Original Article ISSN (Online): 2582-7472

INDIAN CHINTZ-CRAFT IDENTIFICATION AS AN EXQUISITE HAND-PAINTED TRADITIONAL TEXTILE

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Received 06 July 2023 Accepted 04 November 2023 Published 10 November 2023

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DO

10.29121/shodhkosh.v4.i2.2023.590

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

The present social and environmental contexts are very importantly governed by the interplay of crafts, fashion, and sustainability. Their efficient combination contributes to employment generation and the creation of new economic avenues for the country. This is the key focus issue that research studies should attempt to achieve. There is a need to understand "craft", with a perspective that exerts strength, glory, social and cultural connections. In present times, "Kalamkari" is an extremely popular Indian traditional textile craft in which, patterns are drawn with bamboo sticks called "kalam" on cotton fabric. This is a derivative of patterning the fabric with resist and mordant painting and then natural dyeing to pattern them. In relation to this painting tradition, the word "Chintz," is a popular terminology from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the world of textiles. The term according to the researcher is referred to a textile, as well as a technique, involving the mordant and resist painting with natural dyes on cotton fabrics only. This textile, with its awestruck designs, revolutionized global trade and made India popular globally. During that period, the Chintz were exported to various countries like Japan, Thailand, Africa, and most importantly to European countries. The Indian Chintz export to European countries reached immense popularity, revolutionizing the "Chintz Craze" with drastically increased demand. During the industrial revolution in Europe, these beautiful hand-crafted textiles created a threat to the European textile Industry. Hence the chintz export from India was banned, which led to the downfall in their demand and the gradual extinction of these textiles along with the meticulously perfected techniques involved in making them. In 1958, Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay tried to revive this technique (mordant and resist painting with a bamboo pen) and termed it "Kalamkari". This led to the evolution of two different forms related to this ancient craft based on the place it was revived, namely Kalamkari from Sri-Kalahasti and Machilipatnam. This paper is an attempt to retrieve the rich history of the Indian Chintz, with its main characteristic features, technique, and find differences between the present styles with the ancient traditional forms of mordant and resist painting technique with natural dyes. The researcher has made an earnest effort in establishing and retrieving the lost identity of this textile. It was also observed that there is a difference between the traditional style and revived forms (Sri-kalahasti and Machilipatnam) styles with respect to the materials, motifs, colors, and workmanship, as observed from painted pieces that were studied.

Keywords: Chintz, Kalamkari, Craft Sustainability, Mordant and Resist Painting

1. INTRODUCTION

India is well known for its diversified culture with endless tales of its beauty. The rich Indian culture is reflected in various art forms, which talk of its grandeur

and glory. The cultural roots are preserved in the form of various traditional textile practices in India. Amongst the diverse and most unique heritage resources, are various printed and painted textiles that have their richness embarked on their surfaces. A very popular technique of mordant and resist painting was well known in India from ancient times. These textiles occupied an important position because of its global demand as trade goods. It was only India that had mastered the cotton spinning and weaving technology and the technique of patterning fabrics with natural dyes. As per Rosemary Crill these were named as Chintz or Indian Chintz, (Figure 1) which were hand painted fabrics with mordant and resist using natural dyes on cottons only. These were made in India around the Coromandel coast and hence also known as Coromondel Chintz. Irwin & Margret (1971). These were mainly made in late seventeenth and early eighteenth century for foreign exports. Since these were hand painted by means of a bamboo pen these were later baptized as Kalamakari under the patronship of Qutub Shahi of Golconda in seventeenth century. The term usage now from the year 1957, is inseparably attached to the painted and block-printed cotton and silk textiles, produced in the Coromandel Coast (parts of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu) of India. Varadarajan (1979). Today, two of the most prominent centers of kalamkari production are Srikalahasti (Chittoor District) and Machilipatnam (Krishna District) in Andhra Pradesh. While in Srikalahasti, the textiles are literally painted with pens made out of bamboo on cotton, in Machilipatnam style blocks and kalam, both are used. The Indian Chintz the terminology very popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth century both applied to textiles and the technique of mordant and resist painted with natural dyes. Irwin & Margret (1971). These with its fine artistic appeal, design delicacy, and uniqueness were a rare combination of indigenous technique, which was one of its kind. With the usage of natural dyes and intricate painting, these textile forms were one of the rarest in the world and a very popular trade good. These painted textiles are now the most precious possessions in the museums of the world. As quoted by Anand (1979), in Homage to Kalamkari "The differences in the techniques spewed another difference in the nomenclature and this has given rise in the confusion". Hence the main aim of this paper is to elucidate the term chintz with reference to the technique and design from the prevailing present kalamakari styles and establish its unique craft identity. Divakala and Muthian (2014)

