

Effective and Communicative Domains of Colours with an Emphasis on Forces Scope and Intrinsic Effects of Yellow in the Qur'an

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Abstract: While color is a common phenomenon in the world, it creates the most complex domains of communication for human beings. Verse 13 of Surah Al-Nahl describes the creation of the earth in different colours for human beings. Science shows that due to the presence of cone cells in the human eye, the nature of the universe is black, white, and gray. Therefore, colours do not come from the nature of the world, but from human nature. Colour is the realisation of the complex, inner, and deeply human condition. The purpose of this study is to examine the communication effects of colours and study the verses containing them in the Qur'an. The colours mentioned in the Quran and the reason for naming these colours are investigated through a case study on yellow and its intrinsic effects. Colours have three communicative and effective effects, that is, intrinsic, contractual, as well as personal feeling and perception. Red, yellow, green, blue, white, and black are the colours mentioned in the Qur'an. The Qur'an, using colours to express the forces hidden in it, explains the facts and various aspects of human life as well as uses them to convey concepts, which this study serves to elucidate.

Keywords: The Holy Qur'an, colours, communication area of the colours, yellow colour.

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Introduction

Today we talk about the knowledge of colour and its intellectual and scientific world. Colour, on the other hand, is surprisingly one of the most private inner messages of humans. Colour is not just an emotional idea, rather it is much more complex than sensory and personal mechanisms. The idea is associated with the nature of social, cultural, religious, functionalist, and making behaviour. Today, functionalism of colour has become a tool that people in different situations use to achieve results.

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In describing colour, we must set aside all personal feelings, and use instead critical and scientific thinking, resulting in the colour being used rationally and logically. In many of its verses, the Holy Quran mentions different colours with the general title of colour or separately.

Studies and articles, including *Colour of the Qur'an, tradition and psychology view*, by Ali Sharifi, *Miracle of Colours in Qur'an*, by Mehdi Rostami Nejad, *Colour of the Qur'an and tradition*, by Muhammad Bisotony and many similar sources have looked at religious issues, the psychological approach to colour and the psychological effects on human beings. However, from the artistic point of view and the properties of colours in terms of basics and logic, no significant research was observed. This sufficiently highlights the need for studies on this subject.

In his article, *Colour from the Perspective of Quran, Hadith, and Psychology*, Ali Sharifi examined the psychological effects of colours and then considers white as a suitable colour in describing heaven so that humans can associate the best state and place for themselves in the "eternal house". In their article, *The Miracle of Colours in the Quran*, Rostam Nijad and Navid studied the word colour in the Qur'an and examined the word "*Sebghah*" (divine colour) from a spiritual point of view. Reza Paknejad claimed the miracle of the Qur'an in his book, *The First University and the Last Prophet*. For example, in verse 69 of Surah Al-Nahl, he considers the healing power of honey to be related to the colourful nature of the raw materials of honey and considers this as one of the miracles of the Qur'an. In the newest research observed in 2019, *Colour in the Quran and Traditions*, the author expressed that the different colours in the Holy Quran reflect blessings and torments and the connections that can be established between them. The book also expressed the views of Shiite and Sunni commentators from a psychological point of view on the issues of healing and hatred in narrations.

This research looks at the aesthetic effects of colour and its various aspects, including three powerful effects of colour communication. However, due to the limitations of the survey, the study focused on the colour yellow's inherent effect on the Qur'an.

Method

For this research, the descriptive-analytical approach was employed. Qualitative studies are used to study phenomena in their natural form. The current investigation included the analysis of colour communication domains to investigate the communication effects of this phenomenon in humans. First, the types of communication effects of colours are described and explained, after which, the verses in which the colour is mentioned are examined. Then the behavioural and functional characteristics of colour from the perspective of the Qur'an were analysed using yellow and its intrinsic properties as the case study. Using data obtained from literature and theoretical topics, existing propositions and theorems were compiled while examples of verses (content analysis) from the text of the Quran itself were analysed.

Results

The Spectrum of Different Colours in the Monopoly of Humans

Verses consisting of colours can be divided into two general categories: The word “*Loan*” means colour, or “*Sebghah*” means spiritual colour (divine colour) (Rostam Nijad & Navid, 2011, p. 135). Another category is verses that contain different colours. “The word *Loan*, was repeated nine times in the Qur’an” (Abdul-Baqi, 2006, p. 654) and red, yellow, green, blue, white, and black, colours were mentioned in the Qur’an.

