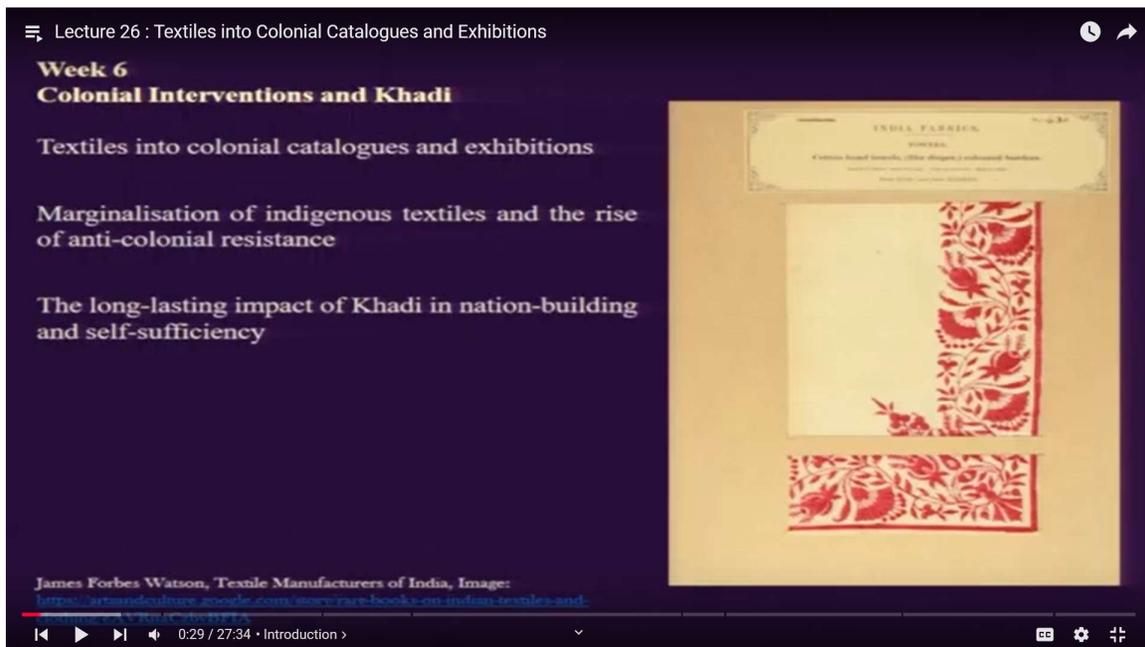


Threads of Visual Exploration: Textiles and Allied Practices
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Week – 06
Lecture – 26

Hello everyone, this is Rajarshi Sengupta and we are here exploring the various allied practices of textiles in the context of the Indian subcontinent. So, we are here in this course in the week 6 and in this week 6 what we will be doing will be looking at the colonial interventions and Khadi. So, these are the two things we will be looking at in the week 6 of this course.



So, what are the things that we will be mostly focusing on? So, there are as you can see in the title there are two things which are sort of emphasized. First thing is the colonial intervention and by colonial intervention that I mean that since India, the Indian subcontinent has a long history of being under the colonial rule. So, what kind of different practices that sort of evolved (took place) during this time, what were the specificities that happened during this time and then we also know that during this time (during the colonial period) a number of different textile and craft practices saw a marked decline and a number

of them have also disappeared and the disappearance was very much to be blamed on the colonial government. So, if those are the things we see during this time, so we can also think about it that what the colonial intervention might mean in the textile sector and then how does that also come back to like our study on textile and visual explorations. So, if that is the first thing that we do in terms of understanding the colonial interventions and then the second part of the title that focuses on Khadi. Khadi is this other kind of textile making and that sort of gain momentum in the first half of the 20th century (very early from the 20th century) and we see that how this Khadi movement that sort of posed a challenge to the colonial government not in terms of just textile production or craft production but also in terms of how we understand the relationship between a community and a land and then land, community, rulers and then subjugation, hierarchy, all those different kind of things. Now if you think about it, Khadi is this very mundane kind of homespun and then hand-woven cotton fabric we are talking about and that too coarse cotton, not really something like muslin, not really something like those expensive silk brocade or anything else, but then what was the significance of this kind of fabric and why that played such an important role in terms of the anti-colonial resistance? So, we'll be looking at these two aspects that took place in the last 200 years or so and we'll be seeing how textiles played a very important role in the entire, in this tug of war of power between the colonial government and the people in the Indian subcontinent.

