

**Indian Art: Materials, Techniques and Artistic Practices**  
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**Lecture – 2**

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As we have continued our discussion on the Indus valley terracotta figurines, so in the first instance, we have found some of the figurines those are the representation of the female bodies as well as the animal bodies. We also have some of the other evidences, for example the representation of the male bodies. In the male bodies as you can see on screen that there are fairly simplistic depictions of these male bodies.

For example, the ones we have on screen, they are the standing male bodies with like the facial features that we also see in the female bodies, for example the eyes are added, then like those thick strips of lips, and then there is also a suggestion of the breast and also the male genitalia and that suggests that this is a male body that is different from the ones we have discussed before. In the male bodies though we do not find usually the use of those elaborate headdresses that is there in the female bodies.

And in this case, we usually find unadorned bodies. Now, we do not know the use of them, they can also be part of the votive offerings. However, in some cases we find use a very simple ornaments, for example the necklace that we have in here. In some cases, also we find

that there are seated male bodies, for example the one we see in the left corner of this image which are also fairly simply made these images are.

Now another important part of the discussion can be that these images those are created from clay and then they are baked, they are baked in the kiln for making these terracotta figures. They are created at a time when the moulds were also available. So, they had moulds available for making images which might have been also much more precise, but still they managed or still they decided to make these images with hand modelling.

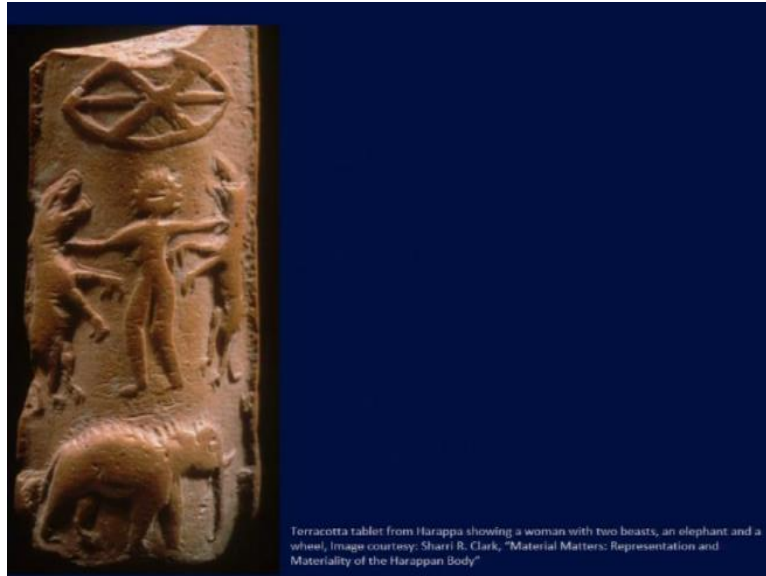
And there can be some of the ritualistic reasons for that. We know that how there are certain kinds of rituals which are related to making things with hand instead of just making things with a mould. And when I talk about mould, we can also think about some of the contemporary images of the gods and goddesses in the Hindu context, in the Buddhist context and so on where we find that one mould is used for making multiple copies of the same gods or goddesses or one mould is used for making multiple copies of the votive figures.

So, that kind of technology was also available to these people because there are some of the moulds of the seals as well as the mould for making other figurines are found from these sites, but still the people in Harappa and the other sites in the Indus Valley they decided or they made a conscious choice to make these things with their hands. And that is something that intrigues us to think that what might have been the reason.

There have been some of the assumptions that how these rituals that they might have performed, they have something to do with the life and betterment of our lives, prosperity and so on and that is the reason they had this intrinsic relationship to what we do with our body, how we are also connected to the land. And terracotta being something that comes from the clay, which is also a representation of the land that became a very significant material for them to work with.

So, terracotta is also not expensive if we think about economic value at a place where a clay and soil is found in abundance, but for its relationship to the earth which is also worshipped as mother earth. So that is a reason that the clay made objects as terracotta and terracruda objects those ones will be of high significance to these people.

