

Design Resource

Kalamkari Painting

The Art of Fabric Painting using Natural Links
by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral Mr. C. Susanthand Mr. J.
Antony William
NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/kalamkari-painting>



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Introduction

Sri Kalahasti is located 37Km away from Tirupati in Chittoor district in Andhra Pradesh. Sri Kalahasti is well known for its traditional Kalamkari printing. The word Kalamkari is derived from the word Kalam-bamboo pen and Kari-craftsmanship. Kalamkari is a type of fabric printing traditionally done on the cotton cloth using natural materials without adding any chemicals. The craft was originated during the period of Sri Krishnadevaraya and later it is patronized by Dr. Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya. The availability of natural raw materials, good and supporting climatic conditions, abundant river water from Swarnamukhi river etc. together make Srikalahasti an ideal place for the production of Kalamkari. Kalamkari prints illustrate episodes from puranas like Ramayana and Mahabharata.



Rounded faces and long big eyes are the important features of Kalamkari prints.



The detailing of jewelry and costume.

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Kalam-the bamboo pen plays a major role in Kalamkari printing.



The craftsman displaying the art piece.

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The intricate detailing of beaded darker outlines.



The beautifully painted image of Hamsa-Swan.

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Master craftsman skillfully sketches without any tracing or reference.



The artisan involved in outlining painting/print.

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The gracefully depicted image of Yashoda and Balakrishna.



The master craftsman displaying the Matsyavantara episode.

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Tools and Raw Materials

The tools and raw materials used for the production of traditional Kalamkari printing are basic handmade and natural materials. Kalam-bamboo pen is the most important tool used in printing process. This is made of bamboo reed. A cotton cloth is rolled over the reed and it is tangled by a cotton thread. Two types of kalams are prepared for outlining and color filling processes. The cotton cloth used for the fabric printing is locally called as Gaada. Vegetable dye stuffs like Myrobalan flower (Karakapuvvu locally) and Myrobalan bud (Karakapinde locally) used to make the black dye permanent. Chavalakodi and suruduchekka are the two types of roots which are procured from local forest areas are grounded into powder to obtain red color. Pomegranate skin is used to obtain light yellow color. Alum is the mordant used in dyeing process. Khatta-is the substance boiled to obtain lighter red color.

Kasim kaaram-Iron black color solution prepared using rusted iron filings, cane jaggery and palm jaggery. These materials are dissolved in water in a closed earthen pot and allowed for fermentation. After 10 days the solution is filtered and the iron filings are taken out. The prepared Kasim kaaram is used for drawing outlines and to fill black color. The tamarind stems are burned and made into charcoal. This charcoal is used for initial sketching. The buffalo milk is used to treat the cloth which helps to avoid color spreading.



The Myrobalan treated Gaada cloth.



The Kalam-bamboo pen used for outlining.

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Suruduchekka root powder used in dyeing process.



Alum-mordant used to obtain red color.

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Kasim kaaram-Iron black color solution used for outlining.



The wooden and stone weights are placed on the cloth for tightness.

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Different sizes of Kalams.



Myrobalan bud used for treating the cloth.



Charcoal made by burning dried tamarind stems.



Chavalakodi root powder used in dyeing process.

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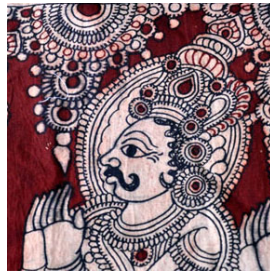
Making Process



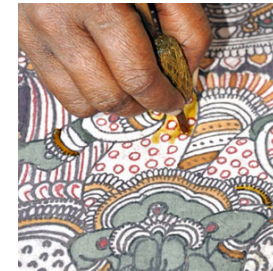
Preparation of Cloth



Initial Drawing & Outlining



Obtaining Red Color



Color Filling

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Preparation of Cloth

Initially the cotton cloth, locally known as Gaada is immersed in water overnight to remove the impurities and starch in it. The washed cloth is then treated in a solution which is made by mixing Myrobalan bud paste (Karakapinde locally), Myrobalan flower paste (Karakapoovu locally) and buffalo milk. For a length of 10 meters of cloth, 4 liters of buffalo milk is used. The cloth, after immersing in milk solution for 5 to 10 minutes is taken out and squeezed to remove the excess solution and it is allowed to dry under sun for 2 hours.