So, in this week, what we'll do is...., we'll loosely divide the material in these three segments and the first segment, we'll be looking into the textiles into colonial catalogues and exhibitions. Now what we see during this time that there are many of the developments that took place during the late 18th century and in the early 19th century. When I say development, we should not think that development means something that brings benefit to the people, but it is this idea of development according to the colonizers. By that, what I mean is that I mean there is this thrust towards documentation, there is this sort of this push towards understanding what is this land that the colonizers were ruling and what different ways in which one can understand this concept of the land, community, people and not to just have extensive knowledge about them but also to have the capability to rule them. So, those are the kinds of issues that we find during this time. For those reasons, the

colonial catalogues and the exhibitions played a very important role. Now during this time in the 19th century ...[more specifically] after the war of Plassey in 1757 and then like I mean the subsequent wars in various parts of the Indian subcontinent then of course in the late 18th century, the war at the Srirangapattana in Karnataka and many different parts of the Indian subcontinent we see that I mean how those separate small parts were kind of coming under the British rule and then of course we also have the Indian princely states they were sort of either staying side by side with the areas which were directly under the British rule or they have sort of like I mean made agreement with the British government for (of course for their benefit also at the same time like I mean how they sort of agreed to come to terms with like I mean whatever the British had proposed to them). So, in this case, we see that I mean there is a different kind of reconfiguration of the land that we know today as the Indian subcontinent.

So, as very early in our course, we have looked into the map of the Indian subcontinent and I have always sort of stressed on the fact that the Indian subcontinent is not the country that we know today as India but then also like I mean the part of the other countries so for example of Pakistan or Bangladesh also. We see that I mean when we say Indian subcontinent, we kind of mean this way and then when we say South Asia we are also meaning like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, then Bhutan, Nepal and so on. So, this way what we see that during this time a large part of the Indian subcontinent that came under the British rule and it was almost like a way of unifying these different diverse regions of the Indian subcontinent and bring them together as a unified place to rule for the British and this attempt what it made possible was to make people imagine as an Indian subcontinent as this unified land or else like I mean before that we see that during the Mauryan era or like I mean ... towards the later Mughal era (during like Aurangzeb's period or Shah Jahan's period) we see that a large chunk of the Indian subcontinent came under one ruler but it was not really something that we see that how India as this idea had sort of emerged earlier than the 19th century. So, during this time in the 19th century we do see that I mean how for the motivation towards administrating this entire region we see that there was a need for unifying all these different regions here and that also sort of made British government [feel the need] to have systematic and a steady documentation of the

land, the people, culture and everything else. Those kinds of documentation we find that sort of ended up being in many of the catalogues and a number of archives which were created during this time and many different kind of surveys which were conducted during this time (the surveys can be botanical surveys, anthropological surveys and so on). So, when we see ... this idea of ... unified Indian subcontinent, the way it sort of emerged in the British imagination in the 19th century it sort of also runs parallel with this thrust towards documenting and archiving, making catalogues and then eventually displaying them at particular venues. So, these two things we see them to be in a parallel process. So, we cannot really see that archive building is different from a building perhaps this imagination of a British India. So, these two things were sort of running parallel and making this extensive colonial catalogues and archives were something we can see that to be part of this larger project of building this British India. So, whatever documentation we see of this time either they [are in the form of] archives, museums or like been printed as books or catalogues or monologues whatever it is, all of them we find them to be somewhere [or the] other connected to the aim and ambition of the colonial government.

