

# ABOUT COLOR SYMBOLS IN FOLKLORE

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**ABSTRACT:** In this article we can see that symbolism of colors have magic symbolic meaning in ritual songs, but in lyric songs they can have associating aesthetic character, these two meanings of symbolism can be seen in wedding songs. Wedding songs express lyric hero's inner world with the help of associative aesthetic symbols, in situations where ritual cases are depicted leading place is given to magic literary meaning.

In folk songs depictions created by colors are main elements. Wide use of different color harmony is an old tradition; they can help more widely understand lyric hero's life.

Genesis of color symbolism in ritual songs is connected with magic of color. In funeral songs and in wedding songs each genre is differentiated according demands and attitude of singer to the object. The use of color symbolism in ritual folklore genres is still in their specific feature.

**Key words:** folklore,tale, poem,legend, symbol, poetics, colour symbolism, poetic symbols, animism, totemizm, symbolic meaning, colour, white, black, blue, red, yellow, green

## I. INTRODUCTION

Symbolic images created with the help of colours are met in all little and large genres of folklore. It shows that literary features concerning colours are taken into concrete gradual degree in folk poetic imagination and it contains specific traditions in itself.

Symbolism of colours in Uzbek national tales figuratively shows virtue and evil, good and bad understandings. Thanks to colours difficult extended meanings and expressions find their more beautiful reflection in easy style. And also, symbolism of tales expressed in colours strengthens their literary expression and aesthetic influence.

In Uzbek tales abstract meanings which can be felt, understood are usually expressed with the help of colours. For example, “оқ йўл” – good trip, “оқ фотиҳа” - blessing, “қора ният” – bad wish, “бахти қора” - unhappy, “оқ бахт” - happy, “оқ ният” – admire is a good poetic example of it. It can be seen in the tale “Bektemir botir”: “...*Bektemir botir said goodbye to his parents, brothers. He hanged a sword on the ceiling of his room and said: “If blood drops from it, be sure, I am dead and moan over me. If there are no blood drops,be sure I am healthy on earth.”Then he had blessing and went to his way...*”

In the tale “Chinnioy and Bakhtiyor” there are also virtue expressions connected with white colour: “*Баракалла, сенинг гайрат ва ҳимматингга! – деб, Бихалфанинг пешонасидан ўтибди-да, – бор, сенга худо оқ йўл берсин! – деб фотиҳа берибди Подшо!*...” “*Well-done,- king said to Bikhalfa and kissed his forehead. – Now go and let God bless you.*”

There is a good tradition of wishing good trip to those who are leaving and it is usually expressed by white colour “оқ уо‘л” or “оқ фотиҳа”. That’s why a good journey is wished to the main hero who is leaving his house, close people. As a poetic symbol “white” is used as an epithet to “road”, and this expression symbolically show the safe and sound achievement of trip goals of a hero.

As a symbol of “road” the colour “white” serves to activate ideological aesthetic features of it. Because any word expressing symbolical idea can carry main ideological aesthetic features in the literary text. In some poems white colour is used as a poetic symbol, it shows the case of peaceful future, the trip of a hero to distant place and their wish.

But in the Middle and Far East white colour is considered as a colour of mourning and funeral<sup>2</sup>. It found its expression in the mourning process of a nation. It is a tradition to wear white in funeral repast in Zerafshan valley. White and blue dresses express funeral repast in these regions. Thus, it comes out that such Arabian

traditions had reached us long before and left their traces on our mourning and funeral ceremonies. Women, deploring and those who are in mourning have white scarves on their heads. And it is the proof that white is a symbol of funeral repast.

