

Original Article

Expression of Emotions through the Blue Colour in Paintings: A Study

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Abstract

The fundamental elements of visual art like line, texture, colour, value, space, and form are harmoniously arranged according to artistic principles to enhance the aesthetic appeal of a painting in more attractive manner. A painting becomes beautiful and meaningful through this harmony. The element of "colour" are important among these principles. Blue is an important colour in expressing diverse emotions in paintings within the spectrum of colours. Numerous colour theorists have proposed theories about colour; among them, the Artist Colour Theory from the perspective of painter was elucidated by theorist Chevreul. The blue colour possesses distinct qualities from the perspective of artist. Blue emerges as a significant element in painting in Indian as well as foreign art traditions. This is because the meaning conveyed by blue in a painting shift based on factors such as artistic style, subject matter, societal psyche, and emotions illustrated in the paintings. Various researchers have presented diverse perspectives on blue colour. Blue, in reality, expresses emotions such as sobriety, masculinity, confidence, knowledge, peace, grandeur, sorrow, benevolence, and coolness. This research examines the reasons behind which specific emotions are expressed and why through blue in artworks created by painters.

Keywords: Blue colour, Emotions in blue, Societal perceptions of blue.

Introduction

Colour has always been a fundamental component of visual art, deeply intertwined with the expression of emotions, moods, and psychological states. Among the spectrum of colours, blue stands out as one of the most versatile and symbolically rich hues. From ancient religious iconography to modern abstract works, blue has been employed by artists to evoke a range of emotions—from calmness and serenity to melancholy and introspection. Its symbolic power and psychological impact are not only embedded in art history but are also influenced by cultural, social, and individual interpretations.

In the visual arts, blue is more than just a pigment—it is a conduit of expression that reflects the internal world of the artist and resonates with the viewer's emotional perception. The use of blue varies across artistic movements, genres, and periods, yet consistently holds emotional depth and symbolic complexity. In the Indian context, as well as globally, the presence of blue in paintings has captured themes of spirituality, divinity, sorrow, and strength, often depending on the subject matter and the artist's intent.

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This study aims to explore how blue is used to express emotions in the works of renowned Maharashtra-based artists—M.F. Hussain, B. Prabha, and Prabhakar Kolte. By analyzing the role of blue in their paintings, the research investigates how this primary colour transforms in meaning and emotion depending on artistic context and societal psyche. Through a qualitative methodology and interpretive lens, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how blue serves as a powerful medium for emotional articulation in visual art.

Objective:

To study the nature of emotions conveyed by the blue colour in paintings transform according to contextual circumstances.

Limitations:

This study is limited to analyzing the expression of emotions through blue in selected works of Maharashtra-based artists M.F. Hussain, B. Prabha, and Prabhakar Kolte.

Hypotheses:

1. The blue colour in paintings reflects the mental state of artists.
2. Blue colour functions as a significant medium for expressing emotions in paintings.

Research Methodology:

The research will employ a qualitative approach using purposive random sampling. Selected artworks featuring blue by the aforementioned painters will constitute the sample for analysis.

Review of Literature:

The Summer Evaluation Project notes that painters depicted the Virgin Mary in a blue robe following Yves Klein since the medieval period. Blue pigment was extremely expensive and critically important for expressing emotional significance at that time. Regarding the Color Wheel and Color Dialogue, the books of Prof. Jayprakash Jagatap establish that color scientist Michel Chevrel's theory of artists' color principles became a cornerstone in art scholarship in the world.

Color Theory (2012) – Symbolic Meaning of Colors: In the presented literature, Ramesh Wadage meticulously explains the symbolic significance of colors and clarifies the importance of blue colour.

Mistry and History 2017 (Behind the Blue Series): Multiple theories exist about why Jodhpur is called the "Blue City." Each city in Rajasthan has distinctive features. The founders of city painted box-like houses in mesmerizing shades of blue, which resembled the sea across the arid Indian terrain.

The Halo of Blue Color:

The color blue holds immense importance in color theory from the perspective of art. The color blue has many components in the sphere of art. There are numerous shades of blue. Each shade of blue possesses a specific halo (aura/quality). Consequently, the meaning of paintings changes according to the subject matter, and each color carries many symbolic meanings. As per the surveys conducted in the U.S. and Europe, it is found that blue is associated with society's confidence, knowledge, intelligence, peace, distance, infinity, imagination, coldness, and sorrow.

Expression Through Blue in the Painting:

Artist: M. F. Hussain

The artistic features of the presented painting are such that M. F. Hussain's *"Blue Head"* is an extremely significant work in this context. Hussain created this painting under the influence of Cubism, and a crucial aspect of this artwork is the use of blue color to express the emotions within it. Various shades of blue have been employed in this painting by the artist. The feelings like purpose, detachment, and contemplation are systematically evoked in the painting. Symbolism is connected with formlessness in it. Hussain used diverse shades of blue with bold and vivid strokes to depict emotion and inner-most turmoil. Primarily, this painting portrays melancholy, reflection, introspection, and the human condition in the contemporary era.



