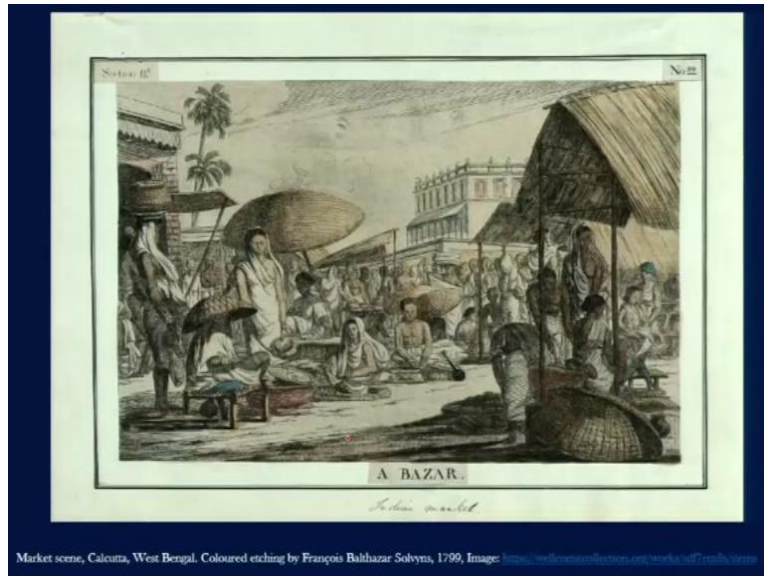


Indian Art: Materials, Techniques and Artistic Practices
Prof. Rajarshi Sengupta
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology – Kanpur

Lecture – 38
Printing

(Refer Slide Time: 00:34)



Hello everyone, we are continuing our discussion on the prints and printmaking practices in the Indian subcontinent and during the colonial time period. So, as we have already started discussing some of the prints by Solvyns and how the occupational group and the caste groups were represented. So, this is another image that we have from Solvyns and also similarly it was made in 1799 and this is a market scene that we see in the city of Calcutta.

And so in Calcutta, as we know it was the capital of the Indian subcontinent during the colonial period until 1911 and then it is a city where we see there was a strong divide between the so called the white quarter and black quarter and so it is kind of the place which was inhabited by the Britishers those are the parts of the ones which were considered to be the so called the white quarters and where we see all those expansive colonial buildings and administrative quarters and everything else is planned and so on.

And the places which when inhabited by the locals like the Babus and then of course the bazaars, the people, the various occupational groups and so on. So, those are the places we find they are represented in much more in a chaotic manner and then this typical bazaar scenes have

also been shown. So, for example this one what we find here clearly the way in which the entire space is organized, there is not really much we can say that is arranged in a well fashioned manner.

So, there are haphazard turns and then there are people, so mostly the people who are selling something in these bazaars and most of them we can see that they are clad in white and dyed cotton, so that is also something that is associated with that ordinary people. And so those ways in which we find that this Bazarre scene is depicted as a place, which is a place for the commoners and then different kinds of occupational groups would come and sell their stuff in this place.

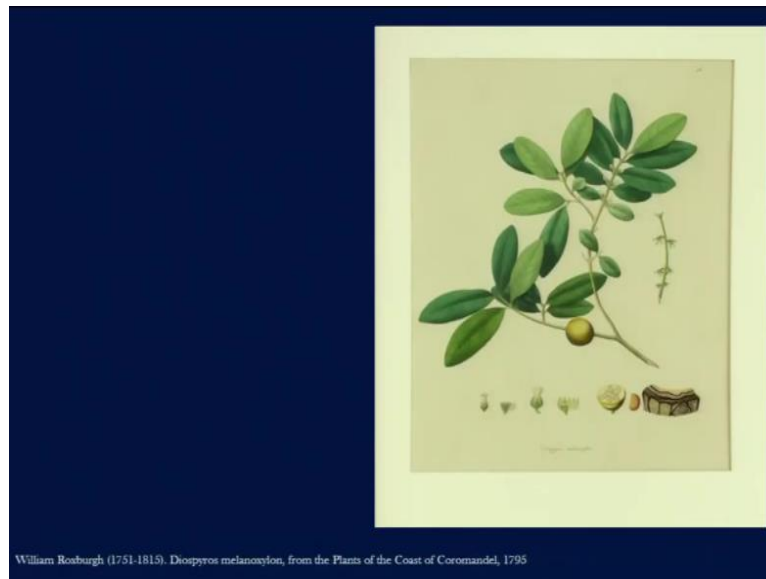
And so, in the foreground again we see on the right side of the screen that how there is this small hut like structure that is shown here, it almost makes this frame for the viewers and through this area then we have a much more expansive view into the entire bazaar scene in the rest of the image. So, if this is the place where we see that this required depth and the darkness is produced in this area in the figures in that depth.

