

## Threads of Visual Exploration: Textiles and Allied Practices

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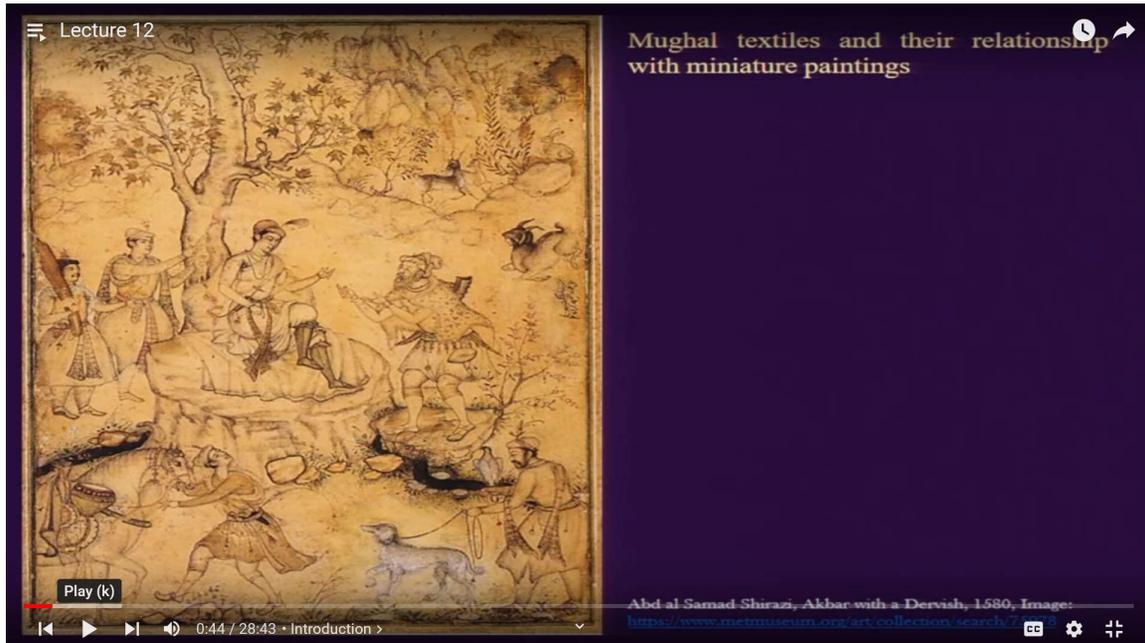
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Week - 03

Lecture – 12

Hello everyone, this is Rajarshi Sengupta and we are in the week 2 of discussing Mughal paintings and Mughal textiles. So, in we as we have sort of like I mean prepared the stage for discussing that I mean what kind of like I mean interrelations we are talking about the Mughal textiles as well as like I mean the miniature paintings.

