

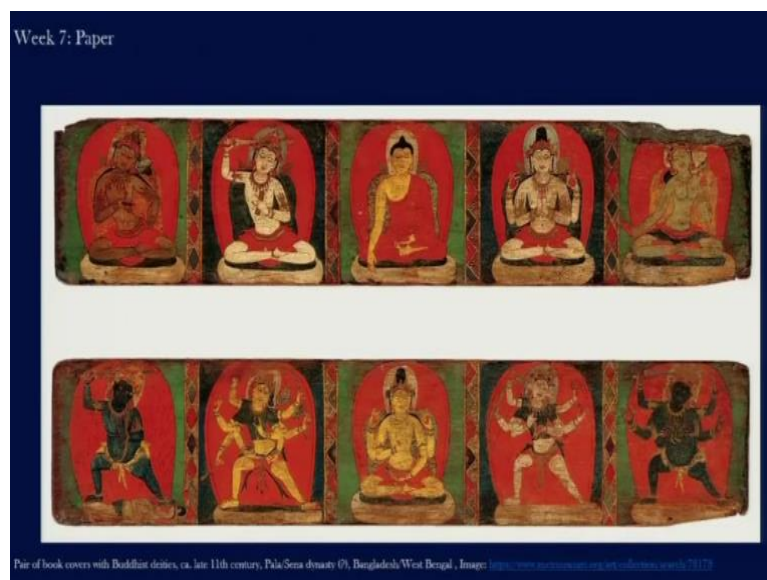
Indian Art: Materials, Techniques and Artistic Practices
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Lecture – 31
Paper

Hello, everyone. I am Rajarshi Sengupta and this week we will be talking about paper. And this is the module on paper and there are different ways in which we will be looking into the history of paper. So, for example we start with some of the earliest examples in which we see that is not the paper we are looking at, however, there are some of the signs in which how the paper will be used in the future. So, we will start our discussion with the palm leaf manuscripts.

Now, the thing is that in this particular week or in this module, we will be looking into different use of paper and mostly we will be seeing the development between 14th and 18th to 19th centuries and in this time, we will be finding a diverse range of areas and schools and different kinds of working methods and colouring techniques. At the same time, different royal courts and other schools, how they improvise and how they also incorporate paper and they enhance the material quality of paper, paint and pigment and take this tradition of painting in India further.

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So, our discussion starts with some of the earliest examples and as I have already mentioned that these are not on paper, but they are on palm leaf manuscripts and they are also on board. So some of the earliest examples for this and something that is portable, so for example when

we look into the murals, the murals are not something one can carry them home. So, murals is in a place, which is in some ways we can call it stagnant, immovable.

On the other hand, paper gives the opportunity for people to take those images home and that also marks a shift from the kind of images we have looked at so far. So, for example we have looked into the sculptures, we have looked into architecture, the same time also the mural paintings, so they have a very different kind of character from the way in which we see the use of paper or the use of manuscripts would do.

So in the 10th-11th century, we find that there are some of the earliest surviving manuscripts that we have in the Indian subcontinent and those will be from the Pala Sena or dynasty from the eastern India. So, for example the ones we have on screen, so these two panels they are actually the book covers. We have the palm leaf manuscripts and the palm leaf as we know for the size and the shape of the palm leaf, so the manuscript can only be done in this horizontal format and really narrow in their pictorial space.

So, in those spaces we find that there are the scriptures and different kinds of doctrines or the narratives those are written and side by side there are images. And so, the book covers that we also have on screen, the front cover and the back cover, they also follow the similar kind of format. So, those two book covers will be there and then in between them there will be all those palm leaves, the files and that is how the entire manuscripts are made in the Buddhist context.

So, this is some of the earliest examples that we find and as we know that in the Buddhist monasteries, the practice of reading the scriptures, the practice of education that have been there quite strongly manifested from the very early times. So that is the reason the use of manuscripts should not come as a surprise there. And we do not really have any other modes of making these manuscripts except for painting or writing onto them.

