

Name of the Element: Kalamkari Paintings.

Community: The craft is practised at Sri Kalahasti by the family of Jonnalagadda Lakshmaiah of the Balija community and other communities which practice this art are- Reddys, Mutharasis, Brahmins, Naidus, Padmasalis of weavers' community, Christians, Muslims, etc. in Andhra Pradesh.

Region: The element is practised mainly at Sri Kalahasti in the Chittoor district of the state of Andhra Pradesh. The craft is also practised at the following places in Andhra Pradesh:

1. Yerpedu, Kolla pharam (near Lanco), Kadur, Narasingapuram and Kannali village in Chittoor District.
2. Venkatagiri in Nellore District, adjoining the Chittoor district along the coastal belt of the Bay of Bengal.
3. Machilipatnam, a local fishing hub in Krishna District of Andhra Pradesh.

Brief Description: Sri Kalahasti near the temple town of Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh specializes in producing temple cloths - Kalamkari (lit. pen-work). Kalamkari is primarily used for the temple festivals or as wall hangings.

The stories from the epics Ramayana, Mahabharata and the Puranas are painted as continuous narratives, each important event framed in a rectangle. Sometimes short episodes from the stories are also painted. The relevant Telugu verses explaining the theme are also carried below the artwork. Considerable degree of imaginative and technical skill is required to condense the stories into illustrative formats.

The master craftsman draws the outline of the design with Kalam or pen on the myrobalan treated cloth using charcoal sticks made from tamarind wood. He draws from the rich repertoire of design and motifs and iconographical details of various god and goddesses as lay down traditionally. The colors are obtained from vegetable and mineral sources. The main colors used are black, red, blue and yellow and alum is used as mordant to fix the colors and to obtain the reds. The gods are painted blue, the demons and evil characters in red and green. Yellow is used for female figures and ornaments. Red is mostly used as a background. The cotton cloth is washed in flowing water to remove starch and between dyeing and bleaching. Keeping up with the times, the Kalamkari artists are now designing also for their modern clientele.