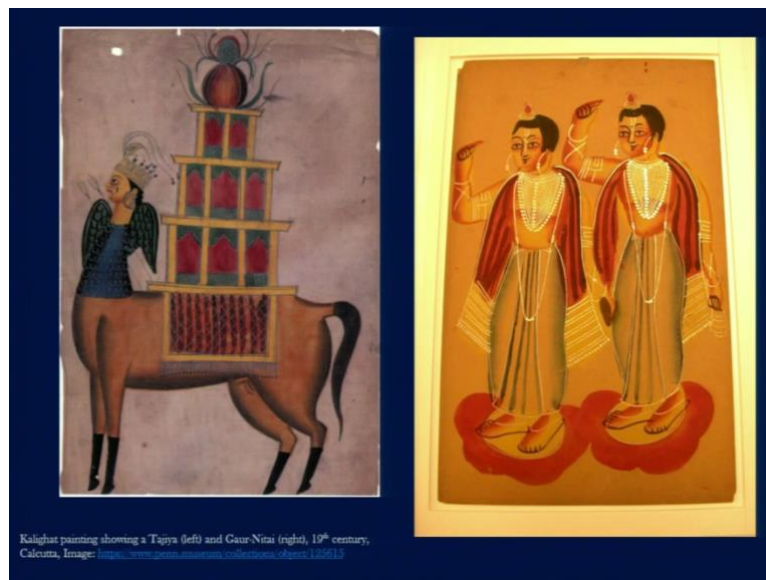


Indian Art: Materials, Techniques and Artistic Practices
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Lecture – 43
Colonial Media - Part 2

Hello, everyone. I am Rajarshi Sengupta and we are continuing our discussion on the new Colonial media. So, we have already started talking about the Kalighat paintings and this use of British watercolour on this mill made newsprint paper and what different kind of visual presence it yells for this newness.

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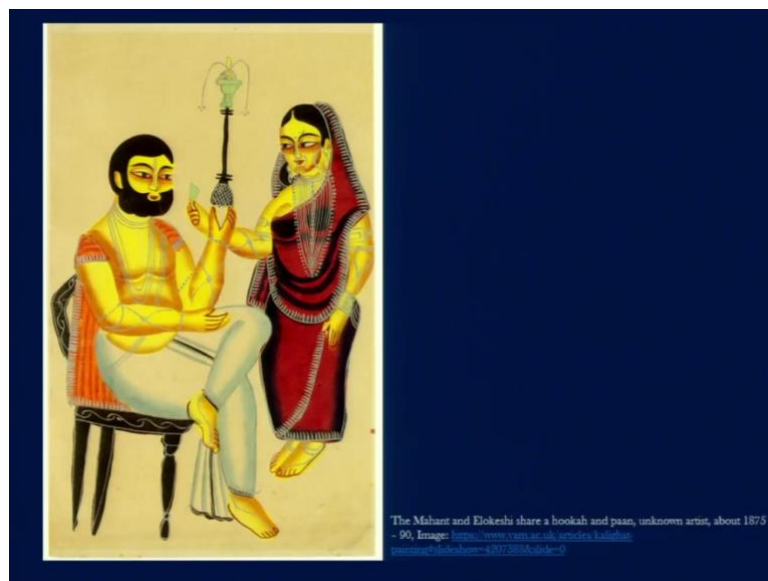
So, what we have on screen? There are two different themes and in the Kalighat paintings what we have that? I mean predominantly there are the devotional themes we find but it is not necessarily that those are all Hindu devotional themes. So, for example, here in the left side of the screen, we see a Tajiyah and that is this elaborately decorated, portable tableaux which are taken out during the Muharram procession.

And then here we have this image of a Burak this composite, human and animal form and on the top of that we have this architectural form here which is a symbolic representation of the like the murders of Karbala. So, this is something that we find that I mean in the Kalighat paintings it is this kind of images can either be used as souvenir items. It can also be used for devotion, for keeping them at home and for whatever religious purposes.

Now, the other image that we have on the other side of the screen there, we see Gaur-Nitai. This two celebrated Vaishnavi Saints from early modern Bengal and then they have played a very important role in the spread of Vaishnavism in Bengal. So, there are certain themes that those are very specific to the Bengali speaking people or this region and then how we also see that?

I mean that there are themes which might also go beyond this particular regional like the forms of devotion.

