



# Kalamkari Art: The Cultural Heritage of Andhra Pradesh

Dr. V.Brahmaiah<sup>1</sup>

Mandal Education Officer (MEO), Vontimitta  
Kadapa, Andhra Pradesh.

## Abstract:

This article describes the ancient textile craft of India. This significant art form is named Kalamkari from the state of Andhra Pradesh. This art originated in two areas in Andhra Pradesh, like Srikalahasti and Machilipatnam. There are traditionally two methods followed, such as hand-painted, and the latter is block-printed art form. The article focuses on Srikalahasti work and methods and preparation of colors and materials. By the 16th century, the Kalamkari occupied a major cotton industry, largely exported to other countries, and challenged the English cotton industry. From the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the craft form started its downfall due to several reasons, and the latest developments taken up by the private and public sectors were also discussed.

**Key words:** Kalamkari, Cotton, Textile, Srikalahasti, Myrobalan, Cow milk

## Introduction:

In ancient times, the traditional story tellers' chitrakattis would go every village by telling famous tales from Indian mythology. Throughout history, they have increasingly used plant-based dyes and enormous canvases painted on-site utilizing crude techniques to represent the narrative. Consequently, the first Kalamkari was born. The Persian language gave rise to the term "Kalamkari," which is composed of the two separate words "kalam" (ghalam) and "kari." In Sanskrit, "kari" means "decorative work," and "kalam" means pen. Generally speaking, the definition of Kalamkari is "a decorative drawing created with a pen." A bamboo stick that has been shaped is the pen used to create this artwork.

It is an age-old Indian textile craft. Traditionally, cotton cloth is painted by hand or block printed by using mineral and vegetable dyes. This style flourished around temples and their patronage and so had an almost religious identity as scrolls, temple hangings, chariot banners and the like, depicted deities and scenes taken from the great Hindu epics. Currently, the village of Sri Kalahasti in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh is home to the majority of the hand-painted kalamkari practitioners. The Mughals fostered the growth of the printed fashion. The most common motifs are those found in nature, such as intertwined leaves, flowers, etc. These days, the Machilipatnam area is where this technique is primarily performed.

The Golconda sultanate and the Mughals supported the evolution of the Kalamkari craft, which is done at Pedana, close to Machilipatnam in the Krishna region of Andhra Pradesh. Sri Kalahasti is located close to the Tirupathi temple town. Approximately 80 miles separate it from Chennai (Madras). In the Middle Ages, Hyderabad's affluent Golconda sultanate was home to the height of this art style. The people who practiced this skill in the provinces of Golconda and Coromandel were referred to as "Qualamkars" by the Mughals who were their patrons. The majority of the components seen in Lepakshi paintings can be seen to have originated from Deccani paintings, which in turn derived from the indigenous Vijayanagara painting style and the Lepakshi mural tradition. For these reasons, the majority of what we know about Kalamkari corresponds

### **Historical background:**

It is estimated that India has a textile heritage dating back over three millennia. Indian silks and brocades are well-known to the world's elite, but in the 18th and 19th centuries, the humble kalamkari on cotton had a profound effect and transformed the country's textile trade. Although dye painting cloth is considered an ancient Indian custom, its exact origins are unknown. The oldest known trace of the custom appears to be a piece of dye-painted cloth discovered among the ruins of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa. While some of the greatest specimens that may be found date back to the 16th century, the oldest sample is likely from that era.

There are two primary Kalamkari styles. The hand-painted technique, which is widely used in Srikalahasti, and the block-printed form, which is employed in Machilipatnam. The hand painted style of kalamkari is less prevalent than the block printed version, which is utilized in many lifestyle and home products. Due to the popularity of temples and the patronage they had, this style developed and associated with religious identity because scrolls, hangings, banners.

