

Folk and Minor Art in India
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Lecture - 03
Traditional Roots: Elements and Principles

So, now the third lecture, we are going to understand the traditional root of this practices, as we said, that we cannot cover the entire country, because there are too many in number, and that may divert us from our basic focus, which is to understand the variety and this stylistic quality of it, and that should basically follow a path, where we critically look at them, access them, and then appreciate them with proper methodology.

So, in a way, when we looked at Madhubani painting, in the previous slide, we have seen that there is a traditional root, that is connected to it, and that was rigidly cast based, and whether for it is good or not, but that that they gave birth to many different visual styles. That also provided to the modern painters, to be more confident, and use variety of styles there. And right now, when the cast based jurisdictions, are more or less removed from the custom, from the practice, where nobody is actually bothered, because it is getting through a very different social and economic condition in today's time.

As like, if we go back and just get into the basic thematic aspect, and we get back to the story of it, we get to see, that, it is something that particular zone, where the male members of a family were engaged in the (Refer Time: 01:59) practices, where the women, they painted things on the walls, floors, and also on many different places, which is connected to the ceremonial practice. We feel that, this is a time where the art works are basically appreciated for the visual styles, and not for the thematic connections, that was there in the traditional root, and it just picked up as a visual style, and the many of the contemporary artist, who do not even belong to a family of the Madhubani, Jitwarpur, Rati and all those places, but they are leaving somewhere else and, but they are still appreciating that style, and using that style, they learning it, and exploiting the virtues of those styles, in the for the creative expression.

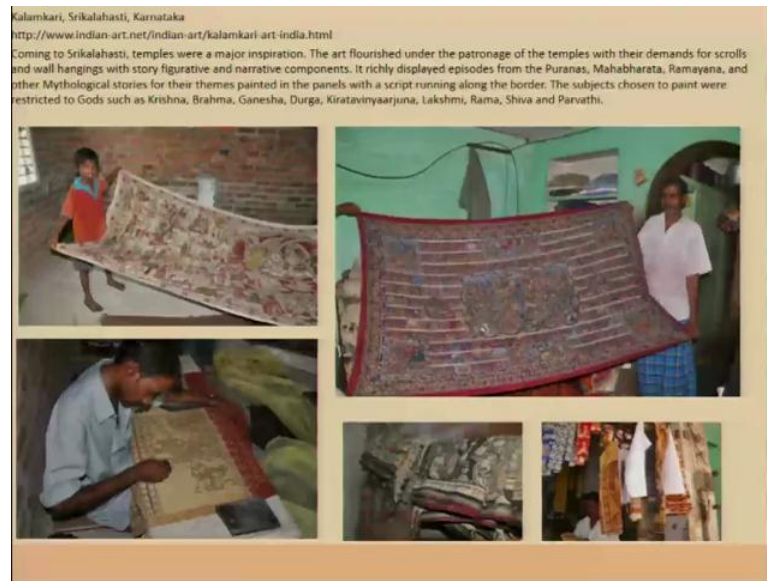
So, that is ended something, which is showing some kind of prospective, for this kind of styles. And the style is also so rich and distinctive, that it was inevitable that people would pick up and go for this kind of styles. I will take another example that is the

Kalamkari tradition of Srikala Hasti. Again, when we go back to the traditional root of it, we see that it has all started in temple of Srikala Hasti, as a temple tradition, as you know when we visit the temple, we feel like collecting as a souvenir. So, we make the similar deities and the images and sell it. Now, in the like, the both sides of the straits, as well as, we see a backdrop, to decorate inside the garbhagriha, and in the places where worships sit, for the worships and the other prayers. It is very common that we see lots of wall hangings there, that depicts the religious stories, and they are often in the mode of narrative stories.

So, in the temple of Srikala Hasti, which is very old, almost a thousand years old, and nearly that; we see that in that temple, many people could not reach the temple, because of many different reasons, because of their age, old age, people they did not have access to the temple. It was a long way to reach there, and it, their health did not permit it. So, for those people, it was like as we know, about the other temple traditions, that the idol use to come down, in the form of the backdrop paintings, that we have the similar idols, painted on the backdrops, and some, like you know, the temple keepers, and they bring that, they will take it to the regular normal households, they will show that to the dwellers of those houses, and also narrate the stories of the particular text.

