# Interpretation of colors in the Holy Qur'an

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Islamic Arab art; the source of richness in color ,was and will remain a great treasure for countless pictures of colors, it is based on imagination and visualization, and colors have found their place that obligated the Arab Muslim artist and their interest in images of beauty which exceeded each imagination, and they were seen and embodied for him in the fields of architecture represented in the wall paintings and their decorations inlaid with mosaics, and it appeared in the spearheads, banners, and in poetry, clothing, and various arts such as drawing, calligraphy, ornamentation, ceramics, miniatures, and dressing. Accordingly, the colors in the artistic creativity of the artists appeared and represented by people who drew it with their sketches and colors, and it became impossible for vivid color pictures, so I decided to present a research at this level that justifies their indications and conceptions among Arab Muslim artists. Interpretation of colors in the Holy Quran highlights the colors involved in the sacred book of Allah. It is consisted on the abstract, two sub-chapters, results and bibliography.

Keywords: Color, Quran, Arab, Prophet Muhammad.

## 1-Background of colors in Arabs:

In the Arab Islamic civilization, the prevailing idea about the hatred for portraying everything that has a spirit that effected the direction of artists towards drawing on textiles and furniture and avoiding the coloring of sculptures of living things, because idols that abandon the worship of Allah and closeness to Him, were destroyed by Muslims which resulted in scarcity of color, art and design in Makkah. And it prolonged till the early eras of Islam until those connections that were held between the Arab Islamic people and the peoples of other civilizations differ from Islamic civilization. It carries various arts, including the art of photography and sculpture, but the Muslims were still close to the covenant with the teachings of the Messenger Muhammad (PBUH), who was extremely pure in love with Allah and was far from the things distracting him Almighty Allah, this is why we saw the first mosques built on an architectural method devoid of all patterns or inscriptions and extravagance in the joys of life.<sup>1</sup>

It must be noted here that the outcome of the Arab-Islamic heritage represents a rich civilization outcome, and a distinguished presence is recorded in the books of nations that have its role in influencing and its ability of creativity directly and indirectly.<sup>2</sup>

Arab Islamic art took its place among the arts at the international level after it recorded its distinguished and prominent role in the clear influence on the schools of arts and industries. The Arabic touches and the Islamic character remain among the characteristics that give this art its wonderful voice and record for it known expertise.

Architecture and various arts are among the important discussions of the Arab Islamic civilization; in that they represent the remaining

monuments that express tangibly the materialistic pictures of that civilization its enormous fields.  $^{3}$ 

Perhaps it is worth mentioning that many religions gave the colors a great importance and took symbolic connotations for it, as yellow is not only a sacred color in China and India but also in European Christianity and for connection of yellow color with the sun light; ancient Egyptian used to use this color as god of light.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps the meaning of serenity and purity is that what is meant by choosing the white color for Muslims as clothing during the Hajj and Umrah and as a shroud for the dead, and the Qur'an used the whiteness of the face on the Day of Resurrection as a symbol of victory in the Hereafter as a result of the righteous deed in this world as Allah says:

"On the day when some faces will be brightened with joy and others darkened with gloom",6

He also says:

"وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ابْيَضَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ فَفِي رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ"
$$^{7}$$

"As for the bright-faced ones, they will be in Allah's mercy"

While the green color is represented in doctrine, sincerity, eternity and spiritual contemplation as it is related to fields, gardens and trees, it is also associated with bliss and heaven in the hereafter.<sup>9</sup>

For the Muslims, the green color is the color of the colors. In the Holy Qur'an, Muslims' clothes in Paradise are described in green in two verses which are:

"They (the residents of paradise) shall be arrayed in the garments of fine green silk and rich brocade" 11

Similarly green color is described in the Holy Quran in the description of couches in the heaven. Allah says:

"Reclining on green cushions" 13

While red color is symbol of hell in many religions, as hell is described as red, and the meanings and symbolism of colors have varied since ancient times among different nations, and they used the strength of their symbolic influence on spiritual values via traditions and customs. Similarly red color is associated with celebrations, blue with superiority, and green with nature, black with death and yellow with sun. In addition to that various civilizations throughout the ages have given symbolic meanings to some colors. As it is known that the black color in the Western civilization is a symbol of mourning, death and pain, and red is a symbol of joy, while the white color honors in the Arab Islamic civilization is related to eternal happiness and sometimes to express sadness and anguish.

Hence, we find that the colors have certain meanings and links to the circumstances and events that we have gone through, and they tend to colors due to some reasons.

The significance of the study of "The interpretation of colors in the Holy Qur'an" is that the Arab nation is significant in this cultural legacy. The noble Qur'an mentioned its significance and value in many verses and surahs, and this study supports our artistic culture and enhances our link in the human history at all levels.

The Arab libraries need a comprehensive study of the colors and their implications so that it can be benefited at different structural fields etc. This research aims to reveal the significance of color in the noble Qur'an and the noble hadith of the Prophet, and to identify the technical and structural aspects of these indications.