And also these areas, so then that also help in emphasizing the areas which are in the other parts of the images which are bathed in sunlight. Now, the one thing that we see among this bazaar scene this another building that rises on the top of this place, which perhaps belongs to a Bengali elite. So, this is not something that we can find that the bazaar places would not be situated somewhere close to the British quarters, but they are the Bengali elites, the Babus and the Zamindars and so on.

They will have their lavish residences close to these kinds of areas, the bazaars and so on. So, this gives us a sense of how the bazaar scenes might have been during this time, but as I have already mentioned these images are really complicated that is in to some extent we can say that they are eyewitnesses. The artists themselves were the eyewitnesses and that is how they made these images.

But at the same time, we can also say that how there are those established ideologies to show the people from the Indian subcontinent that also plays into the mix, so that is the reason these images are not completely evidential, but at the same time they are somewhat in between evidence and imagination.

(Refer Slide Time: 04:58)



Then the next part of the images that we talk about here are the botanical representations. So, there have been these large scale botanical surveys during the colonial times and from 18th century we find that there have been many of the people, so for example, William Roxburgh and some of the very well-known documentation of the plants of Coromandel region parts of southern India and also in Calcutta, we find all of them to be spearheaded by William Roxburgh.

And then we see this one of the folios, one of the books actually that was written and then drawn by William Roxburgh that is the plants of the coast of Coromandel and here there is a representation from this that in this book there are those description of these different kinds of plants, their scientific names, their different parts of the body, how they look like, the visible characteristic features and everything else.

And then in what purpose they are used, it is not just how they can be used in the medical sciences, but also how the local people they make use of them. And we see that the plants they are not just done for just to add to the botanical knowledge about the subcontinent, but the plants which can also have an economic impact, they are also given priority in these documentations.

So that way, we can also see that how the documentation in botany and then this extensive, very careful documentation were not just there for collecting knowledge about the subcontinent, but eventually that can also contribute for the economic growth of the British.

So, these are the kind of the images we also find as part of this documentation and when they are printed and when they are disseminated to a large group of people, then these complicated knowledge and layered knowledge that is transmitted to the learners as well as to the administrators.

(Refer Slide Time: 09:41)



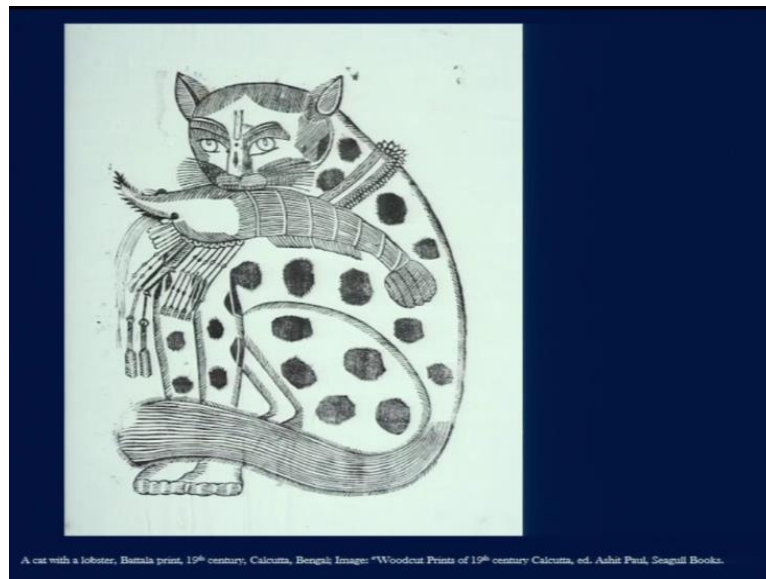
So with this, we also sort of look into a number of different printmaking practices which were prevalent among the indigenous people. So, we see that during this time period in the 18th century and later, mostly in the 19th century that it is not just the Britishers who are involved in making the prints. So, as I have mentioned that in 1799, this one particular place in Serampore which is close to Kolkata or Calcutta, which had this press.

