

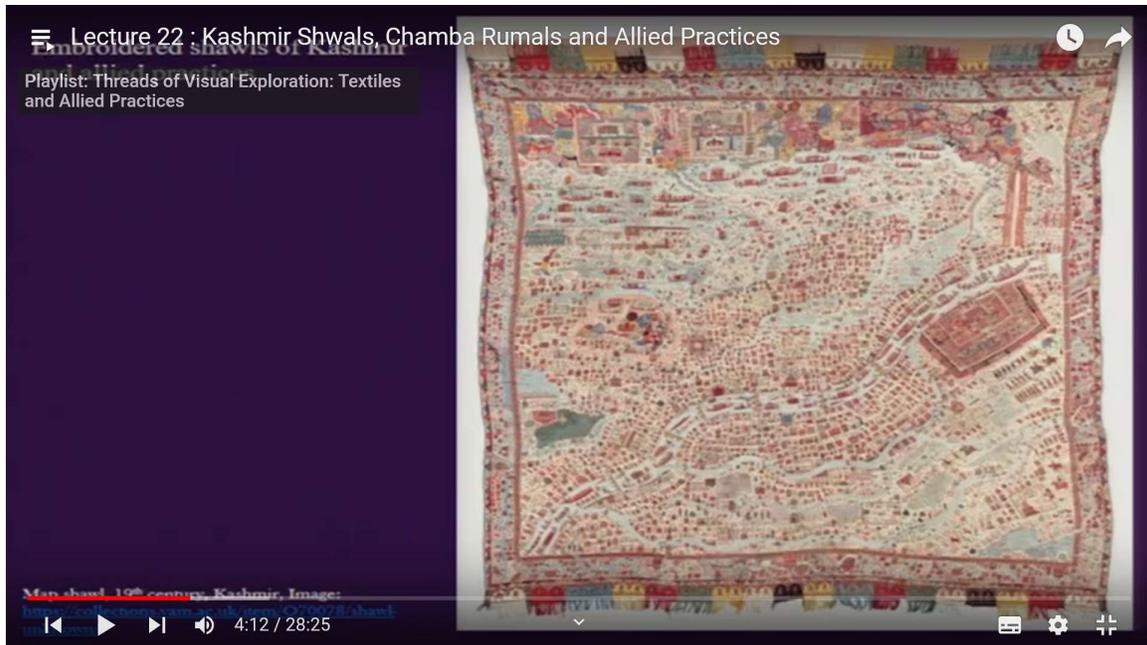
Threads of Visual Exploration: Textiles and Allied Practices
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Week – 05
Lecture – 22

Hello everyone, this is Rajarshi Sengupta and we are in the second installment of our week on embroidered narratives. So, we have so far looked into some of the basics of embroidery and then what kind of effects the embroidery creates. Now the other kind of embroidery what we have not discussed so far is this idea of applique or adding a piece of fabric on the top of a fabric and then embroidering it around it; or like I mean adding embroidery to like I mean sort of make this piece of fabric as part of the already existing fabric.



So, for example, this cut embroidery or like I mean the cut quilt technique that we find it there and it is there in some parts ... India. Mostly we find it in western India, also in parts of northern Karnataka and so on. One of those things what we can see here, this so for example, this technique which is called katab and that comes up and in which we see this fabrics are already cut in pieces. So, (for example the one we see in the left side of the screen, upper left) ... this cut fabrics are then added on the top of a pre-existing fabric

