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DOPAMINE DRESSING: A CHROMO-THERAPY INSPIRED WARDROBE

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ABSTRACT

Dopamine dressing is a contemporary fashion movement rooted in the psychological and physiological effects of colors on human emotion and behavior. Drawing from the principles of chromotherapy, this concept emphasizes the intentional use of vibrant and emotionally resonant clothing to stimulate dopamine release. This article explores the historical evolution of color in fashion and healing, from ancient civilizations like Egypt, Greece, India and China to modern psychological theories and therapeutic practices. It also dwelves into the foundational principles of dopamine dressing, including color-induced Emotional stimulation, enclothed cognition, sensory input and self-expression. By examining the cultural, psychological and therapeutic dimensions of color, this article highlights how fashion can be a powerful tool for emotional well-being, self-confidence and mental health awareness.

KEY WORDS: *Dopamine Dressing, Chromotherapy, Emotional Well-being*

INTRODUCTION

Dopamine dressing, a fashion trend popularized by stylists and fashion publications since 2022, involves dressing in a way that brings an individual joy and boosts their mood. Colour can be taken as an example of Dopamine boost. There is a connection between our outfits and our state of mind. Chromo-therapy, also known as Colour Therapy, is based on the idea that colour and coloured lights can help improve physical and mental health. Chromotherapy has been proving its excellence in the management of a number of medical conditions like Dengue fever[i], Diabetes[ii], Hypertension[iii], Psychiatric illness[iv], Insomnia[v], Seasonal Affective Disorder(SAD) [vi] , Hyperacidity [vii] , Inflammation[viii] and Chronic Joint Diseases[ix].

THE TERM 'DOPAMINE DRESSING'

The term 'Dopamine Dressing' was coined by Fashion psychologist and professor Dawnn Karen, who noticed how clothing choices affect mental well being. She noticed opioid users in her community that were going through withdrawal because of COVID-19 lockdown orders, and saw Fashion as a 'healing modality'. She prescribed her clients a colour that can lift their mood and inspired fashion enthusiasts all around the world to explore the idea of colour-therapy and Dopamine dressing. Social Media platforms like Instagram and Tiktok helped spread Dopamine Dressing as a trend, encouraging users to wear vibrant outfits to feel better. Dopamine is linked to pleasure, reward or motivation. Psychologists have been studying how colours, textures and clothing styles affect mood, self-esteem and confidence. The idea of Dopamine Dressing also intersects with body positivity, mental health awareness and empowerment through self-expression.

HISTORY OF COLOUR IN FASHION

Ancient Egypt: Coloured garments were used in ritual and healing
Ancient China: Colour in dress was tied to elements and emotions
Medieval Europe: Royal blue, crimson and purple indicated wealth and status and black was worn for mourning.
Victorian Era: Fashion was coded with moral and emotional messaging-white for purity, dark colours for grief or modesty
1920s-40s: Colour in fashion reflected cultural moods: black for sophistication, red for boldness, military hues during wartime etc.
1950s-60s: Pastels promoted domestic bliss and fashion brought bright, geometric colours for youth rebellion.
1960s and 70s: Psychedelic prints and bold colours symbolized joy, rebellion and freedom
1980s: Power dressing with bright colours and bold silhouettes aimed to boost confidence.

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2000s onwards: Personal expression through fashion became more mainstream and therapeutic. Designers like Christopher John Rogers, Versace and Stella McCartney embrace color not just for aesthetics, but as a statement of joy, energy and healing.

HISTORY OF CHROMOTHERAPY

The history of Chromo-therapy runs as back as any other medicine runs. Phototherapy (light therapy) was practiced in ancient Egypt, Greece, China and India.

A. Chromo-therapy in Egypt

Sunlight as well as colour were utilized by Egyptians for healing.[x] According to Egyptian Mythology, God Thoth is said to have discovered the art of Chromo-therapy. They used coloured minerals, crystals, gem stones, dyes and salves and also painted treatment sanctuaries in various colours shades.[xi] Examples of use of colour in ancient Egypt are as follows:

- Red: Chaos, Destruction, life, protection
- Blue: Hair of Gods, heavenly, water
- Green: healing, life, growth, resurrection, joy, protection, well-being
- White: cleanliness, simplicity, sacredness, purity
- Black: regeneration, life, fertility
- Gold: eternal, indestructible, perfection

B. Chromotherapy in Greece

In Greek, Garments, plasters, oils and salves were used to treat diseases. They used both forms of treatment with colours: direct exposure to sunlight and indirect healing. Temples were built for healing purposes, where sunlight would shine through colour components to create colour light treatments. They had developed the Four Elements and Four Colour theroies as follows:

