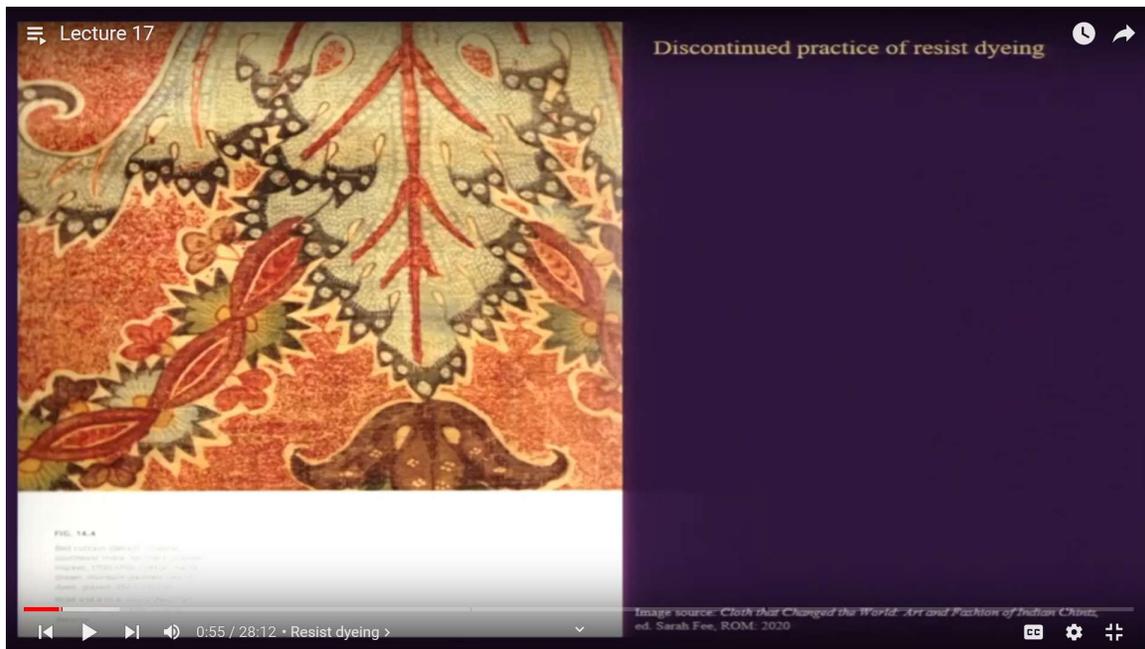


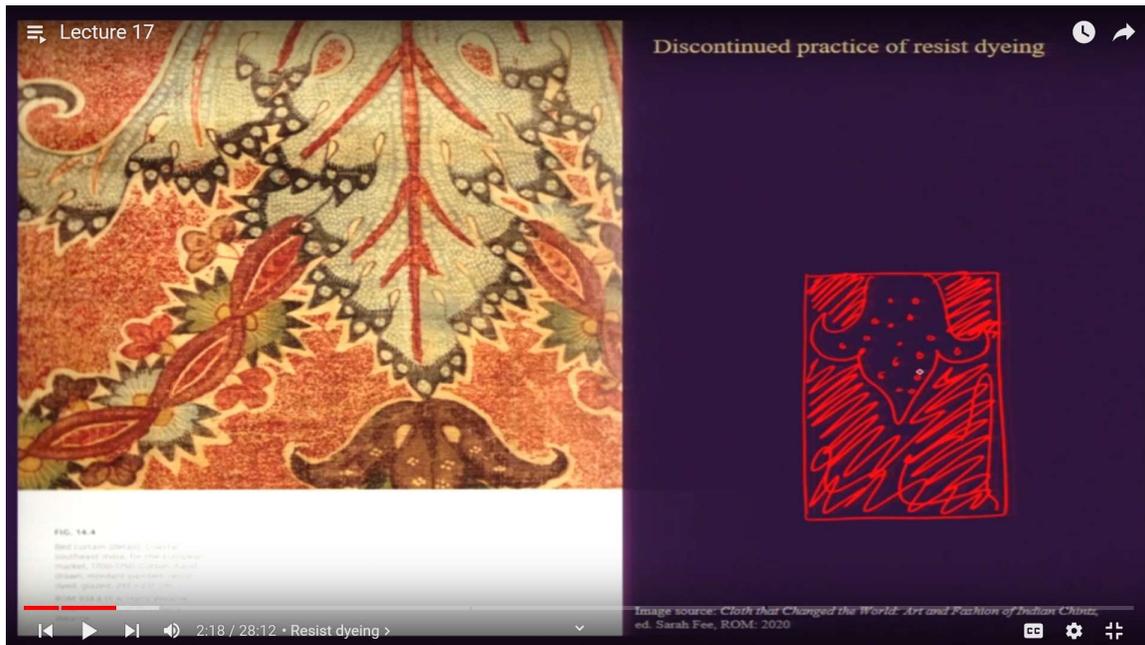
**Threads of Visual Exploration: Textiles and Allied Practices**  
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**Week - 04**  
**Lecture – 17**