In some cases, we do have the stippling or engraving on the palm leaf, but that is also not something that was widespread. So, we do have some of the earliest examples of printed manuscript but those were not there in India or the Indian subcontinent, but those were there in China. So, the Diamond Sutra that we have from the 8th and 9th centuries, those are the ones we find to be some of the earliest examples of the manuscript which were printed on paper.

Now coming back to the Indian subcontinent, what we find here that some of the earliest examples of these manuscripts as I have already mentioned that they are on this palm leaf. They were written and drawn on palm leaf with these wooden covers, so they are called as Pustaka and it is also believed that when someone is taking a Pustaka home or to a place for study, so they are actually carrying a section of the sacred architecture with them.

So that is the reason these movable forms for devotion, movable forms of education, they have been highly significant for the ones who are the devotees or the learners. So, according to Gina Kim, she argues that how this played a very important role not only in terms of understanding the religion, but also for knowledge circulation. Now, from there what we find that in the Buddhist and in the Jain context, there are many of this manuscript that we find.

And some of the earliest surviving manuscript for example the one we have on screen and this comes perhaps from one of those Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita. So, that is one of those Mahayana Buddhist texts which was richly decorated and richly illustrated, and these manuscripts which are made during this 10th-11th centuries and from eastern India, so this follow this particular style that we understand today as something which is understood as the Pala and the Pala Sena style in eastern India mostly in the Bengal region.

And so, it is not quite clear whether these manuscripts were produced in part of eastern India today or the region which we understand as Bangladesh. So, these are mostly the areas in which we find they were practiced. And if we see the kind of images those were produced on them, so there was a layer of this base material that was put on the top of this wooden covers as well as on those palm leaf.

And then this base material was usually made of some kind of like calcium carbonate or zinc oxide and things like that, which gives a white coating on the top of it. And on the top of them, we find that there were different kinds of drawing materials, perhaps red oxide, perhaps charcoal and things like that were used for doing the initial drawings and then we have the different kinds of applications of colour.

Now, if we see also the kinds of images those are produced here, so for its horizontal orientation, we have the images which are put in different sections. So, there are many deities who are being addressed in this manuscript, so although the figures of those deities, the

figurative representation we find them to be here on this book covers. So for example, here we have a prominent image of Buddha at the centre so that also gives us a sense of his supremacy in this manuscript.

(Refer Slide Time: 07:28)



Moving on from there, if we find that some of the other manuscript, for example this one as we see, and this one comes from 15th century, so at least from 14th century we have paper available in the Indian subcontinent. Now paper is not something that was made in India initially and that perhaps came from China via Persia. So, it came from like China, Central Asia, from there to Middle East and from there it came to the Indian subcontinent.

So it is highly probable that from the Middle East, the Indian traders or the traders from the Middle East they actually collected paper and then deekle paper reached to the western frontier of the Indian subcontinent. That is the reason some of the earliest examples of the manuscripts like these religious manuscripts which are made on paper we find from the Gujarat region and perhaps that also says something about the traders' connection.

Now, this is one of the examples in which we find a Jaina manuscript and this comes from Kalpasutra. In Kalpasutra we have this richly decorated these manuscripts, which also follows this horizontal orientation like the one we have seen in this Pala manuscript, but that was painted on to palm leaf, and this one we find the shift had already taken place on paper. So, in these ones what we find that there are also those registers in which the text is there and then alongside there are images.

And the text and the images as we can find in this image here as well that how they are also framed within these elaborate decorative borders. And in these places, we also find something very peculiar and very characteristic of the Kalpasutra and Kalakacharya Katha the Jaina manuscripts from 14th and 15th century in western and central India that there are those circular motifs, as we can see that there are those prominent circular motifs at the centre and the two sides of this manuscript.

And these circular motifs here we see them as part of the ornamentation, but the thing is that this perhaps comes from the earlier use of the manuscripts. So, for example when we see the palm leaf manuscripts, there were always those punching marks through which the threads were passed and that is how all the palm leaf folios were put together. So, that particular way of making these manuscripts, we also find them to be prevalent on the paper here as well.

