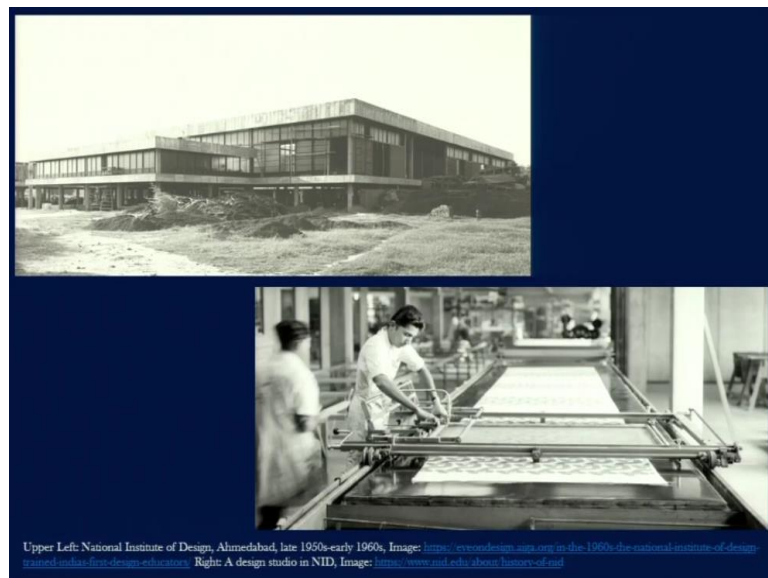


**Indian Art: Materials, Techniques and Artistic Practices**  
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**Lecture – 55**  
**Multimedia Approaches - 1**

Hello everyone. We are here in the middle of our discussion on the multimedia approaches after the India's independence and we have already looked into some of the practices; for example painting, graphics, sculpture and then architecture. So, in the last instalment of our lecture, we will be discussing the importance of the design schools and design practices.

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So, here we have on screen an image of the National Institute of Design or NID, Ahmedabad and in the photograph that shows that the building is still in the process of making, so it should be sometime in the late 1950s or early 1960s. So, when after India's independence, we see that there were some of those activities for example establishment of the fine art school and MSU in Baroda.

And then in 1952, if we see that the establishment of the All India Handicrafts Board and so that kind of activities and alongside we see that during that time, this city of Chandigarh was also being built. So, the architects, for example Le Corbusier and all, they were already present in India. So, there were different kinds of practices were taking place and dialogue between different groups of people were also there.

So, during this time to have dedicated institutions for training at the same time training the technological growth among the young practitioners, there was a need for design institutes. So, what is design? We see this idea of design that is prevalent, it came up this idea of design we see perhaps it was prevalent only in the 19th century in Western Europe and then we also find that in North America.

Then after India's independence, we find that this idea of design had also been promoted by the government and also the people have for example the educators have also understood its importance in terms of having institutes of design. Now, design in one word, to make it very simple I would say design is something that engages with problem solving. So, if there are problems, if there are hurdles on our path and then a design is something that always comes up with, that proposes creative solutions to the problems.

So, that is the reason there was a need for teaching design to the young practitioners so that there are efficient and creative ways of solving problems instead of replicating that from the other parts of the globe. And so that is the reason what we find that there were some of the discussions those were happening in the 1950s is about to what extent one needs to learn from the globe and also to what extent one needs to understand our pre-existing craft traditions.

Now, in the 1950s, we also find that people like Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay and Pupul Jayakar they were highly engaged in revitalizing the craft sectors. So, that is the reason we see that there were discussions around what is the use of handmade product, what can be the use of the products which are made with the new technology and if there are ways in which these two things can be brought together.

So, this discussion that brought Pupul Jayakar and Charles Eames together. So, Charles Eames from the Museum of Modern Art in New York, we find that he and Ray Eames, both of them they travelled to India eventually in the 1950s, and they have travelled extensively to various parts of the Indian subcontinent to see the different kinds of craft practices. So, with these discussions we find that already there was a need for making this design institute and these discussions and that sort of solidified the cause for making the design institute.

So, eventually we find that the Ford Foundation and the Sarabhai family and the Sarabhai foundation they have come together in Ahmedabad to make the first design institute in India

that is National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad that we see on the upper left image here. So, this is something we find that it was a new kind of development in terms of its institutional value.

Also like how it would impact upon the different kinds of object oriented and material oriented practices in the newly independent India. And here on the right corner, we have an image of the design studios in NID where we find this large distance screen printing is going on. And so in one hand, we see how the different kinds of artisanal practices from various parts of India were studied and at the same time we also see that how this new technological interventions were also given priority.