This is Dr. Rajarshi Sengupta. We are continuing our discussion on Kalamkari and allied practices. So, as we have already started discussing the differences between painted and printed Kalamkari, we see that I mean how there are also other techniques which are involved in making these Kalamkari fabrics. So, there are particular kinds of textiles we see which need to be made in the printing technique; then there are particular kinds of textiles we find to be more suited to be made in the painting technique. (And) Then there is also the technique of resist dyeing.



Now, what is resist dyeing? So, in this case, what we see and the image that we have on screen and in this one, we see that there is this extensive use of indigo and this pale indigo that we have on this flower motif. In this one, we have, like, I mean, this pale indigo and, of course, like, I mean, one darker shade of indigo here in the edges of this flower. So, this one, what we see here is this is not really made directly with a pen, or it is not really sort of like, I mean, painted on the top of this textile. But in this case what happens, we see that

it is a reverse process that is used. So, for example, there is a particular kind of Kalam that would be used here for sort of, like, I mean, covering the rest of the area. So, for example, if we consider this to be the textile and this is the area that needs to have indigo, then all these other areas need to be covered with wax, and that is how wax resist drawing starts. And then with the molten wax, all the rest of the area is covered, and even here where in



within this blue surface wherever we see that there are those white dots, those dots are also something those are covered with wax, and that is how, like I mean these patterns are created in this textile surface. And then, it is dipped in the indigo vat. So, this is a very different technique from the other painting and printing because what happens, in this case, is that, I mean, you are submerging the entire textile in a vat, and there is a risk of, like, I mean, the other areas catching the colour as well. But still like, I mean, it needs to be done in this particular way because in indigo, one of the characteristics of indigo is that if you need an area that needs to have an even shade of blue that needs to be dipped, and it cannot be really drawn with hand. So, that is a reason what we see that I mean this kind of textiles they also employed this highly specialised skill of using this wax resist drawing, and that is how, like, I mean larger areas were covered with wax resist at the same time we find that I mean the smaller areas with these dots and everything those were also covered with wax and then it is dipped in the indigo dye.

This is another way of, like, I mean, doing this drawing technique that we see, and it also sort of like, I mean, comes hand in hand with the painting as well as the printing technique. So, for example, in many of these pieces in which ... this resist dyeing has been done ... we see that ... some of the elements were drawn (hand drawn). So, for example, in this case, we see that the edges of or like, I mean the contours of these floral motifs or the vegetal motifs are actually first hand drawn and then on the top of it mordant dyeing has been done, and then after the mordant dyeing then it is covered with wax, and it is dipped in the indigo solution for achieving the shades of blue in this piece. Now for printed textiles as well, we see that, I mean, if there is [a] requirement for these even shades of blue or like in particular cases where we find that, I mean, really dark shades of blue are required in those cases we also see that the printed textiles are also dipped in this vat dye (in indigo vat) and then that is how they have been dyed. So, these are some of the aspects we see for Kalamkari making when we sort of like, I mean and how this Kalamkari making is different from perhaps when we discuss the brocade making technique or a particular woven technique is that there are many different kinds of techniques which are all coming together to form this idea of Kalamkari. It is not really just one set of techniques, but historically, there have been many of these kinds of techniques like painting, printing, resist dyeing and also, there is this other process which we find that is called the discharge process. In which the surface is already dyed (with those are usually mordant dyed) and on the top of that a particular kind of acidic solution (So, for example, lemon juice and then things like oxalic acid) which is also obtained naturally [are used]. ... [they are used] on the top of this mordant dyed surface to take out the colour or, [as] I mean, to bleach those areas, and that is how motifs are created. So, in southern Coromandel, in this town of Pudukottai and in the neighbouring areas, we find that this kind of resist dyeing is something that had been continued for at least for, like, I mean, two or three centuries or so on. So, these are different kinds of techniques we find and all those techniques are sort of clubbed together under the term Kalamkari. We will come to this discussion that I mean why all these terms can I mean all these different kinds of practices can be termed as Kalamkari. So, before we get into the details of the process of making, we also need to see that I mean which are the places where this Kalamkari textile are produced and whether the place also has