And even though the purpose here had already changed because this paper folios are definitely not kept the same way as those palm leaf manuscripts, they are not punched in the centre, but that particular area which was reserved for punching in the centre on the sides, those have now been transformed into these decorative motifs. So, even though this is done on paper, it carries these remnants of the earlier practices which used to be done on the palm leaf.

And that is how we can also see the transition that how the material has transitioned from palm leaf to paper. However, some of the pictorial strategies, the compositional arrangement those have also been carried forward. Now, if we see the kind of colours and the material which are used here, there is also something very significant. So, in the earlier image we have seen that there is predominance of red and black and in some cases we also have found green.

So, these colours as we know they are all collected from mineral sources. So, the colours which are used on paper, the colours which are used on palm leaf as well as on wood, they are usually collected from the different kinds of mineral sources like the green is collected from terre verte and then red comes of course from like red oxide and there are different other materials which are also iron rich.

So, that is how we find the shades of red, in the ones in which like manganese content is there, there we find the variations of brown and of course black is collected either from lampblack or something that has high carbon content. So, that is how we find the colour scheme how it had

been developed in the Pala Sena context in the Buddhist manuscript. From there, if we see how this particular manuscript the Kalpasutra, this one folio from Kalpasutra here definitely there is a use of red.

But the thing is there is also significant use of gold and blue and the blue is ultramarine blue which is not collected from Indigo, but this is from this semiprecious stone lapis lazuli. So lapis lazuli is also something that is collected from Afghanistan and parts of Central Asia, this is not always indigenous to India. So, this also says something about how the people who were commissioning this Jaina manuscript, they had a very different kind of economic background from the ones we have seen in the Pala context.

So, the trader community in the western India and who were also several of them were Jains and they have commissioned these manuscripts. So as we have already mentioned that how making the manuscript, this was a very integral part of devotion and also attaining spiritual merit. That is a reason there was always this attempt of devoting the best to the gods and that is how we find whoever were capable of spending, they have put their best effort for the different kinds of materials.

For example this semiprecious stone, lapis lazuli, how it was made into the pigment and then it was applied onto the paper for attaining this very particular ultramarine blue that we see in this folio. At the same time, we also have extensive use of gold. So, for example here we find and then of course in these areas also we find, sometimes we also find the text those are also painted with gold.

So, gold and lapis lazuli like the choice of this material they say something about the economic condition, at the same time the preference of the western Indian communities and how those were different from the eastern Indian monks and the Buddhist monasteries and then how their choice, their economic status, at the same time their accessibility of how colours and different kinds of pigments how those things were different and how all of those aspects they have contributed immensely to the kinds of images they have produced.

Now, if we think about the different religion and the use of manuscripts, so if we find some of the earliest examples in the Buddhist context, in the Jaina context, then one question might come then why not in Hinduism? So in Hinduism, we find that there are the traditions where

they have evolved more around listening. So, if there is one particular manuscript one person has that can be a performer, that can be a priest.

And then the rest of the people are encouraged to listen to the resuscitation of this manuscript and it is not really for individual worship or not really for the individual devotion for studying. So, for studying also as well for the longest period of time, we find the Hindu, the scriptures, they were listened and they were remembered instead of they were written down and read.

So, this culture or this orientation was listening, the orientation was orality that actually perhaps contributed to the scarcity of this manuscript that we find today in the Hindu context. It does not say there are no manuscript at all, but there is significantly less manuscript compared to the Buddhist and the Jaina context. So perhaps one of the earliest surviving the Hindu manuscript that we find and that is something called Nizwa Sattva Samhita and that that is a tantric Shaiva text that was found from Nepal in the 9th century.

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So, in the 16th century after we find that the prevalence of the Jaina manuscript, the use of paper, the use of different kinds of pigment based colour, the way we have already discussed it, so after we find that those practices were established, then there have been more and more manuscripts we find those were made on paper. So, the use of palm leaf became limited and they were done only in a few sections of the Indian subcontinent.