The cloth obtains the yellowish color after dyeing. This process is done to smoothen the cloth and also to avoid the spreading of the color and outline color.



The off-white cotton cloth (Gaada locally) before treating with Myrobalan solution.



The yellowish cloth is now ready for sketching.

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Initial Drawing & Outlining

The initial sketching is done on the processed cloth using charcoal which is obtained by burning tamarind branches. The thin detailing parts are drawn using pencil. Now Kalam-the bamboo pen is dipped in the kasim kaaram- Iron black solution to absorb the dye liquid. This solution is prepared by mixing cane jaggery, palm jaggery, rusted iron filings with water. The sketching is done based on the traced design with the help of Kalam using kasim kaaram. The dye color contacts the cloth when the artisan squeezes the cotton ball of Kalam slightly. This black color turns darker when it reacts with Myrobalan treated cloth. The excess outline color is removed using a soft cloth by pressing it gently on the design.



The artisan is sketching using charcoal on the surface of the treated cloth.



The skilled artisan draws the image of lord Ganesha.

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The thin lines are traced using pencil.



The Kalam is dipped in the Kasim kaaram solution to absorb the dye color.



Solution comes out from the cotton ball on squeezing the Kalam.



Outlines have darkened after the solution reacts with the Myrobalan cloth.

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The excess solution is wiped using a soft cloth.

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Obtaining Red Color

The red color is obtained by mordanting the cloth with alum. During this process, the areas which are intended to be red are painted with alum solution. While painting, The Kasim Kaaram-Iron solution is mixed with the alum to obtain the darker red shades. And for lighter red shades alum is applied once. The painted alum cloth is allowed to dry for 2 days and then it is washed under running water. Now the boiling process is done using natural dye stuffs i.e. Suruduchakka (300 gm.) and chavalakodi tree root powders (1 Kg.) along with ½ Kg of alum are added in boiling water. The painted cloth is immersed in the solution and boiled for 30 minutes at a high temperature. Once the red color appears, the cloth is removed from the boiling solution. The cloth is now taken to the river water and it is washed repeatedly for 3 days near the bank of the river until the cloth is completely bleached. During this process, the colored areas remain the same and the rest part of the cloth is whitened. The colored cloth is again treated with buffalo milk for 10 minutes to avoid the color spreading.

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The areas which are meant to be red are painted on the cloth with Alum solution.



After drying, the cloth is being washed under running water.

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The excess water is squeezed after washing.



The cloth is dried under the sun.

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Alum, Suruduchakka and Chavalakodi tree root powder are the dye stuffs added in the boiling water to obtain red color.



The red color obtained after the boiling process.

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The lighter red outlines are obtained by painting the alum once.

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Color Filling

The color filling is done so cautiously to avoid color spreading. Red colored cloth is now taken to color filling process. Initially the yellow color is filled in the required portions and then it is followed by green and rose. Finally blue color is filled. The color filling is done using tapered edged Kalam. Tapering is done by chisel.

Color making:

Yellow: Myrobalan flower and alum are grounded into powder and mixed with water. This solution is boiled and cooled to obtain yellow color.

Light Yellow: Pomegranate skin is dried and mixed with alum to obtain light yellow color.

Green: Myrobalan flower, Kasim Kaaram and alum is mixed with water and boiled to obtain green color.

Rose: Chavalakodi root powder and alum is mixed with water to obtain rose color.

Blue: Blue is extracted from natural indigo.

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The cloth is spread on the floor and the weights are placed on it for comfortable painting activities of the artist.



The artisan is involved in the color filling process.

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Tapered edged Kalam is used to fill the colors.



Beautiful appealing deity costume in yellow color.

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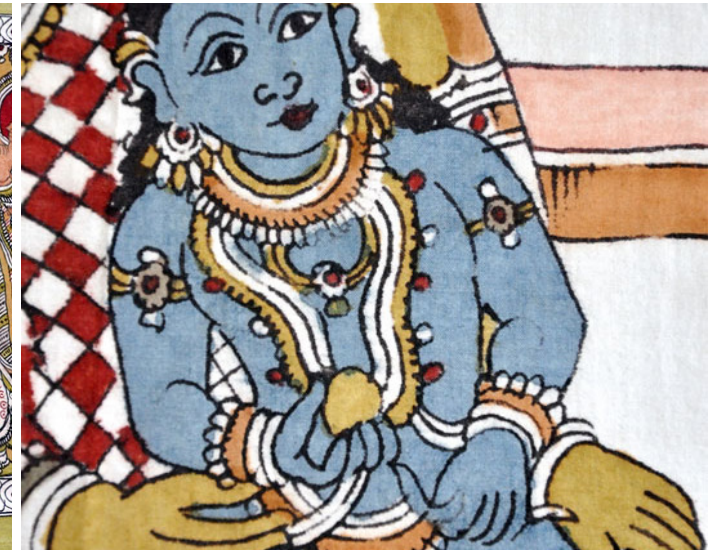
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Darker and lighter shades of green are obtained by varying the quantities of dye stuffs while mixing.