So, that way, it use to come down and reach common people, and that we traditions survived, and or, than also involves the particular tradition of Kalamkari paintings, where the method and material is also something very rich, and it was traditionally known, where they had their own techniques of making the different vegetable dyes, and there are quite a few unique shades, that gives it a very different look. Also we see the kind of style, that they picked up for those art works, where very distinctively recognizable, it gives you a very interesting style, and also the use of lot scriptures, Telugu script mainly, that was from that region, and they made the stories initially on those things.

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So, let see some examples, and access it. So, coming to Srikala Hasti temple, that were the major inspiration for this kind of painting, what we see that, the subject chosen to paint was restricted to god and goddess, such as Krishna, Brahma, Ganesha, Durga, Kiratvinyaarjuna, Lakshmi, Rama, Shiva and Parvati. Kalamkari is a tradition where we see in the picture, that practitioner is painting that with a Kalam or a pen, made out of a stick, and there were particular way, of making this Kalam, which holds the lot of ink at a time, and it goes at a flow, and they paint the stories, and the illustrations of the stories, on the cloth, with flowing linear pattern throughout.

So, seen in the picture, is a complete Ramayana done on a cloth, by Nagarjun, the artist, seen in the picture, and there are other people who help me throughout my research, to hold it, and click photographs. So, you can make certain idea, you can create by that.

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These are some of images that are from a very old tradition which is taken from the museum, and these are done with a same style, with some eclipse, and we can make out that these were some of the other styles, which are very close to the regular practices, that we get to see in today's time, they are there in this picture.

So, just view the examples, and try to get familiar with this particular style, and recognize them, remember them, they are of course, very memorable. There is another tradition, which is known as Mathani Pacheni of Gujarat that also follows a similar principle, that we make the mother goddess figure, on the cloth. They are often using the block prints that are another Kalamkari tradition that was not practiced in Srikala Hasti by it was more popular in another zone called Machalipatnam.

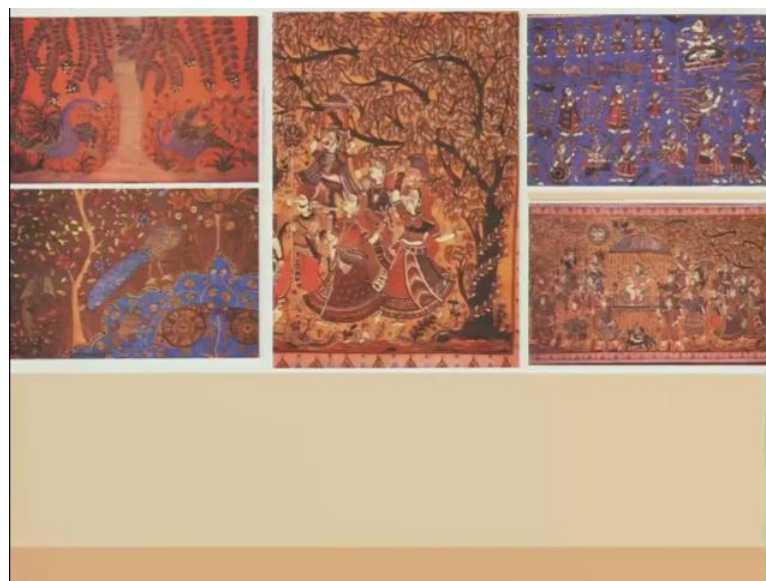
Now, in Gujarat also, we see that they are using the same tradition, they partially block print certain areas, and then the fill it up with Kalam, and they fill it up with some rust or maroon color.

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So, since, the next example, where we see the workers are dedicated to the mother goddess, and her worship, chiefly the Chitaras and the Devipujak community, who do the practice of this folk art, in Vansa and on the outskirts of the Ahmadabad. Chitaras, who are involved in reviving this ancient temple craft, called Mata Ni Pachedi, using the Kalamkari technique, traditionally this works were displayed only on temples in Gujarat.