And in most of the parts of the Indian subcontinent, we find the widespread use of paper. And by this time, we also find paper was produced in the Indian subcontinent and there were

elaborate processes for making paper. Now, this is one of the other kind of manuscript paintings that we find here and this is called Chaurapanchasika and Chaurapanchasika was a collection of poetry that was written in 11th century Kashmir by Bilhana.

And Bilhana the poet the way he had written Chaurapanchasika with time it became more and more prominent, and in the 15th and 16th century we find in central India especially it gained more prominence and this is also the time when we find the illustrated manuscript or the illustrated copies of Chaurapanchasika started emerging in central India, for example in the Malwa region and so on, in Mewar region and in the Rajput dominated areas as well.

So, this is one of the examples that we find, this is the Rajput painting perhaps came from Rajasthan and similar kind of paintings we also find from the Malwa region as well. And what we find here to be the stylistic features, that there are text and the part of the text as we can see they appear in the upper register of this image here and the text is there and then the lower part of this image here, what we find that is kept for making the images.

So, usually for this kind of manuscript, we find there are calligraphers or the people who would write the text and then they will leave the space for the painters to draw on these areas. So, that is the reason what we find that these are always been done in a collaborative process instead of being individualistic works. Now, what we find here to be interesting in terms of its features that it is a rectangular pictorial space in which there is this royal pavilion that we find here.

And then with pillars and with the curtains drawn and the curtains and the pillars everything they are done with all possible details. Then we also have a sense of the interior space here with the use of this bedspread and the pillows and so on and it is a dark interior that is how it has been shown here. Now, with this pavilion we also find on the terrace there are the superstructures on the top of them which also tells something about the architectural traditions prevalent in the Mewar region as well as in the Malwa region.

Now, we also find that in the upper register of this image, there is the depiction of the night sky and how the night sky has been depicted with this dark colour with the stippling of the stars which have perhaps been done with the dots of white pigment. And then on the left side of this image here we find that there is this Nayika figure who is there perhaps in the courtyard or in the garden setup where she is plucking flower.

And if we see the kind of the pictorial traditions those are followed here, she is depicted in her profile form and they have this angular at the same time much stylized version of the figures that we see in our surrounding. So, the eyes we find to be much more projected and these protruding eyes that that is something we find to be also prevalent in the Jaina manuscript here as well.

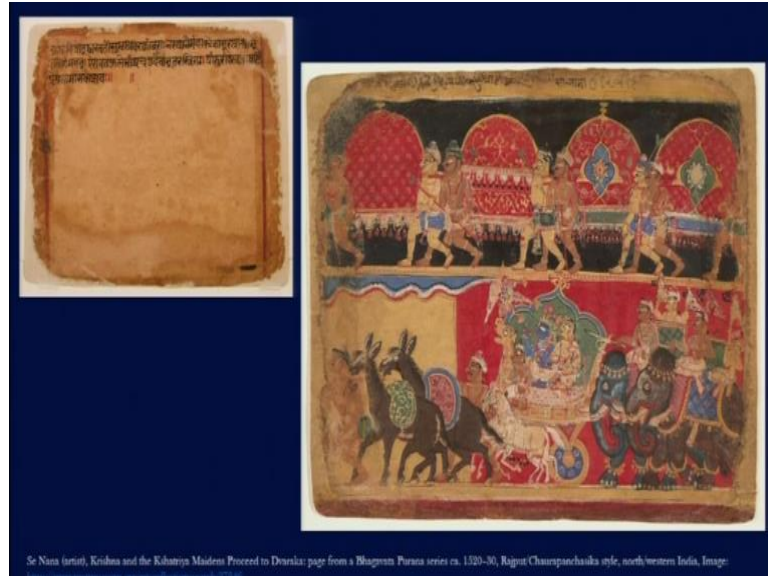
So, this flat treatment of the surface, breaking up the surface in many different registers. So, for example, here as we find there are those different registers in which the entire image is divided, so that kind of strategy is also followed here as well. So, instead of having those very strict registers that we have in the limited space of the Jaina manuscript, here it seems like the registers have been much more seamlessly assimilated within the pictorial space.

