

# **A General Outlook on the Basics of Coloring in Traditional Iranian Arts (with Emphasis on the 4th to 6th centuries AH.)**

## **Abstract**

Colors have exceptional visual, semantic and mystical properties and are considered as the most significant tool for creating works of art. The concealed and inner meanings of colors in traditional coloring have remained unknown till today. In the art of creating traditional Iranian paint, functional elements have a distinct place and uniqueness. This research is pathway for the better understanding of traditional color-making and refers to the sciences in the Islamic tradition. Recognizing how color is used in art and its nature is a matter for reflection. Familiarity with the general principles of traditional Iranian painting is significant for the construction, promotion and revitalization of multifarious painting in Iranian traditional art. This research is completed via a descriptive and analytical method and relying on the data of library resources. The research findings indicate that the correct method of color-making in traditional Iranian art is based on previous instructions and its association with other sciences. Achieving how the methods of making the four elements, the four natures and the temperament qualities of each element in combination with the other component and how they are related, are the significant achievements of this research in the field of traditional coloring in Islamic Iran. The combination and generation of colors in the past was primary based on method of the four basics (thermal, wetting, compressible, pulverizable), the four elements of nature (fire, air, water, soil) and the temperament of the elements (warm, cold, wet, dry). The quality of the application of such colors and their nature are observable in the illustrated versions of the 4th to 6th centuries AH.

## **Research aims:**

1. Understanding the general principles of traditional Iranian painting
2. Recognizing the main colors in the coloring cycle of traditional Iranian art

## **Research questions:**

1. What are the general principles of traditional coloring in Iranian art?
2. What are the main colors in the Iranian painting cycle and what is the basis of the combination of these colors?

**Keywords:** Basics of Painting, Traditional Iranian Arts, Nature and Temperament, 4th to 6th Century Versions.

## Introduction

A review of the history of traditional Iranian painting reveals that the Iranians bestowed unique skills in the use of paint and engraving, and in pre-Islamic and specifically post-Islamic periods, they left valuable artworks and with the art of alchemy, they flourished and strengthened the industry of traditional coloring in close assembly to other disciplines. In recent years, many accomplished studies have been done related to the topic of traditional colors of Islamic Iran, nonetheless, it seems that most of the research and studies in hand, in terms of mystical, theological, philosophical, literary, descriptive, etc., have been on the subject of colors. It appears that studies regarding the discovery of technical and practical features and construction methods in the traditional coloring of former masters is lacking. This absence of effort on traditional coloring, especially the methods of making colors, is confidently presented by the author, thus it appeared essential to address this fundamental shortcoming to determine the secreted knowledge of traditional coloring of the early centuries. This research introduces the theoretical and experimental background of the mentioned features within a research framework with applicable findings; moreover, while referring to the traditional coloring methods used in the early centuries, the paper seeks to review, analyze and define a new and correct definition of color in traditional coloring based on temperament and nature which is the basic principles of traditional Iranian painting in the early centuries.

Regarding the background of the present study, it should be said that no independent work has been written so far; nevertheless, studies on coloring have been conducted including: Muhammad ibn Idris al-Qada'i al-Qalusi (1427 AH) in his book "Tahaf al-Khawas fi'atruf al-Khawas" mentions the main colors in traditional coloring in Arabic and directly refers to them; also in an indirect manner he discusses a significant arrangement of the combination of the above elements in coloring. "Omid Sadeghpour" (2013) in a book called "Introduction and Fundamentals of Traditional Iranian Pharmacy" has dealt with colors and temperament and its types and recognizing its degrees. In a chapter, he has argued about colors in determining the temperament of drugs. "Nazem Jahan, Mohammad Azam" (2015) in the two-volume culture of "The Great Environment", an exceptional and glorious treasure in the science of medicinal contents, has defined temperament and divided colors into six types. Nader Ardalan and Laleh Bakhtiari (2001) in their book "Sense of Unity", a mystical tradition in Iranian architecture, have analyzed colors with a sacred and mystical perspective and in relation to light. "Aqiliyya Khorasani" (1992) in "Makhzan al-Adawiyah" and "Sheikh al-Ra'is Abu Ali Sina" (2004) in "Al-Qanun" have given similar definitions above in different types of temperament and its relation with colors and their anxiety to determine temperament in traditional medicine. "Arezoo Pouriaei and Mohsen Marathi" (2018) in an article entitled "Method of construction and use of black stone in manuscript with emphasis on the treatise" Umm al-Kitab "recorded in the library of Astan Quds Razavi" refer to the four ways of making ink and coloring via a direct reference. Also in "The main book and the promise of the albums of Ibn Badis Sanhaji (1988 AH)", "Qataf al-Azhar in the characteristics of the mines and stones of Ahmad ibn Awad ibn Muhammad al-Maghribi (Bita)", "and mentions the construction of colors without referring to their nature and temperament. Authors such as "Henry Carbon" (2011) in "Realism of Colors and the Scale of Science", "Seyyed Hossein Nasr" (1977) in "Iran Pol-e Firoozeh", "Najmuddin Razi" (2008) in "Mersad Al-Ebad" in their books Pure mysticism and wisdom in coloring have been beautifully described. Also, the following articles have examined the element of color in Persian poetry and prose from each angle and with a specific purpose. "The function of color in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh based on two colors, black and white", by Hassan Ali and Ahmadian (2007). "Comparison of the use of color and visual elements of painting in two poems by Khosrow, Shirin, Lily