2. METHODOLOGY

This is a historical qualitative study that includes thorough literature research and analysis of textual and visual information. This process is combined with case studies on master crafts persons engaged in practicing the crafts. Interviews, interactions, and telephonic conversations along with personal visits were used for primary data collection. Extensive desk research and analysis of literature and visuals were conducted for the study. Sethna (1979)

3. ORIGIN OF CHINTZ

The Indian Chintz, traditionally known as Coromandel Chintz, made history due to its popularity worldwide. It was popular globally and played a very important role in Indian trade from the 15th to 18th century (Crill. R). These textiles were in great demand because, of the technology of cotton weaving spinning, and design painting with natural dyes which were unique and inherent only in India. The technique of mordant and resist painting was only mastered by Indian master craftsperson at that point in time. The word "chintz" is derived from the Hindustani

word "chhint" or "chint", for spotted cloth. Later the word "Chintes", "Chindeys" or "Cheetes" (derived from the hindi word Chint meaning variegated or speckled) were used to this painted cloth. There were many name derivations to this textile being associated with the market for which it was made or for the specific product. The etymology associated consisted of pintadoes by Portuguese, sitz by Dutch, Sarasa by Japanese, Chinoiseries by Chinese, Kalamkari in Iran. Later the word Palampore evolved which was derived from the hindi-persian hybrid Palang-Posh meaning a bed cover. The initial use of Chintz fabric was for canopies, later on, floor spreads, wall hangings and bed sheets and only in the late seventeenth century as fashion fabrics for garments. Since the seventeenth century, the term Indian chintz has been used for Indian cotton cloth with a floral style of decoration developed by hand drawing and dyeing with mordants and resists. (Crill R). In some of the later works block printing was combined with hand-painted ones. The designs were made to specifications prescribed by the importers, and the artisans were expected to convert the designs as per the Indian Styles, which made them unique and exquisite. The major region (Figure 2) for chintz production was the area around the Coromandel coast with major centers of production being Nagapattim, Pondicherry, Pulikat, Palakollu, Berhampur and Khandesh in Golconda.

Figure 1



Figure 1 Wall Hanging -Mordant and Resist Painted, 1750ca-1800 ca

Source https://www.metmuseum.org

4. CHINTZ AND GLOBAL TRADE

Chintz textiles and techniques originated in India, around Southeast Asia – Coromandel Coast. These textiles were hand painted by application of mordant using, a bamboo pen referred to as kalam, along with a resist dyeing technique on cotton fabrics, Varadarajan (1979). The early European merchants were awestruck by the design brilliance and the color fastness produced by the combination of mordant and dyes on Indian painted textiles. In 1611, the English founded a trading settlement in Masulipatnam on the Coromandel coast of south India followed by Dutch in 1614 and the French in 1690, Roy & Riello (2009). These textiles were made mainly for export to various countries. It was mainly served as exchange currencies and were traded globally for various commodities. It played a very important role in establishing trade and relations with different countries around

the globe. These were mainly exported to many countries like Portuguese, Dutch, Indonesia, China, Thailand, Japan, Sri Lanka, Africa, and many more. These, due to their intricate design, and unique and exclusive hand-painted and printed craftsmanship established a rich cultural identity and fame for India. These were mainly used as an exchange currency and were traded to European and Indonesian markets for the exchange of spices. As the European textile industry advanced, its exports declined. (Crill. R.) This resulted in reduced manufacturing and the gradual extinction of the textile and technique in India. With this, it gradually lost its glory, traces, and identity in the Indian market and craft sector. As most of the rare and exquisite masterpieces were exported to Europe, only a few masterpieces (samples) have survived which are quite valuable. Now, these are mainly found as textile pieces preserved and restored in rich repositories, found at very few Indian and foreign museums. This embarked the loss of the intricate and exquisite skills of painting with natural dyes on textiles.