significance in terms of how these textiles are made and how they contributed to the specificity of this textiles.



So, this is a map of the Coromandel region in the right side of the screen and in this one we see that in the Coromandel region there are three mighty rivers (I mean there are many rivers but then there are three prime rivers) which sort of like I mean mark the landscape of this Coromandel region as well as like I mean part of the Deccan. In this three mighty rivers would be one Godavari on northern Coromandel and then Krishna that is almost like the at the juncture of northern and southern Coromandel and then towards the south we find river Kaveri. So, all these three rivers and then the delta region of these rivers are something that we find to be very significant. In these regions we find that there are numerous criss-crossing of canals and those canals have been very important in terms of the dye making, washing and of course the like I mean the production of this dye painted and printed textiles. So, in this for this thing we one thing one can understand that I mean in these regions there is abundance of water then there is also like I mean abundance of particular kind of fuel which are used in making this kind of textiles. So, why is fuel used, that is because of the extensive amount of boiling that needs to be done for mordant printing. So, for those reasons, fuel is required, but it is not usually the wood. I mean, wood is not really used for many of this boiling activities, but we see that I mean how rice husk

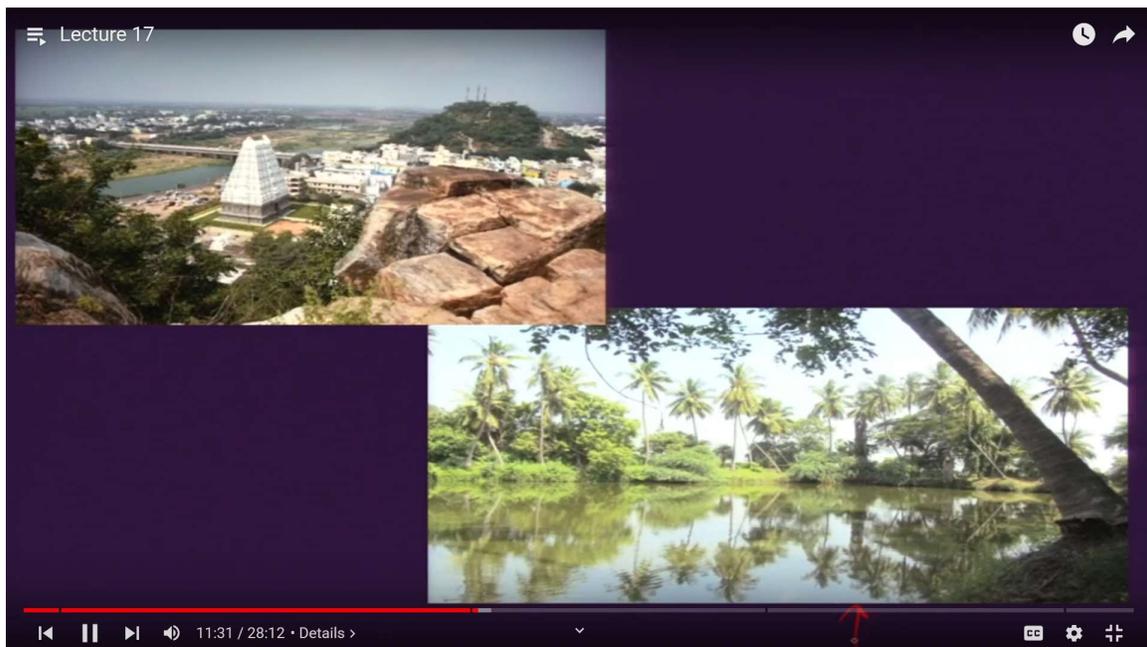
is something that is preferred in northern Coromandel and also like in the other regions. Mind it that I mean the entire Coromandel region that we see there is also characterized by hot and humid climate [and] are also mostly agriculturally rich. In all these places we find that the production of paddy and different other kinds of crops are been continued for longest period of time. So, for those reasons like I mean some of the residues of paddy production, like for example, the rice husk and all those things we see to be also used in the textile industry for boiling and so on. So, this kind of things we also see that I mean how certain kinds of agricultural practices that also support the artisanal practices in this regions. Apart from that we also see that how the its proximity to the sea is something that is also significant in terms of like I mean getting all the resources of water and everything else.

