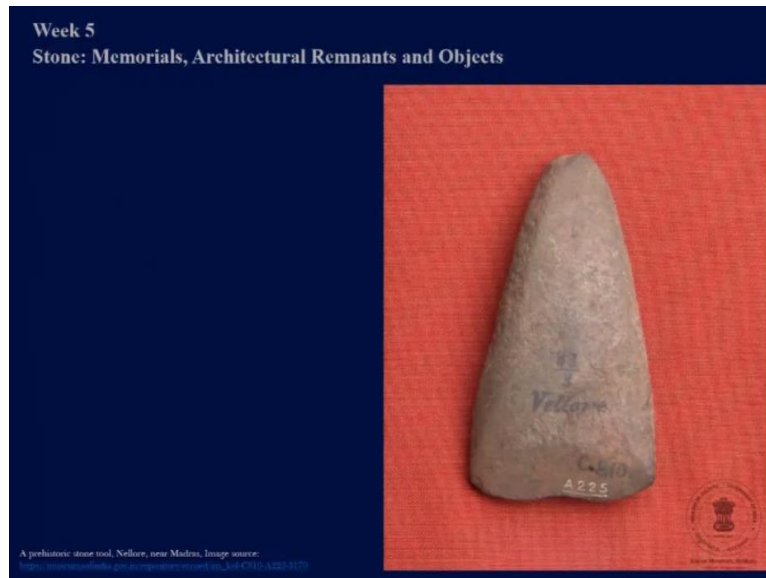


**Indian Art: Materials, Techniques and Artistic Practices**  
**Prof. Rajarshi Sengupta**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology – Kanpur**

**Lecture – 21**  
**Stone: Memorials, Architectural Remnants and Objects**

**(Refer Slide Time: 00:19)**



Hello everyone. I am Rajarshi Sengupta. Our topic is stone and that is memorials, architectural remnants and objects. Now in this module or in this week we will be talking about stone as a material and how that has different kind of its manifestation, not only through the time period, but also through different kinds of purposes, different kinds of context and so on.

And that is the reason instead of focusing on a particular era or focusing on a particular region, in this week what we will do is we will look into a diverse range of objects predominantly made of stone. So, this is in some ways we can say that the structure of this week is very different, not completely different, but significantly different from the other weeks that we studied.

And even though our focus remains on this one particular material, but in self is a kind of course one can you imagine which can be expanded into an entire course in itself. So, what we can see here in terms of that stone and one can ask this question that why stone is chosen as one of these materials here which will be discussed in this length. So, of course that can be

said with many different kinds of materials. So stone here is not just that this is an exclusive material that all these things this diverse range of its use, its significance.

And of course, how this has been incorporated in the community lives in the Indian subcontinent is not something that is exclusive and it is not that like wood or textile or any other kind of things like the metals and stuff, they do not serve the same purpose. So, stone here, the entire discussion this week will just be a kind of structure for all of you to explore it further to see what all material you can think of which also has this kind of functions such as stone.

Now, to start with this, this is also something that I wanted to have in mind that too when we look into art history, when we look into the history of Indian art and as I have mentioned that in the first week in the first lecture as well that how there are the predominant ways of looking into Indian art are mostly a time bound. That I mean we look into the time periods, the temporality and then of course how particular regions or particular dynasties are very important as part of the way history is constructed.

Now, since we are looking into a slightly different mode of perceiving history and that is through the materials and that is the reason what I thought will be interesting is to see how differently a lot of these objects, which are related to stone have been part of the culture in the Indian subcontinent for last 3000 years or so. Now, another thing is that also it is a deliberate way to sort of make the boundary between something that is understood as past.

And something that is understood as present to make this boundary slightly blur so that we can think about a number of stone objects and not just only stone, but the different kinds of objects and how they can also be relevant not only in the history but also in our contemporary lives to understand the history through contemporary lens. And that is a reason why it is also important for us is to look at a number of the stone tools, different kinds of uses of stone and go back and forth in time.