A very significant one established by the East India Company and which published the printed material in English initially and then there were also material which were printed in Bengali or in Bangla. So, this is something that we find that during this time from the very early 19th century that there was also a huge attempt by the people in the Indian subcontinent to learn this new technology and then to make use of them for making content, making images for the people in the Indian subcontinent.

And in those ways, we have seen that some of the very interesting practices that have emerged. One of them will certainly be the Kalighat paintings, we will talk about the paintings more in the next session when we get into the details of the technique and everything else, but Kalighat painting is one of the examples in which we find that how this British technique and also like

the European technique and then the indigenous interventions they sort of came together to form this hybrid mode of image making.

(Refer Slide Time: 11:52)



And then what we see that it is not just the Serampore press in the early 19th century that had the printing activities in Bengal, but it is also that there was this another place in northern Calcutta in the Chitpur area that is known as Battala and Battala is this area which is then became known for these many indigenous small scale presses. So, those presses will have printed books in Bangla and those printed books would not be something that is used for formal education.

But would perhaps be translation or a printed version of a religious text, sometimes scandals, sometimes the stories which are popular in the 19th century Calcutta and then there were also a huge enterprise in terms of making images. So, when we see the images in Battala, these images are made for a book illustration, at the same time we also see something as the broadsheet prints. So, what is a broadsheet print? So, broadsheet print will be like these individual prints which are not associated with a book.

So, for example the kinds of images that we have seen in the barnacle drawings sometimes also as part of these 12 views of India and the Indian subcontinent and so on. So, those are the ones which are part of a larger project, it is not just one image that is like self-sufficient where it is part of a larger book or folio and so on, but in terms of a broadsheet print what we have is this is just a print in itself and that can have religious theme, that can have something to do with the contemporary society and so on.

So, those kinds of images that we find in this broadsheet prints. And this is one of the very celebrated images that we find from Battala. So many images that we find in Kalighat. So, Kalighat and Battala both these places being in the same city of Calcutta, we find that there were much exchange going on between the painters of Kalighat and then the engravers and printers of Battala.

So, what we have here is that is the Battala images that many of the themes, for example this very celebrated theme of a cat with a lobster, this particular theme was very popular one and here what we find in this image is there is this cat, and of course it is made in wood engraving, and that is the reason one can see all the hatched lines here and with the strong contour of the bodies and everything.

And then also what we see here for the wood engraving that all those small details, the ornament like the details and everything, those are also something that is created. Now, the other thing that we also find that the kind of half tone or the tonality, like for example here if you see this, the kind of tonality that is there in the body is there for the water colour cannot be achieved in the wood engraving, so it has much more a graphic quality to it.

So, these are the things that we find them to be similar and different. And at the same time, we also see how these themes are the ones which were widely circulating in the public domain. So, in this image we see that there is this cat with a lobster and a cat with a lobster is a common sight in Bengal and many of the coastal regions. But the thing is here, if we also pay attention, we have a Vaishnava tilaka in the forehead of this cat which is also the same in this counterpart in the Kalighat painting.