Now apart from the rivers and then like I mean the agricultural fields and then also like the available dye stuff and all those other things something that this its proximity to the sea enabled these places is this connection to the places which are not really within the Indian subcontinent. So, what we see here is that I mean this tremendous amount of the trade network, (I mean the tremendous amount of back and fro movement that we see in this region) and those would be spearheaded by the traders, ambassadors, seafarers and many other people and those would also contribute tremendously to the making of these kinds of textiles.

So, what happens in this case we see that how the Coromandel region (if we see it here in



this map in the left side that if this is the southern Indian peninsula and the Coromandel region and the Malabar region), we find that to be always like I mean associated with trade routes. And the trade routes which connected not only just part of like, I mean Indian subcontinent with like the Middle East or like with the part of Southeast Asia and so on. But also, like, I mean with eastern Asia, ... eastern African coast and so on. So, this is how we see that ... these extensive connections, they also enabled not only ... the traders to arrive here but also that we see how different kinds of images, different kinds of aesthetics also arrived in these workshops (these coastal workshops). That is how they enriched the production of Kalamkari. So, these are why as I have also mentioned it briefly in the earlier module that even when we are talking about trade networks and so on why trade networks are something that is very important in Kalamkari production is exactly because of that - its proximity to the sea has enabled certain kind of exchanges between the locals and the people who would arrive from other places and that tremendously sort of boosted the aesthetics as well as the spirit of making this Kalamkari textiles.



Now, getting into more details [on] these aspects, here so we see that I mean there are places like Polavaram (which is here on the right side of the screen) in which we see that I mean this lush green area (which would be very close to this historic port town of Machilipatnam) we find it there and this lush green area with all agricultural fields and canals and all those things around it we see that how that supported this particular kind of

dyeing activities and printing and of course the boiling activities. Mostly as the regions that we are looking at are warm and there is practically no winter in this region so there is a reason why we see that that I mean all over the year we have good sunlight and for dyeing activity like I mean sunlight is something that is very important. Now monsoon is the time we also find that I mean when the dyeing activity is usually it disrupts a bit and the dyers mostly also believe that, I mean, this drizzling rain or the rain that sort of, like I mean, stays for a prolonged period of time with no sign of the sun that does not really do well for dyeing. So it requires, like, I mean, this warm and humid climate and then, like, I mean, of course, that abundance of sunlight, so those things we find that to be there in this region which also supported the this textile making and dyeing and everything else.

Now the other thing we also see in this historic port town of Machilipatnam that since I have already mentioned that there were many of those trade routes which connected this area and we see that during this early modern period in the 16th and 17th century this region also like I mean the port of Machilipatnam was one of the most important ports on the south eastern Coromandel (south eastern coastline of India) and where like I mean this port site also worked as one of the prime port site for the Qutub-Shahi dynasty and so for that reason we find that through this port there were many kinds of trade goods which were either sent from the inland to the other places outside of the Indian subcontinent or things were brought to this port site, and then those were dispersed inland. So, apart from like the trade goods like different kind of artifacts and so on we also find that mention of different kind of fruits which arrived in this place. So, for example the fruit pineapple which arrived there with the Portuguese and then like I mean how that also had a huge significance in shaping the Deccani material culture. So, this kind of things we see that I mean this port sites were already in the early modern times were very thriving centers of this cosmopolitanism and this cultural exchanges that we see there and for that reason in and around Machilipatnam we also find that there is the remains of this the Dutch fort that was established there and for the Dutch fort the prime function of this fort was actually to like store textiles which were produced in and around this region and then also like sort of exporting them. So, these kinds of things we find and then of course there is also this 17th and 18th century Dutch cemetery we find those also attest to the fact that how this areas