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Terracotta tablet from Harappa showing a woman with two beasts, an elephant and a wheel. Image courtesy: Shari B. Clark, "Material Matters: Representation and Materiality of the Harappan Body"

So, for example we also see that how there are different kinds of moulds as I have already said that there are mould like things and there are these moulds they also have a narrative tendency if we go with the iconographic content of them. So, for example, in this particular object that we have it was perhaps used as a seal or it can also be used for making an impression on a soft material. So, this is an object which is made of clay and then it is baked.

So that is the reason this is solid, much more durable object than something that is made from mud and then when it is pressed on to the mud or some kind of other soft material, then the impression of this image will be collected on the other soft material, right. So, that is how the use of these kind of objects were there. And in this image what we find there is a depiction of a wheel on the top of the side of this object.

And in the centre, we find there is a figure and perhaps it is a woman figure considering that there is a suggestion of conical breast there. And it is not clear that how the women's head is made here because there are spike-like things as we can see in the head, but it can also be a headdress that we have already seen in the terracotta figurine that was discussed earlier. Now, we also find that this woman who is represented here.

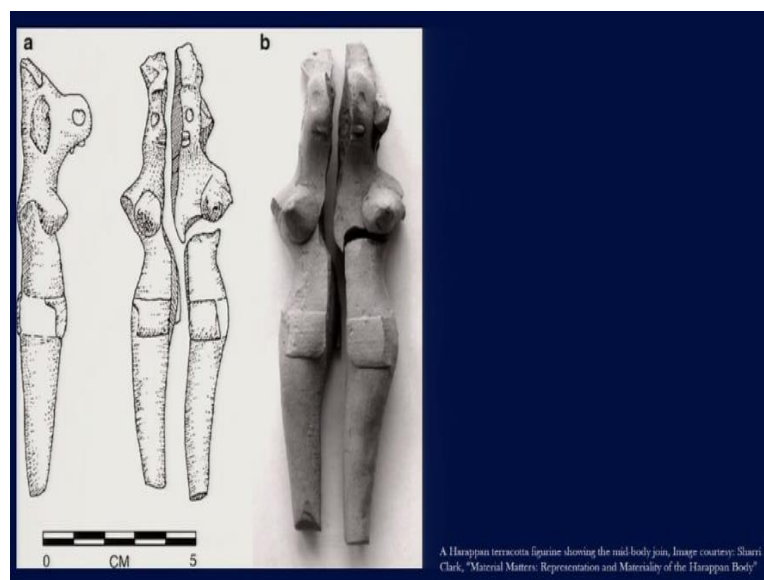
She is considered a valiant one because she is strangling to wild beasts with her bare hands and something that can also attest that she is perhaps being considered to be a supernatural being or it can also be related to their belief system, but we do not have any material evidence to suggest whether these kinds of beliefs or these images whether they have anything to do with the established religions in India today, for example, Hinduism or Jainism.

At the lower part of this image, we also see there is a depiction of an elephant. And if we also considered that how the elephant is created, it also follows some of those basic principles we have seen in the other animal figurines in which there is a degree of simplicity. However, at the same time, the basic forms and integral part of the bodies of these animals have been maintained very carefully that is how we can also distinguish that this is an elephant figure which is different from the figure of the horse that we have seen earlier.

So, all those minute characters they have been incorporated in these figures, however, with a degree of simplicity and that is one of the characteristic features we find in this terracotta objects, in the terracotta figurines as well as in the terracotta tablet or the seals, the kind of ones that we see on screen. Now talking about the terracotta figurines and especially the votive figurines, we find there is also a peculiarity in terms of how they are made.

So, as we have already discussed that there might have been some kind of rituals, which are related to making these figurines, we find that these figurines where they also had a peculiarity in their making that two vertical strips of clay those were put together for making one human body and that is how all these figures are created.

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So, in some of the figures that when this vertical two strips were put together for making a human body and then on the top of that the other body parts were added, and when it was put in the kiln for baking, then there were the marks of this. In some cases, we find that the

fingers also had broken down or there was a crack by the lines through which they were joined.

So that is how we get to know that these figures were not really added as like head after the body after the legs, but they were actually been made from two vertical strips and they were joined together for making these figures and that is also something we find from archaeologist and scholar Sharri Clark's work on the Harappan sites and the material culture.