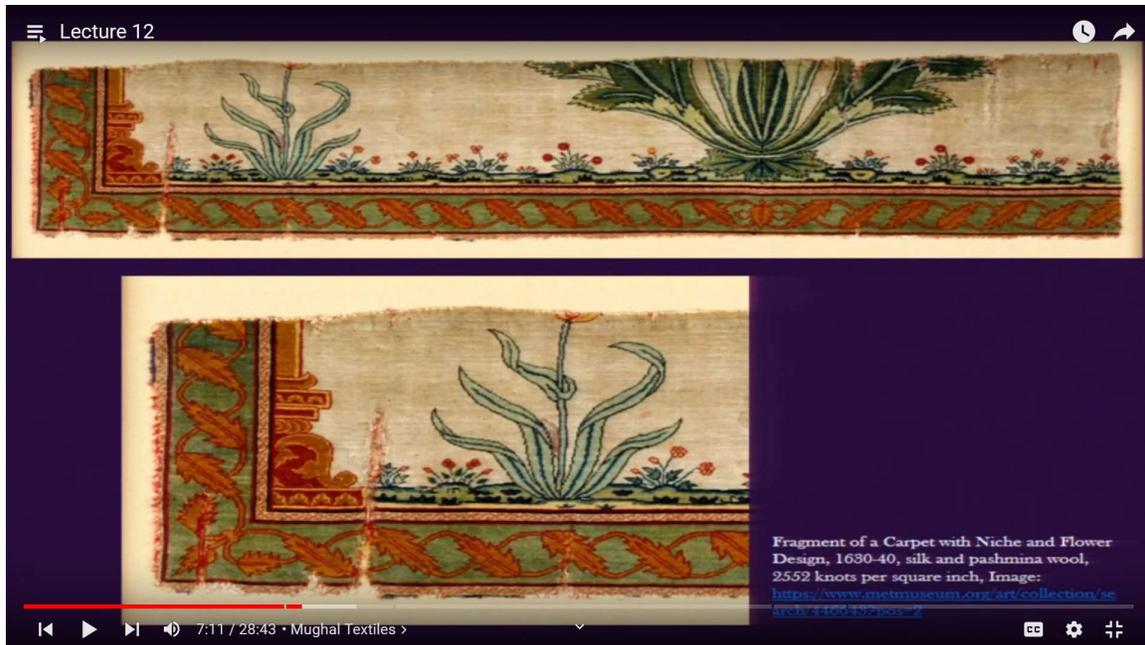


So, here what ... we will try to understand that I mean what was going on for making the Mughal miniature paintings that gives its very distinctive sort of character. So, during Humayun's (I mean during the second Mughal emperor, son of emperor Babur) time period we find that I mean when Humayun was in part of Kabul, Kandahar and then like I mean also in Middle East when he was there. So, during this time we find that I mean he had come in contact with a number of calligraphers and miniature painters and artists. So, for example, we will find that Abd al Samad Shirazi from Shirazi and then like also another artist will find that I mean that is Aqa Riza al Haravi from of course like I mean both of

them are from Iran and we will see them that I mean how during when.... Humayun came back to India and then defeated Sikandar Shah and then sort of reinstated the Mughal rule in the northern Indian plains. So, during this time we find that I mean how this two prolific artists Abd al Samad Shirazi and Aqa Riza al Haravi were invited to the Mughal court and then they were not just there responsible for doing this miniature paintings but then they also became responsible for teaching and supervising the entire atelier. Will find them that I mean how there were many other miniature artists who will be trained under their supervision and then of course we will find that I mean how there are many other miniature painters who will be there either they were invited by the royals or they would arrive there in search of job or livelihood and then like I mean people from part of Middle East from various parts of northern India and so on all of them would gather in this miniature making workshops.