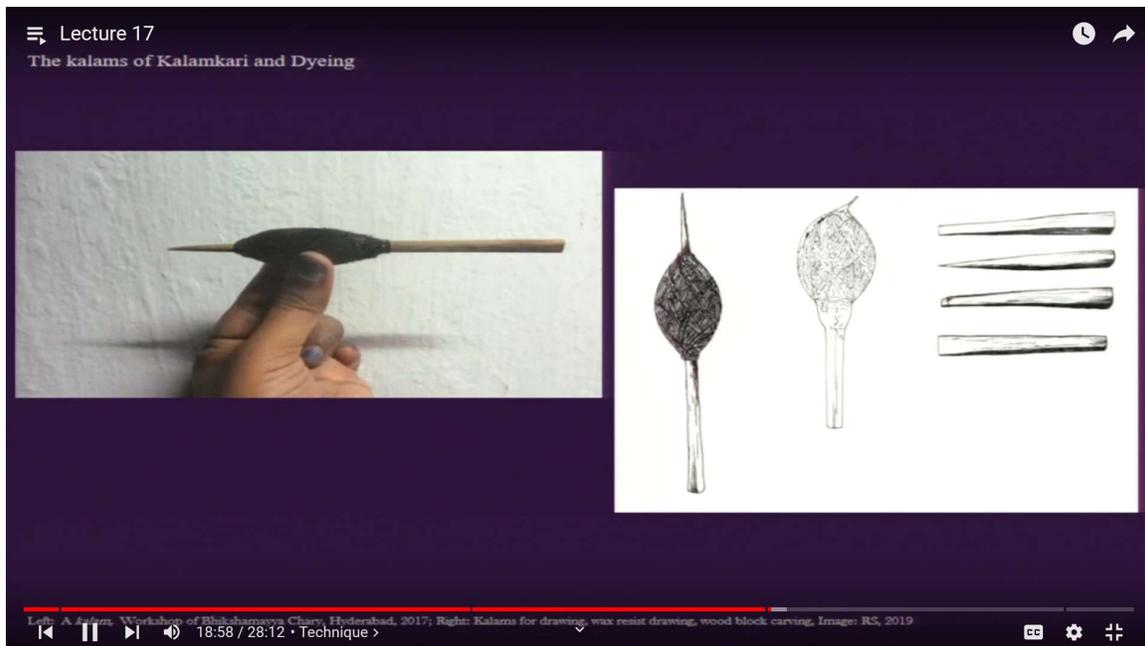
were ... thriving cosmopolitans and during the 17th, 18th century and also like in the 19th century and so on and how that particular kind of cultural atmosphere had helped the Kalamkari production to grow further.

Now in a different situation we see that I mean in the temple town of Srikalahasti which is there which is very close to the Pulicat lake and if you see this, so Pulicat is situated here and Machilipatnam would be like I mean somewhere here in this coastline of Coromandel. So, which is very close to Pulicat lake and in this temple town of Srikalahasti where we have this great temple dedicated to Hindu God Shiva, Sri Srikalahasteeswara temple and his consort Gnanaprasunambika. So, ... this temple became one of the prime sites for patronizing particular kinds of Kalamkaris. And this kind of Kalamkaris is not just exclusive in Srikalahasti but also like in the southern Coromandel we find that how temple cloths are produced or like patronised and ... demanded ... a particular kind of Kalamkari making. So, this Kalamkaris, we find to have extensive figurative drawings, and they are mostly narrative paintings in which we see the narratives are sort of depicted in register after register, and then there is also written text with those narrative panels. So, these kinds of textiles we find them and either like I mean they were displayed in the temples during particular occasions, but we also find them to have been used in overnight performances and other performances of Hindu epics on the temple premises.