So, this is something we see that when accumulation of the knowledge or like accumulation of the information from different parts of the Indian subcontinent was underway, it was also that the accumulation of different kind of objects and materials those were also been carried out. So, as we can understand that textile is something that can be accumulated and that's because of its portability, textile is also something which was very much part of the different trade relations that we have seen between Indian subcontinent and other parts of the world. So, for those reasons, textiles played a very important role in colonial catalogues, exhibitions and, of course, in the archives. So, this week ... our primary focus would be on this kind of catalogue and different ways in which, like I mean, textiles were systematically documented and then presented (put forward). So, if this is something we also see that textiles were also something that remained very crucial in terms of the trade relations. Because the trade relations ... (at least for the two millennia or so on) are something we have seen that in the coastal regions of the Indian subcontinent have been very active in terms of the oceanic trade. And, of course, the inland trade centres (there are many trade routes and then the centres), which would be at the intersection of different trade roads. So,

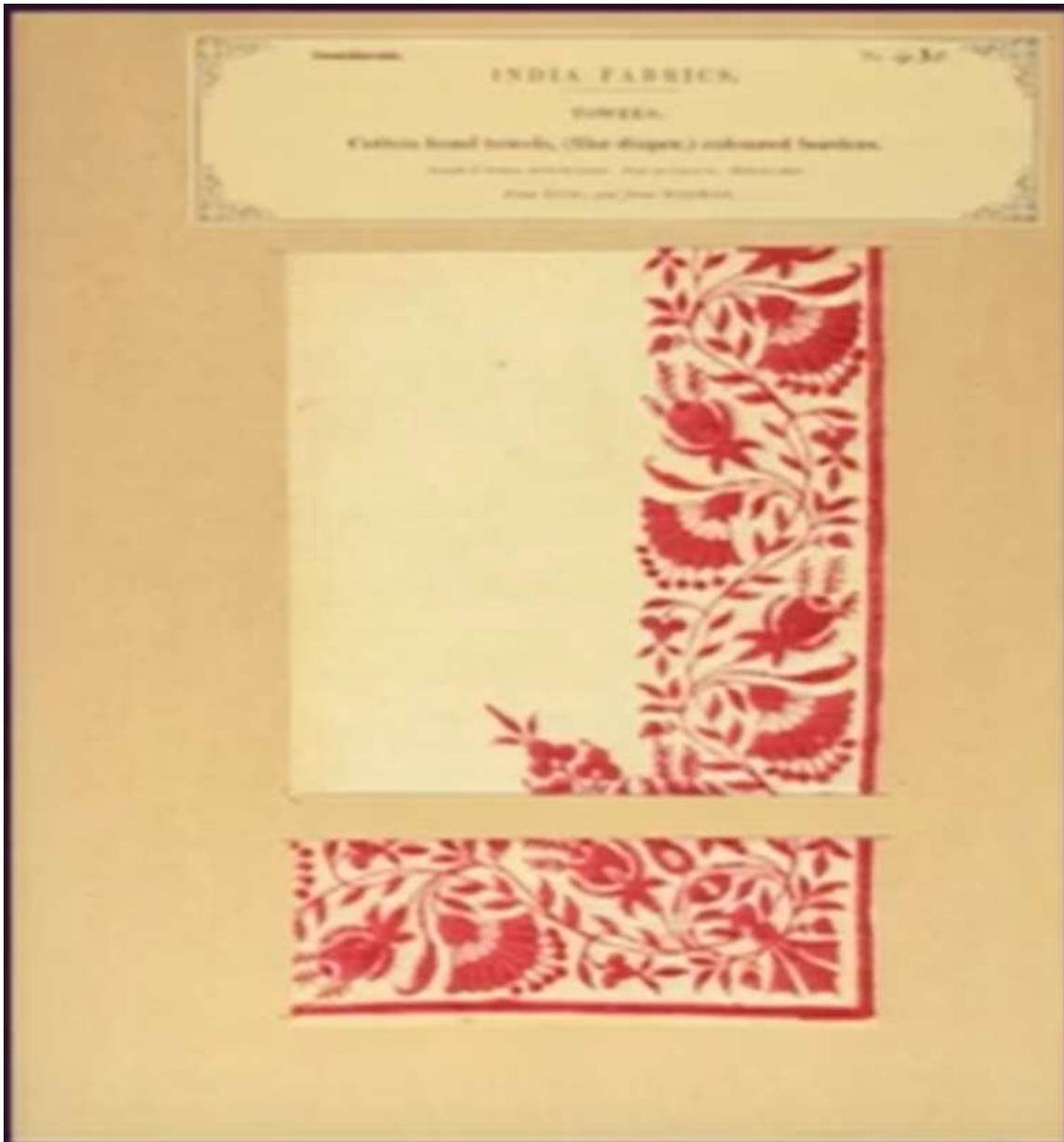
we do see them for inland trade, but why I am focusing more on the oceanic trade network is because that is how Indian textiles got a global audience and something we have discussed in the earlier modules as well and some of the recent exhibitions projects like Interwoven Globe and then Cloth that Changed the World and so on. So, they have sort of focused on those aspects. Now trade in textile is also something that is important for understanding the nature of colonisation in the Indian subcontinent because textile was one of the driving forces for which we see that the Western European traders including the British were much interested to invest in the Indian subcontinent and the textiles which were made in abundance and in large variation, in large variety were something which were bought in a low price in the Indian subcontinent and then they were sold for a much higher price and through which we see that the Western European traders have gained and accumulated a large amount of wealth. And then that sort of drove them much further for eventually getting the land rights and then the trade rights. Eventually, like sort of administrating the kind of production, and which sort of eventually brought the demise (the sad demise) of many of these textile practices and craft practices in the Indian subcontinent. As the interest their (the British or the other Western European traders) interest in the finished product (like the textiles.... moved towards the raw material which could be accumulated from the Indian subcontinent, sent to Western Europe, manufactured there and then sent them back to the Indian subcontinent and other parts of the world in a much higher price for a bigger profit.