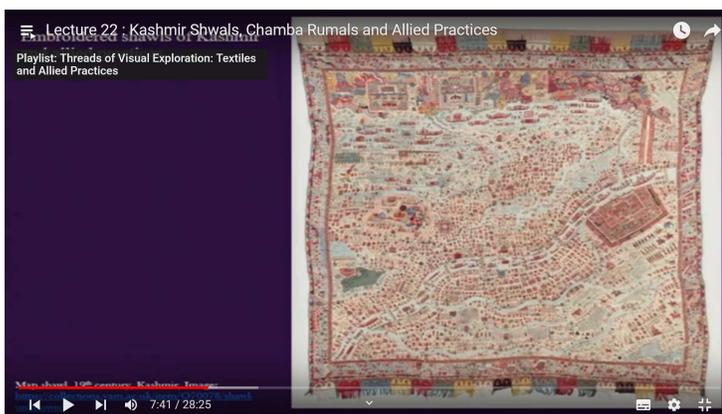
and then stitched with it. So, for that what happens is that we see how this ... gives a different effect to the entire fabric itself. ... for the shadow of the fabric that is added on the top of it, its three dimensionality always remains there, however it still remains like I mean as a fabric so that I mean it kind of like it in one layer of the fabric almost. So, that is how we see that this applique technique that adds a different kind of meaning to the fabric altogether. ... then when we see something like this atari quilt in which we find that many other colors are also used with this kind of quilt making and then it is not just like the cut pieces of the fabric and usually this kind of quilts are made from like used fabrics. So, for example, a used fabric of different colors ... will be [cut] into those small pieces to avoid the areas which are affected and then they will be sort of made into this way [by] arranging the pieces. They would be stitched into the pre-existing fabric and then made into this kind of quilts. So, this technique is definitely about reusing fabric and with this what happens as I have already mentioned that I mean if clothes are getting toned down and they are almost at the verge of being unusable then like I mean embroidery comes as a rescue and then this way the clothes can be sort of made into a new form of fabric which can be used again. So, of course I mean if someone is using a saree or a shirt or dhoti or whatever it is then they won't be able to like I mean wear that cloth the same way if the pieces of the saree are then made into this quilt. but then the quilt will be used in a different purpose altogether. So, this shift in the usage is also something we find that I mean how that is also related to shift in its cultural value. So, when this is saree when this is a regular wearable fabric then it has different kind of purpose. But when it becomes a quilt and the quilt also requires a tremendous amount of time and effort and everything else and labor. So, if those things are involved in that and that's the reason we find that the quilts are something that is used for much longer time. Because [they are] much more sturdy (because of the layers) and also that I mean sometimes we find different kinds of quilts are given as gifts or dowry during marriage or different other kind of occasions which hold much relevance for family and community lives.



Now let us look into the themes that we are supposed to discuss as part of this week's lecture and we'll start the discussion with the embroidered shawls of Kashmir and allied practices. So, as I have already mentioned that the Kashmir shawls there are the woven shawls with like I mean twill weaving and tapestry twill and so on. So, in this case, we are not really talking about those woven shawls but we are talking about embroidered shawls. Now let us just get few things clear that when I talk about like I mean the twill weaving then what do I mean by that? So, in twill weaving as like textile scholar Janet Rizvi has noted that for the Kashmir shawls what happens we see this twill weaving is something that is preferred more than the regular plain weave in which we see that the warp and the weft that sort of like I mean runs you know in right angle with each other. But for twill weaving what happens there are two warps and then like two weft sort of like I mean passes under them and over them. ... that is how what happens that I mean in case of like one another we find like two and then like two here to there and that is how like I mean this diagonal motif is we find that to have created which does not really come in the regular plain weave. ... for its orientation we also find that I mean what also Janet Rizvi has noted that for this kind of orientation