Now there are also other kind of temple cloth we find. So, for example, during the chariot festivals in southern India (part of it like) and ... mostly in Tamil Nadu (that would be in the southern Coromandel) we find that I mean many of the deities (the presiding deities in the temples), they would be like I mean taken out for procession in and around the neighbourhood in a very particular time of the year. So, the time of the year is like that varies from one deity to another, and during this time, we find these elaborate chariots are made, and with this chariot, these chariots would also be covered with particular kinds of textiles (brightly coloured textiles) and some of the textiles would ... have figural representation and sometimes ... certain kinds of symbols which are associated with this deities. So, those kinds of temple clothes we also find to be made in and around these towns. So, if Srikalahasthi is one of the examples of such kind of centres where this kind

of particular temple hangings [are] made in the Kalamkari techniques ... then the other places would be in the Thanjavur region or by the river Kaveri where we find that Thanjavur, Kumbakonam, Darasuram and then so on. These regions we find that there are some of the centers where these temple cloths are produced in the Kalamkari technique. So, we can see that I mean in one hand the trade textiles how the trade networks and all those aspects they made a huge impact on making particular kind of textiles (the textiles that we have already seen) and then in the temple textiles what we see that has a very different kind of flavor because they would have more of the depiction of the Hindu epics and particular deities and so on.

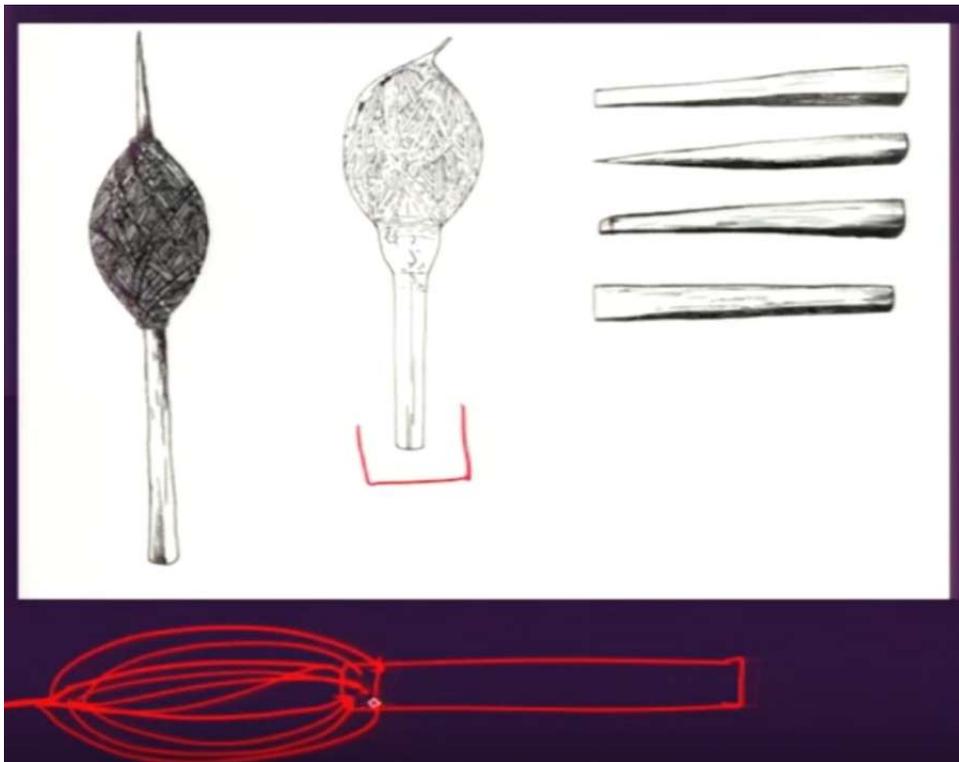
Now, with that, let us come to the technique of making Kalamkari; why do we call all these particular (all these different) kinds of textiles under the same umbrella term Kalamkari? Now, this particular idea of Kalam that we see, which comes from this idea of something