Figure 2



Figure 2 Ancient Indian Map

Source Crill (2015) "Fabrics of India" V&A Publication

5. MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUE

A very essential material was the base fabric used in the chintz painting. A handspun and woven cotton fabric with a very fine count with a smooth surface finish achieved by beetling was of utmost essential for these textiles. Indian spinners and weavers were master craftsmen in the production of the finest cotton dating back to 3500-2000 BCE. This was one of the age-old techniques that Indian artisans had mastered which the Westerners were not aware of. This fabric apart from being spiritually pure, imparted excellent absorbency and strength to undergo the multistage chintz process. The well-perfected knowledge of mordant painting with the right combination of natural dyes enabled the dyer to produce a wide array of colors using natural materials, which were inherent to the local habitat. Various natural materials used were myrobalan, lac, madder, turmeric, and indigo, resulting in the development of a wide array of color development, which imparted awestruck beauty with excellent light and color fastness. The technology and precise chemistry were so advanced that modern-day science is unable to explain them. The right

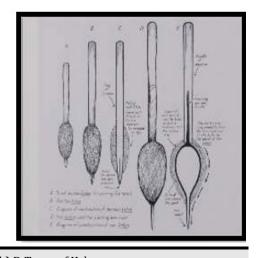
combination of beeswax with certain animal fats resulted in the achievement of fine lines for the development of wax resist. Ghosh (2018)

The major tool being used was a pen made of bamboo called "kalam" or Oalam. These were designed specifically for three uses. First solely for painting the outline, for this, a simple bamboo stick was sharpened or split-tipped, which resulted in a point used for creating a sharp outline. The bamboo stick was often padded with a sponge and wadding of cloth secured by a cotton thread. This bulb so created holds the excess paint. Being porous in nature it acts as a reservoir for excess ink, which was released on the pressing. This tool was used for filling up the color. The other one was made up of metal, which was used for wax application. Figure 3 describes the detailed structures of different types of kalam. There were even block-makers who carved blocks. These were used for creating an inferior variety of chintz textiles, where the outlines were printed using blocks. Irwin & Kathrene (1970), So the entire agency (referred to as workshop in the related literature) involved in chintz making comprised of master artisans and crafts-persons who were farmers, spinners, weavers, washermen, painters, dyers, block makers, and smelters. Apart from these, locally available materials like a red dye-bearing plant called "Chay" played an important role in the development of red natural dye. The rich calcium and magnesium content in the river around the Coromandel coast resulted in the development of color vibrancy of natural dyes and meticulous mordant-resist painting technique combined with the skills of artisans, all perfected the chintz textile design and its vibrancy to unmatched perfection.

Figure 3



Figure 3 (a) Tools Used Source Kalamkari Museum Pedana



(b) B-Types of Kalam **Source** Journal of Textile History, No.1(2nd Edition), Ahmedabad: Calico Museum of Textiles

6. TECHNIQUE

Employing his artistic skill, an artist painted the motifs on cotton or linen fabric using a special painting and dyeing technique, with a unique tool referred to as "kalam" a bamboo pen with a bulb at front, containing mordant and then processed the textile in natural dye. The areas painted with the mordants resulted in colour development due to dye adherence Hadaway (1917). This process was lengthy and had to be repeated for each color in the design using right combination of mordant and natural dye. The right mordant and dye combination had to be used for the right colour and shade achievement. Because these were hand-created, each design was

unique. The main characteristic feature of this technique was hand-painting and multi-color and hence dyeing in stages became an inherent part of the process making it laborious and elaborate. The detailed procedure follows- the cloth was flattened and burnished with buffalo milk and myrobalan (a dried fruit containing tannin) to give it a smooth surface. The milk proteins on the fabric formed sites for chemical bonding for the natural dyes. The design patterns were either traced or freehand drawn using burnt tamarind twigs or charcoal. Then the design outlines were painted with mordants, iron oxide was used for the black outline while alum mordant tinted with sapan wood was used for the red color. Then the fabric was allowed to dry in sunlight and boiled in water that contained chay root. This resulted in the development of black and red colors in respective areas. Next stage was dyeing with blue, for this the entire fabric was covered with wax except for areas to be colored with blue. Then the indigo vat was developed, and the entire fabric was immersed in the vat to dye the blue, later the area was oxidized to achieve blue color. The wax on the fabric was scraped and washed. The majority of the design was developed by repeatedly immersing the fabric in a dye bath after mordant repainting with a thickening agent. A variety of colors were achieved in this manner by multi-stage mordant application and repeated dyeing, with re-mordanting with harda and exposure to sunlight. Sunlight played an important role in the development of color. The chintz was developed in various colors namely orange, brown, pink, crimson, lilac, purple, and black. Repeated washing of the fabric in flowing river water was a very important step that resulted in removing the excess of the madder in the non-mordanted areas. To get rid of any remaining color in the non-mordanted parts and to set the color in the mordanted areas, the fabric was aged in the sun. Finally, any areas requiring yellow were painted using harda, and green was achieved by re-painting with yellow over indigo (including any area dyed blue that was designed to be green in the finished fabric). The violet color was achieved by re-painting red-colored areas with indigo. The following diagram demonstrates the steps in chintz making technique as given by W.S. Hadaway, V&A Museum: T.1A-G-1920 as documented in Crill (2008) "Fabrics OF India" V&A Publication.