Blue is used to represent image of Lord Krishna.

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Products

Traditional themes are depicted from the episodes of Hindu mythological epics. These fabrics are used as hangings in temples and religious instruction. The motifs include temple scenes, wall panels, village scenes, images of deities like Ganesha, Rama, Krishna, and Arjuna. Some of the motifs include trees, birds, and flowers. The Contemporary products are wall panel, Panchatantra themes, sari, dupatta-stole, stationery, photo frames, hand bags, Spectacle cases, and thoranam. The size of the final product may vary from 200x124(cm) to 70x40 feet. The price depends on the oldness of the product.



The attractive image of the lord Ganesha with flute and Vishnu chakra.



The stunning Panchmukhi Ganesha (the five faces of Ganesha) replica in blue color.

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The pleasing image of lord Krishna



The accessories of lord Arjuna are illustrated intricately.

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A scene from the epic Mahabharata where Krishna is riding Arjuna's chariot.



The closer perspective of the detailing work in the chariot.

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An image of lord Ganesha sitting on his Vaahana.



A contemporary wall decorator

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The dominating blue with the blend of red, yellow and black.



The senior artisans displaying their old artifact.

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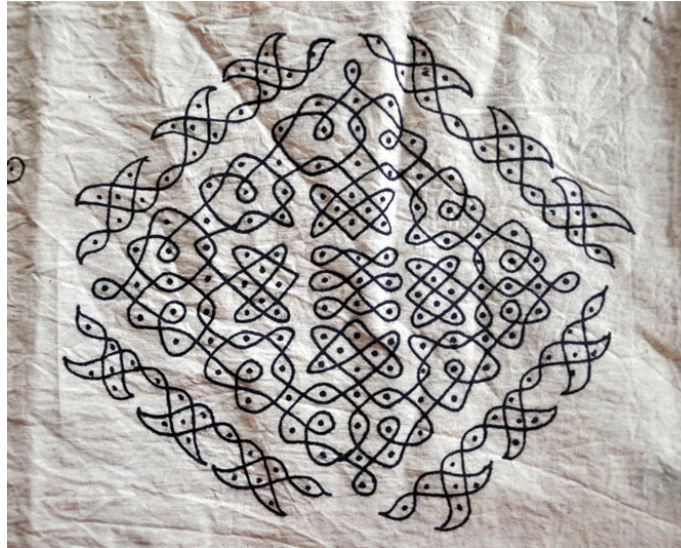
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The traditional kolam design locally called Muggu.



The collage of kolam designs.

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The closer view of matsyavatara episode.



Image of lord Shiva and Parvati

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The panel depicting the scene from a known Hindu epic.



The Raakshasa samharana episode printed on bed spread.

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People and Place

Sri Ramachandraiah of Sri Kalahasti village is one of the master craftsmen who created Guinness record with his art. In Sri Kalahasti, the Kalamkari art is started during Sri Krishnadevaraya period. The rulers used this art to convey the message. Since the ancient period; the art has been practiced traditionally by the skilled craftsman maintaining their own distinct significance. There are nearly 150 craftsmen engaged in producing the Kalamkari products in Sri Kalahasti.



The artisans with their master.



The working environment.

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The arrangements before starting the work.



Mutual co-operation of artisans at work.



The outer view of work place.

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An overview of Sri Kalahasti temple environment.



A store near temple displaying ritual items.



An old architecture in Sri Kalahasti.

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Contact Details

This documentation was done by Professor Bibhudutta Baral, Mr. C. Susanth and Mr. J. Antony William, **NID R&D campus, Bengaluru**

You can visit Master Craftsman Sri Ramachandraiah website:
<http://kalamkariepics.com/>

You could write to the following address regarding suggestions and clarifications:

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