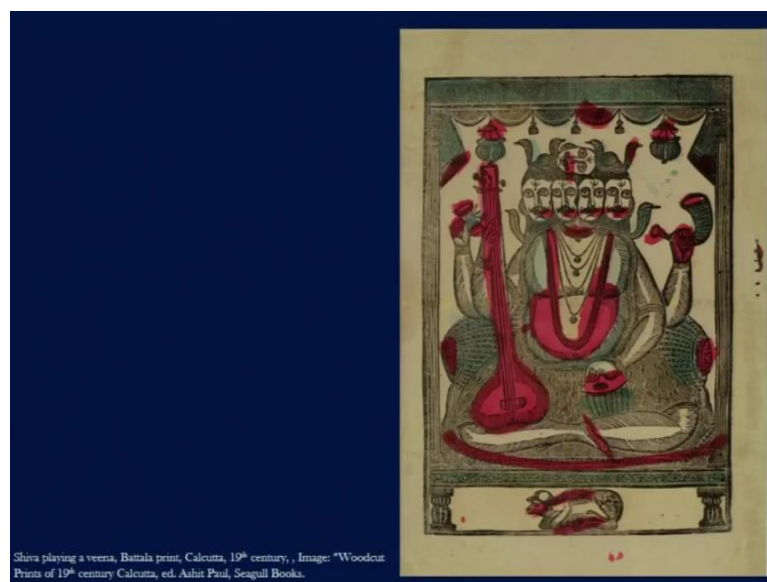
So, this is actually a social commentary which shows the Vaishnavas in Bengal and it can be applicable to the other parts of the Indian subcontinent as well and that how the Vaishnavites they also even though they claim to be vegetarian and claim to be on the path of a particular kind of practice, but still they love their fish and they indulge themselves into the practices which are prohibited. So, this is something that talks about a larger social commentary and the satirical view of the society something that comes with these images.

So, these kinds of images were widely circulated and initially we see them with the Kalighat images and then with the advent of the Battala prints, we see them widely circulated as print. So, these images, we see them as I have already mentioned Battala is not a place of specialized printing, it is also not a place where the kind of images which are produced, they are not considered to be the highly prized ones, but those are the ones for a mass consumption.

And that is the reason we find these images were printed on this cheap mill made paper which are considered as the newsprint paper onto which the newspapers are also printed. So, these are very low quality, cheap mill made paper something that is now that we are talking about paper, if you remember that we have already spoken about the paper in the early modern India in 16th, 17th and 18th century and the laborious process through which the papers were produced.

So, now we are talking about the mill made papers, that kind of newspapers and everything that we still see around us, and how the materiality of the paper, the quality of printing, and sometimes the smudging of the ink and everything else that adds to this new kind of visual which were widely circulated in the public domain.

(Refer Slide Time: 18:29)



Shiva playing a veena, Battala print, Calcutta, 19th century, , Image: *Woodcut Prints of 19th century Calcutta, ed. Ashit Paul, Seagull Books.

This is another example of the Battala print. And as I have said there were many different themes those were addressed by the Battala printers and the Battala wood engravers and this is one of them and in which one we see that there is this Bengali Shiva who is shown here with a potbelly and five heads and a Shiva is shown here playing a veena. And then here there is a representation of Shiva's bull Nandi and then on the top register we see that there are curtains.

These curtains are drawn in a fashion like it is a theatrical stage. So, this particular theatrical stage, we can also think about it how this particular region Chitpur, from the very early times it was also being known for the hub of theatrical performance and north Calcutta was also known for many theatrical performances which might have also impacted upon the visual arrangement of these prints.

So, this is something that we see how even though some of the printing technology, so here we see in Battala that oil-based printing ink is used, which was learned from the Europeans. And then this particular way of wood engraving which we can also see the engraving tools, the way the positive negative space division and everything, those things were also something those were perhaps was much influenced by the Europeans.

But then when it comes in terms of the space division, when it comes in terms of the thematics and everything else, even the aesthetics that becomes very different from the images of the landscape or the human figures that we have already seen, which were made by the European travellers and artists. Here, we also see something else and that is the use of stencil for applying colours.

So, since I have already mentioned these prints in Battala, those were mass produced, so for applying colour one might not have much time to be precise and applying colours to those specific areas. So for example, if we think about like this image in which there is a very specific and it is a highly specialized skill of applying colour to this engraved images, so for this one what we see here it is certainly not that kind of skill we are talking about.

And we are also talking about cheap visual, cheap in terms of its economic value and then how this is mass produced and that is the reason stencils were made, and so the specific stencils will be put for specific colour. So, perhaps one stencil is made for application of the blue colour and so when the stencil is put on the top of this print and there is cotton filled with colour that will be smudged on the stencil.