Surah al-Nahl said, “And the things on this earth which He has multiplied in varying colours (and qualities): verily in this is a sign for men who celebrate the praises of Allah (in gratitude)” (Qur’an, 16: 13).

The original text of the verse:

«وَمَا ذَرَأَ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ»

The noteworthy point is that the Almighty Allah, in this verse, a different colour is expressed specifically to humans. Many researchers consider a wide range of colours to be specific to humans, while animals are unable to see different colour spectrums. “Those who are familiar with chromotherapy know that coloured light can have certain effects on the body, but when these experiments are performed on animals and plants, the theory fails,” says Kandinsky (2005). The healthy human eye can see and separate 10 million different colours due to the existence of three groups of cone cells (Winston, 2004).

In the meantime, there are four types of cone cells in the eye of a small group of women that indicate the possibility of detecting 10 million – 100 million colours (Roth, 2006). Many animals do not have cone cells and are unable to distinguish colours. Animals see the world in a halo of gray or very light colour. Insects have a mosaic vision while humans clearly see the chequered form. Bulls also do not have eye cone cells. It should be clarified here that the bull does not get excited when a red cloth is waved in front of it. Instead, it is the intense movements of the cloth which makes the bull angry, and it is the human being who is excited about the colour red (Rasouli, 2009).

So, when it comes to seeing different colours, this is only available for humans. This is a delicate point that Almighty Allah stated in the Qur’an 15 centuries ago, and it represents a kind of miracle. It is important for humans to see the world in colours, while for many animals, it is not fully coloured world, and depending on the structure of their eyes, they may only see a single colour. So, the nature of the world is black, white, and gray. In other words, the colours do not come from the nature of the world but are a result of human function. This particular human phenomenon

can be studied in isolation. It can be analysed using criteria and its communication system and effectiveness can be determined.

Effective Communication Domains of Colours

Johannes Itten introduced the colour aesthetic review in three aspects:

- Impression
- Expression
- Construction (Itten, 2012)

In fact, there are three powerful phenomena and three effective communication areas related to colour:

1. The force domains and colour inherent effects
2. The force domains and perception effects and personal feelings of the colour
3. The force domains and the effects of the paint contractual

These three categories of capabilities are different as well as similar. Through collision, conflict, disagreement, struggle, or coordination of these three effective areas, the effect of colour takes shape for the audience.

The force domains and colour inherent effects

“Communication and human understanding of the beauty with colour is very simple and immediate, and if there isn’t any theoretical understanding of the colour, instinctively, he is in a position where the colour easily penetrates him and its depth, warmth, and tonality, that is, its objective quality, are mixed with some of his feelings and pains.” (Ferrari, 1992, p. 9). These are the domains of colour’s inherent effect. The sum of the properties of the colour is that as soon as an individual is faced with colours (a person who has eyes and the ability to see colour), the inherent effect takes shape within it. The inherent effect is roughly the same for all people and is inevitable. No normal, healthy person can escape the inherent effects of colour, but certainly, the affectivity can be varied, in what Itten calls as, “the psycho-physiological reality of colour.” (Itten, 2012, p. 20).

The force domains, perception effects and personal feelings of the colour

“The basis of the paintings of many artists, especially in the 19th century onwards, shows the emotional compositional components of colouring” (Itten, 2011, p. 14). For example, “The most important element in the works of Henri Matisse is colour. The period when artists of that time (19th century) no longer created their works according to the wishes of society, but as they wished” (Najafi, 2000, p. 235–237). Each person shows a specific reaction to colours due to their existential nature,

culture, knowledge, skills, and lifestyle, and because of these reactions, chooses or denies colour patterns. If he lacks the ability or scientific thinking skill, he causes harm to others or himself.

The force domains and the effects of the paint contractual

In the past, sometimes only the symbolic aspect of colour was considered, in which case, it was used to identify social classes or symbolically for religious and mythological beliefs.

For example, "In the flags and crowns of kings, the colour orange was used to show power and success. Ancient physicians used red to bring out the negative and sinister energy of the house. Indigenous Australians perceived red as a sign of fertility and hid stones of this colour in their fields to fertilize and germinate seeds planted in the ground. In the Middle Ages, the colour green was a sign of new life and growth, so green was chosen for the bride's new dress. Western Europe considered green the favourite colour of the great powers. They could condemn a person dressed in green to eternal misfortune. This belief persisted to the point that many people today do not drive green cars and they believe that the probability of an accident with these cars is higher" (Danaei, 2009, p. 22).