that has a sharp edge or a sharp tip and that is used for writing, is something that came from this idea of a Reed pen. We see that I mean how this Greek term that was, like, I mean even eventually it was absorbed in the Latin lexicon and then (like) it arrived in the Middle East and from [the] Middle East we see that I mean how this sort of like I mean became this Persian term Kalam and then this term also arrived in South Asia. Whereas we see today that I mean when we say Kalam today, we usually mean a particular kind of pen. But the

thing is that I mean, and even when we say Kalamkari, we usually associate Kalamkari with this kind of bamboo pen (that we see on the left side of the screen). Here we see this bamboo pen, which is fairly simple, like, I mean, a portable pen that we have, and it also has this sharp tip. But then it also has this very characteristic bulbous grip here and this bulbous grip is something that is essential for Kalamkari drawing in this artisanal workshops. So this bulbous grip is something that we see that is made with, like, I mean, layers of cotton, and on the top of that, then we see that cotton yarn is sort of used, and cotton thread is used for sort of tying it around, and that is how this bulbous grip is created. Now why this bulbous grip is important is because when Kalamkari is made then during that time there is containers full of dye stuff (I mean there's this black dye that is sort of ... used for making the outlines and so on) and even is the same thing for the mordant dyeing as well. So the container full of dye or mordant would be there and on that in it like I mean this this pens are dipped and then when the pen is dipped this bulbous grip would absorb maximum amount of this dye into that and then when the drawer would draw with it they would slightly press this bulbous grip and then like I mean the dye would penetrate into the tip of it and that is how like I mean it is drawn. So, this is the reason why like this particular kind of bulbous grip is required in Kalamkari making.

Now, if it is about, like, I mean, doing the hand-drawn Kalamkari, then what about the other kinds of practices, and why are they called Kalamkari? So here in



this image, on the right side [t], here is a representation of a wax drawing Kalam, and in this wax drawing column, we also see that there is this bamboo grip that is made here like a bamboo grip we find. and then on the bamboo grip, we have, like, I mean, iron tip (that is used like, I mean two iron wires are used for a sort of like I mean making the tip). And then, like this iron wire that (sort of) also makes this fine tip there, sometimes iron is used, or sometimes copper is also used, and then it is wrapped with human hair. So instead of, like, I mean using cotton or fabric or like I mean thread here, we see that human hair is used for, like, I mean, wrapping and making this bulbous grip here. So when it is made, and mind it that I mean for wax resist drawing, one needs to, like I mean, dip it in molten wax, and so for that reason, like I mean using cotton and using thread is definitely not the most suited one but like hair is something that is much more suited for this particular purpose and so that's the reason. In this case, we also find that usually, for this wax drawing kalam, this bulbous grip is much (more) thicker and bigger in size compared to the regular drawing kalam. Now, for that reason, we can also understand that resist drawing and the resist-dyed textiles in this particular region can also be termed Kalamkari because both

these techniques also require ... two different kinds of Kalam. But of course, like I mean they are very similar in their structure.

Now, there comes the other kind of kalam, and that looks very different in terms of the first