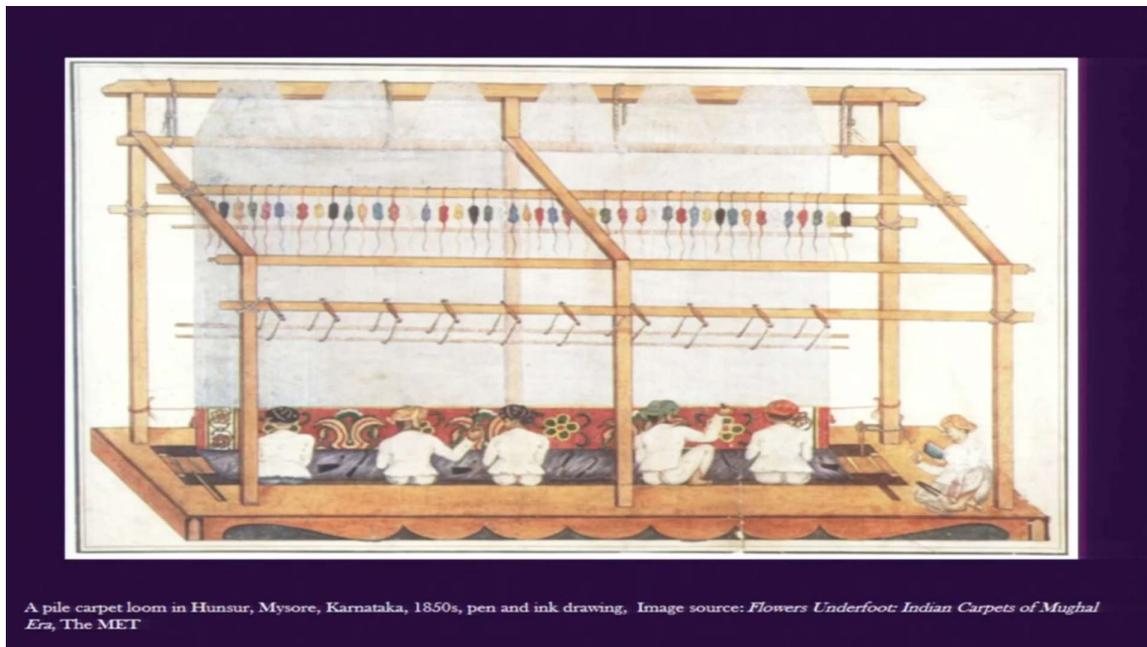
So, this is one of these images by Abd al Samad Shirazi and this is actually one of the later drawings of Shirazi and in which we find that I mean how this one was perhaps like I mean it was much more sort of different and refined from like I mean some of his early works that we find and then some of the early works that had this distinctive the Persian character that we have there and in the later works we find that I mean perhaps with the interaction with the indigenous miniature artist we find that the figuration and then like I mean the use of line and shading and gradation and everything else they have become much more different which are more close to the kind of the language of Mughal miniatures that we can sort of associate with. So, in this case what happens that I mean when we see this particular painting there is also a meeting of two different kinds and it's something if we are thinking in terms of like this idea of cosmopolitanism that how in one of those workshops or like I mean this Mughal Karkhanas in perhaps in Delhi or in Agra or in Fatehpur Sikri we have that people from various different places. So, it's not just like that kind of cosmopolitanism we are talking about and it's not just like that kind of meeting we are talking about but then people like Akbar we find that in this image we see this young Akbar is seated on beneath a tree this Chinar tree that we find it's a very characteristic tree that we find in Kashmir and part of Himalayas and then ... underneath this tree we see that Akbar is seated there and then he is rested on a huge bolster and then there is also a fabric

which is there underneath him. So, he is seen here as this royal figure and then there is a Dervish who we find to be here prominently out of like I mean asking either alms or some kind of engaging in some kind of a conversation with Emperor Akbar. So, in this case what we find that this is a way of showing that how the royalty and the divinity or like I mean the how the royalty and Dervishes or like I mean the people who are on the spiritual path they kind of meet and this is also a theme that we find that to be much sort of emphasized in the .... Persian miniatures as well as in some of the miniature paintings in the Mughal context in which we find that Akbar was certainly someone who was self-fashioning himself as this religious authority during his rule. He was not just trying to sort of claim himself as this supreme political authority of the Mughal sort of the dynasty but he was also sort of proclaiming himself as this religious authority by sort of establishing this new way of living that is Din-i-Ilahi. And so in this cases we find that in this painting as well if we are thinking in terms of like meeting of different elements here we find that there are meeting of there is meeting of like I mean different kind of lifestyles, there are there is meeting of like I mean different people from different sort of like walks of life and also like I mean from the different sectors of the society and then also that I mean what does that mean like I mean bringing like the materiality and spirituality together and something we find that I mean it was also ingrained in the culture of the Mughal Emperor such as Akbar and Jahangir very much. So, with those aspects in mind we can think that I mean when we say that the cultural cosmopolitanism or like I mean coexistence of different ideas it is not just there that I mean one idea is borrowed from one place and another idea is sort of like I mean imbibed from some other resources and then they are clubbed together. But we are also talking in terms of like I mean some of those metaphors some of those metaphysical sort of experiences and how those can be like I mean brought together in the visual representations. So, from looking at all of those visual representations what we see that I mean and then considering all those peculiarities then let us come back to the Mughal textiles and then we see that I mean what is there as significant in terms of like I mean this Mughal textiles so or the textiles which were produced during the Mughal era.