So, this kind of issues we find that I mean this dark history like I mean which are usually sort of not surfaced on a textile, on the surface of the ornate textiles, the brilliantly dyed and then minutely embroidered textiles, but these are the kind of undertones we do see in the colonial textile trade and which are also very much part of the history of textiles that we study today. So, this kind of aspect we see that how textiles that sort of like I mean were part of the colonial catalogues and exhibitions and then how that played an important role in terms of like the kind of the hierarchy, subjugation, suppression of the artisans who make the textiles as well as the communities who reside in the Indian subcontinent. So, textiles played a very important role in making the identity of the people in the Indian subcontinent as well as sort of making this hierarchy between the colonizers and the colonized

prominent. So, the other thing which is then, like I mean, is very much connected to what we have already discussed so far is the marginalization of the indigenous textiles and the rise of the anti-colonial resistance. This will be the other topic that we will be touching upon this week.

So, marginalization of the Indigenous textiles, what we will see that I mean in the early phase of the documentation in the late 18th century, in the early 19th century, and so on, there is this high interest in terms of documenting the different kinds of Indigenous textiles and there were a number of people will be talking about them that how they were interested to study the different aspects of the South Asian textiles, the Indian textiles and sort of implementing the merits of these textiles in the production in England and other parts of Western Europe. But then we also see that it was the simultaneous process in which the colonial government was sort of very systematically subjugating the role of the Indian artisans and eventually the textiles and the other craft objects they have created. So, that way what happened was we see that how this marginalization of the indigenous textiles that sort of led towards the loss of jobs and livelihood for a large group of people in the Indian subcontinent and sort of how that made a huge impact in the society and that also played a very important role in terms of the rise of anti-colonial resistance. So, we do not really see that I mean textiles were used as a very strong tool for anti-colonial resistance in the 19th century, but the thing is, we also see during this time some of the dyestuff (for example, forced agriculture of indigo). So, those kinds of cultivation (of indigo) how those sort of also generated a huge outcry at the same time, resistance from the farmers in the Indian subcontinent. So, those kinds of issues, which are maybe not directly textile but related to textile productions, were equally important in terms of how we understand anti-colonial resistance today.