### **Kalamkari Work at Srikalahasti:**

Srikalahasti is one of the main pilgrimage centre in the Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. which is serving as chief centre for textile painting called Kalamkari which are hand painted stories from indian mythology. This art from being practice for 200 years retains ancient techniques of dying which have been passed down from generations. The Kalamkari painting involves several steps of dying , bleaching, hand painting, line drawing, washing and ironing.

### **Technique:**

The Kalamkari painting technique is very lengthy and takes much time. In some cases it takes several days to produce a cloth subjected to the quality of the cloth, water used and the availability of local minerals to be used as mordents.



**Fig. 1. Sitarama Kalyanam, Kalamkari Style**

The techniques involved in Machilipatnam style and Srikalahasti are differs slightly in its processing but the materials are similar. In Srikalahasti, the cotton cloth is finely washed with water to remove dirt on it for effective painting work. Then it will dried in the sun light. Then cloth will be again soaked for some time in buffalo milk mixed with myrobalan powder. This is once again followed by drying after squeezing out. Then charcoal pencil made of a burnt tamarind twigs to draw the preliminary sketching for a required design. Then a pen made of bamboo reed, with a sharp tip is to be kept ready for drawing. A piece of cotton cloth is wrapped tightly upon the sharp tip of the pen, with the help of a thread.

Kalamkari work is known for its richness of color and the use of natural dyes. But as time went on some of the natural dyes were replaced by chemical ones. This is especially true in the case of indigo, which has largely been abandoned and the chemical used produces a much lighter color. From all accounts a few craftsmen are still using indigo

#### **Extraction of colours.**

1. Myrobalan ( Karaka pindi mixed with cow milk) to obtain light yellow.
2. Kassim Kaaram ( Jaggery+ rusted iron filings\_+ water) for Black outlines.
3. Natural indigo produces blue.
4. Pomegranate produces Golden Yellow.
5. Catechu ( Suryadu Chakka) produces rosemary
6. Algerian produces Red.
7. Alum mixed with water gives out Gray
8. Cow milk ( Highlight the colours on the fabric)

#### **Application of Colour:**

The basic colors utilized in kalamkari are red, yellow, blue, green, and black. The color scheme utilized in Kalamkari is distinct and adheres to several themes. One of the key characteristics of Kalamkari art is this. In accordance with Indian aesthetic standards, women are always portrayed in yellow, gods are in blue, and devils in reds and greens. Typically, lotus motifs are painted on red backgrounds. Religion is the most frequently featured theme in kalamkari paintings, which feature stunning depictions of sun chariots, well-known deities, and scenes from epic tales like the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and other important Indian mythologies. Indian madder root is used to create the red color, mango bark or pomegranate seeds are used to create the yellow color, myrobalan fruit is used to create the black color, and so on. Thus, pigment dyes are widely used by the Kalamkari people. Copper, tin, alum, mineral salts etc. are also used as mordants.

The bamboo reed that is used to create the Kalam, or pen, has its tip folded up with a woolen cloth and secured with cotton thread. It should be emphasized that the pen's tip should always be sharp and thin so that the woolen ball will absorb the dye when the pen is dipped in the solution. Next, the artists hold the pen upright and gently press the woolen ball, dragging it along the needed design on the cloth. After doing this, the dye exits the woolen ball and travels through the bamboo point before arriving to the fabric.

This art form is created through a number of steps. First, the material is immersed in a concoction of chebulic myrobalan (known locally as Karaka pindi) and milk, either from a buffalo or a cow. This will preserve the richness of the colors used and give the fabric a unique smoothness. Following this procedure, the material is carefully cleaned under running water to get rid of the milky smell. After that, blocks are used for designing, or a specially prepared bamboo stick dipped in the fermented jaggery solution is used to draw the designs. Vegetable dyes are then added. Following the coloring process, the material is meticulously cleaned. The application of "alum" ensures.