Figure 4





Figure 4 Steps Showing Chintz Process Given by W. S. Hadaway, V & A: T.1A-G-1920

Source Crill (2008) "Fabrics of India" V& A Publication

7. DESIGN, MOTIFS AND COLOUR

Chintz patterns were usually very complex and elaborate, depicting a wide variety of plants, flowers, and animals. The main theme is the tree of life or the flowering tree. Each element was an exaggerated form of a natural object. Various flowers included in the design vocabulary of chintz were roses, chrysanthemums, marigolds, lilies, tulips, iris etc. These were depicted in multi-dimensional and directional representation with very fine detailing of the floral components including the center, petals, and leaves, all in a very artistic way. The leaves were depicted in the form of serrated and palmate forms. In the tree of life design, the main stem was sometimes depicted in a serpentine form reaching from the ground and escalating the spread of foliage to the sky. This was often in plain or represented with fine detailing. The base was represented in the form of a mound which was either scaled or with exposed roots or in the form of exaggerated vases. The mound at the base was a symbolic depiction as supporting various life forms often had motives of various ground animals namely dear horses, goats, elephants, and horses, etc and the floral and foliage spread had birds like peacocks, hens, parrots, squirrels, etc. Because these were hand-crafted, each design was unique. These flowers were mainly placed in a multi-directional manner intertwined by a network of foliage around the central fruit-bearing serpentine tree emerging from a hillock with stylized peaks and rocks. Other patterns consisted of very complex and elaborate features depicting a wide variety of plants, flowers and animals, and birds. These pieces were a regular feature of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century trade to Europe and were prepared as various articles like wall hangings, bed coverings, and table covers. Crill (2015)

The entire design was created in one, two, or three colors. The multi-colored ones were more expensive as they involved multi-stage processing with mordant and resist painting with dyeing for the achievement of multi-colored. While there were the ones created with the outline by block printing were less exquisite and expensive. There were also very cheap versions created. Gillow & Barnard (2008)

8. PRESENT STATUS

Indian Chintz was bought and used only by the wealthiest classes as these were very expensive. The reason being, they were mainly made for export, to the European and other markets with their specifications as prescribed by foreign traders. But as the European textile industry advanced and the foreign traders realized the extreme popularity of these textile articles was a threat to their own markets. They imposed a ban on the Chintz export from India. As a result, the demand gradually declined. This resulted in a slow decline in chintz making, leading to the gradual extinction of these textiles and the technique then (Crill. R). The majority of the textile artifacts were exported, this practice resulted in no evidence of the remains of the techniques as well as textile pieces in India. The only surviving evidence today are a few masterpieces (samples) that have survived and are quite valuable. These are mainly in form of textile pieces preserved and restored in various museums across the world. However, in 1958, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay attempted to revive the art of mordant and resist painting with kalam under the name of kalamkari. Pant & Thomas (1981). There evolved two styles of painting, one in the region of Sri-Kalahasti and the other in the region of Machilipatnam. However, there is a close relationship between each style and the original chintz technique, yet each one has its unique identity which is enumerated below. Guy (1998)

8.1. KALAMKARI OF MACHILIPATNAM

This style was evolved and practiced around the region of Pedana, Masulipatnam, near the Coromandel Coast. The motifs were mainly floral, stylized and inspired by the Persian and Mughal-styled flowers from nature. Its designs were mainly all over with floral network and had a very detailed bold motif with a black outline. Traditionally the entire design was block printed with an outline block and the kalam painting was only used for filling up the colors. There was an artisanal agency involved in making a very fine and detailed wooden block making, that was developed around the region to support this. However, these days, the designs, have lost their detailing and intricacy. The basic technique in making is direct block printing and mordant painting using kalam. The resist is not used in the present-day process. The floral designs that were intricate are very simple now. However, it shares a commonality with Chintz in terms of usage of floral designs but with a very different motif and design character. However, these days blocks are used for outlines as well as filling instead of kalam and presently there are only a very few artisans working with natural dyes on the same. According to Sri-Nivasan P. master craftsperson in the Masulipatnam style of kalamkari, most of the natural dyes have been replaced by synthetic dyes and pigments, with minimal usage of kalam.