So, this is also something that tells us that they had this very specific approach to the body and this idea of the body being constructed of two vertical halves say something about how they might have considered the idea of humans, their existence, their life and perhaps their also relationship to the earth and clay.

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The significance of clay as a material as well as some of the other materials which also relates to the human body that had been extended and enhanced by the use of pigments that we find in these figures. So, for example the figure that we have on the left side of the screen and that is also from the Harappan sites. In this one, we find that there is the use of the bone-black pigment that is used here.

And the bone-black pigment is something that we find that to be different from the lamp black. So, lamp black is something that is collected from the shoot and which is more easily available, at the same time that is used extensively in making paintings as well as for making

clay slips and so on for pottery as well as for like murals and all these different kinds of purposes.

But here we find that with the chemical analysis, it had been found that the colour black that had been found in the figures of many of these votive figures that we have from the Harappan sites, they do not really have contained from the lamp black, but they actually have this bone pigment. So, it is a burned bone pigment. So, usually the bones of the animals or perhaps of the human beings as well and from the dead ones they are collected.

They are burnt and from that ashes we know that this this black pigment is created and then that black pigment is added to this terracotta figurines. So, by this we also know what happens is that there is this intrinsic relationship to the human body that is created by the use of this kind of material. In one hand, there is a prominence of the use of clay and on the other hand, we also have had this pigment which relates to the human or the animal body.

So, through the material we find that their belief system or their worldview had how they all were connected to the land, to the bodies, and all these different aspects of life. And there are some of the other figurines we have on the right side of the of the screen in which there is an assortment. And we find that either there are some of the figurines which are adorned with pigment. And there are also some of the figurines which are not adorned and many different kinds of forms those are added to these figurines.

And in them, we always find that there is a prominence of different kinds of ornaments like necklaces and so on. And then those fan-like headdresses, which are also something we find to be very specific in the Harappan sites.

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The other important part of the Harappan sites on the Indus Valley sites we find is the rituals of burials. Because after the death, it was not cremated the way we see in the majoritarian practice in India today, but the bodies were buried. And what we see there, there are fairly simple rectangular burial places where there had been those burials. And in these burial sites, we also have some of the skeletons those are excavated with burial pottery.

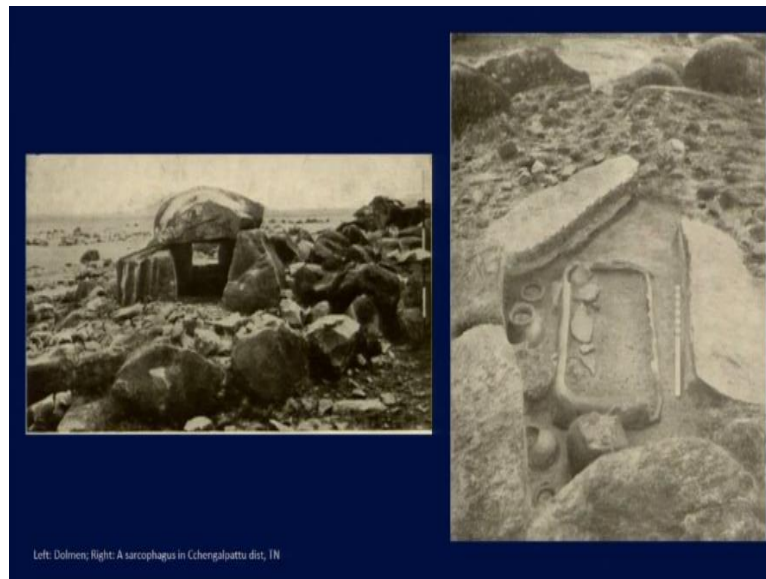
So, pottery is something that is used during the lifetime of the people during the rituals. At the same time, they are also used in the burials. So, they have their significance in the material world as well as in the afterlife. In the image that we find here and this one we have, it comes from the second millennium BC in which there is a burial of a woman and there is also a burial of a child. So, both the skeletons are there in this same rectangular burial site.