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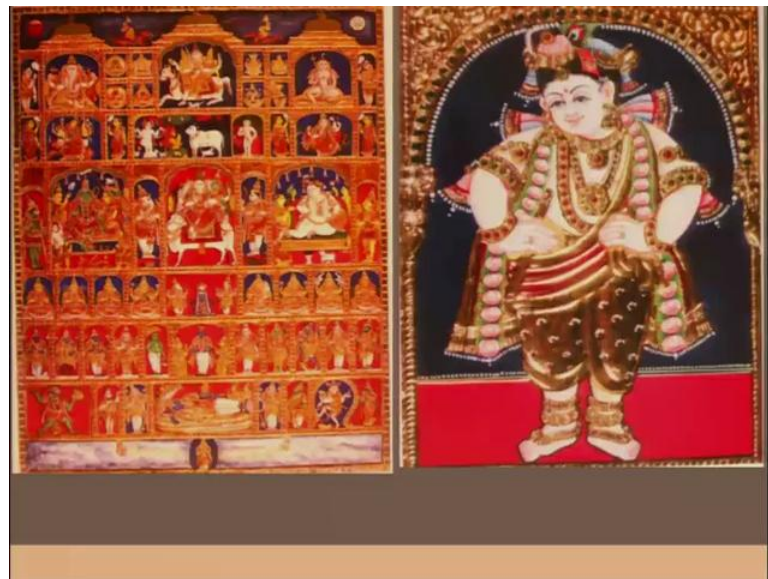


The temple curtains, or the backdrops, became significant records of the previous needs and legends, associated with the living tradition of the people. Matani Pachedi or Mata

no Chandrarvo, or the Chandar, the Chaddar or wrapper, means the temple cloth on the display, which pertains specially to the mother goddess cult. They always have a central figure, consisting of the patterned that, commanding form of goddess Durga, in various iconographic forms, but they also use a lot of pattern, which a secular, it has the trees mostly the Kalpataru, or the wish tree, and it is also connected to some of the deities, that symbolizes blood sacrifice, as a sacred future of Mata, or the mother goddess worship.

So, let us get familiar with the different traditions, we are not going to get deeper into the study right now, but just getting familiar with it is outer look, by looking at the quality of it is elements, of the, and the, understanding the visual principles, what gets depicted there.

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Seen in the picture, are the examples of Tanjore painting. The Tanjore school of Art was born on the banks of river Kaveri, in South India. It developed out of the bhakti movement, long after the unification of the two great fractions of Hinduism, the Shaivas and the Vaishnavas.

However it is to be noted, that, even the Vedas, have a mention of Rathan jedit chitra, or the jewel embedded paintings. The Tanjore school flourished under the royal patronage of the Maratha kings of Tanjore. That is, in a self historical incident, and reached its pinnacle, during the rule of Serfoji Maharaj, a great patron for Tanjore painting. Later, it fail on bad days during which, the workmanship suffered. During the early eighteenth

century, when Tanjore is under the patronage of the Maharatha rule, the Tanjore art developed. Tanjore, which is the name of Thanjavur, about three hundred kilometers from Chennai, Tanjore was the capital of the Chola kingdom, which was made significant contributions to Indian art and architecture. The art form was distinct for its personality, which is painting style, which is next of formal hand folk art. Because of its royal patronage, we can see that it is some kind of a glorification, in its execution, where the use of a whole lot of jewels, and the art work looked much more glossier, than the Kalamkari painting, but there is a certain visual affinity, that is very distinctively identified.

The visual art of Thanjavur school, had its growth and development over a long period from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century.

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The genesis of Tanjore art, dates back to the early eighteenth century, or probably even before, and it is a uni-culmination of several influences, integration of the art forms of Mysore, as well as Andhra, is fairly evident and apparent on these pictures. Tanjore art is a natural extension of this skill of Thanjavur craftsmen, the art is more skill oriented, and it demands a lot of attention on the fineness and perfection. Perhaps due to the royal patronage, that it enjoyed throughout its big phase, the artist is fundamentally iconic, and the theme is normally based on Hindu gods, and goddesses, and very rarely on heroes. The

style and modality have undergone some minor variations, due to the contemporary demands.