The contractual domain of colour is the force formed by collective and group agreement. This occurs when a social group, for some reason, needs specific messages, identical social codes, the understanding of meaningful signs, or something else, fictitiously attributes a property to a particular colour.

"And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colours: verily in that are Signs for those who know." (Qur'an, 30: 22).

The original text of the verse:

”وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْخِلَافُ السِّنِّيَّةِ وَالْوَانِيَّةِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ“

Allameh Tabatabai in Al-Mizan says: "The appearance is that what is meant by colour difference is the difference of nations in different colours, such as white, black, yellow and red." (Tabatabai, 1991, p. 167). Often, people ignore the influence of personal perception and feeling as well as the inherent power of colour, and this difference in skin colour in different nations should not be considered a criterion of superiority but should be construed as God putting a symbol to identify people so that people know each other better.

A point to consider is that if continents are considered in terms of their symbolic colour composition as follows: Red: America, Green: Europe, Black: Africa, Yellow: Asia, Blue: Oceania (Ostovar, 2012), then the criterion for determining the colour of each continent, for Asia, Africa, and America, is the skin colour of the people of

that continent. Green for Europe due to verdure, and blue for Oceania, due to its abundance sea water, which is symbolically assigned for the continents.

The colours red, yellow, green, dark blue, white, and black are mentioned in the Qur'an. The colours white and black (Surahs of Al-Baqarah/ 187, Fatir/ 27, Al Imran/ 106 and 107, Yusuf/ 84), the colour green (Surahs of Yasin/ 80, Yusuf/ 43 and 46, Al-Insan/ 21, Al-Kahf/ 31, Al-Rahman / 76), the colour red (Fatir/ 27), and the colour dark blue in Surah (Ta-Ha / 102).

“From the wedding dress to the *ihram* dress and the dress of the Hereafter, everything is white to express happiness, immaculacy, and purity. Human nature is inclined toward purity and white is the best colour to symbolise it. White is a symbol of cleanliness and purity, and the women of Paradise are also called nymphs because they are pure, and nymph means white.” (Ibn Manzur, 2005, p. 265). “Religious Islam is in accordance with nature, cleanliness, and purity; it is emphasised to wear white clothes as white is the best colour. Most of the clothes of the Holy Prophet Muhammad were white and he said: “Cover the living with white clothes and cover your dead with it. It is also recommended to wear white clothes in prayer and black is not good” (Al-Majlisi, 1999, p. 174).

One of the reasons for the specific expression of the colours mentioned in the Qur'an may be the symbolism of each colour for each continent. For white, it is due to the observance of purity and the need to observe the moral virtues of human beings in all lands. In the science of colours, colours are divided into two groups: chromatic and achromatic.

Chromatic are colourful colours, such as blue, green, or coloured grays. However, the quality that is present in most colours is not available in black, white, or the grays. These are in the group of achromatic colours. Yellow, red and blue are the main colours that exist independently and these colours cannot be created from a combination of other colours. However, other colours can be created from various combinations of these three colours.

But according to Max Lüscher, psychotherapist and professor of psychology at the University of Basel, from a psychological point of view, there are four main colours. According to him, “blue, yellow, red (the main colours in chromatic) plus green have a psychological preference which represents psychological needs, the need for happiness, love, expression, need to action and success and need to look forward” (Lüscher, 1992, p. 30).

These four colours are the same colours mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. Colours that have a psychological preference and “a balanced person in his choice of norm puts these four colours in his first to the fifth choice” (Lüscher, 1992, p. 30).

The rest of the colours are a combination of the three main chromatic colours and, along with achromatic black and white. Therefore, it can be said that the Qur'an, in addition to achromatic colours, directly refers to the main colours

(both in terms of psychology and in terms of colour science) and indirectly refers to all colours and their effects.

The Forces Domains and the Inherent Effects of Yellow in The Holy Qur'an

Yellow is a strange and unique colour and the source of a vanguard. Singular and special are some of the inherent characteristics of this colour. Yellow creates magnification and embodies the forces of discovery and curiosity. It shapes the movement into the future and is the colour of thought and decision. Whenever it comes into the picture, the specificity of that phenomenon increases. It creates inner joy in the viewer. The colour standard is research. Warning, pressure, fatigue, erosion, and change are other characteristics of yellow. The colour yellow in the Holy Qur'an carries both positive and negative meanings together, which are briefly reviewed next.

The construction of inner happiness in the viewer

“They said: “Beseech on our behalf Thy Lord to make plain to us Her colour.” He said: “He says: A fawn-coloured heifer, pure and rich in tone, the admiration of beholders!” (Qur'an, 2: 69).

