

Linguocultural Analysis of Color Concepts in Uzbek Proverbs

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the symbolic and linguocultural meanings of color terms in Uzbek proverbs. As one of the richest layers of oral folklore, proverbs not only convey everyday wisdom and life experience but also reflect the cultural codes and worldview of the Uzbek people. By examining proverbs containing references to white, black, variegated, red, yellow, and green, the study reveals that colors function both as descriptive elements and as carriers of deeper symbolic values. White often symbolizes purity and goodness but can also mask hypocrisy. Black represents sorrow and evil but also fertility and endurance. Variegated denotes ambiguity and diversity, while red conveys vitality and danger. Yellow is linked with insignificance and cunning, and green reflects blessing and nature. The findings demonstrate that the symbolic interpretations of colors are not fixed but context-dependent, highlighting the dynamic relationship between language, culture, and worldview.

Keywords: Uzbek proverbs, color symbolism, linguoculturology, cultural worldview, oral folklore, semantics, tradition

INTRODUCTION

In human cognition, colors have long embodied a distinct symbolic and spiritual weight. Every nation has understood colors in harmony with its own culture, religious views, customs,

and aesthetic taste. In particular, Uzbek proverbs represent one of the richest layers of our language, and the wide use of color expressions within them serves as a unique mirror of the people's worldview and psyche. Since proverbs encapsulate not only life experience but also national thought and symbols, studying them from the perspective of color reveals the people's artistic-aesthetic worldview. Each color unit used in Uzbek proverbs has linguocultural significance, because proverbs are the result of the people's many years of experience and way of life. In this brief study, we examine the distinctive aspects of each color that occurs in proverbs.

White has long been regarded as a symbol of purity, innocence, light, good intentions, justice, and virtue. At the same time, the spiritual memory of the people preserves the religious and social roots of white. For example, in Islamic tradition, white clothing is considered a person's purest garment; shrouding the deceased in a white shroud also confirms the antiquity of this symbol. White likewise signifies sunlight, the breath of dawn, renewal, and the continuity of life.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive and analytical approach to examine the symbolic meanings of color terms in Uzbek proverbs. The research is based on the collection, categorization, and interpretation of proverbs containing references to colors, drawn primarily from published sources such as Uzbek Folk Proverbs (Mirzayev, Musoqulov & Sarimsoqov 2005) and various phraseological dictionaries.

The methodology consisted of several stages:

1. **Data collection:** Proverbs with explicit color terms (white, black, variegated, red, yellow, green) were extracted from linguistic and folkloric sources.
2. **Categorization:** The collected proverbs were grouped according to the color terms they contained.
3. **Semantic analysis:** Each color expression was analyzed for its literal, figurative, and symbolic meanings.

4. **Linguocultural interpretation:** The symbolic meanings were examined in the context of Uzbek cultural traditions, religious beliefs, and social practices, highlighting how colors reflect collective memory and national values. By applying this methodology, the study seeks to reveal the multifaceted roles that colors play in shaping the ethical, aesthetic, and cognitive worldview embedded in Uzbek proverbs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Uzbek proverbs, white often expresses semantic layers linked with positivity, goodness, and purity:

1. Even if it isn't white, let it be pure.
2. A pure-hearted person's face is bright.
3. The name of a pure heart will not die, nor will its body be cured.
4. If there is purity, there is no hunger.
5. A canal that has flowed will not cease to flow.

In addition, white appears alongside other colors to express various meanings. For example: "For a beggar, a white sack or a blue sack – it's all the same;" "White dog, black dog – both are dogs;" "A white sheep is hung by its own legs, and so is a black sheep." In these proverbs, sameness, equality, and the idea that an evil person may look good outwardly but always harbors ill intent are conveyed; no matter how diverse the external appearance, one should pay attention to the inner heart.

We also encounter cases where this color is used in the sense of weakness or low strength:

1. You will brighten on a white day, and darken on a black day.
2. A white camel does not stand, a blue camel does not kneel.
3. A white hand is the owner of food; a strong hand is the owner of work.

In many proverbs, white and black appear side by side in opposite senses (we will discuss such proverbs under the description of black).

However, white cannot always be considered positive. In the proverb “Even if the mullah’s turban is white, his heart is black,” white symbolizes outward appearance (a sign of piety) but is interpreted as a cover that conceals inner darkness. Or when paired with the color blue, it expresses luxury and peace: “My white home – my blue home.” In ancient Turkic culture, the white home was regarded as a symbol of prosperity and sacred dwelling. In this proverb too, white conveys a symbolic meaning associated with a person’s house, family, and shelter. In the proverb “He who wears white in the moonlight wears blue in the shade”, white and blue together symbolize concealment and duplicity.