The visual art of the Thanjavur school, had it is growth and development over a long period, from seventeen hundred to nineteen hundred, but it is picked during the region of Serfoji Maharaj, who ruled during 1797 to 1833. It is a unique mixture of the Bhakti cult, and the ability to present the same in an attractive manner. It is basically iconic, with the popular Hindu gods, forming the central theme, if the painting depicts an event from Hindu mythology, then the main figure is supported by the number of smaller figures, to bring out the reality of the event. While it does not call for major innovation or creativity, it does call for skill, fineness, and perfection.

Some of the popular things are the coronation of Rama, Krishna eating butter, and Devi. We should also get familiar with another very significant, but not so well known form, which is famous as Kalamanzatu two Kalametletu, from Kerala. This is a tradition, or complete ephemeral performance, that takes place during the Bhadrakali worship, in Kerala, and what we see that it just too ephemeral and it stays for a very little while. It all starts with the worship of Bhadrakali, where the drama community, like painters from the drama community, they paint the image of Bhadrakali, on the floor, in a huge scale. The Drummers also like, encouraged the painters to paint, and they accompany them with their drum beats throughout. And after while, it creates a trance like condition, where the painters would paint, and the drummers will play the drums, and they reach the climax.

At the end of it, when the worship gets over, they put their offerings on all those images, and by the time the worship is over, the image has also to be destroyed completely. So, this is one tradition that needs a very special documentation, because we cannot get to see it, but it is all about how it gets created and destroyed, in the same go, and during the performance. So, we will try to see that, and understand that with the some of the examples that is there.

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Seen in the picture is how the painters, develop the images of Bhadrakali, in a very large scale, and how they do it together. It is not an individual practice, it is done by many people together, the drawing is done directly with the hand, that is, without the using any tool whatsoever. The powders used are all natural from vegetable or mineral or combined sources. The usual items used are rice, turmeric, yellow, charcoal from paddy husk black, blend of turmeric powder and lime that yields into a red color, and powdered leaves, that gives a green color.

Although several leaves are found suitable, the most commonly used are those of albizia lebbeck. Even eventually, the drawing develops, with the central line drawn with a black white powder, the color feeling is done by the drummers the layers grow gradually towards it, and slowly the artist, who are traditional drummers, they developed sound to compliment it. Grains and other offerings are to be piled in an around to the painting, is the allotted places. The spaces seen decorated with gardens and fire lamps. Lighting is of at most importance in those rituals, the drawing starts at selected time and are to be erased immediately after the worship is over.

We see significant influence of Kalamanzatu, and it is practice, in the mural of Kerala and adjoining areas, where the art work stays for a very short while, but the viewers, they carry it further and they use a similar kind of techniques, and the similar kind of qualities of it, in the mural paintings which is done on the wall, and with some other variations.

So, let see the contemporary murals of Kerala and how Kalamanzatu has an influence on that. So, there are close connections, as per as the visual and also the thematic contents are concerned, but it is very important to get familiar with them.

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So, here we see a contemporary art work, these are the murals in Dakshinachitra, made by the mural painters of Kerala, and use of colors, the linear qualities, is the formations are traditional, and the expressions are also very, very sophisticated and fine, but the subject matter of course, it is not, something which is connected to the secular theme, though it is contemporary, but it still following the traditional theme as its subject matter.

So, with that, we may raise a few questions, at this point, and that we help us to understand the issue, in a, in a much greater detail. One is that, can Indian art, in it is folk tradition, be codified? How do we make definition of Indian art, in it is folk and minor form? Do this sporadic art practice, share a common connection? Do they old a common entity? Is it the religion, and cultural values that operates the homogeneity in practice or the universal rules of the visual aesthetics that gives it a prominent identity as a whole? With those questions in mind, holding them, we will continue with our next lecture.