
POPULAR KALAMKARI ART OF ANDHRA PRADESH

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Abstract: Kalamkari is essentially an art of painting and printing fabrics. The Kalamkari fabrics are known world-wide for their attractive designs on bed sheets, wall hangings, sarees, table clothes and curtain clothes. Kalamkari is the earliest and one of the most complex techniques of fabric printing using vegetable dyes and minerals. **Motifs** drawn in this ancient art of **Kalamkari** include flowers, peacock, paisleys and also divine characters from Ramayana and Mahabharata. Kalamkari was born out of an art of story-telling.

In ancient times, groups of singers, musians and painters, called chitrakaries, moved village to village to tell the village dwellers the great stories of Hindu mythology. They illustrated their accounts using large bolts of canvas painted on the spot with simple means and dyes extracted from plants. Till today Kalamkari fabrics are traditionally hand painted or block printed on cotton fabric with vegetable dyes. There are two identifiable styles of Kalamkari art in India – Srikalahasthi style and Machilipatnam style. Kalamkari art primarily use earthy colors like indigo, mustard, rust, black and green. Natural dyes used to paint colors in Kalamkari art is extracted from natural sources with no use of chemicals and artificial matter. For instance, craftsmen extract black color by blending jaggery, water and iron fillings which they essentially use for outlining the sketches. While mustard or yellow is derived by boiling pomegranate peels, red hues are created from bark of madder or aligarin. Likewise, blue is obtained from indigo and green is derived by mixing yellow and blue together.

Keywords: Kalamkari Fabrics, Art of Painting And Printing, Natural Dyes.

Renowned for its textiles, Andhra Pradesh is an ancient institution of hand-woven painted and printed fabrics. It produces the most exclusive saris and dress-materials, having delicate and distinctive designs. Here are some of the authentic Textiles from Andhra Pradesh you should look out for when you visit.

Some of the famous Textiles of Andhra Pradesh are as follows.

- **Kalamkari** Fabrics. (An art of painting and printing)
- Chirala Textiles. ...
- Dharmavaram Sarees. ...
- Venkatagiri Sarees. ...
- Eluru Carpets. ...
- **Mangalgi** Handlooms.

In this paper specialty of Kalamkari fabrics is discussed.

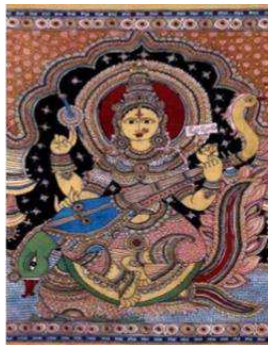
Kalamkari Fabrics: Kalamkari is essentially an art of painting and printing fabrics. The Kalamkari fabrics are known world-wide for their attractive designs on bed sheets, wall hangings, sarees, table clothes and curtain clothes. Kalamkari is the earliest and one of the most complex techniques of fabric printing using vegetable dyes and minerals. Kalamkari or Qalamkari is a type of hand painted or block printed textile produced in India especially in Andhra Pradesh. The word is derived from the Persian words kalam (pen) and kari (craftsmanship), meaning drawing with a pen. The craft made at Pedana nearby Machilipatnam of Krishna district and Srikalahasthi of Chotoor district, Andhra Pradesh. During the rule of Qutub Shahis, Kalamkari art was introduced in the region. **Motifs** drawn in this ancient art of **Kalamkari** include flowers, peacock, paisleys and also divine characters from Ramayana and Mahabharata. Kalamkari was born out of an art of story-telling.

In ancient times, groups of singers, musicians and painters, called chitrakaries, moved village to village to tell the village dwellers the great stories of Hindu mythology. They illustrated their accounts using large bolts of canvas painted on the spot with simple means and dyes extracted from plants. Till today Kalamkari fabrics are traditionally hand painted or block printed on cotton fabric with vegetable dyes. The painted style grew around the Hindu temples and depicted images of deities and scenes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata (mythological epics).

Kalamkari art is known for its beautiful colour patterns that flow through a variety of different themes. Figures of women in yellow, demons in green or red, gods in shades of blue are common in Kalamkari. Lotus motifs tend to be the most common background for these prints.

Types of Kalamkari: There are two identifiable styles of Kalamkari art in India – Srikalahasthi style and Machilipatnam style. In the Machilipatnam style of Kalamkari, motifs are essentially printed with hand-carved traditional blocks with intricate detailing painted by hands. The practice of hand painted Kalamkari is currently concentrated in a village called Sri Kalahasti in the state of Andhra Pradesh. The Andhra Kalamkari borrows design inspiration from forts, palaces and temples of India, along with motifs of animals and birds.

Sri Kalahasti Style: Sri Kalahasti is a temple town found in Chittoor District in Andhra. The main design inspiration for the Sri Kalahasti style is Hindu Mythology describing scenes from the epics and folklore. This style holds a strong religious connect because of its origin in the temples. The Sri Kalahasti style is characterized by one very important feature: free hand drawing. The procedure begins with the crafts man treating the cloth using mordant and sketching the design outline with black colour or Kasami. The only other colours used for filling the outlined sketch are those obtained from natural plants. Therefore every Sri Kalahasthi art is quite unique and absolutely authentic.