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So, this is another example of the Kalighat painting and this is perhaps this is made in the late 19th century around 1875 and here we see this episode of Mahant and Elokeshi. So, we have already discussed this scandal of the 19th century Bengal that is about Mahant and Elokeshi. And here we see how these two figures are painted, into by the Kalighat painters. So, here what we have that?

I mean this image is perhaps again we can see that there are like the additional Blobs of colour. And some of the places the lines will be extended out of the contour lines and then like I mean in parts of the places I mean in places, we also see how the colour of the body and the other attire? They would also extend beyond the contour lines of the body. However, so those kind of swiftness we find in this one.

But we can also see how this image is much more refined from some of the other images. That we have seen earlier. Now, in this one, we also see this particular tendency of giving

modulation to the body and that is the reason, how this; bodies they look round in shape. Now, this modulation of the body, people have also suggested that how the idol makers? Who were well versed in making the 3D models or the idols of the gods and goddesses?

So that is the reason they already had a tendency of making this. The 3D structures of the bodies and that is something that is reflected in the making of this figures as well where this 3D modulation is given and so, this is something that we that it is a possibility. However, one cannot deny that this kind of modulation is also something that had been possible because of the particular use of colour.

This watercolour made this kind of modulation possible of course, with the Artisans intervention. And as I have already mentioned that how this particular episode in the 19th century Calcutta had gained momentum and for all wrong reasons. So that is the reason this particular this theme was addressed by many people. The painters of Kalighat at the same time the print maker, the printers and wood block carvers of Botala and all of them have responded to the story of Mahant and Elokeshi.

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So, from there I will move on to the next segment of our discussion and that is to do with the oil painting. Now, if like when we spoke about the new colonial media for painting. So, in by that media, I have meant that one is the watercolour this British watercolour, it is characteristic feature why it was a very important one? And then what different kind of like the approaches it had presented?

Now, here we find that there is this other painting, medium that is oil painting and why oil painting was also something that is new. So in the Indian subcontinent we have images, I mean we have the images which are made in opaque watercolour but not really oil based colour. So, here for that reason, we find that after it is invention, oil painting had been profusely incorporated in artistic practices in various parts of Western and Northern Europe.

And then we see that how the oil painting had? Also had it is importance because of it is life like quality or certain things which are almost brought to life by the use of oil colours. So that is the reason this particular tendency of the colonial rulers and also the Western Europeans towards this evidence, like visuals. So, the oil painting definitely satisfies that and thus the reason we find that oil painting had it is importance for depiction of this kind of themes.

Now, this is one image that I mean it is not necessarily made by the Indian painters or not specifically, for like I mean for South Asia or the Indian subcontinent but this is an image which shows something it gives a message and does the reason I wanted to share this. Now, what do we have in this image? Say this image we see that it is almost like I mean the viewer can see that there is this seafaring that is happening there is this ocean.

And where is this ship at the center of this image and then in this oval frame in this there are two figures who are in conversation with each other. And this two figure one is Britannia and that is she is the symbol of Britain, so she is here. She is all white. She is also clad in this white drapery and with like white pearls and everything and then she sits on the cloud or on a high ground.

And then there is this lion which is the British lion representation of the British lion. And so, then she is in conversation with this very dark-skinned woman and the dark-skinned woman represents the East. So, this painting does not really specify that I mean whether by East it means like South Asia, Southeast Asia, Middle East or anything else but in general it is sort of like I mean, represent East and then what we see here is this woman?

This dark-skinned woman is she has her upper body uncovered and she only wears drapery in the lower part of her body, something that is also associated with being uncivilized and then this dark-skinned woman willingly gives all her riches to Britannia. So, we see that I mean the

dark-skinned woman she holds this plate full of riches. So, there we see like the ornaments and different kind of pearls and like the precious jewels and everything.

And she gives them or like recommend she willingly offers them to Britannia almost in a form that she knows that if those things are given to Britannia. Then she will be safe or all those things will be in safe hand. So, this image if we see this image, if we see all the anatomical details of this central character, all the other characters around them. And then also like the way this, the sea has been shown the way the clouds in the sky.

They have been shown, they have the lifelike quality and oil painting also contributes to that. It adds to this lifelike quality and this super modulation of the skin and anatomy. All those things can be done. So that is how what happens is that? We see that how this almost looks like an image which is believable or something that actually took place in reality. So now, we also have like I mean so in other words, I can say that what we see here is this?