So, this combination of these two that also enabled creation of a number of design schools and at the same time design firms and very importantly a number of designers in the post-independence India.

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So, one of the important designers would be Riten Mozumdar and Riten Mozumdar is was definitely not trained in NID but it was during this time when we see that similar kind of ethos were found in many different people. So, Riten Mozumdar was trained in Santiniketan and then after his training, he also pursued his study and his practice in Yugoslavia, Italy and Finland.

So, from there what we find that already in the 1950s that he had learned some of this overlapping were like fine arts and design practices can come together and how that contributes to making the new space and making this new country. So, this is something that we find in

people like Riten Mozumdar's work. So, here we see that Riten Mozumdar in his Delhi home and this home was designed by Charles Correa.

So, we are sort of like when moving into this circle where there are the architects, designers, they would have exchanged with each other, there are craft activist like Pupul Jayakar and Charles Eames curator all of them are also having conversation and that is how through these different conversations or having this different people from different backgrounds or with different expertise, when they come together, then there are the new innovative practices that emerge out of them.

So, here what we find that in Riten Mozumdar's practice that he is perhaps considered as one of the first textile designers in India, but he had also been involved in developing furniture and other objects. So, on the right side of the screen we have some of the rugs or the textiles which were developed by Riten Mozumdar. So, here there is one here there is another one. So, what we see if we think about the rugs, so we see the rugs they definitely serve this utilitarian purpose of being on the floor.

And of course, they have been in use for more than millennia. So what we see there that in the traditional rug for example we would have a particular shape like it is the symmetry, the geometricity and the balance of the forms and the shapes and everything, those are meticulously maintained, whereas if we think about this particular carpet or the rug that is there on the floor here it is not particularly circular.

It is circular, but at the same time it is uneven the surface and then like the uneven fibres those are also kept here so that it adds to this uneven nature of this form. And then also if we see the kind of work that has been done on it, so there is tie dye that has been done on this particular rug for which this particular resist dyed motif is created. Now, this tie dye on the rug is also not something that is usually seen.

So, on the rug we either see print or we see this meticulous weaving that is involved in producing the carpets and rugs, so tie dye is definitely that has its used for wearable fabric or for furnishing, but not specifically for rugs. So, we see that if people like Riten Mozumdar if they learned from one source, they also were open enough to experiment that with something

else and also they had been brave in terms of understanding what is the importance of a form in the utilitarian spaces.

So, whether an uneven form, a form with uneven surface would also serve the purpose, what we do with like the strictly circular form or a rectangular form. The similar thing we can also say about this particular rug here where there is again this cross which is created and then we also see that how this cross is definitely not symmetrical and then this unevenness is also emphasized in the shape at the same time in this colour distribution.

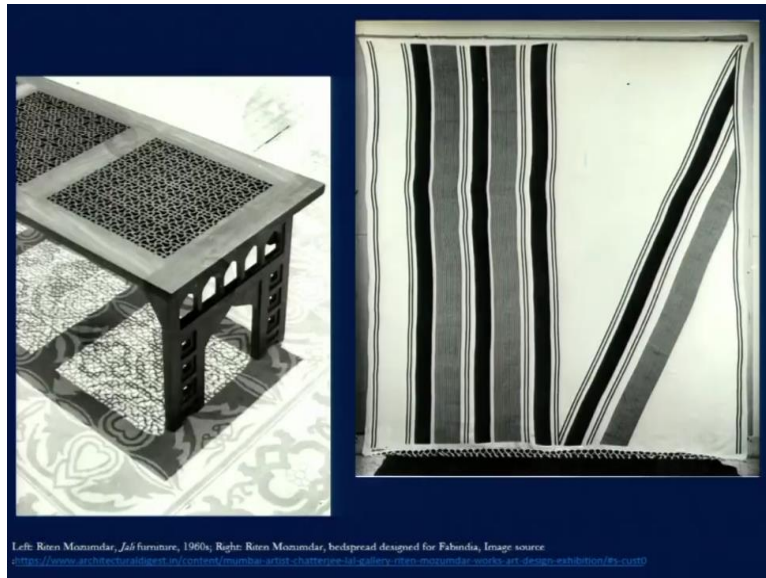
So, these kinds of things we find that is there in Riten Mozumdar's work. So, in some ways we can also see that how the experimentation with form, experimentation with what is even, what is uneven, irregularity and then what are the ways in which we can think about balance, but not in the conventional sense, but finding balance in this new arrangement of imbalance, so those kinds of issues were featured in Riten Mozumdar's practice.