There is a word “*oqpadar*” – epithet which means unworthy son of father in the tale “*Ziyod botir*”, and following example concretely opens the meaning of it: “*Султон Хусайн Мирзо ўз яқинлари билан ўтирган экан, улар орасида шайх ҳам бор экан. Шайхнинг ўгли подшога таъзим қилиб: – Шоҳим, яқинда юртимизга бир оқпадар йигит бир қиз билан келган эди. Мен уларни дуруст одам деб ўйлаб никоҳлаб қўйган эдим. Кейин ҳовли ҳам олиб бердим. Шу кеча кўчадан ўтиб кетаётсам, ҳовлидан кулги эшитилди. Қарасам, ҳалиги оқпадарнинг хотини йигитлар ўртасида ўйнаб турган экан. Аччигимга чидолмай йигитни чақириб: “Бу нима бузуқлик, уялмайсанми?” деган эдим, у менга бир мушт солди. Шу оқпадарни жазоласангиз<sup>3</sup>..”*

*(Sultan Husayn Mirzo was with his suite, and there was a sheikh among them. Sheikh's son bowed to the shah and said:- Your majesty, young unworthy son of his father came to our land with a girl recently. I married them off thinking that they were good people. Then I bought a house for them. This night, passing this house I heard a laugh coming from there. Looking in I saw man's wife among several follows. Then I called the man and said that it was not good of him to let his wife behave like that. But he had knocked me down. I want you to punish this man.)*

We know that there is a word “*oq qilmoq*” which means surrendering a child. In this phrase “white” – means space, which means that there is nothing left to connect the relationship between father and child. It is tradition to hate, or to look with hatred to those who had this curse. We have to take into consideration that negative meaning of white colour is rare case in Uzbek traditions, but we can still have it to express negative emotional feelings.

According to S.Utanova, who studied symbolism of colours in Alisher Navai's poetry, “*oq*” in “*oqpadar*” and “*oq qilmoq*” has no connection with the colour *oq* – white. “*Oqpadar*” is defined as following: *oq* – rejected, *padar* – father, completely- rejected by father. Because of Arabian “*oq*” loaned to Turkic languages two words with the same sound but different meaning appeared in language, and there is misunderstanding in their use”.<sup>4</sup>

In the tale “*Ziyod botir*” “*oqpadar*” is really that who had his father's curse, who had people's hatred and whose personage is given in negative expressive colours.

Such example can be found in the ballad “*Alpomys*h”, in which Ultontoz makes his father discontented, he is also surrendered and lives a very bad life:

*“Бунни Қултой кўриб, Ултонтозга насиҳат бериб, бу сўзни айтиб турибди:*

*Подшолар бўшатган хурма тўп бўлар,*

*Ҳар ўлкада сендай беклар кўп бўлар,*

*Отасини урган фарзанд оқ бўлар,*

*Урма дейман Бойбўридай бийингни..”<sup>5</sup>*

Beauty, charm, naivety of girls in hyperbolic style is usually expressed with white colour – white wrist, white-faces, white teeth and etc. it is not only abstract, but also showing a beauty of lover in her physical state also and it expresses poetic approach in description. In most songs slim and attractive body of lover is resembled to milk<sup>6</sup>. This resemblance is connected with life experience. As they say, in long before times wives of kings had a bath in the special ponds filled with milk. Bathing in milk helps to make body white and attractive. In European countries white body shows aristocracy. Aristocrats were called “white bones” and had higher status in the society.

In Uzbek fairy tales and ballads we can see the same, that's to say, hero's symbolic names. In Malikai Ayyor ballad the princess has a maid named *Oqqiz*. She is described as pretty, healthy, slim and charming girl<sup>7</sup>. Or in the ballad “*Ravshan*” princess *Zulkhumor*'s beautiful, white maid's name is also *Oqqiz*.

In the tales kings' famous daughters' name is usually *Oqbilak*: “*Many kings were in love with Oqbilak, but couldn't achieve her. Qilich botir made Qorakhon king his prisoner. He took Oqbilak and left. They reached*

*Oqbilak's fortress and lived there happily.<sup>8</sup>”, or “...There was a king Shavkat in Egypt. He had a daughter Oqbilak. She was as beautiful as the moon. She was so beautiful, that everybody fell in love with her. You are as strong as lion. Go and bring Oqbilak! – thus Bektemir heard from old lady about Oqbilak and fell in love with her.<sup>9</sup>”.*

The girl's beauty, virginity, naevity, and love is expressed with the epithet “oq bilak”, and symbolically princess has the same name. But sometimes this phrase is used to lazy, light-minded, snob girls also. Usually merchants', kings' spoilt daughters are called so and it expresses social inequality.