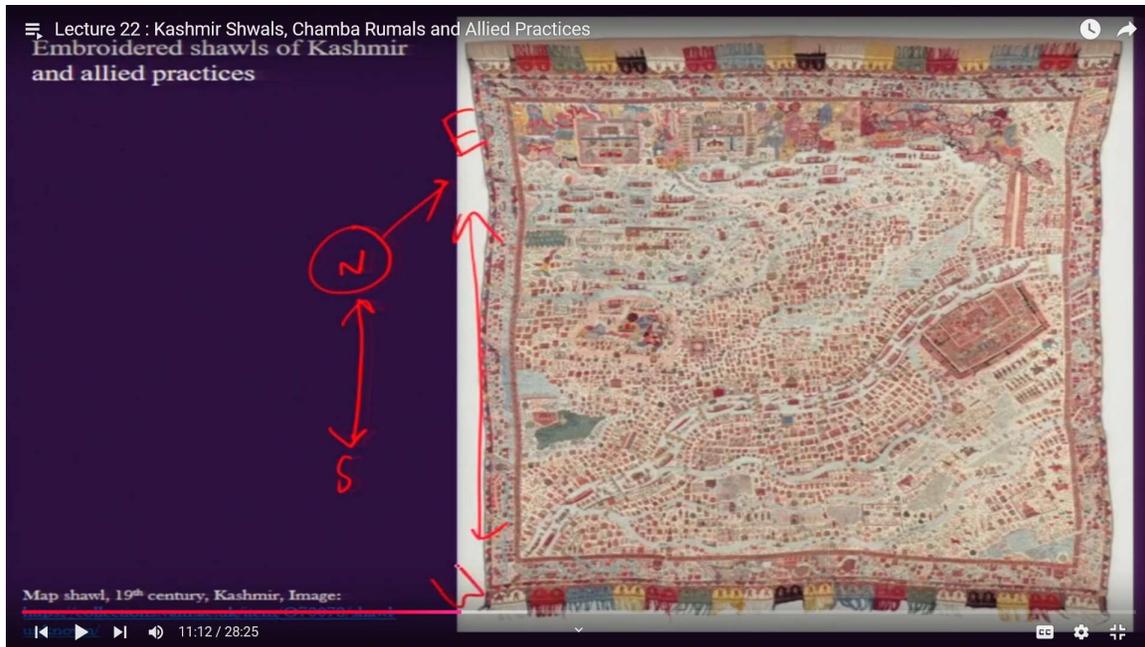
in which ... the flow of the two weaves ... something that is going above the weft threads (two weft threads will be going on the top of the warp thread and then two will be going underneath the warp thread). That is the construction [that] also gives the fabric much more elasticity (to certain extent) and that is the reason we find that ... this kind of fabric is much more soft and flexible when those are ... wrapped around the body. ... that is the reason that this highly prized pashmina shawls, we find them to be much more softer on the skin and they are much more comfortable when ... worn. So, these are the kind of like I mean some of the basics we find that to be there in the plain woven Kashmir shawls. ... on the top of that we see how the embroidery is added on the top of it for whatever purpose they need to serve. So in this case what happens we see that this kind of embroidered shawl [as] I have already mentioned ... started coming [to be produced] ... at least from the 18th century. So, a number of these kinds of shawls were created. ... when I was talking about the Kashmir shawls I ... mentioned ... how this kind of twill weaving .. makes those kinds of shawls much more comfortable ... on the wearer's body. But this embroidered shawls were certainly not meant to be used on someone's body but they were meant to be perhaps displayed and they were meant for gift. So, in this case, what see a number of this kind of shawls were created in like 18th century in the 19th century some of them ... we find ... in the Victoria and Albert Museum in, London [and] few of the other museum collections in London and Western Europe, then [in] the National Gallery in Australia and of course in the Shri Pratap Singh Museum in Srinagar. So, all those different museum collections have some of those embroidered shawls, and what do these embroidered shawls display? So, in this shawl we see that I mean there is a combination of chain stitch, kani stitch which is very characteristic in Kashmir and then



also like I mean sometimes we see the satin stitch as well. All those stitches are used for meticulously making these maps on the shawl surface. ... predominantly we find the shawls to be squarish, and

sometimes it can be slightly rectangular. But like I mean in this case also we find it like I mean squarish and it has this border. [The] border is ... not really outside of the narrative that is depicted in the center of the shawl, but it also sort of ... involves those narrative elements and ... continues all across [as] the margins of this shawl. ... in the center of the shawl what we see [is] a map of Srinagar (the city of Srinagar). ... it sort of shows the direction of the different Parganas or the district, or the Kasbas or the towns and like the settlements. ... and in the center we find ... the river Jhelum and then ... all the canals of the tributaries that we see it kind of like I mean separates from the main source and it sort of like I mean flows through the different parts of the city of Srinagar. ... we see how the part of Srinagar (like I mean this part is certainly given much prominence) and how certain parts of Srinagar are like made as this more populated areas whereas like I mean the other parts are shown much more sort of like I mean with the housing and everything distributed in the landscape. Now with this water (I mean the flow of the river that we see) which almost sort of like divides the shawl in this two halves (like I mean this two diagonal halves almost that it divides). In the upper half we find that I mean part of Dal lake and Dal lake or Daljheel is something we all also see that I mean how that is very important part of the landscape of the city of Srinagar even today. So we see the Dal lake and numerous boats which are flowing in the lake as well as in the river and then we see all the settlements around it. ... then on the top layer we

find that I mean this part it is also very interesting in which we see that there are those two famed Mughal gardens that is Shalimar Bagh and Nishat Bagh those two gardens are then depicted there, and then the rocks or the rocky landscape around them is also