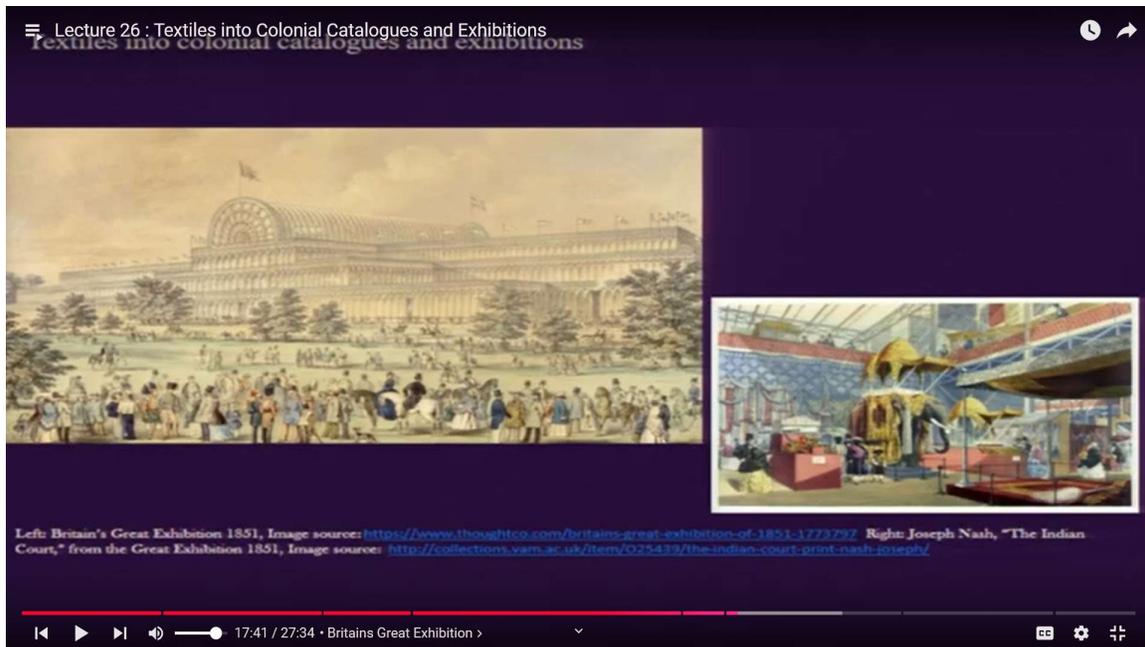
So, that leads to the 20th century intervention and that is the making of Khadi. So, from very early in the 20th century, we see that I mean the long-lasting impact of Khadi and, of course, its role in nation-building and understanding self-sufficiency, something that Mahatma Gandhi had proposed. So, these are the issues we'll be looking at in depth in this week and in the slide, we also have this image and that comes from James Forbes Watson



and in which we see that there is this fragment of a textile which is then put in an album and then with the level so that I mean we know that what kind of textile we are looking at and of course this kind of documentations were not made for the textile producers or the audience in the Indian subcontinent but they were produced for the archives in Western Europe and for some of the institutions in the Indian subcontinent but those were directly under the British government. Now if we see that I mean what kind of this the nature of collection that sort of like I mean took place and so before we come to like I mean the ways

in collecting we can see that I mean what happened that when some of the collections were displayed.

So, the display is something we can understand that a number of those collections were all aiming towards that I mean they will be eventually displayed in a public ground, and then a large group of people would be able to see them.