Now this is a fragment of a carpet that shows niche and then like I mean the flower designs and it came from again like I mean the early half of 17th century 1630 to 1640 and in this one we have like I mean this carpet. So, carpet is something that I mean we find that to be prominently made and then also that is something that we find that to be very much in use during the Mughal period and it was also something that came from like I mean with the Central Asian customs. I mean of course there was use of carpets beforehand as well but then like particular kind of making of these carpets was something that was excelled during this time period. In this carpet what we find that I mean there are this the technical complexity that reached its zenith during this time period and then there is also very much a careful choice of material that we find that to be there in this carpets. That where to use cotton, where to use silk, where to use this fine pashmina wool. So, those kind of choices we find that to be there which also like I mean the kind of visuals we find on those carpets responsible for. So, the kind of material, the technicalities and then like I mean of course in terms of like execution of the visuals all of them are intertwined in this way. Now in this one what we also find that I mean why do we sort of consider this kind of textiles to be much more finer compared to the other sorts. And in this is one of the finest of the Mughal carpets even though it is in the form of a fragment but one of the finest what we consider is because like I mean the fineness of the carpets is also sort of decided by how many knots would be there in the one square inch and for this particular carpet that we have on screen

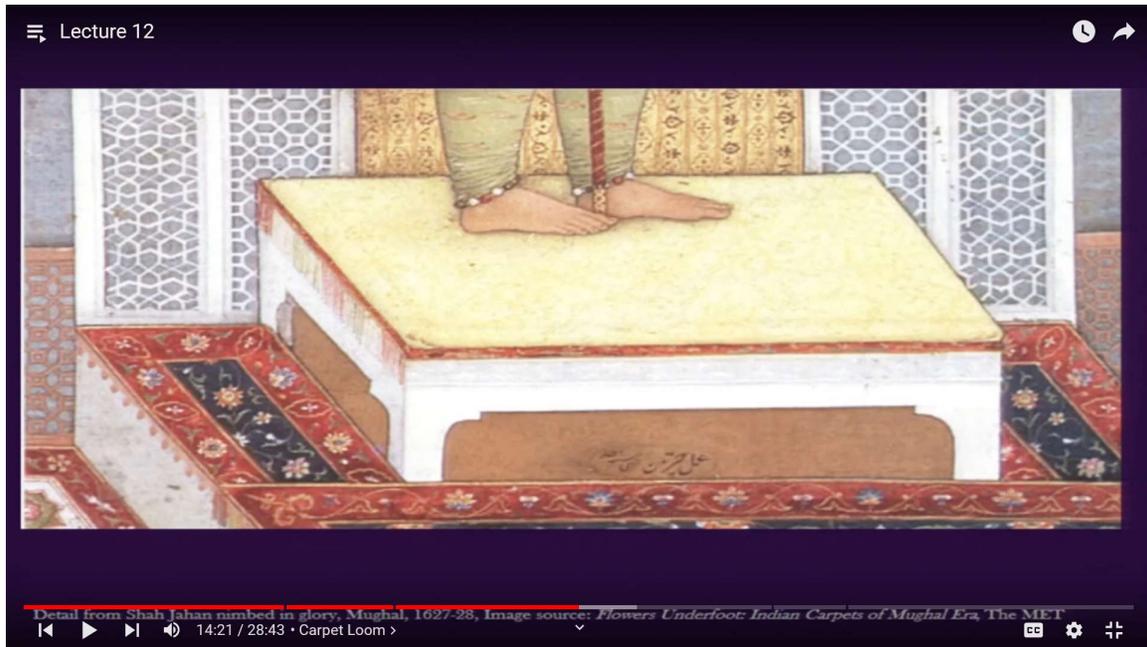
it almost has 2250 knots within one square inch and that's something that makes it highly complex and intricate. And for that reason, since we have this many knots within like one square inch for that reason, we have the precision of the design that we can see it here. We will come back to like this precision of the design but this is something that I wanted to just introduce first and then sort of move on to the rest of it.