And that is also the reason why I have arranged this material in the way starting with the stone tools and then slowly getting into more and more details about different modes of carving stone and using them. So as you can see here we have this one, a very simple the

stone tool here which looks kind of triangular. And this is a stone tool that comes from paleolithic time period and it was found from Nellore near Madras or Chennai.

So, in the archaeological records it says Madras and that is the thing that I have also stick to, but as we all know that Madras is today called Chennai. So, this one was found from Nellore. And if you can see that this is a prehistoric stone tool, so this is not an object in itself. Of course it is an object in itself, but this is a tool which is used for making an object perhaps or shaping certain things. So, what are the characteristics of a tool that we can find here?

Of course, one can see that this stone tool this has been shaped in such a way that the surface of it has become almost smooth and then this curvilinear line that we see and it is sort of like there is no breakage, there is no abrupt surface, so everything is smooth in that sense, and then the tip of the stone tool that we find it is somewhat rounded and it is not sharp. And then at the end here in the bottom, then we see that there is a slight groove that was made here in this particular area slightly slanted.

And that is how one can imagine that perhaps this has been used for someone to hold it in their hand and then make use of it. So, since we do not really see sharp edges in this tool, either in this sides or on the top, so one can imagine that this was not used to cut anything, but perhaps it was used for like smoothening things or to break another surface and things like that.

So, that way these are the ways in which we can think about how the shape of it, the surface texture of it and then the smoothness, the roughness and then all the grooves and all the slant in that object, all of them how they tell a story about its use and its relevance. And so, this is one thing one can see that how in the prehistoric time and since we are talking about a time the prehistoric time and perhaps this comes from paleolithic period.

And at a time when the technologies for incorporating metal in the daily life practices was not really widespread or perhaps it was not known. So, one can imagine for many different kinds of things where metal is used for hammering, for breaking things as well as for cutting and everything else, so stone must have been used. And that is the reason one can see that stone being this heavy mass and how that can be incorporated for doing the purposes, which later on were served by the metal objects.

**(Refer Slide Time: 07:43)**



We are continuing our discussion on the stone tools, and we have two prehistoric stone tools on this slide. So, here one can see that how differently the stone tools are made. And the first one that we have already discussed in slide 1 and here we can see that that was being contrasted with another stone tool. So, on the right side of the screen, we have a prehistoric stone tool and that is from Dhone in the Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh.

So which is not very far from the other stone tool from where it and that one is found from Nellore again southern Andhra Pradesh. So, this is something that these two areas are in close proximity and what we can see here is how differently the stone tools are made. So, once we do the comparison, the characteristic features and everything they become much more prominent. So, in the stone tool that we have on the right side of the screen, we see this being somewhat abrupt.

So, it does not really follow a uniform shape like the one that is there on the left side. And then also we can see that there are many of these ups and downs those are there in the body of this stone tool and those are still very much there. So, there is not really any conscious effort of smoothening it like the way we see this on the left side. And also seeing the edges one can imagine the way this stone tool on the left side of the screen.

The edges have been smoothened very carefully so that there are no abrupt edges or anything else or any abrupt projection or groove within it. So, this has been done very carefully, whereas here one can see on the right side of the image, we see the edges all the different ups

and downs and some cases one can see that the edges are also sharp. So those things have been kept here and one can imagine that these things were there for a conscious reason.

Because if a smoothed surface of this stone the one we have on the left side that serves a particular kind of purpose either for like pressing something or also it might have been used for smoothing another surface for which reason that needed an even surface of this tool. So, if this is the kind of purpose it has served, so the one we have on the right side of the screen must have served a very different kind of purpose.

So, all these abrupt edges and the sharp edges as well that suggests that it must have been used for cutting something or breaking something. So, for that reason it required that kind of angular and sharp edges which is not present on the one in the left side of the screen. And so this is the kind of like and both of them are portable, they can be hold in the hands, right. So, if these are the kind of characteristic features that we see in both the stone tools, so that makes us think about how the skill had also developed in the prehistoric time period.