depicted with various colors. So, all these different kind of colors like I mean green, yellow, blue and so on those are used for emphasizing the rocky landscape there. So we see that I mean as Rosemary Crill had also written about this shawl she says that I mean how even though the shawl sort of like I mean shows the narrative vertically, .. we might just think that since it's a map .. it might have a northern orientation. Because like north-south if this works out in this way because like I mean the story certainly like I mean requires the viewer to see it vertically and not in any other way around. However, if we think about the location of Nishat Bagh and Shalimar Bagh in the city of Srinagar we see that they are actually situated towards the east of the city, so the north that we see here in the shawl is actually east. So, it's an east-west orientation, but like in the depiction we see ... how the east had become north. So, this kind of changes we see that I mean certainly if there are particular kind of like I mean aspirations those were there being the driving force of making this decision; we find that there are certain kind of change and amendments those are made by the makers of this shawl for whatever reason. We do not know much about the context of making this shawl but these kind of differences [in]

these kind of information that certainly make us think that there must have been much more thought process involved in making this kind of shawls there.

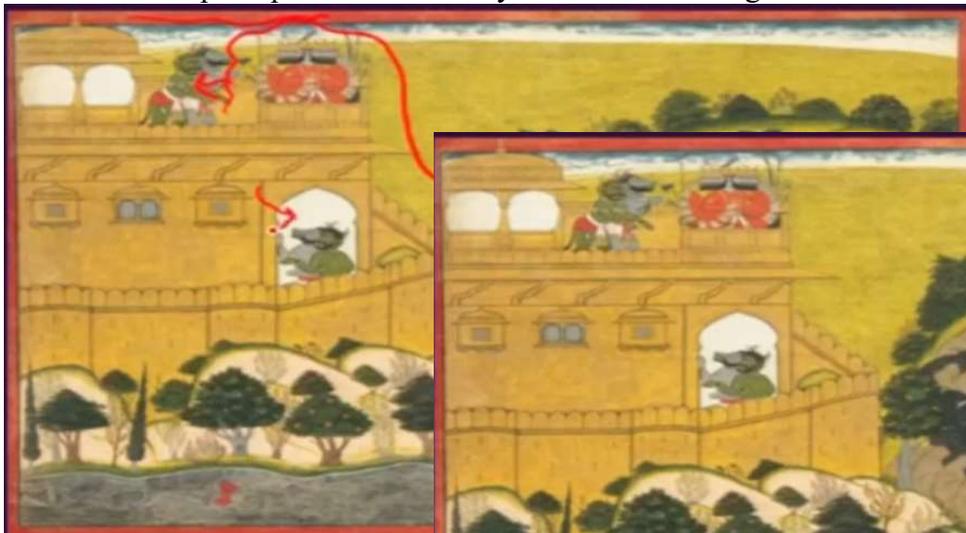
Now some of the issues as we have already mentioned that how when we think about these shawls so what kind of like I mean aspects we need to consider or like what kind of ... other allied practices we need to consider. So, one of the closest visual practice that



we find with these shawls would be the miniature painting tradition. ... miniature painting that we know as it also flourished in the 18th century. ... of course, there were ... miniature paintings before that in the Pahari region. ... by Pahari region I mean the Punjab hills, part of Kashmir like Jammu and so on, and then mostly today's Himachal Pradesh (the state of India). ... in this cases what we see in the Pahari miniature paintings a lot of times we see this bird's eye point of view or the multiple perspectival views which are added in the paintings in which we see almost this map like view in which many events are happening simultaneously or there is a narrative flow that something is happening in one part of the image and then like I mean the same narrative is continuing in the other part of the image as well. So, those kinds of tendencies we find that to be there in the map shawl as well. Now in the map shawl as we see that I mean until 18th century and so on mostly there are those 12 tapestry woven shawls we find and also like I mean using extra weft and so on. So, all those shawls in which we find that how

pashmina wool is used for making the warp and the weft at the same time we see the dyed wool or silk threads are used for making the extra weft weaving on the shawl. So as Janet Rizvi also mentions that how this one particular embroider and she refers to this European traveler and chronicler Moorcroft's chronicles in which it comes up there was this one particular shawl maker Ali Baba who started using embroidery in one shawl and after it ... gave him satisfaction he started doing embroidery all over on the shawl and that is how perhaps like I mean this entire shawl making tradition started. Now this is one story and we do not really know that I mean whether this is the only beginning of this embroidered shawl or if there are other sources for starting this kind of embroidered endeavor.