So that only the areas which are removed from this, so those areas which catch colour so that is how like part of the image that has blue and then another stencil would be used for application of this pinkish colour. So, since I have already mentioned the quality of the paper is usually

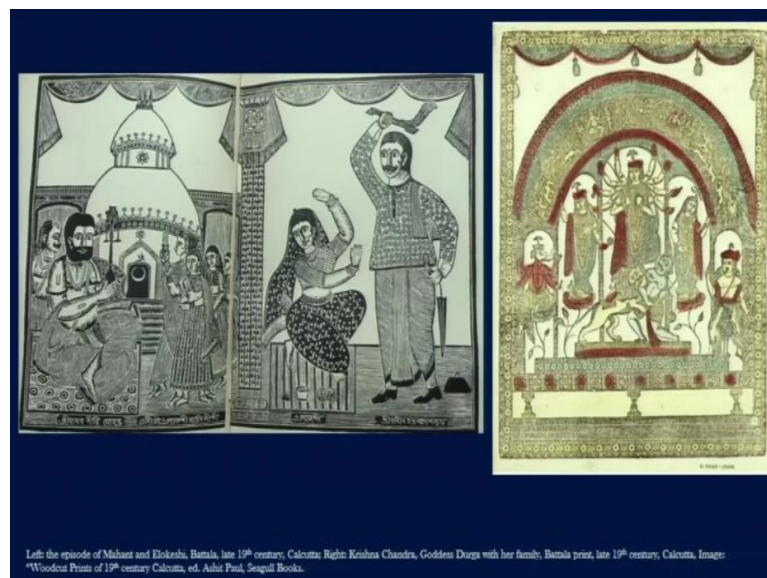
very bad and it is mill made cheaply available paper and that is the reason sometimes we find the stencils do not really stay within the contour lines of the areas.

And sometimes we also see smudging, some time we also see how the colour spreads, for example here, this area it seems to be some of the colour is unnecessary. So those things would happen and they also add to this particular kind of aesthetics of the Battala prints which is essentially meant for a mass. So, this is something that we can think about how this specific kind of making the images.

The printing technology, application of colour, their difference that who is making it, either they are made by the colonial administrators or this botanist and so on, so what kind of care they put into making these images. And when it comes in terms of the indigenous printers or the engravers, someone who is making these images for the general audience in the city of Calcutta how their approach will be very different from the Europeans.

And still there are some kinds of exchange in terms of the technique and then the material those are going on between the indigenous printers and the European printers and of course the engravers.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:51)



So, there are more of these Battala images here one can see and as I have already mentioned that there are some of the episodes those were very popular in 19th century Calcutta. And one of the episodes would be this particular story about Elokeshi and Mohanta. Mohanta is the head

priest in this temple of Tarakeswar which is dedicated to Lord Shiva and then Elokeshi is this married woman who would visit this temple and eventually these two would fall for each other.

And then since like a Mohanta of a temple is not supposed to be indulging himself into this and then that became a social scandal and eventually the husband of Elokeshi that is Nobin. He kills Elokeshi and here we see in this particular scene where Nobin has raised this, it is a vegetable chopper, to decapitate the head of Elokeshi and Elokeshi dies there. And then Nobin eventually also kills Mohanta.

And this one was a scandal in 19th century Calcutta and that is something that we can see that how these themes were widely appreciated. And as I have already mentioned the Battala prints were made for mass consumption and this kind of popular stories were made into these prints and they were sold widely. So, in this one we can see that how this Mohanta Elokeshi this particular story and different episodes of the story was made into these different prints.

So far here we see how this is there almost this pillar in the middle that sort of makes a division between the earlier part of the story and later half of the story. And we can also see that this typical chala type Bengali temple, the architecture of the Bengali temple is also something that is shown here to give specificity to this story. And then we also see how the curtain is shown here, featured.

That I have already mentioned the suggestion was the theatrical practices in northern Calcutta that was also shown here. And on the right side of the screen, we have image of the very celebrated family of Devi Durga and in this one as well we see that how this elaborately made wood engraving that is printed onto this paper and then how the stencil is used for adding colours to them.

So, these kinds of prints would be used as souvenir items and people who would visit to Calcutta and particular religious sites, so they would probably collect them and they can take them to their homes and have them on their walls, so something that we do today with the calendars, these are the early versions of those kinds of practices we can think about today in the 19th century. So, we will continue more on these different kinds of printing practices, both indigenous and the European interventions, in the next lectures. Thank you.