And it is not really like one person knew how to do the smoothing and another person did not know how to do the smoothing, but it says something about how the people in the prehistoric times in the Indian subcontinent and of course we are talking about the southern part of the Indian subcontinent, how they have realized and how they have understood the material characteristics of stone and how differently a smooth surface and a rough surface can actually serve some different purposes.

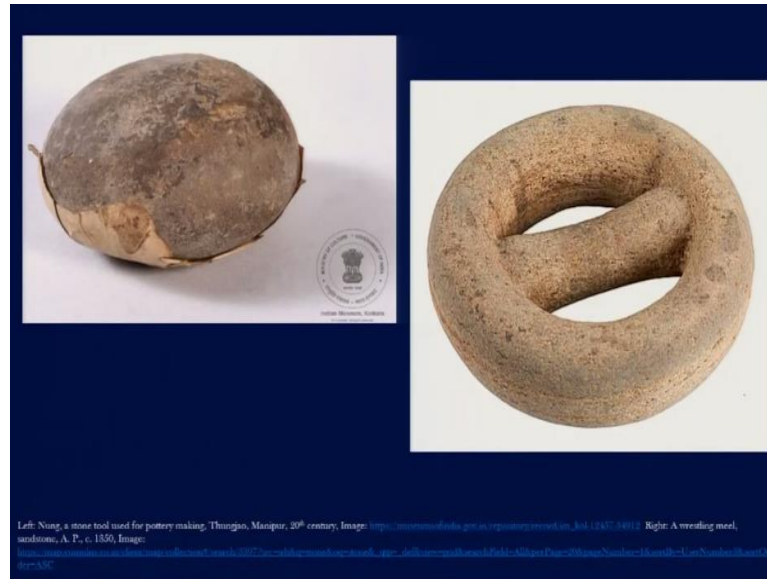
So, those are the things, the understanding of the material, understanding of how that can be used for solving problems for daily life or for something else, so those things led to this kind of material explorations, those things lead to making these kinds of tools and in extension of that making objects. So, for all these things, one can imagine that this kind of tool making practice, utilization of tools or stone whatever those required a high degree of sensibility towards the material themselves.

And that is also something that we are also trying to do here to understand stone from a close proximity so that one can understand its possibilities, one can see that in what all different contexts one can explore this. So, from there I wanted to also show some of the stone tools

which are used in 20th century, in the 19th century. So, we were looking into the tools which were there in the prehistoric times.

And as I have said earlier that the prehistoric practices or the early historic practices, not all the time that those practices are completely away from what we are doing right now, and these are some of the examples.

**(Refer Slide Time: 12:59)**



So, for example, here we have this particular stone tool called Nung and this is a stone tool, which is used during pottery making in Manipur in the 20th century. So, this is the Nung, this is this tool which is there on the left side of the screen. And one can see this is oval shaped stone, which is again very smooth in itself is an oval almost like an egg. So, this is something that one can imagine that it can be held in hand and then if it is used during pottery making.

Then one can imagine that these kinds of stones are used for flattening the surface of the pot or slowly beating it. For pottery there are different ways in which the pots and the utilitarian objects are produced. And in this once we find that beating of the pots and also smoothening it, flattening the clay to make it the flat slabs of clay, those are also very much an important part of pottery remaking

So, this kind of tool which does not really have any abrupt edge and it has a broad surface with which one can beat it on the clay surface or press it. So, those kinds of things one can see that how the stone tools are used for attaining those kinds of purposes. So, the basic

characteristic as we have already discussed in the earlier slide, the basic characteristic of these kind of tools which are made of stone.

So that is the smoothness, the roughness and then also like whether it is angular, whether it has a curvilinear edge or how big this is, what kind of surface it has. So, all these different kinds of things one can see that how they tell us about their users and some of the things we have seen that how those stone tools were used during the prehistoric times and this 20th century example from Manipur, this Nung stone.