Seeing, in this case, is not something as a harmless way of seeing but when one sees ... all these different kind of textiles and craft productions of high master skilled and so those things that says that I mean all this kind of skill and everything else and now under the rule of the British. So, it's a way of ... showing the power of the ruling monarch in England. So, we see that I mean the textiles into this colonial catalogues and exhibitions this probably like I mean we can start this discussion around this landmark exhibition project that took place in London that is called the Britain's Great Exhibition in 1851. So, and this particular venue that we have in the left side of the screen it was created it was called the Crystal Palace and this Crystal Palace was built with teal and glass. So, it's kind of like it's a new way of building that we can see and in this exhibition venue large group of people showed up and within this exhibition venue what we see that of course a lot of different kind of things were projected and it was initially was sort planned as a venue to show the industrial growth in England but then it also sort of covered a large other objects which were snatched

or taken from the countries or the lands which were under the colonial rule and India was certainly a very important part of this exhibition.



So, on the right side of the screen here, we have images from the display in which we can see the Indian Pavilion or the Indian Court in which we see different kinds of objects and mostly, these are the objects from the Indian courts which were displayed at the exhibition venue for people to appreciate them, people to be in awe of different kind of objects which were made in the Indian subcontinent. So, what we see when these things that I mean there are again like I mean the things that we see in this exhibition are something (either large scale or small scale) they are portable and they were sort of brought from India England in the venue, and it was definitely different from the immovable things. So, for example an immovable architecture or people who cannot be always very easily removed from the places and brought to somewhere else in a large community. So, the 1851 exhibition what we see that in one hand it was sort of about the growth of the British industry and at the same time showing what kind of growth is this and it is sort of like I mean in comparison with the colonized countries in which all these different craft practices were seen as something that is inferior to the industrial growth in Britain. Now at the same time even though the craft objects were considered as inferior but this highly masterful execution of this craft objects also made people consider that how this kind of objects cannot be produced in England. So, it is something we can see that in one hand, they were already

sort of like I mean, making the hierarchy that how the industrial objects in Britain were in a much higher position than the craft objects produced by these so-called primitive countries, but at the same time this primitive (so-called primitive) objects were having their own merits something that people were also envy about. So, this kind ... duality we see that to be ... very much present in these objects and the kind of display that was made possible in this venue.

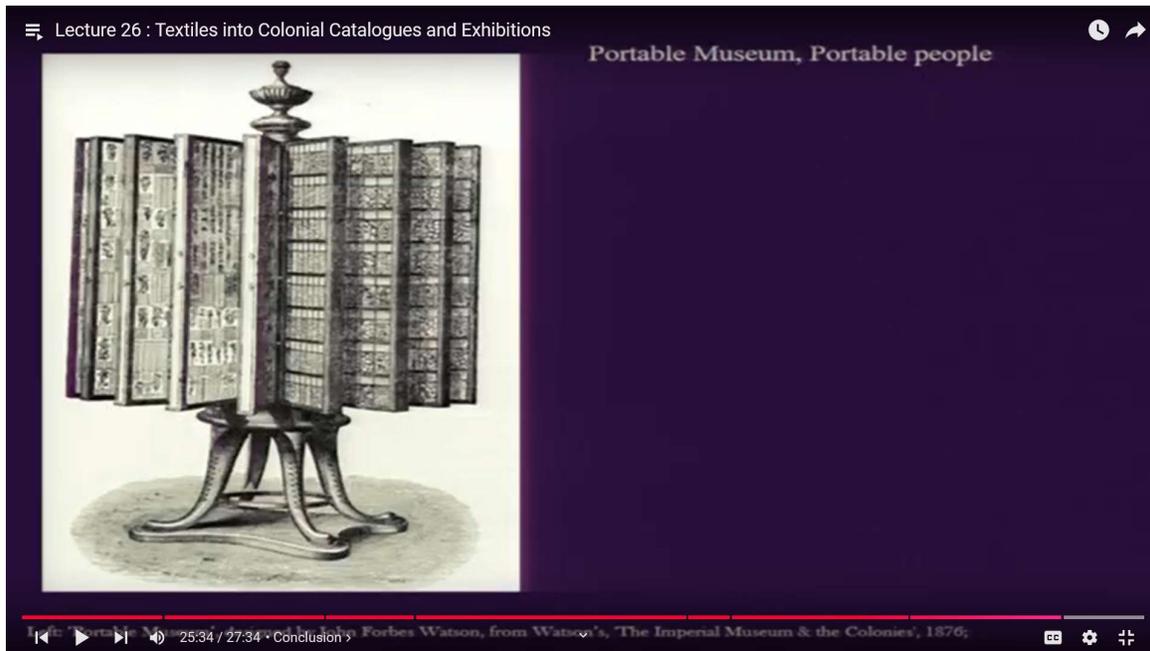
Now what we see that I mean this is also the exhibition in which like Kohinoor Diamond was displayed for the first time for the audience in western Europe and a lot of like different arrangements were made and so on. Saloni Mathur and then William Dalrymple all of them