Now let us come back to like the miniature paintings if we see that I mean what kind of like this similarities and differences we can see there. So, this is a miniature painting in the left side of the screen that we have and that comes from painter Manaku and who was a son of Pandit Seu and he was Manaku was also brother of this famed painter Nainsukh. he was from Guler [and] we find him to be based in Basholi as well and so in his work we find that I mean this kind of like I mean this narrative progression we see them to be there very much. So, in this particular image what we see here [is] there are those two demon spies we find them to be there. Here we find this the golden Lanka (which is shown here as this fortified city or like I mean this fort complex) ... which is distinctive from ... the forest landscape that we see on the right side of the image. ... in this golden Lanka, we see the image of Ravana who's instructing these two demons and we find these two demons or perhaps like I mean they are almost arriving.

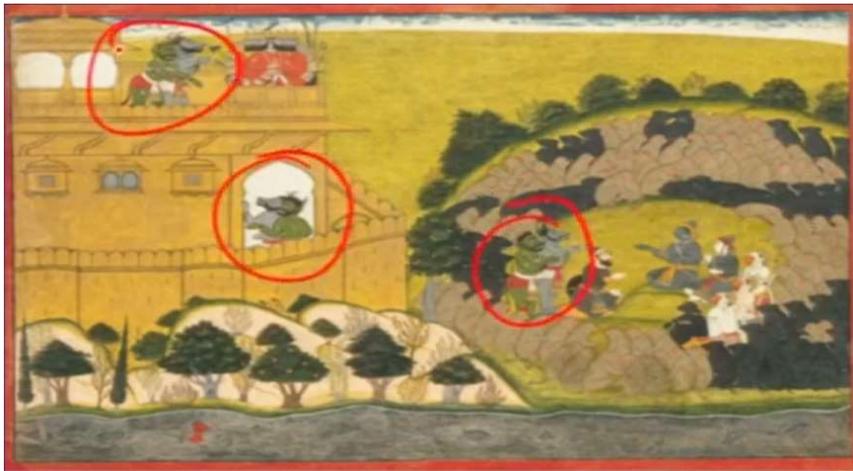


So, what happens in



this case that, in the right side of the image we see ... this small ground which is surrounded by rocks and then ... this mountains and of course ... all those Vanaras (or like I mean the monkeys) who are all ... part of ... Rama's army. ... Rama and Lakshmana we find them to be there at the center stage. Here we see that these two spies are there in front of Rama and Lakshmana. So, Rama and Lakshmana meet them and then they release these two spies and then they arrive in this golden Lanka and then they go to Ravana. So, there is this narrative progression that ... I was talking about. Here we also see that the idea of the ocean that is depicted with water. ... it is not just this one miniature painting in which we will find the use of water. Since the Pahari region is ... completely cut off from the ocean and is landlocked and that's the [probable] reason we see ... a lot of times the depiction of the river becomes metaphor of endless flow of water. ... that is the reason we also see that ... the rivers [or] the way those are been shown in these Pahari miniatures [are as] these torrential turbulent rivers. ... it's not just about showing the water that is flowing ... through this landscape but it is also something to do with ... the turbulence in life, the flow of life. I would extend that to say that I mean that also something that is related to the flow of a narrative which is very much there as part of like the narrative progression in the miniature paintings.

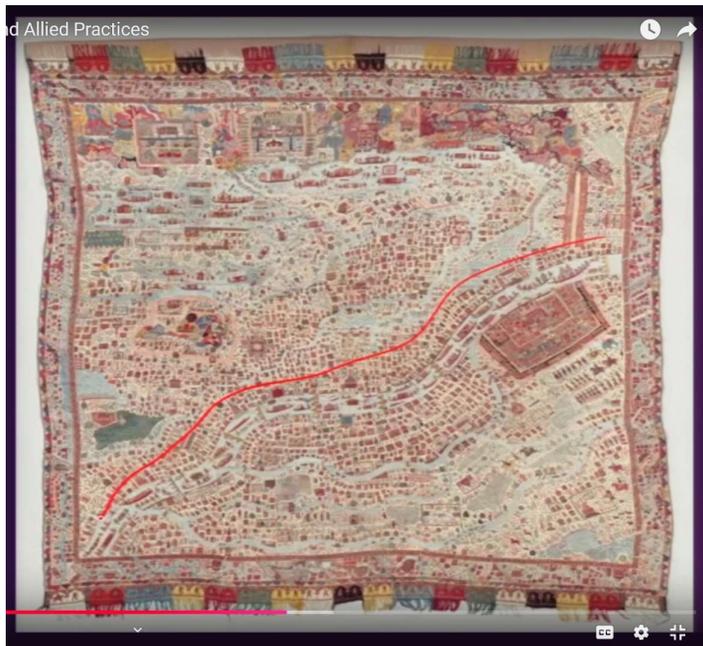
So, for example, if we see this miniature painting and start from like either this side or



from here like I mean we will get to when we sort of like I mean see the same characters being repeated in this part, this part and this part we know that I mean there is a

progression that is happening looking at their directionality and then like I mean also comparing them to the textual narrative of Ramayana one can understand ... how this narrative is progressing so far.