### **Down fall of Kalamkari:**

The English weavers opposed the flux of cotton imported from India must date back to the 1670s. By 1690, linen drapers and dyers had joined the demonstration. In a widespread demonstration against was called up against the imports of Indian Kalamkari textile, 5,000 English weavers stormed the House of Commons. Ultimately that led to passed a legislation on prohibiting the entry of Indian silks and cottons that had been dyed or printed into Britain, with the exception of re export Crill (2008). This earmarked the declaim of Kalamkari art. There were many factors effected to Kalamkari's rapid decrease in comparison to other Indian textile trades. The growth of the European textile business in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was one of the initial causes. Craftsmen who were masters in their trade died without leaving heirs, and workers were forced into poverty.

However, the industry's disadvantage is that, because to its cottage-based and decentralized structure, it is quite disorganized. In addition, several serious issues with design, innovation, and technological advancements, as well as a highly decentralized, unstructured, and customized manufacturing system affected the sector. Additionally, the industry is fragmented, has minimal investment and capitalization, and has few resources available for marketing, distribution, and production. Growing competition from creative designs, dwindling supply of high-quality raw materials, and expensive manufacturing and transportation expenses are factors that contribute to the industry's slow growth. gradation, highly decentralized and unstructuralised and individualized production system. And fragmented industry, limited capitalization and low investment, limited resources for production , distribution, marketing. Increasing threat form imaginative designs, declining supply of fine quality raw material and high cost for production and transportation are influencing factors for the growth less industry.

### **Suggestions:**

1. Promote Srikalahasti is highly centered for tourism and craft of Kalamkari. Government should take care initiation to promote the cultural tourism at Srikalahasti. It gives positive result on the craft of Kalamkari.
2. To prevent mass production and printing of duplicate or imitation of Kalamkari designs on cheaper clothes under name of designer ware. Every design should be registered under a copy right. Especially these imitating works should be banned near and off the temple locations.
3. Uniformity in price should be maintained under an umbrella of society depends upon the categorization of art and level of difficulty in design and process.

Adaptation and introduction of innovative methods in technology should be accepted R&D should be involved to invent new designs in collaboration of designers and artisans and improve

## Support and Promotion:

'The rough texture of Kalamkari textile and strong colours which did not appealed to the Europeans in the later times. When compared to the delicate chintz work of art, Kalamkari cloth considered as simple and rudimentary. This Kalamakari artists illustrates scenes from epics which were showcased at the Indian & colonial Exhibition in London in 1886 and attracted many people. After independence one can saw the near disappearance of the industry at Machilipatnam. At the same time at Kalahasti temple patrons and patronage for Kalahasti temple has started to decline and the zamindars and art lovers and patrons lost wealth and power of patronage. In the year 1952 Kalamkari was revived at Machilipatnam with the help of some local textile lovers and support of the All India Handicrafts board.(Gillow and Barnard, 1991).

## Conclusion:

Kalamakari was greatly encouraged by Mughals and Bahmani kingdoms. The bold patterns and designs were created for Kalamkari. Dyes used for this work are purely extracted vegetable. The Kalamkari paintings now widely using for various kinds of textile products like saris, bed sheets, towels, wall hangings, mats, pillow covers, door curtains and dress materials for women and men in this fashioned era.

Huge demand was there for the kalamkari art in 16<sup>th</sup> century across the international markets like Iran, Maldives, Burma, and Europe. Kalamkari paintings were used as currency in the spice trade. With the advent of the British, encouraged a lot in initial days for exquisite designs and indigenous methods and decorative nature of Kalamkari. Later it has faced many challenges from the European cotton traders forced the government to restrict the export of Kalamkari products. After Independence, a new spirit aroused in the traditional art lovers and patrons of India. The All India Handicrafts Board has come forward to preserve and revive this art form. There were very limited families at Sri Kalahasti are practicing Kalamkari and block printing work at Machilipatnam. Today very limited number of craftsmen practicing Kalamakari as their legacy of their ancestors.

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