Title: Blue Head

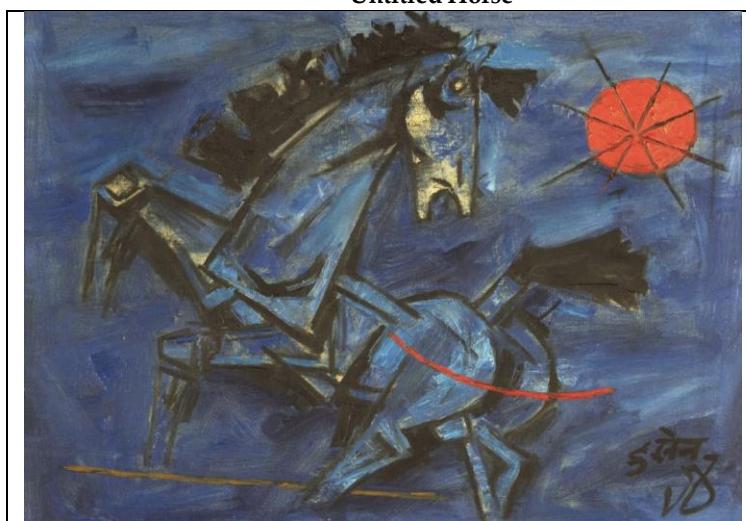
The emotions evoked by the "Blue Lady" created by Husain are felt throughout the aura of the painting. Each viewer observes this painting with different perspective having different sort of feelings in their minds. The main element in the painting is rendered in Persian Blue and Ultramarine Blue colors, while the background of the painting has a Light Blue hue applied on it. The narratives within his various controversial paintings touch the heart of the observer. Hussain has hidden faces in many paintings like "Virgin Night" and "Mother Teresa". The emotions within the picture are revealed through the blue color in accordance with the themes of many such paintings by Hussain.

The horse element has been depicted by him numerous times in the paintings of artist

Title: Virgin Night

Maqbool Fida Hussain. He portrayed horses as symbols of power and wild energy in his paintings. In the painting "Untitled Horse", magnificent blue strokes are displayed vividly. The animal is precisely presented upon these with bold black outlines. The sun casts a dark red light, which stands out beautifully against the cool colors of the composition within the painting. The arrow piercing the horse and the arrow fallen beneath its hooves clearly symbolize the situation of war depicted within the picture. Primarily, a sorrowful, war-induced atmosphere is created by the blue color in the painting. The blue color compels the art connoisseur to focus on the subject matter after viewing the painting.

Untitled Horse



Artist B. Prabha

The influence of Western art and the ideals established by earlier artists are cultivated within the style of B. Prabha and it is evident in her paintings. Her artistic compositions create a beautiful and captivating rhythmic beauty (*Laya-Saundarya*) in the female form. A predominant use of the blue colour is notably visible in her paintings. The blue colour is extensively employed in her numerous works which include *Fisherwoman (Blue)*, *Fisherwoman with Basket*, and *Sister (Blue)*. A subtle hint of other colours is visible in many of her paintings to further enhance the beauty of the blue. The circumstances she experienced are reflected in the blue colour in the paintings of B. Prabha. The

subjects in her paintings are rural, and the use of various colour shades along with the blue makes the subject matter feel more emotive and evocative too. The female figures in the paintings of B. Prabha are highly rhythmic in nature. By elongating all body parts i.e., faces, necks, hands, fingers – the elongated bodily expression of the female figure is a reflection of a distinct rural physique, and the blue colour in the painting captivates the mind. B. Prabha was a prominent Indian artist in this sphere. She worked predominantly in oil paints which is an instantly recognizable style of her paintings. She captured the tall and slender figures of thoughtful rural women and their emotions rendered in specific colours in an elegant manner.



Sisters (Blue) - B Prabha - Indian Painting



Fisherwoman with Shells - B Prabha - Indian Painting

Artist Prabhakar Kolte:

Blue colour is used abundantly in non-representational paintings just as it is in representational paintings by many artists. The expressions are truly remarkable in the abstract paintings of artist Prabhakar Kolte.



Title: Untitled



Title: Untitled

The artist materializes their experiences within paintings while creating it on the canvas. Kolte has grasped the science of how to manifest those experiences concretely onto the canvas. He has clearly demonstrated color, form, and grandeur; that which is abstract and unknown takes shape through his imagination. It is given a substantial form by the artist through their medium, which can be reflected through the emotions of the individuals. The presentation of the blue color in the paintings of Kolte is seen to reign over the mind of art connoisseur. This is because the blue color in the paintings of Kolte embodies the fusion of fundamental principles and the principles of design of art in an abstract form. The emotions within the mind of artist become perceptible especially through the blue color in the paintings of the various artists.

Conclusion:

Colour is immensely significant in the worldwide history of art. Each colour possesses specific qualities, but as observed in the present research concerning the blue colour, it is noted that the history of blue is very ancient in art. Similarly, blue exists in abundant varieties of colours. Blue cannot be created by mixing other colours in it since it is a primary colour. Therefore, blue possesses its own unique inherent properties. However, blue plays a very important role in creating shades of numerous other colours besides the primary colours i.e. blue, yellow, and red. Emotions are expressed through the painting based on its subject, type, and style when blue is applied in paintings. For example, the blue colour in the paintings of M.F. Husain significantly impacts the human mind and heart. Similarly, the women in the paintings of B. Prabha are depicted in blue, which mirrors the theme of rural life, while the presentation of colour is done in diverse ways in Prabhakar Kolte's abstract painting style, which makes the blue colour

appealing to the human mind and heart. It feels as if the colour is speaking to us. It seems to provide evidence of the supreme imagination of artist through the application of blue in paintings of many artists. Overall, the blue colour conveys emotions like happiness-sorrow, melancholy, poverty as well as peace, sadness, negativity, positivity – relaxation, trust, loyalty, honesty in all paintings; while darker shades of blue can depict authority and stability. As far as symbolism in religious art is concerned, blue is always used to depict deities, and it represents freedom, intuition, and imagination of the artists. Artistic Expression: The application of blue in paintings is done according to the mental state of artist, while blue is also used to depict variations in shadow. Thus, as revealed and discussed in the present research paper, blue, endowed with such diverse qualities, is an important colour for the expression of emotions according to the individual.

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