This also says something that some of the practices of using stone which existed in such a long time back has not been disappeared from the culture. So, there are those continued use of stone tools and stone for these kinds of purposes of treating another material or smoothening it or making it ready for turning them into some utilitarian object or other objects of daily use. Now, the other example that we have on the same slide and it is a wrestling meel.

So, this wrestling meel it is something that utilizes the way of the stone. So, the stone being this this heavy material which one can see how that can be useful for the activities which require high degree of physical involvement. So, wrestling something like that where like in training or physique is very much part of its overall practice. So, there use of the stone as a wrestling meel is something one can imagine that why stone was chosen as the desired object for serving this particular purpose.

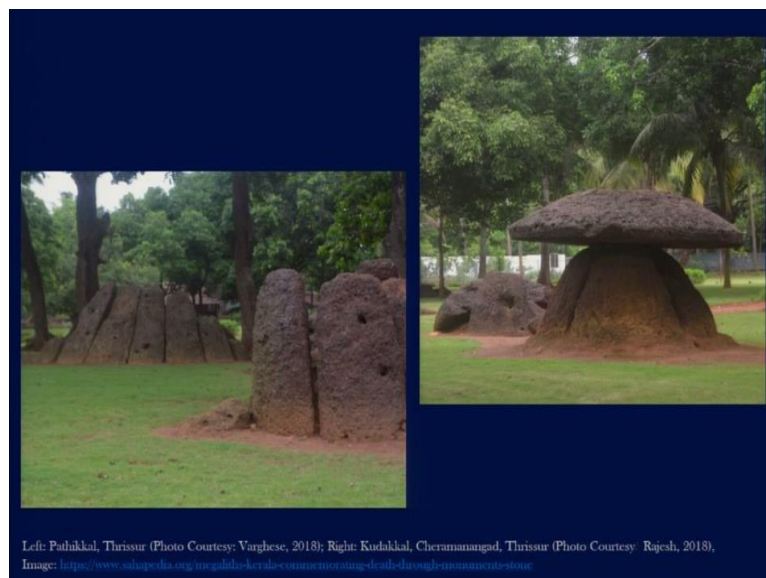
So, this is a wrestling meel which is made of sandstone and it is also found from Andhra Pradesh around 1850. So, one can imagine this was made or like this was used in the mid 19th century and what we see here is the continuous use of stone and it is also something this is used for wrestling purpose, this is not used for something that we see on a daily basis. So, for using such kind of tools on the daily purpose, it might not be the most convenient thing.

Because of its heavyweight, but for wrestling a heavyweight object is very much required and that is the reason perhaps stone serves or stone fits the purpose very well. And here also in terms of its making one can see that how its circular shape has been made and then all the surfaces that has been there it has been smoothened so that there are no abrupt stages, there are no sharp angles or edges that can hurt anyone who is holding it.

And for holding it perhaps in the middle, there is the circular shape with the hollow centre with this one particular band that is running between these two parts is something is made in this particular way so that perhaps one can hold it or that that can be utilized for a grip. So, these are some of the reasons in which we find that how the materiality of the stone is utilized and depending on its shape, its form, then one can also think about what all purposes it might have served.

So, these are the different ways in which we see that, not only during the prehistoric times, that even today, even in the 20th century and even to some extent we can say today that how we understand the different kinds of uses of stone and that is how some of the purposes that the prehistoric people have served one can still relate to that. I am not saying that all these things are directly relatable, but we can think that there are certain kinds of resonances one can find in the practices which are there in the history and the practices that we still continue today.

**(Refer Slide Time: 19:34)**



So, from there I wanted to touch upon some of the other uses of stone in another part of the country. So, if we can think about some of the objects that we have already looked at the tools and then of course this wrestling meel, which is an object, right. So, these are the things we have already looked at, so those are the ones which are portable and they are usually the ones which are used either for daily purposes or for wrestling and so on this specialized kind of training.



