

A Note on Color

H.P.B. says: “The student must, however, remember that the colors which we see with our physical eyes are not the true colours of Occult Nature, but are merely the effects produced on the mechanism of our physical organs by certain rates of vibration.” (Secret Doctrine, vol 3, page 483). Keep this in mind with reference to the color-scale given in these lessons. It is one of several, each true on its own plane. The scale we use is, however, strictly scientific, because it represents accurately the correlations between color and sound as we know them on the physical plane. To us a certain rate of vibratory activity is the cause of the sensation named “C” on the scale of sound. Several octaves higher, the corresponding vibration is felt by the eye as “red”.

The Builders use the physical scale because their work begins on the physical plane. The “Adytum” is a physical structure, which I have elsewhere compared to a radio apparatus. It is built through the application of physical rates of vibration. Until it is built, there are grave dangers in experimenting with higher planes. One of our first objects is to put ourselves in touch with the consciousness of centers of the Life-Power which are more highly evolved than we. To do this, we must change our bodies, and we change them by using physical forces. When we have made our contact with the Inner School, we shall be in a position to receive first-hand information about the higher manifestations of sound and color, free from the “blinds” which are found in all Piscean Age expositions of this subject.

In our advanced work we make practical use of our knowledge of the correlation between color and sound. In ceremonial work, for example, certain color combinations are used in connection with certain tonal sequences, in order to intensify a specific rate of vibration. We are able to select that rate of vibration by choosing a color representing its effect upon the physical eye. Again, we use mental exercises in vibratory control based on color-imagination. Imagination is based on memory. To control a specific rate of vibration mentally, you must remember its physical aspect in terms of color and sound.

It is well to know that color and sound sensations are different on other planes; but in practical occultism for people using physical bodies, the work must be done with physical plane forces. Certainly you are working only with relative truth when you employ color as we see it here. It is important to know that color is just as relative on higher planes. The very noun “color” hints at this. Its Latin root means “to conceal”. While you work with color you work with differentiation. On the highest planes color disappears. First the spectrum is synthesized as pure white brilliance. Then ever this dazzling whiteness is transcended. On this account the “Mystical Theology” of Dionysius describes AIN SVP AVR, the Limitless Light, by the paradoxical name, “Radiant Darkness.”

In our color-scale, the tints assigned to Saturn and Venus are just the reverse of those found in some Theosophical and astrological books. The colors of the Moon and Jupiter are also reversed. The attribution of blue-violet or indigo to Saturn is based upon the fact that Saturn is the planetary influence corresponding to Akasha, which is not black, as sometimes described, but a very deep blue-violet. Venus, as we see in the Tarot, is a mixture of the Mercurial yellow with the Saline blue, for in the Tarot the Empress is a symbol of the union of the Magician with the High Priestess. Venus is green also because green is the complement of red, a fact hinted at in mythology by the story of the clandestine love of Mars and Venus. Again, Venus represents the manifestation of the Mercurial yellow, or light, in organic form, through the agency of the restrictive, limiting power of the blue Tamas. We ascribe blue to the Moon because blue is the color of the Tamas guna, and because blue is the color we associate with Water. Blue is shown in the Tarot as the predominating color of the High Priestess’s robe, and the High Priestess is associated with the Tamas guna by her correspondence to Hecate, goddess of sorcery, and mistress of the dark, illusive underworld. The Moon, moreover, waxes and wanes, and represents reflected light. Thus it symbolizes the illusive world of name and form, which is the reflection of the changeless Light, and in which growth and decay, waxing and waning, are predominant characteristics. Jupiter is violet or purple because Jupiter’s astrological rulership is over the blood, which is blue in its Tamasic or impure state, and scarlet in its pure, Rajastic state. Jupiter is by no means the cold principle of inertia indicated by the unmixed Tamasic blue. His weapon is the Martian thunderbolt. He is the

energy principle, the fiery Rajas, working through the formative, restrictive blue Tamas. Thus his color represents the balance of these two contending forces in violet.

With these facts about physical plane colors and correspondences in mind, you will be better prepared to understand the colors of the Sephiroth. From Binah to Yesod inclusive, the colors are those of the planets for which these Sephiroth are spheres of influence. Kether, Chokmah and Malkuth are given colors in accordance with their special characteristics. The complete Sephirotic scale is as follows:

Kether: Pure white brilliance.

Chokmah: Opalescent gray. This is very difficult to represent by pigments. It is really a translucent ray, shot through with all the colors.

Binah: Deep blue-violet

Chesed: Violet of a rather deep shade.

Geburah: Flame-scarlet, the color of arterial blood.

Tipherith: Bright orange.

Netzach: Green, the shade of the stole of Justice in the Tarot.

Hod: Yellow.

Yesod: Blue.

Malkuth: This has four colors. They are: Yellow for Air or Sattva; Red for fire or Rajas; Blue for Water or Tamas; and a mixture of all three for Earth. In equal proportions, this mixture gives Brown, but because Tamas predominates at present, more blue is added to the mixture until it is nearly Black.

To show these four colors of Malkuth on the Tree of Life, divide the lowermost circle into four equal parts by drawing two diameters at right angles to each other; but place these diameters in the circle so that each will make an angle of 45 degrees from the horizontal, or so that they will look like a letter “X” in the circle. The space in the top of the “X” is then colored

yellow; the space on the right side, the side of Mercy or Chesed, is red; the space on the left side is blue; and the bottom space is the mixture of the three.