One of the widely spread symbolic personages in Uzbek folklore is white snake. The etymology of it is connected with religious belief. As it is known, white snake is saint creature for our people. Because white snake is a king of snakes and the person who can see its feet will be the happiest person in the world. Appearance of the white snake at home, in the yard is also a symbol of profit and virtue. That's why in Fergana valley, Bukhara and Khorezm those who had seen it spilled flour on it, put milk in the cup for it. Those who see “white hairy snake” in Bukhara region usually consider it as a ghost of predecessors and spill flour on it.<sup>10</sup> It is a great sin to kill a white snake. They imagined in the past that there lived Muslim fairies in white snakes' appearance.

In the legend “Revenge” a young man kills a white snake which appeared to his wife. Then the woman is followed by another black snake. And anywhere this couple appears there appears that black snake also. One morning, when the young man goes out he sees his wife's dead body at the same place where he killed a white snake. The black snake is laying circled at her. The snake killed the fellow also. And so the snake died itself.<sup>11</sup>

The legend shows that people considered the white snake as taboo. If this taboo is destroyed, snake attacks people and hurts them. So, this legend literally expresses the taboo to the white snake and its results when it is destroyed. Later such epic traditional motives began to be included to the national songs<sup>12</sup>.

People in the past believed that flora and fauna were good protectors of human kind, and considered some of them as Gods of the mankind.<sup>13</sup> Such totemistic imaginations were strengthened with colour depictions also. People usually sacrifice animals as sheep, goat, hen of black, white, red and other colours for safety and health of their family and prosperity of their business. We can say that this realistic approach was a reason for formation of animals' supporting and riving motives for heroes. In national fairy tales and ballads hero is somehow assisted by white goat, white horse, white snake, white deer and other animals and his enemies are mythological personages (black deev, black lion).

For example, in the tale “Nigini shohi moron” the king of snakes gives its ring to the boy who saved its son of fatal danger. The ring was magical and all dreams of boy began to come true with the words: “O nigini shohi moron, let there appear a plate of plov by the order of white snake”, and there appeared a plate of plov<sup>14</sup>”. It is clear that snake's power is strengthened, he is shown as a sponsor helping the boy in different difficult cases.

In many tales white snake is described as a positive featured character, and in some cases black snake stands against it: “...-I am a daughter of the fair kings. One deev fell in love with me and wanted to marry me, but I ran away turning to white snake. You were on my way and you let me pass, you had killed deev, following me. If you didn't kill it, it would kill me. Now you go home and don't be afraid of anything, if you are in difficulty burn my hair and I will help you, - and gave three hairs to him<sup>15</sup>.” This tale also shows the overcoming of virtue on evil in the white snake's appearance, it is also described as a power helping kind, gentle, noble people.

Some tales say that white horse usually helps hero because it is expressed as a ghost of deceased father of him. “Three brothers”, “Father's preset” are good example of it.

V.Y.Propp wrote: “The horse is always when it expresses the cult.”<sup>16</sup> Really, the white horse is the fellow's friend, companion, and talisman of happiness in the tale. It is seen that horse's magic, unusual features are literally interpreted clearly in national ballads.

In the past the colour of horses had its value in various processes, those kings and generals who won in the battles came to their cities on white horse in ceremonial way. White horse is always a symbol of success, victory and luck. As historical information says that one of Turkic rulers Kulteegin won all battles when he went to war on his white horse.<sup>17</sup> Also ancient pictures show that goddesses Ardvissura and Anakhita came down from heaven to ordinary people in their carriage hosed with four similar horses.<sup>18</sup>