- Black: Earth, Darkness
- Red: Air
- White: Fire, Lightness, Lymphatic System
- Yellow: water, life force
- Black + Yellow: Cold
- Yellow+Red: Humid
- Red+White: Warm
- White+ Black: Dry

C. Chromotherapy in India

One of the most notable traditional Indian practices, Ayurveda, believes in Internal energy centres called Chakras, where each Chakra is associated with a colour, as follows:

- Red: 1st Chakra, root, physical stability
- Orange: 2nd Chakra, Sacral, Enjoyment
- Yellow: 3rd Chakra, Solar plexus, power and confidence
- Green: 4th Chakra, heart, emotional belonging
- Blue: 5th Chakra, throat, authentic self expression
- Indigo: 6th Chakra, Third eye, mental clarity
- Purple/White: 7th Chakra, crown, spiritual union

D. Chromotherapy in China

The FIVE Colours of Chinese Medicine mention the use of elements, organ function and mood. Traditional Chinese Medicine(TCM) believes that the colours we attract are alignments or imbalances with the cosmos and surrounding energy. The Five Colours of Chinese medicine are as follows:

- Black/Blue: Kidney organ system, bladder, water, fear
- Green: Liver organ system, gallbladder, wood, anger
- Red: Heart organ system, small intestine, fire, joy
- Yellow: Spleen organ system, stomach, earth, worry
- White: Lung organ system, large intestine, metal, grief

E. The start of modern Colour Therapy

The modern study of light and color began probably after Issac Newton's experiments published in 1672. In 1810, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe shared his discoveries on how colours affects our psychological perceptions and physiological conditions.

In the late 1800s, Dr. Seth Pancoast and Edwin D. Babbitt published researches and findings in the subject of chromotherapy, 'The Principles of Light and Color'. Babbit identified the color red as a blood stimulant, yellow and orange as nerve stimulants, blue and violet as soothing to all systems and having anti-inflammatory properties. His prescriptions were as follows:

Red: paralysis, chronic rheumatism, physical exhaustion
Blue: Sciatica, inflammatory conditions, headache, meningitis, nervous instability, sunstroke and irritability
Yellow: emetic, laxative, purgative and for bronchial difficulties

Dinshah P. Ghadiali (1927) discovered Scientific principles of Colour-therapy. He even published the 'Spectro-Chrome Encyclopedia', the first book to explain the complete doctrine of Chromotherapy.

Takkata (1951) discovered that 'Colour Ray Frequency changes in atmosphere arising from the sunspots really affected flocculation index of human blood albumin resulting in changes of menstrual cycles'.[xii]

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Researchers like Carl Jung have also explored how color affects emotions and behavior. He was one of the pioneer psychologists to suggest that colors are symbols of deep seated psychological symbols. He used Mandalas and Colour Symbolism in therapy to explore unconscious thoughts and emotions.

Phototherapy in Seasonal Affective Disorders (SAD) and sleep disorders and LED colour therapy in relaxation and holistic therapy are examples of some implementations of chromotherapy in modern era.

PRINCIPLES OF DOPAMINE DRESSING: COLOURS IN FASHION

A. Colour and Mood

Colour, being a sensory stimulus, may play a role in corresponding mood.[xiii] For example, light colours consistently receive more positive feedback whereas dark colours receive more negative feedback. The following colours were found to evoke positive and negative responses respectively:[xiv]

Green: 95.9% positive
Purple: 64.3% positive
Black: 7.1% positive

Many colours have been co-related to various Psychological conditions and emotions as follows:

- Red: Love, passion, anger, strength, power, courage, danger, confidence
- Orange: encouragement, optimism, self-confidence, courage, enthusiasm, rejuvenation, vitality
- Yellow: creativity, uplifting, illuminating, hope, happiness, fun, warm
- Green: nature, balance, growth, rebirth, freshness, security, self-reliance
- Blue: trust, serenity, peace, honesty
- Purple: imagination, spirituality, introspective, compassion, understanding, wealth, royalty, quality, fantasy, creativity

B. Influence of Color in different environment

1. In the professional environment: In work environments, colors can be used to convey seriousness, professionalism and confidence. Neutral tones, like white, grey or black can be used when you want to go for a more formal look, whereas colours like blue and green can be used to convey calmness and reliability.
2. At social events: Vibrant colours can be used in outdoor events, and black, white and gold can be used in posh and elegant events. Different events have their own specific colour coding, like green when it comes to events related to environmental issues, red worn by brides symbolizes love, fertility, good fortune and prosperity, saffrons in Hindu monks' robes symbolizes sanctity, yellow is used in religious rituals, etc.
3. According to culture: Same colour can have different meanings according to different cultures. The colour white is used in Christian weddings whereas the same colour is used in Hindu funerals.