The original text of the verse:

«قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا لَوْنُهَا قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ صَفْرَاءُ فَاقِعٌ لَوْنُهَا تَسُرُّ النَّاظِرِينَ»

This verse speaks of the colour yellow, which is joyful. “The word تَسُرُّ means inner and real happiness” (Al-Asgari, 1992, p. 277) and is taken from the word سر meaning hidden. This implies that joy may not be apparent. Therefore, the word فرح has not been used (Sharifi, 2008, p. 15). Allameh Tabatabai says in Al-Mizan exegesis: “richly coloured and pure yellow” (Tabatabai, 1991, p. 202). This effect of the colour yellow is also mentioned in traditions. Imam Ali (PBUH) said: “Whoever wears yellow shoes, his discomfort will decrease” (Al-Alusi, 1995, p. 289). Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (PBUH) also said: “Everyone wears yellow shoes, as long as it has shoes, he has happy” (Mohammadi Rey Shahri, 2006, p. 97) and finally, he refers to the verse shown earlier.

Yellow is the first colour that forms in the human brain. The colour is very positive and its brightness can create a feeling of happiness, warmth, and hope in people. Perhaps, this explains why yellow was chosen as the default colour for emoticons and emojis in mobile communication apps. Yellow is creative and optimistic. It can maintain its neutrality whilst being eye-catching. Many famous animated characters are also yellow in colour. “The image of a smiling face is yellow. Like the colour of the sun, yellow reflects completely unadulterated light into human life. Psychologically, it is the happiest colour in the spectrum. It conveys feelings of optimism, happiness,

and spontaneity” (Sutton & Whelan, 2010). “It is uplifting and impressive and its effects are brightness, joy, and radiance as well as inner peace and happiness to human beings” (Lüscher, 1992, p. 87). Therefore, the reference to yellow in verse 69 of Surah Al-Baqarah, which considers it a source of happiness, is derived from the inherent effect of yellow on happiness.

Individualistic and Special

Another point is the exceptional nature of yellow, which is inherently niggling and aggravates any problem immediately. The cow’s yellow colour, which is also uniform, may emphasize the cow’s uniqueness and perfection.

A colour for magnifying, alerting and enhancing a phenomenon

“Indeed it throws about sparks (huge) as Forts. As if there were (a string of) yellow camels (marching swiftly)” (Qur’an, 77: 32-33).

The original text of the verse:

«إِنَّهَا تَرْمِي بِشَرَرٍ كَالْقَصْرِ، كَأَنَّهُ جِمَالَةٌ صُفْرٌ»

According to Allameh Tabarsi, flames and sparks of fire are compared to a large palace in terms of volume: “These sparks and flares of fire are similar to yellow camels in number, colour, speed, movement, and flow in all directions.” (Tabarsi, 1997, p. 208).

“If it is a yellow circle, it reveals a slight focus and an expanding outward motion, approaching the viewer dramatically” (Kandinsky, 2005, p. 111). Another inherent characteristic of yellow is penetration and depth of field. In addition, it moves outward and therefore induces tension in length and height. Yellow is the colour of “speed, thought, movement and will” (Ostovar, 2012, p. 22). It creates pressure and tension. The beam is complete, strong, agile, lively, volatile, and emits, and belongs to the group of warm colours. “Warm colours can stimulate the sympathetic nervous system and make the blood move faster in the body” (Chijiwa, 1998, p. 30). And “intensify emotions. These colours are clearly visible and induce warmth” (Ostovar, 2012, p. 38). Looking at “a yellow geometric shape, its rude and aggressive nature is revealed and leaves a disturbing effect. The intensification of the yellow colour enhances the screaming and painful sound of the note” (Kandinsky, 2005, p. 112). These intrinsic properties of yellow are in harmony with the many flames mentioned in Surah Al-Mursalat and its dynamic nature, pressure, tension, and heat, and for this reason, yellow is a good reminder of the greatness of the flames of fire. In addition, yellow “completes the brain’s ability to recall and increases the power of analysis and research” (Ali Akbarzade, 1994, p. 70). It makes people aware of the

facts and develop realism. Colour can be cautionary and represent danger. In this way, it inspires the concept of thinking, warning oppressors and infidels, and not forgetting it. Yellow also magnifies the intensity and specificity of any phenomenon. Therefore, it plays an effective role in understanding the ignition of flames and their greatness.