8.2. KALAMKARI OF SRI-KALAHASTI

This style of painting evolved in the region of Sri-kalahasti, the abode of temples. It comprises of completely mordant painting design using Kalam and then natural dyed for color development. Initially, it was practiced to create religious forms and deities of temple tradition and was used as a sacred temple cloth. The main motifs on these religious and ceremonial cloth comprised of Hindu gods and goddesses and the main themes were the popular epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata. Later on, it even had motifs of floral and vegetation designs. However, the technique resembled quite closely to the traditionally practiced chintz technique with the use of kalam. However, the design character was very different from the chintz. It was much simplified, less detailed, and comprised of bold floral or human forms of religious themes with black outlines. These designs are completely handpainted with Kalam. The technique is direct hand painting with very less usage of resist, only while indigo dyeing. The technique mainly used is direct mordant and resist hand painting. The design consists of narratives and detailed representations of gods and goddesses and is often used as a temple or sacred cloth. Earlier this was entirely natural dyed but now a days completely painted with pigments or synthetic dyes. The kalam is still used for the outline and colour filling but presently the resist is not used at all. This tradition has lost the intricacy of motifs painted in earlier styles. Guy (2000)

9. ANALYSIS AND DIFFERENTIATION OF THE THREE STYLES OF PAINTING

The Figure 4 below shows the tree of life pieces each developed by the two prevalent styles of kalamkari- Machilipatnam and Srikalahasti along with a museum-preserved masterpiece of the original chintz. The Table 1 below, clearly elucidates the differences in the design character and technique of each painting style.

Figure 5

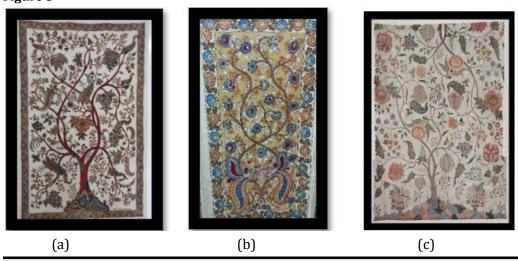


Figure 5 (a) Tree of Life, Machilipatnam Style of Kalamkari, Artist-Sri Pitchuka Srinivasan, Pedana, Massulipatnam

- (b) Tree of Life, Sri-Kalahasti Style of Kalamkari Artist-Vishwanath Reddy
- (c) Tree of Life, Chintz from 17th Century, Crill (2008), "Chintz- Indian Textiles for the West." V
- & A Publishing, from Museum Archives

Table 1

S. No	Machilipatnam Style	Sri- Kalahasti	Chintz
Main Motifs	Floral Design- allover network with borders	Figurative forms – gods and goddesses Floral design	Tree of life or flowering tree
Motif Character	Stylized flowers with few detailing	Bold Figurative human forms and floral designs with less detailing	Highly abstracted or exaggerated naturalistic floral forms with Extremely fine design details created by white resists.
Main design themes	Floral sprays and networks	Mythological Narratives	Tree of life or flowering tree
Design Layout	All overall design	As per the narrative (arranged in bands)	All over the unidirectional stem and floral repetitions with or without borders
Technique	Mordant application using blocks for outlines and filling with kalam	Mordant application with kalam and dyeing. Resist application only when indigo is used in very small areas.	Multi-stage mordant and resist painting with repeated dyeing as per the numbe of colors and tonal variations
Tools	Block And Kalam	Kalam	Kalam
Painting style	Outline with black, filling and very little detailings with black	Outline in black and filling with very little detailing in black on colored area.	Outline in black or any other colour in monochromes of same color with fine detailing created with white resist textures or by mordant painting on white areas.
Motif inspiration	Persian and Mughal Flowers	Motifs representations of gods and goddesses as in Hindu mythology and simplified floral forms	Natural floral designs inspiration is modified as per the market for which it was designed.
Main Motifs	Floral scrolls- rose, marigold, paisley	Shiva, Ganesha, Krishna, Ram, Goddesses like Vishnu and Lakshmi	Lily, iris, rose, chrysanthemum, tulip, leaves.With animal motifs- hen, cock, peacock, squirrels, panther, Deer, bird
Design Components	Flowers, leaves, veins, sprays, buds and stems as connectors	Gods and Goddesses, floral design and birds	Base/Mound-Stem Flower spread borde

