods used by poets to use color in creation of artistic mental images: natural method and unconscious method. The poets who apply blue to describe the sky or apply green to describe jungle use the natural method. On the other hand, there are some poets who use the unconscious method, for instance, Nima (a Persian poet) who describes his sorrow and anxiety via black color. Moreover, Vincent Van Gogh has used red and green in his paintings of coffee house and sunset to describe human's pains and agonies³⁰.

Certainly, a poet's artistic creativity would be searched in the

second method, because this is the only way to reach the depth of poet's mental states and to analyze the colorful images resulted from poetic intuition. This issue is more obvious in poems by Masud Saad-e Salman and Manuchehri Damghani who are considered as two famous Persian language poets³¹.

Because of his affinity with nature, Manuchehri Damghani is known as the poet of nature. In one of his poems he describes a colorless raindrop on different backgrounds to reflect the effect of color on the raindrop. For example, the rain drop is on the petal of a red rose and it is described as a bride's tear on the cheek. Not only does he take advantage of main colors such as red, white and green, he also uses words which do not directly refer to colors, but they imply the concept of colors. In other words, these words are used to express their colors rather than their concrete existence³². Anyhow, Manuchehri presents only the main meaning in his poems, and colors do not find symbolic meaning, while Masud Saad-e Salman uses symbolic meaning of colors in his poems. In order to describe his damnation, he has used "black" or whatever implies "black" in his poems³³. For instance, in one of his poems he uses the word "raven" which implies blackness and the word "black" to describe his sorrow. Since Salman applies these two words to represent something beyond the real meaning or better to say to represent his sadness and agony, it is possible to call them symbolic meanings of colors. Moreover, the application of colors in his poems was a beginning for symbolizing the concept of color.

In classical Persian poetry, mystic poetry and allegorical poetry, colors are used a lot. Moreover, in the New Poetry (a kind of poetry that often has neither meter nor rhyme) colors are present, however, they are influenced by environmental factors, local color and sometimes western poems. For instance, Sohrab Sepehri – an Iranian poet and painter- was fascinated with "blue" and his intuitions through this color are obvious in his book titled "blue room". In his poems he uses descriptive compounds such as colorful story, green wind, green freshness, golden dream of the fish, pink sorrow and colorful nothingness to express his distinctive perception of colors³⁴.

In fact, there is a difference between sensory enjoyment of color and its logical enjoyment and whenever one sort of enjoyment flourishes the other one declines. In other words, there is a deep relation between the choice of color and genre of poetry. In didactic poetry, as a result of respecting logical rules, there is no place for symbolic expression of color. On the other hand, in lyrical poetry, there is no place for reason and logic, therefore, the poet is allowed to take advantage of all linguistic forms and symbols to express his internal emotional state, then in lyrical poetry the elements creating an image lose their real meaning and find an implicit application.

As it was mentioned previously, some researchers have been done to show the effects of colors on life, moreover, there are some poets who have tried to clarify and determine the unknown mysteries of colors through their emotional or logical

perceptions. Molana is one of these poets and he has defined the lexical meaning of "color" in one of his poems. Anyway, it is clear that color affects social life, and all individuals feel the impact of color on their own lives. Nowadays, people wear black in disastrous days, brides wear white, moreover, white flag is symbolic of peace and red flag is symbolic of danger, therefore, people have accepted the fact that colors affect human societies.

Conclusion

Color affects financial issues as well. Scientists have proved that oil vaporization decreases in white tanks. That is the reason that in warm regions, oil tanks are white. In the field of literature, personal unconscious is usually influenced by color and only the unconscious choice of colors creates poetic images. In the conscious application of color, logic does not let emotions flourish and then poem is separated from its nature as being a poem. Generally, poets distinguish what is called "color" and what implies "color", they believe that color needs to be sensed and enjoyed without intervention of logic.

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