So, these are some of the things we find that these things also perhaps when parallelly with the development of form based practices in the Indian fine art. For example, if we see the development of paintings, sculptures and printmaking where forms were given priority where different kinds of experiments in terms of like making patterns those were also given priority. So, we find that there are parallels, which can be drawn between them.

So, the difference would be in terms of that how the works we have discussed in terms of the paintings on canvas or the graphic works, they are the ones which are non-utilitarian in their nature, whereas these ones even though they have high similarity with the artworks, they are utilitarian in nature. So, these are some of the things we also have to keep in mind. And as I have already mentioned design is also something that is aligned with problem solving.

So aligned with problem solving and making our livelihood and contributing to our livelihood to contribute to our daily life to make things much more efficient and that is the reason this utilitarian aspect in design cannot be denied. So, I am not suggesting that all the designs are strictly utilitarian, but utility remains at the heart of most of the design projects.

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So, this is another example of Riten Mozumdar's work and here what we find that he had also been a friend and a colleague of John Bissell who established Fabindia in the 1960s. So, Riten Mozumdar had his studio in Delhi and then John Bissell was also operating from Delhi when he established Fabindia. So, we find that they had worked together closely for decades, and we can see this is one table or a coffee table which was developed by Riten Mozumdar.

So, this is not just the one table which was developed by Riten Mozumdar, but there were other furniture as well. So, what happens for that we see here that Riten Mozumdar had also taken reference from the Mughal architecture, especially from the jali here and of course there are the arch ways here as well and then there is a large arch way which is then translated into the legs of the table.

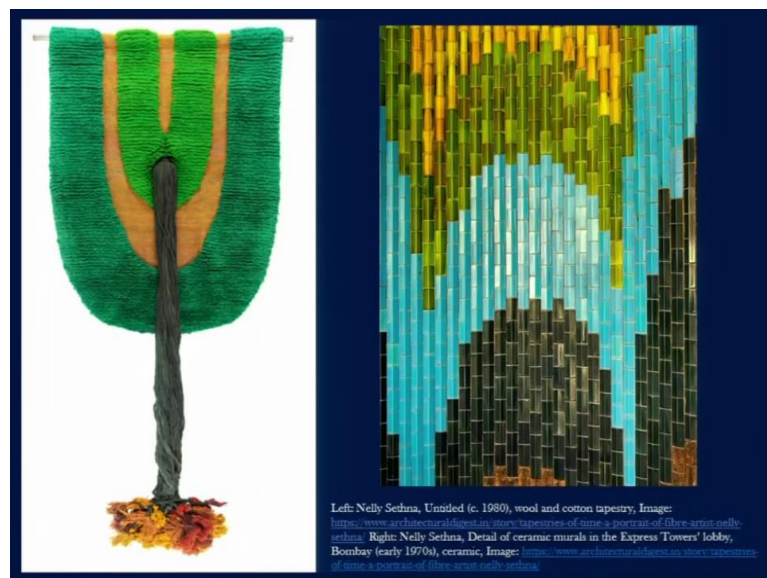
And on the surface, we find that this fine jali work is featured and when it is kept in the sunlight then we can also see the shadow of this jali beneath. So, what happens with that we find that in Fabindia, when Riten Mozumdar had worked with Fabindia, then we see that he had worked perhaps slightly differently from his individual practice where he had prioritized the unevenness and then had moved beyond symmetry.

But when he was working for this organization for Fabindia then we see how symmetry, geometricity and utility all of them are sort of put together and all of them were merged seamlessly in this furniture design. This is another one, this is a bedspread that we find that was also designed by Riten Mozumdar for Fabindia. In this one, we find that there is this light shift from the traditional motif.

So, for example if we consider the half of this bedspread, so half of it can be easily compared to the woven bedspreads that we find in the artisanal sectors, but then in the other half of the image that we find this particular motif, these parallel lines are not repeated and then one set of motif is then made into a diagonal form in a gesture that how this diagonal form sort of encompasses this entire rectangular space leaving the rest of the space empty.

So, this is something we find that it is how he had relied upon the traditional designs, the designs which were much more common in the artisanal sectors and then the shift that he had introduced into that. So, the shift is not something that is a drastic change, but the thing is just the shift and literally the shift one can see it is a diagonal shift here. So, this is how the idea of how to respect the artisanal sectors, but at the same time introducing a new form of practice, these two things are seamlessly merged in Riten Mozumdar's practice.

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Now, another designer that we find in the post-independence India would be Nelly Sethna. And Nelly Sethna is someone who we find she was also a dedicated designer and she had extensively worked with textiles and when I say textile, I also mean she had extensively worked with different kinds of fibres like cotton fibre, wool and silk and so on. And so, this one we find that this is a tapestry and this is a tapestry that was made in 1980.