In Uzbek folklore researcher of deev personage J.Eshonqul, explaining the symbolism of colours in the primitive society, tells the following about colours: “Black deev is a symbol of darkness, red deev is - blood, conquer, white deev is - hard rain, cloud, yellow deev is - fire, blue deev is a symbol of sky, the symbols coded names<sup>19</sup>”. These three types of deev can be found in fairy tale “Jurakhon”. In this tale white, red and black deevs are described as evil forces disturbing people, and cruel creatures keeping girls in hostage. Every deev has its border, territory and coming signs. In “Jurakhon” tale white deev comes after white wind, red deev after red wind thus power and signs of deevs are shown. In most cases the line of colours is like white, red and black, there can be only few cases when the line is on the contrary, i.e., red, black, white. It is a proof that symbolic meaning of colours is valuable for personage. In Uzbek national ballad “Malikai ayyor” Avazkhon faced with leavedeev, red deev and at last, with white deev. In analysis of this ballad J.Eshonqul wrote: “Avaz’s going to another world comes up from people’s imagination about it, - the first stage of going there is connected with plants and trees and that’s why first he meets **Leavedeev**; the second stage is connected with air, gas, and fire and warmth, that’s why he meets **Red deev**; the last stage is underground sky stage, as the sky has white colour here he meets **White deev**<sup>20</sup>”.

Also a tale about Qayroqtosh child<sup>21</sup> the head of the deevs was White deev and he brought a hero to the sky which shows its connection. We think white colour is a symbol of positive expressive colour thanks to help to heroes, because at the end of the tale negative emotional features of a deev are weakened.

In folklore there are many poetic units expressing features of age, especially, old age features.

*“Guruglibek dreamt red faced, dressed in white old man was surrounded by a group of men. The elder of them was his maid who said:*

*— Hey, Bobo Kambar! That boy came for his horse. Let his wish come true! Anyway, don’t make him disappointed.<sup>22</sup>”* Besides expressing the old age, clarity, cleanness, white as a colour of dress, shows the pass to the other world, sanity.

When we look at the life of a man, when a child is born, he is wrapped up in white. When a bride, she wears white dress, and everybody envies her. Those who celebrate anniversary of “muchal” also wear white dress wishing a kind wishes. When a man dies, he is also wrapped up in white, those who mourn also wear white scarves. If the father dies in Peshku, Romitan and Shafirkon regions of Bukhara province, elder son will have white turban on his head. By this he symbolically shows that he is an inheritant of the father’s affairs.

Because of white colour’s being active in ceremonies first it became saint in folklore and then in epic and written works, in religion it became saint also.

In Alisher Navai’s “Sab’ ai sayyor” (“Seven planets”) king Bahrom listens to seven pilgrims’ stories in seven different coloured castles. The end of the story poet connected with white colour and Friday (Bahrom’s finding Dilorom) which is interpreted like a kindness and sanity of the colour and day. Here poet’s idea of sanity of white and Friday is clearly seen. As Islam says, the seventh day of the week – Friday – is the day when God created man.

Sufism had also special approach on symbolism of colors. Colours showed the main idea, thoughts and attitude, apprentice’s condition of every branch of Sufism.

Also the founder of “Kubraviya” teachings Najmiddin Kubro explained the changing of colours in his theory “Latoif”: white – yellow – blue – violet – green – red – black. These seven colours show apprentice’s seven conditions, that’s to say, white – Islam, green – belief, red – confession, black – surprise and emotiveness.<sup>23</sup>

In conclusion, epic genres in Uzbek folklore have a system of different symbols, in tales and ballads colours have different semantic, literary and aesthetic meanings. That's why the value of colours in mythology, religion, folklore and written literature is specific.

Comparing it in comparative-analytical method, we can see that colours used for expressing literary aesthetic features in songs may have the same ones in symbolic meaning in enigmas and riddles:

*Oq yer ochdim,*

*Qora bug'doy sochdim.*<sup>[24]</sup>

(I opened *white land*

*Sowed black wheat*.)

The answer of this riddle is copybook and writing, the antithesis of white and black expresses writing on a white surface of a copybook in black ink. In this case antithesis of white and black serves to improve poetic impressiveness of a literary work

In the following riddle *black* serves as a poetic symbol, and shows the thing which expresses the main feature of it:

*Qoravoy otdan tushdi,*

*Bolalari yugurib keldi.*<sup>25</sup>

(Qoravoy jumped down the horse,

Its children ran after him.)