In the worldview of our people, black has a dual symbolic meaning. On the one hand, it is associated with negative notions such as grief, sorrow, danger, hardship, death, and evil. On the other hand, black in some cases represents strength, stability, and the endurance of life. In the ancient Turkic worldview, black denoted the North, but gradually, under religious and social connotations, it took on predominantly negative meanings:

1. The ill-natured has a black face.
2. This world will pass, but the stain of a black face will remain.
3. The deeds of a black-hearted person are crooked.
4. He whose heart is black also has a black face.
5. A black hen scatters straw and reveals its own fault.
6. He who is cut off from the people will have a blackened face; he who is cut off from the homeland will lose his word.
7. The essence of black will not become white, the essence of corruption will not be corrected.
8. A black heart is a wounded heart; a black-hearted tongue is black as well.
9. The deeds of a black-hearted person are crooked.
10. Better a leper than a black-hearted one.
11. He whose heart is black also has a black face.
12. The good is like a garden, the bad is a black cauldron.
13. Evil does not stain the good, nor does society rely on the wicked.
14. If you lean against a cauldron, its blackness will rub off; if you lean on the wicked, their wounds will affect you.
15. A false friend is the shadow of a black cloud.

16. In a black house, there is a patched roof.
17. Rather than begging from a coward, drown in a black river.
18. Black water does not quench thirst; a miserly person does not host a guest.
19. What is black at its core will remain black.
20. The soot of a cauldron will come off, but the wound of the heart will not.
21. The soot of a cauldron will come off, but the darkness of the heart will not.

In oral folklore, the opposition of black and white creates the contrast between good and evil, light and darkness:

1. From a foul mouth, a white dog enters and a black dog comes out.
2. The shame of a black dog falls upon the white dog.”
3. White means blessing, black means curse.
4. You will shine on a white day, and darken on a black day.
5. No matter how much you wash black, it will not turn white.
6. No white word comes from a black heart.

Black also often symbolizes difficulty, patience, hardship, and livelihood in many proverbs:

1. My wife became my husband, my black hair became a cap.
2. When the black cauldron boils, a white face will appear.
3. A black belly is a black sorrow.

The Uzbek people are so rich in language that even in the study of a single color, countless treasures may be discovered. In addition to the above meanings, black is also used to intensify or emphasize:

1. Your own black cauldron is better than someone else’s copper one.
2. My dog has no garden, its fruit is black charos grapes.
3. There is no dye darker than black.

In the proverb “Do not cross the black stream until the black day arrives,” the color black symbolizes danger, misfortune, and difficult times. In “My stomach is full with black bread,” “black”

is used as a symbol of poverty and hardship, yet in the mentality of the people it is seen as something to be endured with patience. Even in proverbs where black and white are contrasted, we sometimes find black used in a positive sense: “If you sow seeds in black soil, white bread will grow.” Here, black directly represents the earth, that is, the fertile motherland. Black soil symbolizes fertility, sustenance, and the source of life, while white bread represents result and blessing. Thus, in this context, black is not negative but a symbol of vitality and the land. In addition to these meanings, black is also used in the sense of “part” or “fragment”: **“Do not say I remained from seeing its blackness, do not say I received what had not yet touched your hand; if the dog does not see the black, it will not bark.* Therefore, although black in the popular mind is mostly connected with negative notions, in some proverbs it also symbolizes fertility, abundance, hardship, patience, and life. This shows that the symbolic layers of colors are not fixed, but rather are interpreted differently depending on the context.

In the worldview of the Uzbek people, the variegated (mottled, *ola*) color is often used to symbolize mixture, inconsistency, or uncertainty. Since *ola* derives from the combination of white and black, in folk speech it is viewed as an intermediate image, standing between the two colors. For this reason, in proverbs *ola* often appears as a symbol of unity, cooperation, or the temporary nature of conflicts. In many cases, however, *ola* carries negative meanings such as evil, duplicity, and disaster:

1. The river turned mottled, the river became disastrous.
2. He who fears snakes will also fear a mottled rope.
3. Cursed be both the mottled and the black snake.
4. A blemish in cattle is inside, but a blemish in people is outside.
5. Even if a mottled grasshopper is agile, it cannot be a hawk.
6. Even if an ox dies, its mottled eye remains.
7. Mottled prayer is a disaster prayer. (from a hadith).

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Uzbek proverbs demonstrates that color terms serve as powerful linguistic and cultural symbols, reflecting the people's worldview, traditions, and values. White is associated with purity, goodness, and renewal, yet it can also mask hypocrisy. Black symbolizes grief, misfortune, and evil, but in certain contexts it expresses strength, endurance, and fertility. Variegated (mottled) colors highlight mixture, duplicity, or uncertainty, while also symbolizing unity in diversity. Red conveys life, love, joy, and passion, but likewise embodies danger and shame. Yellow often carries meanings of insignificance or cunning, and green represents goodness, blessing, and the beauty of nature.

These findings reveal that the symbolic meanings of colors in proverbs are not fixed but context-dependent, shifting between positive and negative interpretations. As a result, color symbolism in proverbs embodies the complexity of human experience, offering insight into the Uzbek people's aesthetic perception, moral values, and collective cultural memory.

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