And in this one we see that wool and cotton are used for making it. Now if we see the shape, if we see how it is displayed and everything, we do not necessarily see this would be used for any kind of problem solving or strictly utilitarian way, but it has its reference to those utilitarian

tapestry those will adorn the walls of interiors or it also has a reference to the horizontal carpets or rugs.

But then it is neither a tapestry nor a rug, but it is something in between, it is not utilitarian but it still carries the essence of the utilitarian items that we see. And the process of making this tapestry is also painstaking, it is also following the same pathway to make the utilitarian rugs or tapestry. So, this is how we find that how Nelly Sethna had understood the different kind of textile making as well as the artisanal practices and then introduced or intervened into that with her own sensibility, with her own interest.

Now, this idea of working with symmetry and geometricity and how far that works and where do we stop in this experimentation, so we see understanding those each and every fibre, each and every thread that had also and then their impact on creating the entire surface of a tapestry is something that had also translated into some of the other works she had done. And here is a detail from a ceramic mural that is featured in the Express tower in Bombay.

And this detail shows that how this each and every ceramic tile is chosen very carefully for expressing or translating the surface of the wall almost into this woven tapestry like form. So, we find that in Nelly Sethna's practice that in her personal practice these kinds of experiments had taken place, but she also had been a dedicated craft researcher and she had visited some of the museum collections, for example Victoria Albert Museum in London and so on.

And she played a very important role in revitalizing Kalamkari in southern India. So, when she was in Victoria Albert Museum, we find that she had done detailed documentation of the different forms, the motifs and then she brought them back with her in India and then based on those studies, there were new blocks which were carved, the wooden blocks which were carved, and in collaboration with the block makers, printers in Machilipatnam she had implemented those designs onto fabric.

And then these designs which she studied from Victoria Albert Museum, those designs were made available to the artisans so that new designs can be developed out of them. And also she had contributed to the to the hand drawn Kalamkari of Srikalahasti as well, so where we find that her sensibility and her dedication to research, all those things have come together not only for contributing to her own practice, but also to the craft communities.



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So, to sum up all those different kinds of practices as I have mentioned in the beginning that it is not really easy to put all those things together under one umbrella to show that all those things are happening and there are some of the common threads, but perhaps one thing one can say or perhaps one thing I can say here is that all these different practices from 1947 to late 20th century, what we find that the India was opening up to different kind of possibility.

So, India was opening up to different kind of possibility in terms of different kinds of materials, different kinds of societal situations and perhaps one of the most important points will be that there were people like Riten Mozumdar, like Nelly Sethna, like Gulammohammed Sheikh and K. G. Subramanyan who travelled between places from India to somewhere else either for studying, for practice, for visiting and they have brought back their knowledge with them.

And that is how when they have disseminated that knowledge to others, so for example to their students, to their colleagues or through their designs or practice so that contributed to this new form of layered practice that added to the identity of this newly independent nation state. So, those are some of the things that we can think about how some of the characteristic features of the time.

Or how these individuals that we have studied as part of today's discussion or today's lecture how they have contributed to the growth of India's fine art as well as design practice. Now, if we just think about that what all we have studied, so at the beginning of the lecture that we

have seen some of the painting traditions or some of the new tradition which were made by Bombay Progressive Group.

So, for example this kind of painting on canvas and how the form, the arrangement of colour, the complementary colours and the balance all these things were given priority. So, this is something that we see that started in the 1940s and perhaps even though these kinds of practices were critiqued later on, these practices were critiqued for not being closely associated with societal happenings, but we do see there are traces in which we can see that is not entirely true.

So, these kinds of explorations were also important during this time so that fine art is understood as something that is beyond portraiture, beyond making landscapes or something that contributes to the administrative work or the government buildings or the institutional art practice was by these kinds of revolutionary moves we find this fine art was something that was established as this way of expressing the new interest in the society.

And similarly, we see how architecture that had also come to represent some of the new aspects of the growth in the Indian metropolitan cities and for example as we have seen in Charles Correa's architecture that how the vertical growth was prioritized, but also like the individual spaces and then the provision for allowing sunlight and air in the architectural spaces was also prioritized.

So, both these things, how those things can go hand in hand to suggest some of the new developments in the society. And from there, if we see the development of the textile design and furniture design, then we see how the artisanal sectors and like this idea of problem solving for the new kind of interiors in the post-independent India they were experimented with, so all these different experiments they constitute the idea of Indian art in the post-independence period. Thank you.