And that is the reason we find the night sky being in one register the upper part of the image and then there is this a flat red background in which the main protagonist we find to be there present. And also if we can see this particular area where this richly ornamented pavilion has been presented that also shows that how the entire pictorial space has been broken down in different sections and so this idea of breaking down the entire pictorial space in different registers is also prevalent here very much.

Another thing we also find to be interesting is that the kind of details we find. So, the details for example, the kind of the ornaments, the different patterns on the textiles, at the same time the details which have been presented in depicting water, for example here or the flowers and everything else, they also indicate to widespread pictorial strategy that is not just prevalent in making the images on paper, but also on textile.

So, some of the earliest surviving Gujarati textiles resist dyed textiles that we find from 13th and 14th century, they also follow similar kinds of pictorial strategies. And that is how we can understand that this kind of making the images it was not really exclusive to only on paper, but it had its widespread use, perhaps it was known to the makers of textiles as well and perhaps some of the other practitioners likewise.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:07)



So, from there, we find that slowly there were also experimentation, perhaps there are different groups of people who were involved in it and the kind of sophistication, the kind of details which were done in some of the later paintings we find, for example this one that Bhagavata Purana and these are some of the texts we find if we see Chaurapanchasika being this secular text, which did not really appear initially as a strictly religious text, for example, the ones we saw in the Jaina context, in the Buddhist context and so on.

So Bhagavata Purana and Ragamala and Gita Govinda these are some of the texts we find that they have their roots in Hinduism, but at the same time they also borrow extensively from some of the contemporary or earlier literary traditions like the Gita Govinda that was initially written in Maithili and that we find to be then translated and then also made into these pictorial narrations in the courts in western India as part of central India.

So, here we have this one page from Bhagavata Purana and that we are not quite sure about the particular space from which where it is found, but it is believed that this is found either from Northern or western India and it also follows this Chaurapanchasika style. So, this particular kind of imagery that we have here, this breaking up the entire pictorial space in different registers and the prevalence of ornamentation.

The prevalence of flat colours, and then this angular style of making images and the figures and then of course this orientation towards details, so these characteristic features we find to be a really influential one not only in central India, but also in western India and later on we

will also find that in Northern India as well. So, this Chaurapanchasika style we find to be prevalent when it started being developed in the 14th and 15th century.

It was not only just prevalent in central India or western India, but also parts of northern India and then later on we will also find that to be an influential style in the Pahari region as well. So, in the Bhagavata Purana series here as we can see there often these images those will be made as part of this manuscript. And so in the reverse side or in the front, we have these images and on the flip side, sometimes we also have text written there.

So, on the top register we already have text here for example and then in the reverse side of the same folio we have here from the same page we also have text written in the reverse side of it. So, this is a clear indication how these images were never really meant to be displayed like the way we see them on the museum walls. So, they were not really meant to be ever displayed as individual paintings.

But they have always been made as books or folios where one can see the images, they can read the text, they can do back and forth between text and images. So, this is how all these images have been made. So, if we think about the Jaina context, if we think about the Chaurapanchasika and now with the Bhagavata Purana, so in all of these ones we find to be the similar strategy that was employed.

Now, in here we also find this particular orientation in which the figures are drawn in profile. So, the figures as we can see here that there are these two registers in which the narration is taking place and the narration is basically that how Krishna and women he rescued from the court of Pragjyotishpur which is considered to be in Assam and how all of them are moving towards Dwarka.

And so, here we find that the profile figures and all of them are oriented towards this one direction, so that says something about which direction Dwarka will be. And when we see the figures in profile that also adds to this idea of how an image is moving in one way. So, it is a time when we did not really have an animation or any kind of ways in which the images can be made into the moving images.

So, this kind of orientation that the movement of the eyes or the direction of the face and their body gestures and everything that indicated towards which direction the narrative is moving. So, that is also something that is prevalent here we find to be in this Bhagavata Purana as well and how this had been an established strategy for picture making in various parts of India. Thank you.