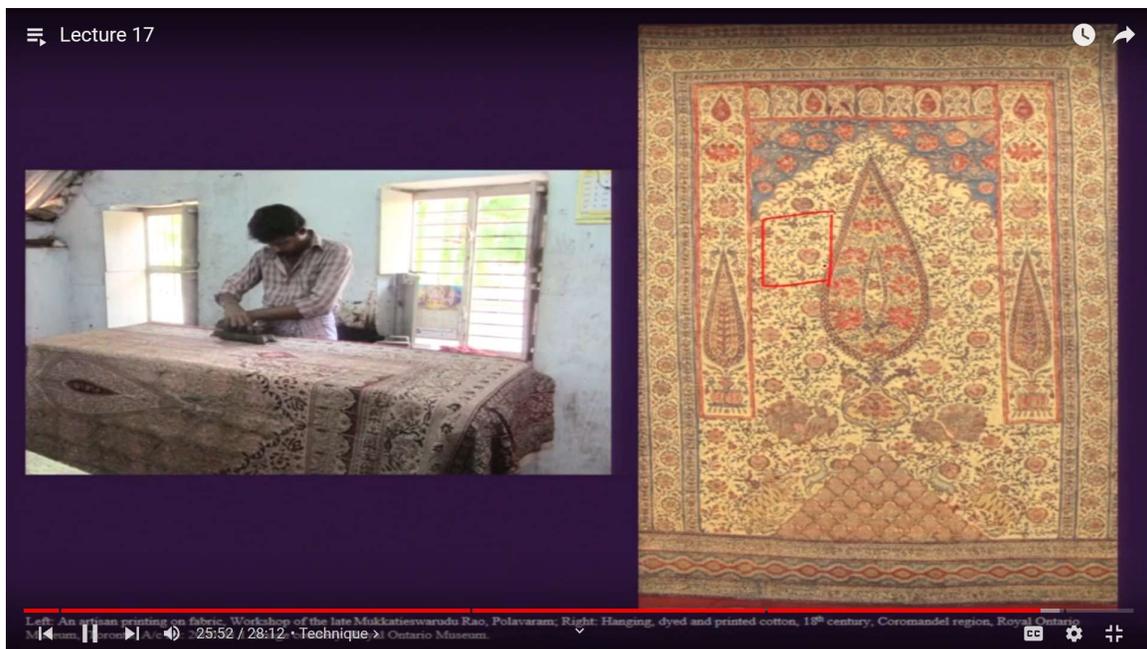


two kalams that we have discussed, and those are these kalams. So, these are basically iron-made engraving tools [that are] very small, and those are used in the

wood block makers' workshop. In this case, what happens [is that] we find that the iron tools (which) are used with the non-dominant hand, and then a beater is used on top of it for making the designs or ... any kind of engraved patterns that will be created on the wood block surface. So, in this case, what happens [is] we do not really see them, that I mean why this kind of engraving tools are called Kalam. But when we sort of ... speak to the artisans (the block makers) [they] would always term them as Kalam, and Kalam is used for something that is to produce these fine minute lines. It is not just this block makers would call them Kalam, but we also find in the other parts of the Indian subcontinent. So, for example, in Farrukhabad in Uttar Pradesh and so on. [In] all these places the block makers would term these particular engraving tools as Kalam. Even in Iran today, we see that I mean this particular kind of engraving tool is very similar to the ones we have here. They are also called Kalam, and they are used for engraving on the top of metal surfaces. So that is the reason we find that this particular use- artisanal use of the term Kalam is something that also explains why painted, printed, resist dyed all these textiles are called

Kalamkari textiles. (Because) The prime images, the outlines, or the images which sort of give life to Kalamkari, are something that is achieved through these tools, and the tools remain central to understanding why all these textiles are called Kalamkari.

Now, one of the characteristic features of Kalamkari that we see ... is that this flowing rhythmic lines and the lines if we think that is achieved in the freehand drawing or like I mean just drawing with Kalam, then like I mean this rhythmic lines are also something we find that to have been there in the printed surfaces as well. So, for example, if we consider this particular hanging, in this one, we see that I mean even though these areas (I mean



entirely this image is printed) but like I mean this kind of areas where we see that I mean there is this overall creeper and flower motif that sort of encompasses the entire area here so this is something that is achieved by like I mean block printing. Now the blocks are made in such a way that the continuity of the lines and these motifs are continued. So, they are not disrupted, the continuity is not disrupted in that way, and that is how like the flow of the linear rhythm, something that is achieved in the painted surfaces is also continued in the printed surfaces as well.

Now we also see that I mean how dyeing is sort of like ... used in these cases, and for dyeing, we have many different kinds of dyestuff. So, for example we have the red dye, we



have indigo. For red, we have, like, I mean, the Indigenous madder, or we have this very well-known dyestuff that is extensively used in southern India that is Chaya roots. This kind of dyestuff is also found to be there. But then this dyestuff is not something that is used directly on the textile, but it is actually used when these textiles are developed after being mordant painted.

Now, with this like, I mean we will sort of like I mean continue this discussion on mordant painting in the next lecture, and then continue the discussion on the other topics. So, what we see in this particular set of, like, I mean, works or like I mean these topics we have discussed so far, that how the region, particular kind of tools and particular kind of dyes they all contribute to the making and sustainment of Kalamkari textiles. Thank you.