PROBABLE MODE OF ACTION

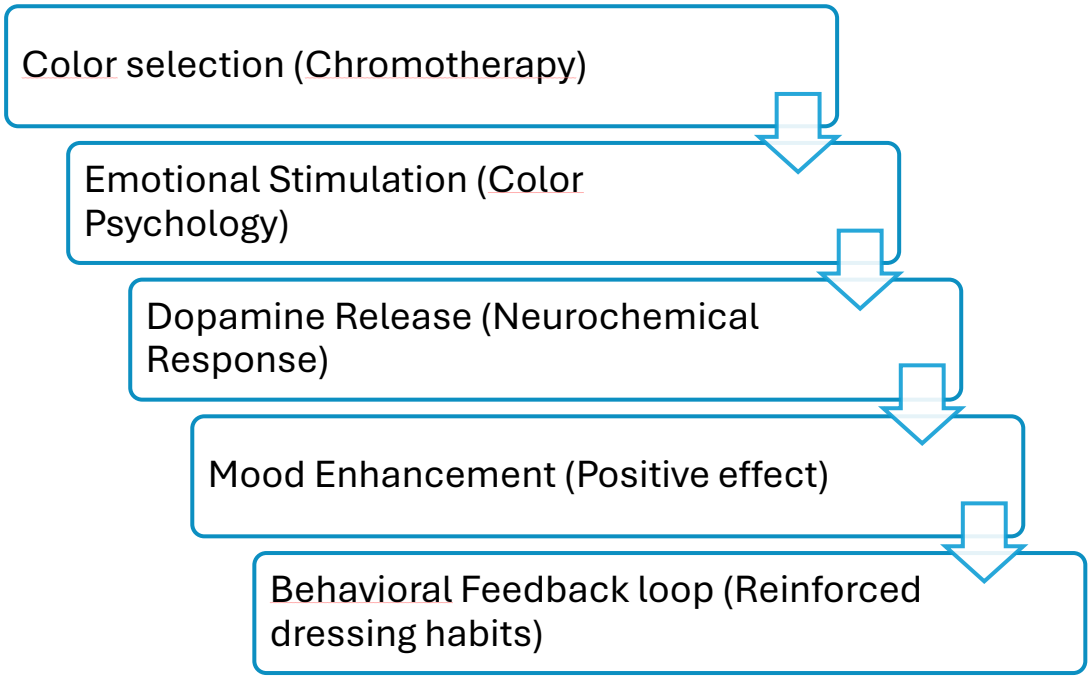
A. Color-induced Emotional Stimulation
According to color psychology, different colors evoke different emotional responses, like red evokes energy, passion, confidence; purple evokes creativity and introspection and so on.

B. Enclothed cognition
What we wear influences our cognitive processes and behavior, enhancing confidence, motivation, and mood, which directly boosts our dopamine levels.

C. Sensory Stimulation
Clothing color, textures and patterns provide tactile and visual stimulation.

D. Self-expression and Autonomy
Choosing of clothes reflect personal identity and mood, which helps in portraying a certain self-image.

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WEARING THE COLOURS

RED

- To energize the group or meeting
- In small patches of the outfit, such as a blouse or scarf
- Red ties are favoured by politicians
- Wearing too much red or too often, can make you seem like a bossy person

ORANGE

- For networking or social gathering, wear it boldly in a blazer
- Can also be worn in small clothings like scarf or blouse
- Make sure to purchase orange clothes in daylight, because there are different tones of orange
- Men can use orange ties

YELLOW

- Lighter shades like butter yellow and earthy shades like mustard yellow can be chosen.
- Yellow clothes help stand out from the crowd
- Can be paired with moderating shades like mid-blue or forest green

GREEN

- In business, green is beneficial in anything to do with health, healing and promoting natural, safe, organic and environmental friendly products.
- Use shades of green like turquoise, aqua etc. as solids or prints as tops, blouses and shirts.
- Men can wear teal ties to make them look approachable and authoritative.

BLUE

- Blue works well for the corporate world
- Often can be worn in important meetings
- Can be worn in interviews
- Royal blue ties are the politician's uniform

PURPLE

- Goes well with most pastels
- Purple ties, pastel or pinstripe shirts go for men to give a creative look

CONCLUSION

Dopamine Dressing can be more than a fleeting fashion trend, it can be taken as a holistic approach to self-care, emotional regulation, and personal empowerment through clothing. Rooted in ancient chromotherapy principles and supported by modern psychological research, it demonstrates how color and style choices can influence mood, behavior and self perception. Embracing this practice not only enhances personal well-being but also fosters a culture of positivity, inclusivity and mindful living.

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