And then by the side, we also have different kinds of burial pottery. And in this pottery, we have some of the things for example there are those urns. There are also some of the other pottery which are there perhaps for keeping food grains and all different kinds of offerings which they have believed that the dead people will be using them in their afterlife. So, this is kind of like this burial practice that we find that was there very much prominent in most of these Indus valley sites.

This burial practice also connects us to the some of the other places in the Indian subcontinent. As we have already discussed that this Indus valley site is one of the earliest sites in from where the material evidences of the human practices those are found from the

Indian subcontinent. However, it is also for us to remember that Indus valley sites were not only the site where this kind of activities were taking place.

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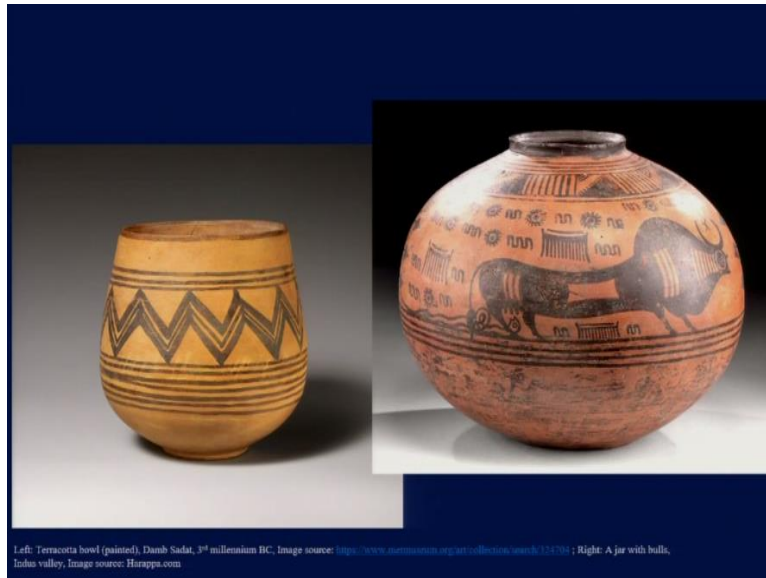
So some of the examples we find are from southern India and from eastern India, where we have some of those burial sites and there is no better evidence than the than the megaliths of southern India mostly from Tamilnadu, part of Karnataka and part of Southern Andhra Pradesh where we have some of those burial structures like the dolmen that we have on the left side of the screen or a sarcophagus like structure like where there is a terracotta sarcophagus in which like the dead body was buried.

And we can also see in this sites that how the burial sites are protected by the use of the stones and there are also evidence of burial urns and the different kinds of pottery similar to what we have also seen in the Harappan sites. And this is something for us, so the evidences we have here they are mostly from Sirudavoor in the Chengalpattu district in Tamil Nadu and also from Keeladi and so on which are further south in Tamil Nadu.

So, this is something for us to think that how these practices they have been simultaneous, even though some of the burial sites those are excavated in Southern India, they come from slightly later times, for example 700 to 800 BC and so on which is slightly later than the Harappan time, but we can see that how it is not really a disconnected practice and perhaps during the Harappan time, there had also been similar kind of practices in the other parts of the Indian subcontinent.

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So, getting more about the pottery that we have here, so there are two kinds of pottery, at least two kinds of pottery we find that some of the pottery which are used during the material life the ones we have on screen and some of the poetry we have those are used for very specifically for the burial purposes. So, for the ones that we have on screen, they are perhaps been used on a daily basis.

But the thing is that since the way we they have been made we can also think about the economy, also their social value that they are not just made for keeping grains or keeping water and things like that, but they are also very carefully decorated. So, when there are this amount of details and care that is added to this pottery that also perhaps indicates something about their social status.

But there is unadorned pottery which do not really have any detail or any kind of ornamentation on them, which suggest that they are perhaps been used by day-to-day life by the regular people. And when there are the potteries which are adorned, which are also something that we find to be much more carefully done, we can assume that they had some more social significance, economic significance and cultural significance as well.

Now, the other thing that we also find in this pottery is that there is a clear sense of symmetry and balance which have perhaps been made from the potter's wheel. And that is the reason that kind of the balance symmetry and the precision that comes in this pottery, those are made possible by the use of the potter's wheel. In terms of the decoration, we find that different kinds of these geometric and repetitive motifs which are used in this pottery.

