

Spirituality of color in traditional colors focused on Obangsaek and Chakra for well-being and healing environments

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ABSTRACT

Color is one of the most important components in design and built environment, and is related to culture and region. In this study, the spirituality of color in Obangsaek in Korea and Chakras in India was examined to be reflective of color' spirituality in relation with well-being and healing environments. The purpose of this study is to identify the contributing factors that influence of spiritual integration for well-being and healing environments. It is therefore necessary to delineate the spectrums and meanings captured the essential elements and characteristics of spiritual integration of obangsaek and chakras. It is also proposed that the process of spiritual integration incorporates a holistic meaning of spirituality. The five colors of Obangsaek k and the 7 colors of Chakras were examined with color spectrums and meanings based on spiritual integration for well-being and healing environments, and proposing a spiritual integration framework to assess color intent spirituality for well-being and healing environment.

KEYWORDS: five colors(obangsaek), chakra, yin-yang, spirituality, well-being

INTRODUCTION

At a time when humanity is seeking to find a balanced and integrated approach to improve human well-being, the meaning and importance of consciousness as a determining and influencing factor in this process is only beginning to be scientifically explored. While theories abound as to the effectiveness of various methods of healing whether conventional, complementary, or alternative, research has yet to describe adequately the relationship between consciousness and well-being. Utilizing current theories of the evolving nature of consciousness, this study explores the relationship between Obangasaek and Chakras for well-being. Throughout the centuries varying religious and psychospiritual texts have espoused commentary about the evolution of human consciousness. Recent postulates in the field of quantum physics are confirming what the mystics, saints, and sages throughout history set forth about the nature of reality. Reality is now viewed to be a vast, interpenetrating, interconnected network of information, which according to some innovative scientists, can be termed, *consciousness*. The mystics professed a similar insight, describing the nature of the Divine as an omnipresent, omniscient ordered plan unfolding into *being*. The two perspectives share a common understanding: the phenomenon of the universe as being an inseparable, interconnected, harmonious whole. With this divergence from a purely mechanistic approach, where mind and matter had been categorized as separate, science now quantifies the emergence of a new paradigm: one that supports body, mind, and spirit through a more integrated vision of reality. The interrelatedness of mind, body, and spirit has been investigated in relation to many areas of human health functioning. Quantifiably demonstrating the interconnectedness of mind, body, and spirit, research within the subspecialties of psychoneuroimmunology, neuroendocrinology, and psychophysiology give validation to this phenomenon. The model of health as a consequence of increasing consciousness within the mind/body is the underlying tenant upon which holistic healthcare is structured. The obangsaek in Korea and chakras in India recognize the importance of incorporating the "human qualities of emotion, mind, intention, and consciousness" into the equations of physics. Transpersonal models such as those of Abraham Maslow identifies the highest stages of human consciousness as moving toward the mystical levels of transcendent union. The colors in Korea have a traditional symbolism and related meanings. The colors used in the paintings on the eaves and columns of

Korean temples are referred to as Dancheong. The five main colors of black, blue, yellow and white refer to the five elements of classic Chinese philosophy.

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COLOR SPECTRUM OF OBANGSAEK IN KOREA

Korean traditional color symbolism is based upon the five elements and the five basic colors are blue, white, red, black and yellow. Traditionally, blue symbolizes creativity, immortality and hope; white symboliese chastity, truth, innocence and death; red symbolises the sun, fire, production, creation, passion and love; black symbolises existence; yellow symbolises light and essence of vitality. These five colors reflect the traditional principle of yin yang, male and female, positive and negative and light and dark, symbolic of a harmonious world in the East Asian cosmology(Figure 1, Figure 2).

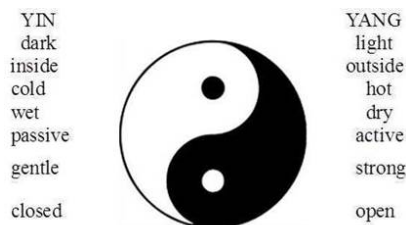


Figure1. Diverse meaning of Yin -Yang

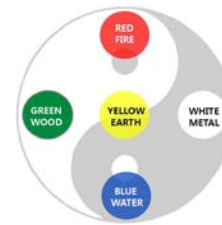


Figure 2. Five elements of Yin-Yang

The color yellow in Korea is associated with earth, black with water, white with metal, green/blue with wood and red with fire. The colors are also associated with seasons: green for spring, red for summer, yellow for late summer, white for autumn and black for winter and even specific times of the day. Dancheong colors also represent the directions: blue (east), white (west), red (south), black (north) and yellow (center).