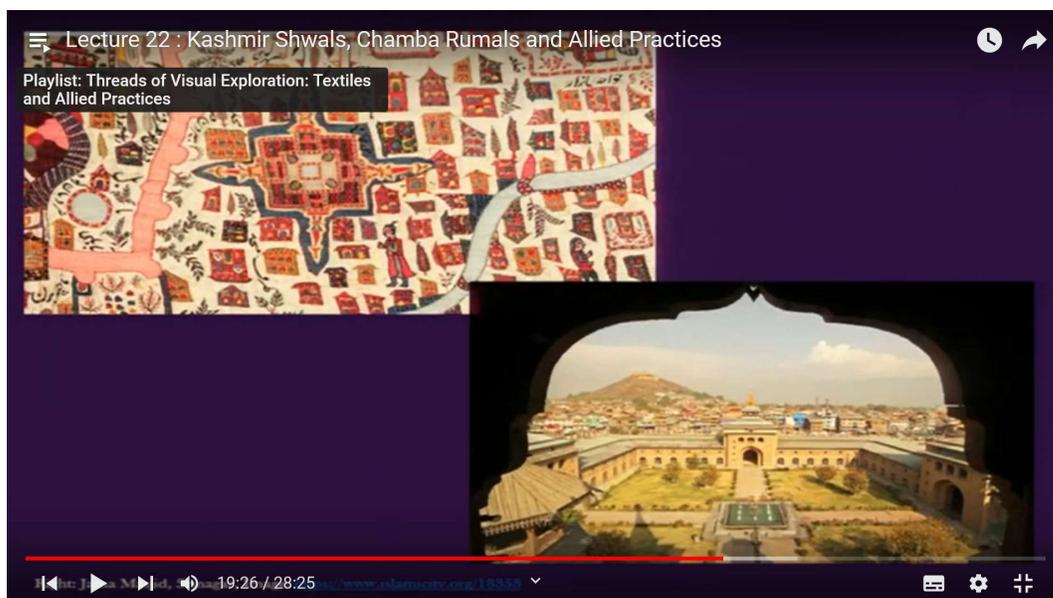
So that flow of the narrative as we already see that in the miniature painting that comes out very prominently is something that is run simultaneously with the flow of the river



and this is this idea that we see that to be there in the map shawl as well, that the river which sort of cut across this entire shawl and make it into this diagonal halves is not incidental. Perhaps it seems like an... conscious decision to sort of like I mean grab the viewers attention, to make people think that how the river and the other like I mean this