## 2-Colors in the Holy Quran

Allah (the glorified and exalted) created this great universe with brilliant signs and gorgeous images and decorated its upper and lower worlds with joy and freshness and added colors in it as it became part and parcel of every creature to be designed with enormous colors and these different colors were mixed with different colorful lights which increased their glory and beauty. This bright and glowing beauty captivated the sightseers and each and every sightseer is speechless in front of these spell bounded scenes and raises the slogan: Glory to Allah, the Almighty Creator.<sup>14</sup>

And the noble Qur'an mentioned colors which are white, black, red, yellow, green and blue, and these (six colors) and others have been mentioned in (the noble Qur'an) on different occasions.<sup>15</sup>

There are many colors mentioned in the Holy Qur'an with different and multiple interpretations, including that they have symbolic connotations linking with some religious practices with particular colors specially. The Holy Quran has stated that in the difference of dialects and colors; there is a lesson for those who think in the authority and supremacy of the creator of the universe. It is mentioned in the Holy Quran:

"And yet others of His signs are the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your language and colors; surely there are signs in this for the knowledge-able."

Dr. Ahmed Mukhtar Omar mentioned several places in the Noble Qur'an and the noble hadith in which these colors appeared. He found the word "color"a single or added twice in verse 69 of surah Al-Baqara, "color" and plural (colors) added to the pronouns (their colors) in verse 22 of surah Rum, and (colors) in verses 13 and 69 of surah Nahal, and verse no 28 of surah Fater and verse no 21 of Al-Zumr, and (their colors) in verse no 27 of surah Fater twice, all of these were explained in different forms. <sup>18</sup>

#### i: White color

The white color was mentioned in eleven places in the Noble Qur'an, and its interpretations are indicated as serenity, purity, and good deeds in this world and the hereafter.<sup>19</sup>

The Almighty said:

"As for the bright-faced ones, they will be in Allah's mercy" <sup>21</sup> He also said:

"Eat and drink until the white thread of dawn appears to you from the black thread of night" 23

The Almighty Allah also said at another place:

"Then he drew out his hand from his pocket and it became shining white to all the beholders" 25

"Now put your hand under your armpit, it shall become shining white without hurting you, this will be another sign" 27

"Now put your hand into your pocket; it will come out shining white without any harm to you" 29

"A crystal-white drink, delicious to those who drink it" 31

"His eyes became white with grief",33

"Similarly, in the mountains there are streaks of various shades including white, red, jet-black rocks", 35

"As for the bright-faced ones, they will be in Allah's mercy" 37

"Now put your hand into your pocket, it will come out shining white without any harm",39

#### ii: Red Color

The red color was mentioned in the noble Qur'an once, indicating to a beautiful scene. The Almighty said:

"Similarly, in the mountains there are streaks of various shades including white, red, jet-black rocks",41

And it was mentioned in the hadith of the Prophet (PBUH) in more than fifty places.

## iii: Green Color

The green color came in the noble Qur'an to refer to the clothes of the people of Paradise and what awaits the valued Muslims, as it was mentioned nine times in our dear book<sup>42</sup>, and from the places where the clothing of the people of Paradise is indicated by the saying of Allah Almighty:

"They will wear green garments of fine silk and rich brocade and they will recline on soft couches" '44

And Allah says:

"Reclining on green cushions and beautiful fine carpets" It is also indicated as the valuable things by Almighty Allah:

"It is He Who sends down rainwater from the sky and therein vegetation of all kinds: He brings forth green crops" 48

And many others places; like

"It is He Who produces for you the spark from the green tree to kindle therewith your own fires" 50

### Allah also says:

"One day the king(of Egypt) said: I saw seven fat cows in my dream which were eaten by seven lean cows, likewise I saw seven green ears of corn..."

He says:

"O Yusuf the truthful one! Tell us the meaning of the dream of seven fat cows which are eaten by seven lean cows and of seven green ears of corn and seven other dried up" 54

He says:

"Reclining on green cushions and beautiful fine carpets",56

He says:

"They (the residents of paradise) shall be arrayed in the garments of fine green silk and rich brocade" 58

Allah says:

"Do you not see that Allah sends down water from the sky so that the land becomes green?" becomes green?"

iv: Yellow Color

The yellow color is found at five places in the noble Qur'an, and this color indicated in some of the places mentioning some of the characteristics of animals and inanimate objects. In its indications for the animal we find the words of Almighty Allah:

"Musa replied: Allah says that the cow should be of a rich and deep yellow color pleasing to eyes" 62

And Allah also says:

"Throwing up sparks as huge as castles, as if they were yellow camels" And in its indication to the contrary, He said:

"And if We send a wind which turns their crops yellow, behold they will become even more firm in their disbelief" 66

And He says:

"Then they wither and you see them turning yellow, and then finally He crumbles them to dust" 68

He also said:

"Then it withers and you see it turn yellow, soon it becomes dry and crumbles away"

And the last three verses refer to the plant that becomes yellowish and dries up.