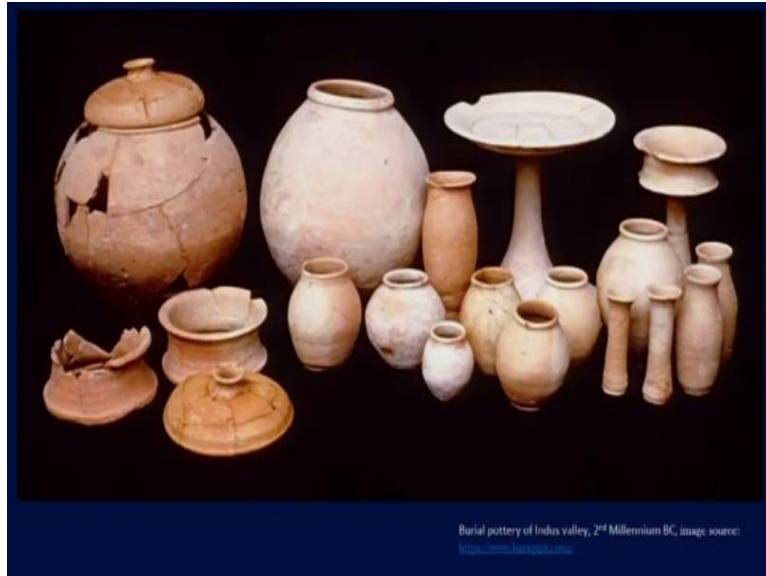
For example, the one we have on the left side of the screen, which looks like a mug or a vessel for drinking perhaps. And in this one we have these horizontal parallel lines, which make the borders and between them there are those zigzag patterns and all these patterns are made from different brushstrokes. So, there are the thick and the thin brushstrokes those are used here that also perhaps indicate that different kinds of brushes have already been available at this time in the Indus valley sites.

The right one we have on screen that is perhaps much more complicated. And in this one, it has perhaps been made for storing water or other liquid and it has this bulbous body with a narrow neck and that one is profusely decorated. In this one we have bands of the borders, and in the bands of the borders, we already have some of these geometric motifs which are repeated.

And in the central panel we have there is this extended body of a zebu bull which has also been celebrated in the number of artifacts in the Indus valley site. And in this bull, we have again its basic characteristic features, for example the hump, the horns and then of course like its leg and its entire body. All those have the characteristic of this zebu bull so that it is identified. And in the bottom, we also find there is a depiction of a snake, which is perhaps trying to suck out milk from the bull.

So, we do not know the significance of this kind of images. However, these images stand here as for us to comprehend or to perceive that what all they have thought about and how they have also constructed different kinds of narratives, which were made part of this utilitarian objects.

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And this is an example of the burial pottery that we have, and in the burial pottery that what we have here is this different kind of this pottery for offering. So, we have urn and then we also have the different degrees of this pottery for the smaller ones, which perhaps contains something in smaller quantity. And then also there are like the plates with a raised pedestal which perhaps had something which can be kept in the open.

So, there are different degrees of those pottery and the shape, their form and their capacity to hold something within them that suggests that have been what all different kinds of purposes they might have served in these burial chambers or in this burial sites.

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From there, we also find that there are some of the animal representations. Some of the animal representation also tells us about some of the peculiarities of this Indus valley sites.

So, for example there are some of these intriguing rhinoceros figures from Harappa and from some of the other sites of Indus valley area. And in these ones when we see the rhinoceros figures, today we do not really have any of the rhinoceros existing in this site.

However, in those times it seems that there had been rhinoceros as researchers have found. And so, in this rhinoceros we also see that how the legs which are much more sort of simplified as we have also seen in that first horse figurine. So that kind of like simplified legs and very simple body forms those are used here. However, also very cleverly and efficiently they have implemented some of the bodily features of the rhinoceros.