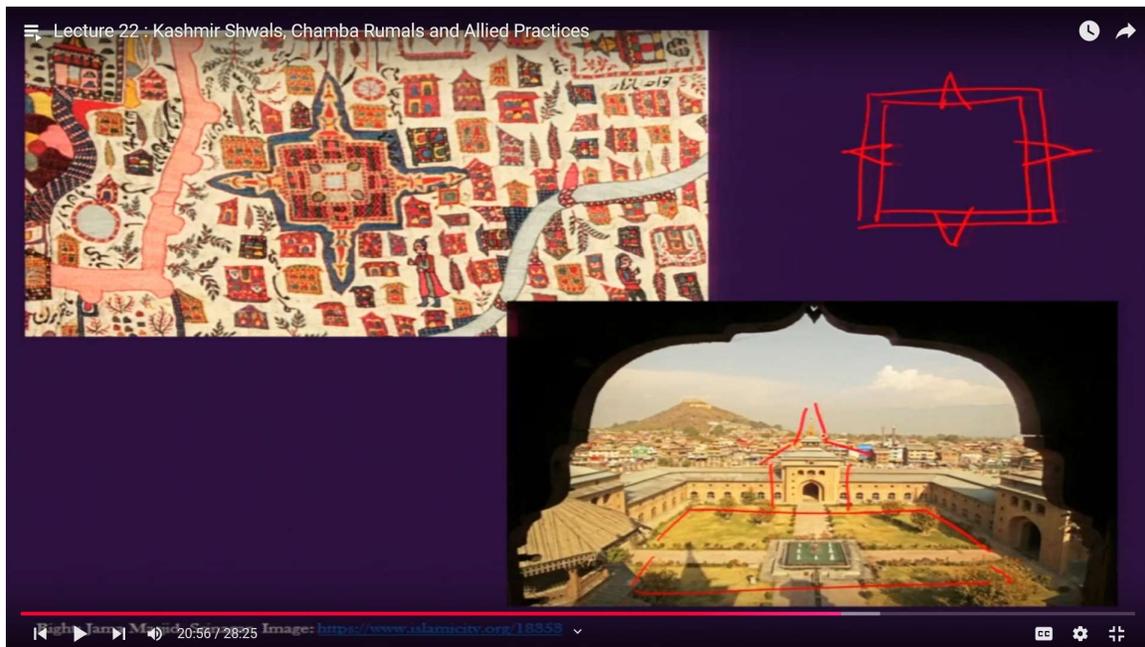
tributaries and the canals and eventually its connection to the Daljheel all of these things are the lifeline of the city of Srinagar and all the narratives are built around that. and that is the reason why we see that this river plays such an important role in depiction of the city here on the shawl. So, in this case when we sort of compare the miniature paintings

with the shawl, this embroidered map shawl, we do not try to understand that I mean this kind of images are used in the miniature and the same kind of images are used in the shawl and so on; but we try to see that I mean what kind of motifs are used, what kind of like flow of the narrative is there and then also in terms of like I mean some of those three dominant elements in this images. So, for example, the flow of the water or flow of the river is something that we find in the miniature paintings as well as in the map shawl. So, those are the kind of like underlying similarities that we can see between these two practices and why we can understand them as allied practices.



Now the second aspect will probably be depiction of architecture. Architecture is something we on and off talk about in this entire course. ... in the map shawl we find that there are occasional writings and those would indicate like I mean which part of the city one is looking at or like which Parganas or like I mean which Kasba and places that one is looking into (so those things we see). In this particular part of this shawl we find this famed Jama Masjid that is depicted. The Jama Masjid here we almost see to be ... depicted like the square shape, with the central projections. And why this particular kind of depiction is there? If we consider [comparing] it with like the actual architectural complex of the Jama Masjid and Srinagar then we can understand that why these kind of decisions were made.

We see this Jama Masjid complex is also predominantly square and then it has like those



central gateways and for that reason ... in this image [or] in this photograph we see this square area (this courtyard) in the center and which is ... sort of corresponds with this square area here and then we see the central gateways here. This very characteristic gateways which has this Yvonne motif but at the top we have this triangular roof and then like I mean the triangular roof also has this really sharp triangular apex on the top of it. So, this typical architecture that we find here in the Jama Masjid of Srinagar is something that is meticulously studied and then that is depicted in this map shawl (here as well). In this case we have those central gateways and then like I mean how this the central tower with this long triangular apex is depicted there and then also what we find in the center there is this fountain and this fountain we can also relate it to the Charbagh plan that we find in the Mughal gardens and so on in which we have like I mean this four rivers they would come and sort of like I mean meet at the center. So, there are those, we see that I mean there is flow of water here and that sort of like I mean goes to the fountain not all the other ways would have the water sources but it loosely sort of follows this Charbagh planning. This fountain is perhaps like I mean depicted here by showing the square area at the center. Now what we also see that I mean it is not just a faithful depiction of this architectural complex in Srinagar but the embroider has also took liberty or the embroiders have also took liberty in terms of like depicting the surface. Whereas the