Fabric Flow Process



Kalamkari's known for marvelous designs, colour, expensive and vibrant cousin is the hand-painted Kalamkari from Sri Kalahasti, a village near Tirupati in southern Andhra Pradesh. Here, artisans take months together to paint beautiful designs, mostly of gods in vibrant colours, and over cotton and silk sarees and dupattas. The Srikalahasti Kalamkari is much harder to find when compared to the Pedana one. In Srikalahasti, there is a Kalamkari Research and Training Centre.



Masulipatnam Kalamkari: Owing to Muslim rule in Golconda the Masulipatnam Kalamkari is influenced by Persian motifs and designs. The outlines and main features are done using hand carved blocks. The finer details are later done using pen. The Masulipatnam Kalamkari is different from Sri Kalahasti style because it is not exactly pen craft but the craftsman creates his sketches and its key design features with the help of wooden blocks. These blocks continue to be used repeatedly for many years. In Kalamkari printing technique, the craftsman first decides on the fabric and colours. Located in the Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh, Pedana is 10km from the district headquarters Machilipatnam, and 2.5 hrs from Vijayawada by road. The second you enter this little hamlet, you'll know what's special about the place. It is home to the ubiquitous textile design: Kalamkari; and this becomes evident very soon because every house in the village has a Kalamkari cloth curtain blocking its entrance.

1. Grey fabric is used for printing.
2. Natural bleaching (with cow or goat dung and water) is done.
3. Bleached fabric is treated with Myrobalan mix which helps in preparing the fabric for block printing.
4. Blocks are used for printing the outer sketch as per the designs visualized.
5. Fabric printed with outline blocks is washed in the running water and subsequently the second block with particular processed natural colour dye is used for printing as fillers in the design, based on the colour/design.
6. With the second printing, the fabric is soaked in the boiling water with natural leaves and Anar and then washed in running water.
7. Depending upon the design and number of colours to be applied, the same process in stage 6 is continued.
8. Fabric is soaked again in the boiling water with natural leaves for getting additional colours.
9. Fabric is finally washed in the running water with Alum (for colour fixing) and then dried in hot sun.
10. Till the final stage, after every wash, the fabric is to be dried in the shade and not in the hot sun.



Motifs



The process of making Kalamkari involves 23 steps. From natural process of bleaching the fabric, softening it, sun drying, preparing natural dyes, hand painting, to the processes of air drying and washing, the entire procedure is a process which requires precision and an eye for detailing.

Cotton fabric used for Kalamkari is first treated with a solution of cow dung and bleach. After keeping the fabric in this solution for hours, the fabric gets a uniform off-white color. After this, the cotton fabric is immersed in a mixture of buffalo milk and Myrobalans. This avoids smudging of dyes in the fabric when it is painted with natural dyes. Later, the fabric is washed under running water to get rid of the odor of buffalo milk. The fabric likewise, is washed twenty times and dried under the sun. Once the fabric is ready for painting, artists sketch motifs and designs on the fabric. The Kalamkari artists prepare dyes using natural sources to fill colors within the drawings.

Incorporating minute details, the Kalamkars use 'tamarind twig' as pen, to sketch beautiful motifs of Krishna Raas-Leela, Indian god and goddesses like Parvati, Vishnu, Shri Jaganath; designs of peacock, lotus; and scenes from the Hindu epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana.



Colors of Kalamkari: Kalamkari art primarily use earthy colors like indigo, mustard, rust, black and green. Natural dyes used to paint colors in Kalamkari art is extracted from natural sources with no use of chemicals and artificial matter. For instance, craftsmen extract black color by blending jaggery, water and iron fillings which they essentially use for outlining the sketches. While mustard or yellow is derived by boiling pomegranate peels, red hues are created from bark of madder or aligarin. Likewise, blue is obtained from indigo and green is derived by mixing yellow and blue together.

The design on the cloth is made by printing with vegetable dyes and these dyes are essentially available only in basic colours: red, black and blue. However, more colours are being bled into the cloth now. The cloth itself is first dyed in a basic colour, dried out under the sun and block printing is done on it later.

The designs tend to be small motifs of flowers, leaves, etc. Pedana Kalamkari is the most easily available textile in India. However if you want to avoid the fake ones produced in power looms visit the Andhra Pradesh State Emporium in various parts of the country sells original Kalamkari.

Pro-tip: The easiest way to tell power loom Kalamkari from the original one is by the softness of the cloth and the bleed. The cloth used in the original is a soft cotton that feels very comfortable to touch and easy to fold. The power loom one is rough and stiff; and the design bleeds more in the original cloth.

Conclusion: Kalamkari is unique and greatly coveted fabrics of India

References:

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2. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/kalamkari>