This constructed reality through which a message, a very important message, is conveyed that the British colonizers they did not take over the various parts of Asia or the so, called East. But the people there they willingly offered their land and the riches to the British to the colonizers because they know that is the only way to be civilized. That is the only way they will have protection and safety and everything else.

So, why this medium of oil painting here is very important? Is this is a constructed reality and the colonizers know about it but an image like that which takes minute references from the study of the anatomy from all the other different kind of details setting up this stage like form and having this entire scene being performed So, this things add to constructing this imagined reality.

And that is something that I mean that at also added to their justification of taking over the lands of various parts of Asia, parts of Africa and so on. So, this is the reason, as I have said that I mean the oil painting has that lifelike quality and this image is made in 1778 that is in the late 18th century, much before the advent of photography. So, this kind of make-believe images can be used to show the people that what the reality is?

Whereas we all know that this is a constructed reality. This is not the actual reality but the language of the painting, this visual language makes it believable makes it very close to the life.

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So, taking this thing, we also see that there are certain, the European painters they have travelled. So, for example, we see like the William and Thomas Daniel. So, they are the ones and then like also another painter would be Tilly Kettle. So, there are many of those painters who would be travelling with the colonial administrators and sometimes they have worked for the East India company sometimes we also see that after their performance.

Some of the princely states would invite them to have their European style portraits painted. So that kind of activity we would find and then this particular image that we see even though this is painted as in watercolour and it is actually an unknown painter who had painted it. But what is interesting in this image? Is this we find that the painter Tilly Kettle is caught in the process of painting this particular image

So, what we see here is? That Tilly Kettle is seated here in the can with this canvas and then he is painting this image of Shuja ud-Daula. So, Shuja ud-Daula was this ruler of Avadh or Lucknow. And then he if this is an image that we find that in the early 19th century. So, in the early 19th century, as we know that Tilly Kettle had arrived in this Avadi court and then he also made a portrait of Shuja ud-Daula. But what we have here in this image? Is this the making of that painting?

So, this image what we have that Shuja ud-Daula with his ten sons and then also like I mean we have the architectural reference of the palace complex there. Now, we also see that I mean in this particular image that how that the painter that is presumably Tilly Kettle and he does not look to the image to the canvas he is painting. But he sort of like I mean looks to the viewers almost like I mean as a conscious gesture that he is attesting his own identity into this image.

Now, the thing is that I mean this image had also been discussed by art historian Natasha Eaton and she had looked into the mimetic qualities of this image. And we know that I mean how this kind of like I mean the images of the portraits of the colonial rulers that started this large-scale oil painting portraits they started being used as gifts. So, how the rulers would give those painted portraits of themselves to the other people?

And then those images would stay in this different palaces or in this offices as a symbolic presence of this particular those influential figures. So, in a way those oil painted portraits became a kind of a presence in their absence. So that is how like I mean the paintings, even though those were given as gifts they had this high political value and that is the reason the mimetic the power in this images are something that goes beyond it is visual appreciation.

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So, in those grounds we find that I mean the Indian the princely states, the Elites from the Indian princely States the Royals. They also started commissioning this kind of portraits and in the fashion of the European rulers and the administrators and there is one example of that. So, here we have another portrait made by Tilly Kettle and this is Muhammad Ali Khan and he was the Nawab of Arcot in TamilNadu.

So, this is also an image which was painted in the 1770s so late, 18th century. And in these lives it is a large scale portrait painting and in this one what we find that? The Nawab he stands in this open, perhaps in an open terrace like space, where the light falls on him and then this image is also sort of framed by this thick pillar and there is this curtain which is drawn. So, this drawn curtain something that is a motif and that is something that I have already discussed in the earlier lecture.

That how that was also a colonial strategy we find? That is employed in painting the portraits so that the similar kind of thing we would find in many of the portraits which were produced in the 18th and 19th centuries. So, this drawn curtain and the a dark column like this that would almost most like I mean suggest that the curtain is now drawn. And then the viewers have an access to the world through this window.

So, the window is the painting and then like the curtains are drawn and then one can have access to this like I mean to this world there. And what we also see here? Is this how this particular image of Muhammad Ali Khan is painted? And then usually the sitters like I mean this Royals would stand there or would give them multiple sitting for painting these portraits. And here we find that I mean all the details of the images have been executed.