As shown in Figure 3 these five primary colors also correspond to the four points of the compass and the centre(blue-the east, white-the west, red-the south, black-the north, yellow-the centre); the five elements of the weather (cold, warmth, wind, dryness and humidity); and the five blessings (longevity, wealth, success, health and luck). There are five secondary colors of obangsaek(Figure 4).

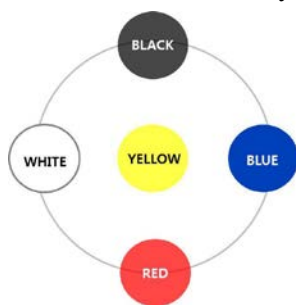


Figure3. Primary colors of Obangsaek

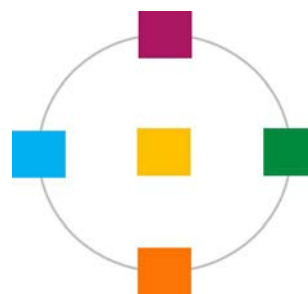


Figure 4. Secondary colors of Obangsaek

This can be seen in the principles of "Yin and Yang", and was later expressed as Obangsaek. Obang means "five directions" and saek means "color" in Korean. Obang consists of north, south, east, west, and the center of these cardinal points. Interestingly each direction has its own color. North is associated with the color black. Black stands for winter, water, kidneys, a salty taste, sorrow and knowledge. Koreans in the old times associated deep valleys and water with the north. Deep water seems black, and represents Yin. Because of this, Chosun dynasty people avoided using black in their daily lives, though common people used sometimes black in making their clothes. The color for south was red. Red means summer, fire, the heart, bitterness, pleasure and propriety. The south always receives the light of the sun during the day time. Therefore, our ancestors associated the south with red. This color is filled with Yang energy. Red promotes vitality and also keeps the power of Yang. Koreans associated the color red with the power of the occult. They

believed that an abundance of Yang energy repulses evil. Thus, red peppers were hung on the gate with a rope when a son was born, and patjuk (rice gruel boiled together with red-beans) was eaten on the day of dongji (the winter solstice). This practice has continued to the present day. The east was assigned the color blue. Blue represents spring, tree, the liver, sourness, delight and benevolence. The sun rises in the east, so ancient Koreans believed that the east possesses strong Yang energy, like the north. Blue is frequently found in Korean clothes, architecture, and diverse relics of the past. This color is often used for the traditional Korean marriage ceremony. Red and blue strings are put on the wedding table, representing the harmony of the bride and bridegroom. The west was associated with the color white. White signifies fall, gold, lungs, pungency, anger and righteousness. Lastly, the center of the four cardinal points was given the color yellow. Yellow denotes the spleen, soil, sweetness, greed and wisdom. Soil is regarded as the center of the universe, so yellow was the most honorable color and only an emperor could wear yellow clothes. On the other hand, common people used yellow for exorcising evil spirits and preventing illness by hanging straw festoons in specific places. The arrangement of colors in traditional costumes also applied the concept of these five cosmic elements. The five-color stripe on children's sleeves is a typical example, although colors may be added or excluded. It was hoped that the use of the cardinal elements would protect children from evil spirits. The five color stripe in the sleeves of the full court dress of queens and on the wedding garments of commoners throughout the Koryo and Choson dynasties is another example. Regardless of personal taste, the five cardinal elements played a significant role in traditional Korean culture and deeply penetrated peoples' lives and thoughts.

COLOR SPECTRUM OF CHAKRAS IN INDIA

Chakra system theory dates back to the second century B.C. in India and is theorized to be a complex energy-conducting network located within the body that receives and processes what has been called subtle energy or bio-energy, but is also known as "prana" in India, "chi" in Asian cultures, and "ethereal energy" in the United States. There are seven major energy vortexes, called chakras, comprising the chakra system, each with its own unique ability and function. The lower three chakras are generally believed to be associated with worldly concerns such as meeting one's basic needs (e.g., food, shelter, money), while the upper three chakras are associated with more spiritual endeavors (e.g., finding meaning, contributing, evolving). The heart chakra's primary purpose, which is located in the center of the chakra system, is to balance the lower and upper chakras so harmony exists in meeting the needs of body, mind, and spirit. All seven chakras exist at birth, but become more active as the individual grows and develops. For example, the root chakra is active at birth with the purpose of "grounding" the child to insure a feeling of safety and belonging. The sixth chakra, on the other hand, is associated with more complex cognitive development, usually beginning in adolescence. Characteristics and functions of each chakra can be seen in Table I.