The nature of change

In Surah Az-Zumar, Ar-Rūm, and Al-Hadīd, another concept of yellow is introduced. "Seest thou not that Allah sends down rain from the sky, and leads it through springs in the earth? Then He causes to grow, therewith, produce of various colours: then it withers; thou wilt see it grow yellow; then He makes it dry up and crumble away. Truly, in this, is a Message of remembrance to men of understanding" (Qur'an, 39: 21).

The original text of the verse:

«أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَلَكَهُ يَدَابِيعُ فِي الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ يُخْرِجُ بِهِ زَرْعًا مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ فَتَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَجْعَلُهُ
نُطَامًا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرًا لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ»

"And if we (but) send a Wind from which they see (their tilth) turn yellow, behold, they become, thereafter, Ungrateful (Unbelievers)(Qur'an, 30: 51).

The original text of the verse:

«وَلَننْ أَرْسِلْنَا رِيحًا فَرَأَوْهُ مُصْفَرًّا لَظُلُومًا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ يَكْفُرُونَ»

"Know ye (all), that the life of this world is but play and amusement, pomp and mutual boasting and multiplying, (in rivalry) among yourselves, riches and children. Here is a similitude: How rain and the growth which it brings forth, delight (the hearts of) the tillers; soon it withers; thou wilt see it grow yellow; then it becomes dry and crumbles away. But in the Hereafter is a Penalty severe (for the devotees of wrong). And Forgiveness from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure (for the devotees of Allah). And what is the life of this world, but goods and chattels of deception?" (Qur'an, 57: 20).

The original text of the verse:

«اعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُوَ زِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ الْكُفْرَانَ نُبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ
تَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَامًا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ»

The word مُصْفَر is used in all three verses for "signifying transformation from one state to another" (Hanafi, 2005, p. 51). In the discussion of companionship and colour contrasts, when green and yellow come together, the change from green to yellow is the change from vitality to decline. Yellow also brings forth the meaning of

distant future and change (Lüscher, 1992, p. 90). These characteristics of yellow are consistent with the meaning of the three verses mentioned.

The yellow colour of plants and dried leaves sometimes tends to be cream or brown. "Pure colour can be debilitated with white and black. Yellow, in combination with white, cold, and combination with black, can lose its radiance and make it somewhat poisonous, sick, and conspiratorial, and destroy its greatness" (Itten, 2012, p. 138).

Brown radiates the properties of nostalgia and the most memorable messages as well as induces a sense of antiquity and historical tone. The colour brown also has hidden corporal energy and incorporates the concept of life again in the future for trees. Brown can create a sense of sadness and isolation (Cherry, 2020). Imam Sadegh said: "Whoever wears yellow shoes is always in joy until the shoes become old" (Huwayzi, 2004, p. 90). Thus, the obsolescence and soiling of yellow changes its meaning and in these verses, God refers to the instability of the world and the existence of the world after death by expressing the yellowness and dryness of trees after greenery and life, which is sent as a reminder for the wise.

Conclusion

This study shows that colours are mentioned as one of the tangible realities of human life in the Holy Qur'an. So according to the miracle of the Qur'an, the use of these allusions is based on an easier understanding and acceptance of divine verses by man.

Given the presence of cone cells in the human eye, it can be concluded that colour is the realisation of the complex, inner, and deep-seated human condition which God refers to in verse 13 of Surah An-Nahl. An intrinsic effect is the set of colour properties that is inevitably formed in a person immediately after encountering the colour. With regard to effect of personal perception and feeling, each person shows a specific reaction to colours based on their existential nature, culture, upbringing, knowledge, skills, and type of life, while the contractual effect of colour is formed by a collective agreement which artificially attributes a property to a certain colour.

The Qur'an, in using colours and expressing the forces hidden in them, explains the facts and various aspects of human life as well as uses them to convey concepts. These concepts include the absence of racial superiority due to colour differences in skin and hair, instability of the world and the existence of life after death. For instance, the inherent effects of yellow include inner happiness, warning and intensification of a phenomenon, intensification of defects, moving forward and induction of tension in length and height. The Qur'an used yellow and its communication effects to describe past events such as the story of Prophet Moses (PBUH) and future events such as the realities of the world after death. The force of colour on any phenomenon, dimensions or concentration, creates change. No artist has done this remarkably and in a timely manner such as the masterful painter of nature (God). As such, the

most complete colour ideas as well as their logical and purposeful functions can be received from the world and used effectively in their surroundings. To conclude, colours can play a very effective and valuable role as these colour influences can enhance the behavioural and mental states of human beings.

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