Now this is an image I mean of course this comes much later and this is also not ... definitely from the northern Indian plains this is from Mysore, actually from Hunsur so this is a pile carpet loom that we find in the 1850s. Why I wanted to show this image is because just to show that what kind of organization we are talking about when we say carpet weaving. So, in this case what we see that I mean in the earlier modules we have sort of looked into the kind of making of the textiles which are on the horizontal plane even though in the draw loom we definitely see that I mean there is a draw person or a draw boy who would be like I mean lifting the threads and sort of like I mean allowing the weft thread to sort of get through it and that is how like I mean the complex designs are sort of produced. But then all of those were there on a horizontal loom always. Now for a carpet loom for a tapestry loom what we find that I mean there are the I mean it is actually on a vertical setting. So, we have the entire loom structure that we have on this image in which this huge wooden posts are there and then of course like I mean how the wooden posts are then like

connected with the bars and then in the entire loom setup we find that I mean it sort of makes provision for multiple people to sit and work there together and this is also we can imagine that when we talk about carpet or a floor spread we are talking about something which would cover a large part of the floor. So, this is not something we can imagine which would be possible to make within a loom which is this the width of it is limited. So, we need something for that in which like I mean the width will be much more bigger than the ones we have in the draw looms or the pit looms or the backstrap looms. So, in this case what happens we find that there is the warp thread the weft thread and on the top of that we have the knots which are sort of like I mean made on this pile carpet. So, for piling we find that usually wool is preferred in the Mughal context. So, all the colors that we find all the different kinds of like patterns and everything we find mostly those are made in wool and if those are like the finer qualities of those carpets we find that those very expensive pashmina wool is then used there. And in this image we also find that I mean how there are all those the yarns we can find that to be there like I mean sort of like hanging on the top of this bar I mean from this bar. ...then all those yarns will be like I mean sort of the connecting threads will be there and then the weavers they would be like I mean using them to sort of make the knots and then cut them there and then again make a knot. So, in the arrangement of those warps. So, this is how we find that how this carpet weaving sort of like I mean continues and in this case what we also see that I mean today in the present day we have like I mean some of the areas where like this kind of pile carpet weaving is continued one of the prominent places will be Bhadohi in Uttar Pradesh which is not that far from Agra. ... then in there we also have like I mean many of the carpet weavers who would be like I mean continuing this kind of this similar kind of process completely hand woven and process of like I mean making this pile carpets. Then in this context we also find that I mean there are other kinds of textiles. So, for example this very complex velvet textiles and even though like I mean in velvet also this piling technique is used but then velvet is not really made in a vertical loom but it is made in a draw loom, in complex draw loom in which like I mean there are multiple warps are used and then velvet is a kind of a this warp pile weave that it sort of like I mean incorporates in that it is technically it is very different from how like the carpet weaving sort of happens. So, with those things if we understand that I mean this carpet loom that has this vertical orientation and whereas like

draw loom, pit loom and all of them they have the horizontal orientation so with those we can keep them in mind and then when we sort of like I mean compare some of the other visual records with them we can sort of like I mean think through that.



So, this is also something we find that I mean during this time we have like I mean the visual representations of this minutely made carpets. So, for example this is a detail from this particular painting which was represented Shah Jahan. .... in this one we have like I mean a number of these carpets which are there sort of adorning the floor. Whereas we in the background we have this lattice work like I mean this jolly work in on marble and of course also in the sandstone here. So, this different kind of like I mean this ornamentation and also like I mean the how all those precision that is there on stone as well as on the carpet and so on all of them they sort of come together in this visual representation it is a good example of that. Now for the Mughal rugs we find that I mean during the one of the most significant exhibitions which displayed large number of Mughal rugs or like this fragments was in 1997 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York which was called Flowers Underfoot Indian Carpets on Mughal Era. So, that particular exhibition which also marked the 50th year of Indian independence from 1947 so that exhibition was one of the most significant exhibitions that we find that it sort of hold a large quantity of Mughal this carpets in under one roof. So, we also find that I mean when this carpet weaving was sort