And that gives its the individualistic character of this rhinoceros here, right. And of course, we also see there are those hides which are made on the back of this rhinoceros and the hides have perhaps been created. On the right image that we have on screen, the hides have perhaps been created from additional clay strips which are added to this rhinoceros figures and with punching holes.

So different kinds of materials have perhaps also been used for making this terracotta figurines and the tools perhaps like metallic tools and so on, those are also implemented to be made part of the making these objects.

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Then from this discussion, we also look into some of the terracotta seals and so on. So, there have been terracotta seals there also. Some of the seals, we also find they are made from soapstone and so on. And in these ones, we find the seals they tell us about the trade relations

in this age because seals are something those are integral part of the trade systems and the Indus valley site for their proximity to the river Indus and as well as the Arabian Sea that we have, where the Indus river meets the ocean.

So for this reason, what we have there was a prominence of the trade relations and the trade activities. And they had trade relation with different sites, for example with Mesopotamia, with Egypt and so on. And the kinds of materials that we have found from the Indus valley sites as well as from Mesopotamia and from Egypt and so on it had been believed that there were more exports than of import.

And some of the most important things which were exported from the Indus valley sites were for example the terracotta objects and then also the beads, different kinds of perhaps textiles, textiles being very much part of this trade network and very early from the second or third millennium BC. So, all these things those were made as part of this trade network from very early on. And seals were very much part of the system as well.

Because seals give the authenticity of particular sites or a city or a workshop and that is how the seals are used. And in the seals what we find that there are some of the images which are implemented. And we again have this very celebrated zebu bull which is depicted in this seal, which is there on the left side of the screen. And in this seal what we have is a terracotta seal and in this seal what we see is that there is perhaps a terracotta slab.

And then on the top of this slab the image was almost either made with a mould and so that is the reason the image area is raised from the terracotta slab or it can also be made by like removing the matrix of the terracotta and that is how like the image area is raised and the rest of the area is sunken. So, this is how the terracotta seal had been made. And then all the characteristic features here we find is pretty impressive that the bull.

The zebu bull which had been one of the celebrated figures in the Harappan context, we find that this zebu bull has been made here with all the possible details. So, for example we have the horns, there is really elongated horns that we have here and then like the neck with all these wavy lines and then like its hump, then all the bodily features for example the back and then the legs and everything else, all of them are done with great detail.

So, this also says something that there might have been a degree of craftsmanship that we do not really have, that if this kind of skill is available to the people, then one can also wonder that why all the figures are not made with similar kind of precision. So that might also indicate that there had been degrees of craftsmanship. So, some of the ones which are much more important, they were done with much more care and precision.

Whereas the other ones which needed to serve the purpose but the precision was not really the priority, there we do not really have that kind of details available there. So, these are the different kinds of aspects that we can also read from these images. And in these seals, we also find that what happens is that there are areas mostly in the upper part of the seal reserved for text. So, for that reason there are some of the text or different kinds of signs that we find.

In some of the ones we also do not really find the signs but usually in the upper half we have some text or like some script that is made part of this seal, which might have indicated a particular city or a workshop or a group of people who are part of this trade exchanges. So, on the right side image we find another image of the bull. In this image actually sort of the image area is sunken in this block.

Whereas in the one that we have seen on the left side the image area is raised. So, these are some of the differences we find and perhaps that also says that how different kinds of modelling or sculpting methods were used for making these kinds of figures. And in the image on the right side, we also have some script that is made as part of this seal.

And again, in the upper half of it which shows that all these Indus valley sites they might have followed a similar kind of convention of having the script on the upper half of the image and having the visuals in the lower half of the seal, right. And then the backside of this particular seal that we have on screen on the right side that also has a holder like thing in its back.

So, some people have also assumed that it might have been worked as an amulet through which a thread can be passed and it can be used as an amulet in the body of someone or it can also be a small holder for people to hold it in their hand and just like stamp it wherever they want to put the seal on, right. So, there can be like these different kinds of purposes, but this

small traces on these materials on these objects, they sort of make us wonder about their very organized as well as complex material culture during these times.

Talking about seals there are also some of the other references that we find and that will be on the bodies and how the human bodies are also represented in some of those seals. So, we will continue more on this sealed in the next section of this lecture. Thank you.