The chakra system is postulated to be inextricably linked to endocrine glands and the nervous system; therefore, they affect, and are affected by, almost all biochemical reactions in the body. More specifically, energy taken in by the chakra system is distributed through the nervous system and endocrine glands, and is then absorbed by the blood and distributed through the body. At the cellular level, this energy is converted to electrical activity and is facilitated by gap junctions which are protein comprised channels that exist between certain cells to facilitate communication among the cellular structure. These areas are typically targeted by energy healers: believing when communication is "blocked" in a particular area, energy healing techniques (e.g., body work, acupuncture) can release stagnated energy, restoring normal cellular activity.

Table 1. Characteristics of the seven chakras

Chakra	Color	Location	Primary functions	Symptoms of imbalance
Base/Root	Red	Base of spine	Safety, Security	Anxiety, obesity
Sacral/Naval	Orange	Sex organs	Creativity,passion	Rigidity, fear of sex
Solar	Yellow	Solar plexus	Confidence	Low energy
Heart	Green	Heart	Love, grief	Critical, jealousy
Throat	Blue	Throat	Expression	Fear of speaking
Eye	Indigo	Between eyes	Openness to idea	Poor memory, obsessions
Crown	Violet	Top of head	Peace, wisdom	Greed, delusions

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Chakra is a Sanskrit word literally meaning "wheel." These centers were named as such because of the circular shape to the spinning energy centers which exist in our subtle etheric body, the non-material energetic counterpart to our physical body. There are seven main chakras and they are located along the spine extending out the front and back of the body. Each chakra has a number of specific qualities that correspond to the refinement of energy from the base-level material-self identity, located at the first chakras, up to the higher vibration spirit-level awareness of being at our crown. These energetic centers represent our highest level of integration split, prism like, into a spectrum of colors. Our opportunity in studying them is to learn how to master each chakra essence and unite them all into a unified field of brilliance. As such, we re-unite our disparate parts into a radian light of full self-awareness. Our material bodies could not exist without them for they serve as gateways for the flow of energy and life into our physical bodies. Each chakra is associated with a certain part of the body and a certain organ which it provides with the energy it needs to function. Additionally, just as every organ in the human body has its equivalent on the mental and spiritual level, so too every chakra corresponds to a specific aspect of human behavior and development. Our circular spirals of energy differ in size and activity from person to person. They vibrate at different levels relative to the awareness of the individual and their ability to integrate the characteristics of each into their life. The lower chakras are associated with fundamental emotions and needs, for the energy here vibrates at a lower frequency and is therefore denser in nature. The finer energies of the upper chakras corresponds to our higher mental and spiritual aspirations and faculties. Each center has an integral function in creating our energetic balance. It is through the study of our energetic and physical being that we can create health, emotional stability and spiritual bliss. The following chart maps out the primary qualities of each chakra, its corresponding location in the body, color, physical and emotional realms of influence, and its greater significance.

CONCLUSION

Colors have the ability to manipulate a person's feelings moods, emotions and well-being. Colors affect one's actions and response to situations, ideas and other people. We are surrounded by colors which have evolved by culure and region to pursuit one's well-being. Each color corresponds to a vibration, which is associated with energy. Color is an ubiquitous, primary and non-verbal aspects of human behavior on the most basic level. The World Health Organization defines Health as a state of mental, physical, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. In a broad understanding, well-being is living a good life with which one is satisfied. The human life is dependent on four important pillars which must be given equal weightage all the time; physical well-being, intellectual well-being, emotional well-being and spiritual well-being. There is a need for more systematic research on the spirituality of colors on people. There are some enticing possibilities about being able to create spaces that encourage more activity and participation, or places that are calmer and more restful, but the lack of research hinders designers from being able to apply colors with confidence. There is better knowledge about spirituality of colors which can support the creation of environments that enhance well-being and healing environments.

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