of like I mean it was encouraged it was not just something that was patronized by the court but I mean some of the emperors the Mughal emperors they also had much interest in particularly in carpet weaving in velvet making and things like that. So, we find that I mean particularly that Emperor Akbar had much interest in carpet making and his biographer Abul Fazal had also mentioned that I mean Akbar's inclination towards making or like I mean to know more about like I mean carpet. And then what we find that I mean when there are certain like I mean descriptions about the city of Fatehpur Sikri and Agra and then how the bazaar area or like I mean the different kind of workshops were sort of set up around the royal enclosure or like I mean close to the royal enclosure we find that different kinds of workshops those are also mentioned by Abul Fazal and other biographers that I mean they have mentioned that I mean how the different kind of workshops of tapestry making, carpet weaving, curtain making. So, curtain making would also entail like different kind of Rafugari and tailoring and then also like I mean goldsmiths work and those kind of like I mean things would be there side by side all different kind of workshops this all different kinds of artisanal workshops will be there very close to the royal enclosure.

Now very interestingly, we also find that I mean the making or manufacturing of arms like I mean the arms guns and like I mean swords and things like that which would be predominantly made with metals would also be there side by side with this kind of workshops. So, we do not really find that I mean there is a stark differentiation between something that is used in the interior setting like carpet or this delicate textiles and then something that is used in warfare or for security reasons like gun or like different kinds of arms. So, these things were all sort of like I mean continued side by side we can also see the kind of like I mean the divisions that we make today in terms of like I mean what is more suited for the interior space or like I mean what is there for like the military use or the army use. So, those kind of divisions we do not really find that to be there that prominent in terms of like I mean when we are considering this early modern workshops. Now adding to that we also find that Abd al Samad Shirazi was also made the director of the Royal Mint in Agra. So, even though we find that I mean he was primarily an artist, a calligrapher, a supervisor and a teacher we find that I mean how Akbar was very much impressed by his work and then eventually he made him the director of the Royal Mint in

Agra. It is something that we also find that I mean how the artists were given roles which are much more sort of politically important and active role. However, there is no such division that what the artist can do and what the people who are prominently there in the political positions can do. So, there were much more of those fluid exchanges or like those juxtapositions were very different from the way we understand them today.



So, from there what we also see that I mean there are many this carpets and things like that they are mentioned in this in the Mughal records and one of the things we will also find that to be there is this how the Mughal records, the reports and so on. They would have like I mean particular records on the market price of particular yarn or like I mean the goods and that sort of like I mean gives us a sense of like I mean if something that is imported from somewhere else then what kind of cost we are talking about and then like I mean what is their value not only just the economic value but social value, cultural value and things like that. So, we see those different kind of things when we sort of consider these records and one of the records that also mentioned this particular this devastating fire in one of this wire house spaces of Fatehpur Sikri in 1579 and in which like I mean a lot of these textiles were gutted in fire and so for that sort of like I mean also gives us a sense about like I mean how much of this precious textiles which were not just made and sort of like I mean manufactured in and around Agra and Fatehpur Sikri but also brought from different parts

of the subcontinent and then they were kept in this warehouse and after this devastating fire what kind of loss they have encountered and that also gives us a sense about like this large variation, diversity of textiles which reached the Mughal court or this Mughal warehouses. So, this kind of different information that also help us to understand that I mean if we are thinking in terms of cosmopolitanism in relation to trade, material and so on then the reach of the cosmopolitanism is until what. Now continuing on the discussion we can also see that I mean what all different kind of materials are used and whether these materials also sort of make us think about this unique nature of cosmopolitanism in the Mughal court or not.