So, for example, we have how the surface of the fabric is like this? This white Jama is made differently from this velvet jacket. And then also like I mean how this is also different from the pearls or like I mean the other jewels or the sword that he holds in his hand. So, oil painting that gives this opportunity to experiment with this different kind of surface making and since this is a painting technique which is done in layers.

So, a different kind of like I mean this kind of surfaces can be built over time and like if there are mistakes, if there are things that need to be changed that can also be done which is not possible in the watercolour technique.

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This is another image by Tilly Kettle and what we have? That I mean sometimes as I have already mentioned that this images would serve as a documentation of important historical events, political relations and of course, the portraits of this important figures. So, in this image, what we find here? Is this how this particular event is unfolding? Now, this is something that was in this one we find the Teshu Lama and he is giving the he is addressing the people here.

Now, this is perhaps the first audience of the first British Embassy in to Tibet. So and that happened in around in the 1770s. So, when it happened? The Tilly Kettle himself was not presented there I mean he was not present there. Then he heard this in the description of the entire event from George Bogle and then George Bogle, we can see him as like I mean we see him in this image, he is stood here. So, he is like I mean clad in this. in this Tibetan costume.

But like I mean we can also mark him to be different from the other figures that we have around. So, what we have here? Is this first audience of the first British Embassy to Tibet in the 1770s? And during this time we see that Teshu Lama and he sitted here in this like I mean in the seat and then there are this Thangka's which are displayed onto the wall and then again there is this window in the background through which then the curtains are drawn.

So that one can see parts of the mountain as well as like I mean this historic Palace Complex in Lhasa. So, what we have here in this image? Is that again that is supposed to show the reality and the it is supposed to stand as this evidential document of the first audience of the first British Embassy to Tibet. However, as I have already mentioned that I mean the painter himself was not present.

I mean there but then like he had heard the entire description of this place from George Bogle who's present in this image. And then it kind of like I mean through that station of George Bogle one can the authenticity of this image was established. So, in a way that I mean even though these images are considered as the evidential proof but there are all these layers involved that the painter was not present there.

But still like I mean how through George Bogle the authenticity of this painting was established. Now, by that what I mean is that? I mean this authenticity of the painting is also established by the language of oil painting because if oil painting is this particular medium of expression was not employed if this particular image was like I mean made in like the Kalighat paintings.

Then it might have created a very different kind of reaction from the audience like up in the sketch like image or a hand-drawn image would always yield a very different kind of response from the audience than what happens? When we have this carefully constructed in oil painting so, those are the kind of things that make the oil painting different from many other forms of expression.

That also like I mean as I have mentioned that I mean that adds to the like the believability of this kind of images and how that is also used for constructing reality? And not saying representing reality but they construct reality. The other important part of the oil painting technique that we find that in most cases when we are talking about watercolour, we keep the paper on the horizontal level and then we paint on to it.

And since there are water-based ink that can drip and that is the reason like I mean usually that is kept on the horizontal level or slightly in this diagonal level and then it is painted. However, what happens in the oil painting? We find that easel is used. So, for example, in this image we have the part of the wooden easel that is there and that sort of like I mean supports the canvas.

And the canvas is unlike the paper canvas is something that is placed almost vertically in front of the artist and the artist can paint onto that. So, this is a very different approach from how the paintings are made? So, as opposed to like how the horizontally we do the painting and here

we do it vertically? And that is also some one of the reason in which we find that I mean when the sitters are there we see them like I mean in front of us.

And then there is a canvas which is also placed vertically. So, how like I mean the sitter or the object which we the painters, try to paint that is then exactly replicated onto the canvas or at least like I mean that is what it is claimed. So, these are the reasons like I mean the technique of making this painting become very different. It is a new kind of intervention into the existing visual culture in the Indian subcontinent.

And that is the reason what we find that? I mean during this time period the wealthy in Indians like the Royals. They would prefer to have their portraits painted. And it is not just the Royals in the later times, we also find like the Zamindars and then like I mean the important traders and so on. They would also commission this kind of images to be made. Now that said, we also find that I mean how that also made a way for like I mean training.

The next generation of painters would not always be from the European background but from the South Asian background will get more into that in the next lecture. Thank you.