Hence comparing the three styles we can conclude that each style has evolved with reference to its design and technique imparting a unique identity to the art in the present day. While sharing a few commonalities. That is, the design is the result of mordant application and then natural dyeing. The resist application (wax) existed predominately in chintz, while sparingly used for the Sri-kalahasti style and is presently totally absent in Machilipatnam style, while both styles have eliminated this character in present times. Both the present-day kalamkari styles, are derivatives of the original mordant and resist technique, that existed for making chintz, but are yet very different. The Machilipatnam style uses block for outlining and bamboo pen very sparingly for filling the colour, while in Sri-kalahasti style the total painting is done using kalam. While Indian Chintz were completely hand painted using "Kalam" and the resist was predominately used for creating finer details in the motif. Divakala (2016)

Comparing the design style and motif character, the Sri-Kalahasti motifs are very bold in forms, and Machilipatnam being fine networking in all over patterns with few details. While the Chintz motifs were very intricately detailed with either mordant painting on plain mordanted background or resist painted to form white designs on coloured foreground, resulting in an interesting contrast in either way. This design character is very unique to Indian Chintz

In the Machilipatnam style, floral motifs are stylized with Persian influence. The Sri-kalahasti style mainly uses the figurative forms of gods and goddesses, with very few floral motifs, all very bold. While chintz was designed with the most intricate and delicate floral designs, interpreted and made as per the design musters given by foreign markets (as per domestic demand). This resulted in a strange amalgamation of design with a new design character. The technique was mordant and resists painting with multistage dyeing as per—the requirement of the design. The floral designs have tonal variations in a single color created by mordant overpainting and multistage dyeing. According to the researcher's visual observation, the motif has a lot of white design renderings on the colored foreground achieved by wax resist application. This gives life to the motif. The outline can be black or the same color as the filling. The background is created white in most of the pieces, but there were colored backgrounds also. Dua (2014)

The designs are characterized by arrangements of multiple motifs in a way that creates "unity in variety and chaos". Each and every motif is a highly exaggerated and elaborated form of a naturalistic object with extremely fine detailing. The main design element is the tonal effect created by the painting technique with extremely fine details in textures created by the fine wax resist. This creates a design character due to the interesting amalgamation of white texture and tonal effect with color in a single motif. These deductions facilitate the author to refer to Chintz textiles, as the most unique with extremely intricate motif details, created with wax-resist in tonal colored effects, establishing them as most original, with a unique and different identity, which is being completely lost in the present day.

10. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that presently there are two styles of kalamkari painting existing in regions of Masullipatnam and Sri- Kalahasti (with Geographic Indications) which display a very different design character, than the original form of mordant and resist painting technique followed for the chintz (which were exported) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The two styles also can be

referred to as derivatives of the original style. But Chintz textiles, with its very unique design character, intricacy, and technique definitely calls for a differentiated identity.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author acknowledges the conversation and details from Sri Pitchuka Srinivas, Pedana, Muslipatnam (Master craftsperson in Masulipatnam Style) and details obtained from Kalamkari museum. Also acknowledges Artist Shri Vishwanath Reddy (Master craftsperson in Sri-kalahasti style) for their contribution regarding details obtained for the Sri-Kalahasti Style of Kalamkari.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

This is the original work of an academic project undertaken under, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. There was a detailed case study for the kalamkari style of painting of Sri-kalahasti, and Muslipatnam was done and a comparison and differentiation of three design character of each style of kalamkari of past and present was done by the researcher.

"I have made a study of the books mentioned in my references and have not used any line as it is from there but used the understanding gained from thereon and hence it is not possible to add/create what does not exist. All reference materials in this article have been used by me not as sentence or word by word, or/ and quoted from and has been using the zest of these articles. I am indebted to these authors for shaping my article."

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