Now, for stone, we can also see that it is not the only kind of thing that those were used from the very early times. Another very prominent use of stone that we find in the history of the Indian subcontinent is the use of stone for making burials. And we have touched upon the South Indian burials in the week on the Harappan sites, the Indus valley sites and we have spoken about the burial practices.

And here are some more examples that how the burial sites, the megalithic burials in the southern India they have utilized stone in different ways. So, the examples that we have on screen are from Kerala and there are two different kinds of burial sites that we see here. And so these burial sites, we find them from like 1000 BC to 500 AD, so between this long time period for around 1500 years or so.

Between these times we find these burial practices have been sustained and they were carried forward and that is also something we can see that even today in certain Hindu communities in southern India they still practice burial rituals. And in their death rituals, the bodies are not cremated, but buried. So, one can see that how there are the continuation of these kind of practices and again when there is a burial, there needs to be the use of some kind of plaque or some kind of marker which pays homage to the deceased person.

And that is how we find that some kind of permanent material is used in this purpose there and one can think about what all permanent material we have in our surrounding and in Southern India we find in a number of these sites, the local stones were made use of. And stones are used for their durability, at the same time how they remain almost unchanged over the time, right. So, this is something we find on the left side of the screen we have something called pathikkal.

And pathikkal is this particular kind of this burial where we find that there are these rectangular pieces of stone and where the upper edge of the stone is smooth and slightly made into this half circular in shape. And so this pathikkal basically means a hood of a snake. And so, one can imagine that the way these stones are arranged they are almost sort of arranged in a way in which they are providing shelter to the tomb which lies within it.

So, this is how one can see that how the shape of it and its resemblance to the natural elements or like the natural beings that had inspired the terminology of it. And as we have

already discussed that in this burial site what happens is that there are burials underground and then on the top of that there are the stones which are placed in different ways like for example here we see this particular fashion in which the stones are arranged that is pathikkal in which the snake hood kind of this ambience that is created.

And then we also see that main hill like form like where we have these long pieces of monolithic stone which are just placed there. There are dolmen like forms and if you remember that we have already looked into some of the forms in the Chengalpattu district of Tamil Nadu in which we have those huge blocks of stone which are placed on the top of this burial as a sign of showing respect to the deceased ones.

So, here we see the local this laterite stone is used for making these pathikkal or the burial stones or these memorial stones. So, laterite is something that we find in abundance in that part of the country in the Malabar region and in Kerala and in the Western ghats. So, there is another thing that we can see that how this porous rock surface off laterite the and then this uneven rock surface with particularly this distinctive reddish tone that it has.

So, all these things add to the regional specificity and that says something about the site from where the stones are collected and where these particular memorials are erected. So, all these things also add to the distinctive flavour and the distinctive cultural trait of this region. And the other thing that we have here the other example and this one is called kudakkal and kudakkal is another kind of burial and again that comes from Kerala.

And as I have already mentioned the time period will probably be somewhere between 1000 BC to 500 AD. So, between these times, there were these widespread practices of making these burials, these memorials. So, here what we have there is the kudakkal which is basically it's an umbrella form. So, what one can see that there is this block of stone here and then on the top of that there is this very carefully placed umbrella like form and that sort of is placed here.

In one hand, it is sort of shows reverence towards the deceased one as we know that how umbrella is something that is related to the royalty and we only put umbrella on the top of the people whom we show respect or reverence, so that is this particular practice from our daily lives that has been then transformed into the form of stone here and to make this stone

umbrella and then putting it on the top of this vertical stone so that it remains immovable and stable so that this site where the deceased person is buried should not be disturbed.

So, these are these are some of the ways in which we find that how the weight of the stone and then of course the locally available material, all these things they make a huge deal of impact on the kind of objects and the kind of sites they create and how their relevance in the society are constructed. Thank you.