

PAINTING STUDY MATERIAL FOR CLASS 12TH BASED ON NCERT

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The Art of Ajanta Caves

Introduction

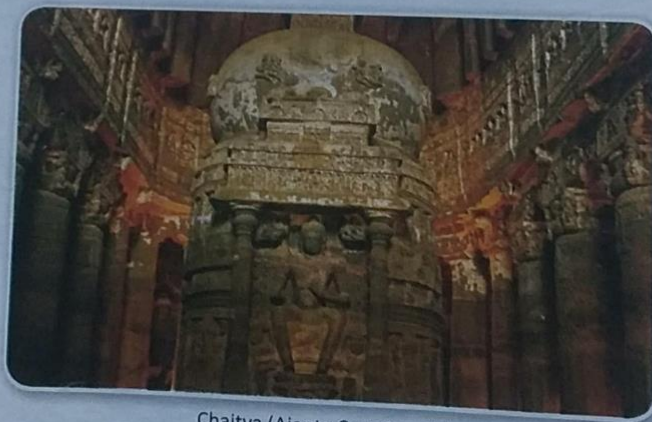
✓ Related to Buddhism, Ajanta is the most famous UNESCO world heritage site and protected by Archaeological Survey of India. It is an ancient rock-cut caves site which is located in Aurangabad district of Maharashtra state, 60 kms away from Jalgaon Railway Station. There is a U-shaped cliff of a gorge of small river Waghora (Waghur) where 30 caves have been discovered. Lord Buddha, Bodhisattvas and Jatak tales (based on Buddha's life) have been engraved and painted on the walls, pillars and ceiling of the caves. These caves had been constructed during 2nd century B.C. to 5th century A.D. which are categorised as—

1. **Chaityagrah (Chaityas):** Cave Nos. 9, 10, 19, 26 and 29. ✓
2. **Viharas:** Rest of the caves are the Viharas.

This Buddhist site has been discovered in 1819 A.D. by a hunting group of British officers. These caves are not in a sequence because they could not be discovered at the same time.

Main features of the caves are as follows:

- (i) Cave Nos. 8, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 15A belong to earliest Hinayana phase of Buddhism which have been constructed during 2nd century B.C. to 2nd century A.D. in which cave Nos. 9 and 10 are Chaityas (Stup halls) while Cave Nos. 8, 12, 13 and 15A are Viharas.
- (ii) The rest of the caves, related to Mahayana second phase of Buddhism, are Vihara and Chaitya caves. They consist of a pillared verandah, a pillared hall and cells along the walls. The back wall of the hall has the main Buddha shrine. Shrine images of Ajanta are grand in size.



Chaitya (Ajanta Cave No. 19)

- (iii) Cave Nos. 6, 11 and 15 are very specific because they had been constructed from 2nd century B.C. to early 6th century A.D. and decorated with both paintings and sculptures.
- (iv) Cave Nos. 1 to 8, 11 and 14 to 29 are concerned with **Vakataka Period**, constructed from mid of 5th century to early 6th century. Cave Nos. 9, 10, 12, 13 and 15A belong to **Satvahana Period**.
- (v) Cave No. 26 is very big and carved with a variety of Buddha images. The biggest and more remarkable one is the **Mahaparinirvana** image.
- (vi) Some of the Vihara caves are unfinished such as Cave Nos. 5, 14, 23, 24, 28 and 29.
- (vii) Ajanta is the only example which has the existence of paintings of the 2nd century B.C. to 6th century A.D. Many famous paintings, related to the Buddha's life and scene from the Jataka tales, have their existence in Cave Nos. 1, 2, 9, 10, 16 and 17.

Main features of the paintings are as follows:

- (i) These paintings have a lot of typological variation such as outward projections, rhythmicity in clearly defined lines.
- (ii) Body colour gets merged with the outline which creates the effect of volume. Colours are limited, no over stylisation.
- (iii) The figures are broad with heavy proportion, events are grouped together according to space and location.
- (iv) Buddha figures in Cave Nos. 9 and 10 are different from figures painted during the second phase of 5th and 6th centuries A.D.
- (v) The next stage of development is observed mainly in the paintings of Cave Nos. 1, 2, 16, and 17.
- (vi) The paintings of Cave Nos. 1 and 2 are very orderly and naturalistic, well-integrated with the sculptures in the caves.
- (vii) It may also be observed that various skin colours are used in the paintings such as brown, yellowish brown, greenish, yellow ochre, etc. which represent a multi-coloured population.
- (viii) The theme of the paintings are the events based on the life of Buddha, the Jatakas and the Avadanas.
- (ix) **Simhala Avadana**, **Mahajanaka Jataka** and **Vidharpundita Jataka** are the paintings that cover the entire wall of the cave and **Chaddanta Jataka** has been painted with acute details and events.
- (x) The famous paintings of Ajanta caves **Padmapani** and **Vajrapani** have been painted in Cave No. 1. However, it is observed that the images of Padmapani and Vajrapani are very common in Ajanta but these are the best preserved paintings.

Among the important patrons of Ajanta were Varahadeva (Prime Minister of the Vakataka king, Harishena), Upendra Gupta, Buddhahadra and Mathuradasa.

TO be continues.....