## v: Blue Color

The blue color mentioned in the noble Qur'an and the noble hadith is associated with repugnant thing, and this color was mentioned in the Noble Qur'an once, the Almighty said:

"We shall assemble all the sinners, their eyes will turn blue with terror" i.e. glaucoma, and it was mentioned in the noble Hadith of the Prophet three times.

#### vi: Miscellaneous Colors

The sub-colors in the Noble Qur'an came with multiple indications, as the color of Dhumah(Blackness) in the Noble Qur'an indicates the intensity of the greening of the implantation, indicating what this means of bliss and contentment for the people of Paradise. This color was mentioned in the Noble Qur'an once in the Almighty saying:

"And besides these two there shall be two other gardens. Then, O jinn and men, which of your Rabb's favors will both of you deny? Densely shaded with dark green trees." <sup>74</sup>

And Dhumah according to Arabs is "blackness" and it is also said for paradise "Mudhamah" just because of its intense greenery.

The color ((Al-Hawa)), which is black towards green and red towards black in the Holy Qur'an, indicates a change in the color of the plant due to the power of the Creator, the Most High, as Allah says:

"Glorify the name of your Rabb, the Most High, Who has created all things and perfected them, Who has set their destinies and guided them, Who brings forth green pasture, then reduces it to black rubbish." <sup>76</sup>

"Al-Hoor" was mentioned in the description of white women in the Paradise. The Almighty said:

"And dark eyed Huris (damsels), as lovely as well guarded pearls" Allah also says:

"Huris(beautiful damsels) sheltered in their tents." <sup>80</sup>

Among the colors that were mentioned in the Holy Qur'an in the description of the Almighty's actions in his creation are the pink and greasy colors, and they were mentioned together in his Almighty saying:

"When the heaven will burst and will become red like red hide." 82

Pink is a red color that turns a good yellow in everything while "dhahni'or "dhihaan" is like the red hell color. And the color "Al-Yahmum", meaning the dark black in the character of the non-believers who are tormented by Allah in Hell to the extent that their skins will turn dark black as mentioned in the Holy Quran:

"As for those of left hand-how unfortunate will be the people of left hand! They will be in the midst of scorching winds and boiling water." 84

In short, the color has been involved in the artistic and cultural heritage of humankind since their ancient times and its use in our heritage in a particular era has been used in many fields and useful in what is relevant with the Islamic religion when used in coloring the images and shapes that Islam prohibited, but that did not affect the beauty of color in the other fields of life, as there are areas in which colors flourished, perhaps the most important of the art of Islamic linear decoration, as artists were far away from the depiction of living creatures and turned attention to the linear and interior decor. Muslims excelled in what excelled in four shapes of arts, the first of which is the interlocking securitization securing, the second is modulation, and the third is coloring, and the fourth is linear writing<sup>85</sup>.

It is well known that the color has a general effect on imparting a sweet radiance to the forms of Islamic nominal Arabic drapery, as it reveals a delicate feeling, with colors approaching at times and separating at other times from natural colors.<sup>86</sup>

#### **Results**

The most important findings reached; revolve around the novelty and curiosity of the topic and what it was exposed to it, I think that there are the foundations of a new color approach to study aspects of Arab Islamic art. Their mysteries unfold by tracking the opinions, ideas, and impressions of artists expressed in colors and their psychological feelings. The conclusion of this research is summarized in the following points:

1-The study demonstrated that the colors from the inception of the first civilizations, starting from the valley of Mesopotamia to the modern era, were associated with meanings and symbolism among various peoples, and used the power of their symbolic influence on spiritual values, through customs and traditions, where the color red was associated with celebrations, blue with superiority, green with nature, black with death and yellow with the sun. In addition, different civilizations have arisen across

the ages illuminate symbolic meanings and interpretations of some colors without others, and in this explanation of the reasons why some people tend to color without the other.

- 2- The study indicated the association of colors for centuries with the names of the celestial planets, and they began to clearly associate the silver color with the moon and gold in the sun and red with Mars and violets with Mercury... and so on.
- 3- I found the dislike for photography in the Arab Islamic civilization has its effect in uniting colors to draw textiles and furniture and to decorate books, miniatures and keeping away from coloring sculptures representing living things.
- 4-I found the hatred for photography in the Arab Islamic civilization has its effect in uniting colors to draw textiles and furniture and to decorate books, miniatures and keeping away from coloring sculptures representing living things.
- 5-I found that the colors in the Noble Qur'an mentioned various indications, including that they have taken symbolic connotations, including linking some religious practices with specified colors. The Noble Qur'an states that in the differing tongues and colors of men there are lessons for those who think about the wisdom and greatness of God.

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