they talk about this display and then what we also see during this time is that particular kind of displays were made possible. So, for example this one image that we have here on screen and that is made by Joseph Nash and in this image what we see there is this royal tent which is kind of put up and tent is something we have discussed earlier that how tent is something as a movable architectural form that comes up in many of the discussions. So, for example in Semper's understanding of the relationship between architecture and textile as we have seen earlier and then we have also discussed that how the Mughal tents and so on the Lal Dehra and the other tents in the Mughal context we see them to be like such an important part of ... the kingship and also at the same time like I mean sort of making a

space within like wherever they are moving to. So, these kinds of aspects we see them there that how this tent setup within this exhibition venue was very like thoughtfully carried out so that like I mean the visitors whoever are visiting there will be transported to a land which is far away from Western Europe also far away from the culture of Western Europe very easily. So, in this tent setup what we see that I mean this is I mean of course it's this elaborate tent setup in which there are those expensive hangings and presumably these hangings are made of expensive silk brocade and perhaps with embroidery, Zardozi embroidery and so on because we can see the gold being like shining in the light and then we also have different other kind of objects so for example these expensive rugs and then there are different kind of like I mean furniture and then in this Darbar setup and the center of this place we see there is this throne which has been shown here and the throne was actually gifted by the king of Travancore to the queen of England (Victoria) and then of course we also see that I mean here there is a crown and that crown perhaps it belonged to the king of Oudh or Awadh in Northern India (Lucknow would be part of that) and then we also see that there are other objects so for example there is this royal Jhama or like I mean this costume of the Raja of Bundi from Rajasthan so it's kind of like I mean the way I was talking about this unification of the land we can see it here that how different parts of the Indian subcontinent and all acquired from the different princely states were brought together under the same tent so it kind of like this tent gives the sense of what all different regions the British came to rule or like I mean the British came to sort of like I mean have their agreement of rule with the princely states and here we see that I mean there is this one visitor and then there is this one security person so they are almost like I mean stepping into this world which is not the usual world that people in England are habituated to see. So this is the kind of like the unification of the idea of this imagined imagination of this land that we can see in this exhibition venue and how the assimilation of these different kinds of objects was sort of, like, I mean, put forward to make this kind of imagination possible.

With that we can also see that I mean there was a understanding of these objects were not



just made for displaying at this particular venue but then it was also made as part of like I mean disseminating the knowledge and that made an intervention towards making of the portable museum. Then we also see that I mean how making of the portable museum and subsequent exhibitions that made people sort of like I mean on the move as well but then I use the word portable people because in some of the context we see that the artisans were treated as objects and like the ... portable objects which were sort of made into this transition, the people were also sort of like I mean uprooted from one place and then like I mean made to visit certain other places.

So we will continue on this discussion more in the next lecture so for now we'll be sort of like I mean concluding this lecture by seeing that how this idea of the colonial exhibition and the colonial cataloguing is something that was very much part of like I mean making this extensive archives, but also sort of feeding into this imagination of the unified Indian subcontinent which the British was very much aiming towards, thank you.