and Majnoon", by "Mohammad Reza Rezanejad and Ahmad Ghanipour Malekshah" (2020). Also, the article "Analysis of the use of color in the drawings of Mir Haidar's Ascension Letter based on the place of color in the Holy Quran and Hadiths" is the title of an article by the goddess of repentance of Najafabadi and Zahra Fanaei, which examines the color symbols and concepts used in the Quran. The artist uses these concepts in presenting the religious themes of the paintings. In many studies in the Islamic tradition by traditional art scholars such as Titus Burkhart, Henry Carbon, Najmuddin Razi, Sadr al-Din Muhammad, as well as contemporary scholars, color has so far been examined from a sacred, mystical, theological, or philosophical perspective or in relation to light. This research is of significance since despite the outlooks of other researchers and artists it explains the methods of creating traditional colors by a scientific and applicable manner which paves the way for a general familiarity with the significant principals of traditional color-making techniques.

The research method is descriptive-analytical and according to previous researches, experiments, tests and errors in the field of four methods of making traditional coloring. Coloring and its main elements have been expressed in the original manuscripts and dissertations in a cataloged and complex manner. In the analysis section, an attempt has been made to collect these divisions based on recent experiments and researches. The following topics and principles all directly or indirectly express the types of elements and colors and the number of colors in the tradition and in all sciences such as coloring, pharmacy, art, mysticism, etc., so that all sciences in language; moreover, they raise the same issue, but separately. In this article, the authors have expressed the general principles of dyeing with a similar tendency that is used in pharmacy to determine the temperament of medicine and has been one of the main bases of the principles of dyeing in the early centuries.

## **Conclusion**

An examination of the basics of traditional Iranian painting shows that the origin of the primary colors in Iranian art is the six colors "black", "white", red, yellow, green, and lilac. In some elements in nature, there are pigments that today, in the contemporary era, physically and ostensibly combine pigments to form colors that bear no resemblance to the true colors found in traditional art. Principles and foundations of traditional Iranian painting is the integration of physical and chemical principles, or in other words, the integration of esoteric and external principles. In the actual doctrines of coloring, the real nature of the elements in the chemical state, and in the virtual principles of coloring, the physical appearance of the elements in nature and their combination leads to the construction of color. The reason why the two main colors "black" and "white" are considered to be the basis for making all colors in traditional coloring are the interactions created by their cold and warmth based on the temperament of the elements since the basis of all interactions and chemical (esoteric) effects are "quadruple construction methods", "quadruple natures" and "temperament qualities of the elements". This is the legal issue of the creation of all creatures on earth. Traditional products in the past, such as pharmacy and dyeing, etc., have been closely related to each other. In chemical (esoteric) principles, the qualities of the elements in "mixing" with each other and creating revolutions and influences and interactions are fundamental and obvious. Therefore, obtaining colors similar to the gender and color of objects in nature certainly appears rather normal and natural since the origin of their construction is alike to the original foundation of the elements in nature created by the one and only Creator.

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