The key of this riddle is pot, plate and dishes. In Uzbek culture the word "qoravoy" usually equal to pot and it is a parallel image to pot in this riddle. Uzbek folklorist and scientist on riddles M.Juraeva said: "...such similarities are not just a simple comparison, they are the specific ways of literary expressing ancient imaginations and understanding of our nation with the help of metaphorical poetic style..." Really, as riddle says: "*ko'k ho'kiz oldin chiqar, qizil ho'kiz quvib chiqar (blue bull goes first, red one runs after (smoke and fire); Ko'k ko'ylakli xotin, Sarig' bola ko'targan (woman in blue dress has a child in her hands (maize); it is a stream, it is yellow, its face is red, it is head is barbed (wheat)*". In all these riddles colours serve as a source of image creation. Symbolism of colour gives new expression to images, improves literary features of them, shows the place of national culture and spirit in them.

Colours express traditional symbolic images in national proverbs also: *Qora itning uyati oq itga tegar (shame of black dog concerns white one also); Qizil tilim tiyolmadim, qizimnuikiga borolmadim (I couldn't stop my red tongue, and couldn't go to my daughter).*<sup>26</sup> ;*oq kunda oqararsan, qora kunda qorayarsan. (You'll be white in white day, and black in black one).*<sup>27</sup>; *sabrning tagi sariq oltin (the result of patience is yellow gold)*<sup>28</sup>. In these examples the meaning expressed by colour in connection with images becomes a container of symbolic meaning. Analyzing the proverb "Rang ko'r, hol so'r" (asking about the condition according the colour), we can say that this example studies the spiritual condition, knowing the character and behavior by inner outcomes of a person.

There are colour symbols in patters, one of the wide-spread genres of folklore. In patters a great attention is paid to sound expressiveness. Colours mostly serve to form a genre composition in them:

*Oq choynakka oq qopqoq*

*Ko'k choynakka ko'k qopqoq.*<sup>29</sup>

(*White closure to white tea-pot*

*Blue closure to blue tea-pot*).

Several repetitions of sounds “o” in “oq” and “k” in “ko`k” brings an alliteration, and serves to improve the sound.

The images as white head kerchief, red head kerchief, yellow head kerchief, black head kerchief, white snake, white dove, blue dove, white horse, black horse, white fish, white camel, white paper, red flower, white flower, black maple, black crow, white wheat, white birch, white hurricane, black cloud, black parandja, white parandja, red parandja, green dress, white apple, red apple, white tent, white castle, white house, black spot, black lamp, green valley and other symbolic images improve the colour of description, imagery, and spirituality of images.

Literary function of colour symbols is that, they open the poetic meaning of a song. Poetic thinking can be clearly, impressively and beautifully shown by their support. White and red colours expressing flower types in folk songs usually as a poetic image mean two sex people in them:

*Oq gul bilan qizil gulni chatdilar,*

Ozod boshim bandi qilib sotdilar.

Otam bilan onamdan xato o`tdi,

Meni sotib ne murodga yetdilar.<sup>30</sup>

*(white and red flowers were connected*

My free head was slaved.

My father and mother were mistaken.

What had they by selling me?)

In folk songs the image of red flower is seen in its straight and metaphorical meaning. In metaphorical meaning it expresses symbolic image of a girl, her virginity and symbol of her love:

*Asra qizil gulingni,*

Saqla qizil gulingni.

Bahosiga yetmasalar,

Sotma qizil gulingni.<sup>31</sup>

*(Keep your red flower,*

Save your red flower.

If there is no estimation,

Don't sell your red flower.)

In most cases girls are characterized as red flowers. Because girls' beauty, charm is completely expressed by the symbol of red flower. In the lines given above red flower is an image of a girl, gardener is a symbol of parents. The poem straightly relates to gardener. Red flower is the most beautiful, saint and attractive flower in the garden. So, the adjective “red” in the word combination contains appreciation, saint, and beauty in itself. When the red flower flourishes, gardener wants to give it to a person who appreciates it, and parents also want their daughter to marry a man who appreciates her. In this case the destiny of a girl simulates the red flower. The song impressively expresses the lively similarity between the girl and the flower.

It is seen that tops of literacy concerning colors improved on gradual stage in different genres and together with them it serves to express some aesthetic aim.

Colors are main symbolic elements which contain specific features for improving imagery. Colours are connected with the social life of people and that's why they are deeply soaked in their spiritual life also. That's why in folklore they became symbolic images. Researching such symbolisms in folklore helps to learn spirit of a nation.

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