So, here I just wanted to focus on one of these aspects of the materials those are used for carpet making and that is the dyes. So, for example we have the silk or the wool yarn which is used for the pile carpet making. So, we find that I mean mostly wool is used for making this pile carpets in the Mughal context in northern India. However, in the Deccan and so on we also find that how silk yarn is used for making the carpets. Now this wool and wool yarn as I have already mentioned in the earlier module that how wool is this protein fiber which is much more easier to dye than compared to like I mean cotton yarn. But then what happens is that in this carpets or like I mean any of those other fabrics we find that there is a tremendous diversity of color that we have and if you are thinking in terms of like 16th or 17th century we can imagine that all those colors were obtained from natural dyes. So, what kind of like I mean color we are talking about and then if we are also thinking in terms of like I mean imported yarn or like I mean imported goods from one place to another then what all differences we can see it there.

So, for example in South Asia in the Indian subcontinent we have different kinds of madder that is used there for obtaining the shades of red. .... the one that we have in the left side of the screen this image this one detail from a larger carpet in which the red background that we have there is much more kind of this earthy red and then also like I mean sort of like this blood red background that we have here it is obtained from madder and some of the scholars they have also suggested that there might have been a combination of madder and lac together for a sort of like I mean tinting this yarn. Now lac is something that is traditionally used for dyeing wool and silk because the impact of lac is much more better

on protein fiber than on cotton fiber. I mean in general that I mean cotton or silage fiber is harder to dye but then for lac it is always I mean it gives its best results on silk and wool. Now if it is combined with madder then like I mean this kind of color it can yield. So, this is one of the examples and then like I mean the other example that we have on screen on the right side of the screen and in the red ground there that we find that to be it is much more sort of like this pinkish red I am not sure if it is much clear on the slide but I mean this pinkish red kind of this a bit more different from the earthy red that we are talking about in the South Asian context is something that we find that to have obtained from using cochineal and in the Mughal context we find that either this pinkish red this bright pink pinkish red yarns were imported from Iran or like I mean this Iranian carpets like this one that we have on the right side of the screen it is a Iranian carpet from 16th century is a gigantic huge carpet and it is intact. So, this carpet that we find that to have extensive use of cochineal and cochineal is something that is not a dye stuff that that is obtained from a vegetable sources or from plant but it actually comes from a particular insect.

So, what we see here is that I mean this different kinds of dyes and if we sort of pay attention to the details we can see that I mean this particular kind of colors certain colors are achieved in the South Asian context and then certain colors were preferred or achieved in Iranian context and this two things they also stand somewhat like I mean side by side. ... if we pay attention to them we can also see that I mean how the difference in color also talks about that how they are also related to different geographical locations and then like I mean you bought this kind of textiles like I mean the textile that we have in the right side of the screen is not something that is found from the Mughal court but we can imagine that similar sort of textiles if they arrive in the Mughal court then one would be able to sort of tell that I mean if it is Iranian textile because of looking at this pinkish bright red and distinguishing that with the madder red that we have in the South Asian context. Now we also find that particular kinds of colors were much more sort of achievable in South Asia than in Middle East and that is the reason the kind of like I mean the variation of the yarns that we have if it is red then we are not just talking about one particular bright earthy red but then there are also sort of like I mean variations in red like I mean that can have like I mean much lighter tone in it. It can also be combined with other dyes for example like I mean pale yellow and so on and this combinations this all this permutation and combination

something we find that the in the South Asian context the dye had the dyeing processes have reached much complex sort of destination than compared to many other parts of the world. ... that is the reason what we find in this South Asian this carpets like for example the one we have on screen the left side it is from northern India perhaps from Lahore. There are various gradations of the same color that we can see there and there is the reason a soft modulation of the body in of this animals that we find that to be there is present which would probably not be the same way if we compare that to the Iranian counterpart. So, these are the different kind of like I mean aspects we find that as we have mentioned that the Mughal cosmopolitanism in which we have the similarities differences and this coexistence the different kind of elements they are sort of like I mean they are side by side all of those things we will be seeing them in this artifacts and we can compare like I mean textile with textile and textile with other artifacts and that is how like I mean the discussion can be much more enhanced.

We will continue this discussion much more in the next lectures. Thank you.