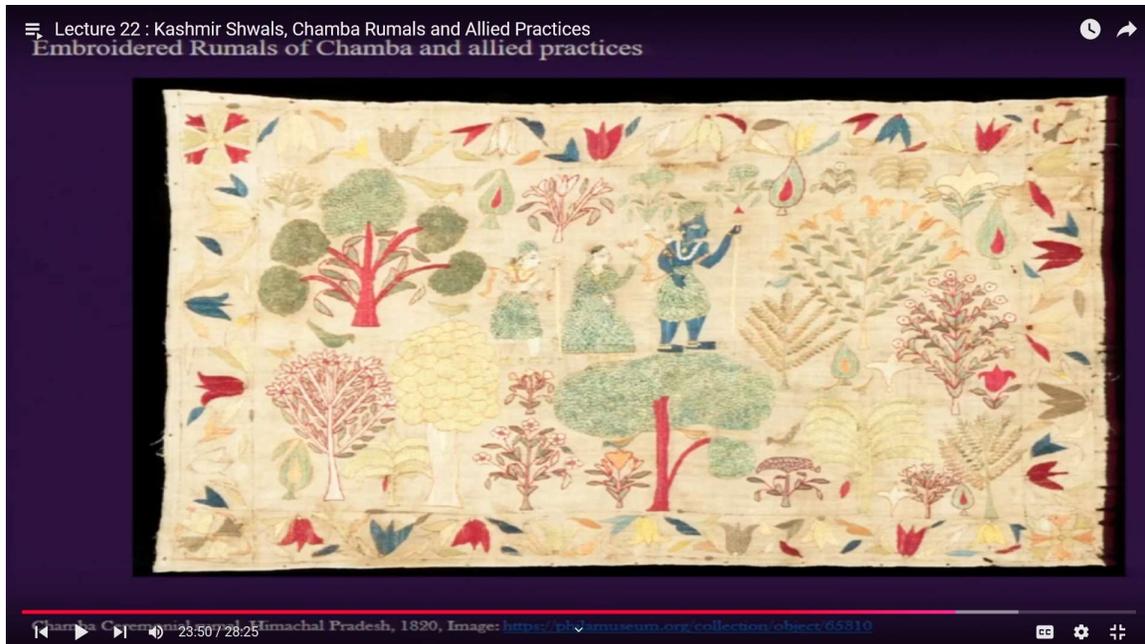
recognizability of this architectural structure is there, when we see the details within this structure we find the zigzag motifs or like I mean the repetitive patterns which are used which sort of like I mean makes us come back to the idea that even though we are looking at a representation of Jama Masjid but this is an embroidered version of it and that's the reason we also need to understand that this is an embroidered surface and it is not just a depiction of the Jama Masjid. So, it's kind of like I mean makes the viewer question their perception about architecture and textile. By ... inserting these repetitive motifs or the zigzag patterns it's almost like a claim that the shawl makers or the embroiders are making that we are looking at an architectural depiction but nevertheless this is textile and the characters of the textiles that's the reason are also depicted very much in this form.

The other thing also we find that there are many other structures around and that's the



reason there was a need for sort of emphasizing this particular structure which is distinctive from the other houses or the palace complex and stuff so on. ... that's the reason there is this area which we find that to be covered with this blue embroidery and blue and black embroidery and that sort of emphasizes its relevance in this surface.

So, from there what we see that I mean as I have mentioned that I mean if this is what is happening in Kashmir, we find that in the Himachal in the Chamba region this particular kind of rumals were there that is being used and those are square format rumals. Usually



we see square or slightly rectangularish format rumal and these are again that even though rumals are something that we use on a daily basis but this rumal was certainly not used on daily basis this was either used for gift giving or for dowry or for like religious ceremonies and so on. In this rumal what we see that this dorukha technique is used, in which the satin stitches is used in both sides so that it can be seen the same motifs can be seen in both sides. There is no reverse side and no front side, so both sides can be equally appreciated. In these rumals we find that again that there are those close similarities with the figuration and the narratives with the miniature paintings (something that we have already discussed in the context of the Kashmir shawls). But in this case what we see that on the muslin cloth silk threads are used for making this embroidery. ... this kind of embroidery is something we find that to have been there in the practice at least since 18th century. So, we are talking about similar time frame for the Kashmir shawls, for the Pahari miniatures, and for the Chamba rumals. ... so, in this case we see mostly the Hindu mythological stories, the Hindu epics – Ramayana, Mahabharata and so on ... are depicted. ... a lot of themes we will find them to be around the Krishna's life and his activities. ... in this case we find us a narrative from Ramayana in which we see the trio

the figures and all those are also like I mean they stay close to geometry than being close to the kind of sophistication the Chamba rumals would have. So, for that reason most often like the full curry textiles are something those are associated with like this idea of so-called folk or community kind of activity; whereas the murals are something that is associated much more with the courtly practice. ... we see the Chamba rumals are something that is almost between the courtly practices and this folk practice, so where do we situate them? So, these are the different kind of questions when we see that there are those allied practices with the craft making and how we sort of associate one with the other. Thank you.