PREFAEC

The study of western Indian Buddhist caves has always been concerned with the chronology of the caves. Focus of study was more closely followed the political chronology of the Sātavāhanas, Traikutakas, Vākātakas and Konkaṇ Mauryas. The caves are broadly classified as Hinayāna caves where there is no Buddha image and the Mahāyāna caves with the Buddha images. The Mahāyāna Buddhist caves in the western Deccan are dated to fifth and sixth century AD and therefore their sources of development are traced outside the western Deccan. Thus the creative magnitudes of the artisans are completely disregarded in the previous studies. The present work is an attempt to proceed from earlier studies on western Indian caves to a broader concern with visual perception and the pattern of architectural and decorative design such as how a particular pattern of articulation was evolved? How did the artisans worked in the society with available tradition/skill and what was the role of patronage? How the early Mahayana developments can be traced within the region itself?

Artistic activity is a form of reasoning in which perceiving and thinking are intertwined. The past is seen in the present while opting for any particular mode of articulation. It gives a new dimension to the activity of evolving pattern, shape and its ways of unifying in the space. These fundamental questions of art are perceived in a wider social context to analyse the early western Indian Buddhist caves.

My graduation in the visual arts helped to explore the various dimensions of the creative mind and later when I specialized in History of Art, exploration in the source material and their application in understanding the visual form was an important task. My M.Phil on the Buddhist cave of Nasik and Junnar was a small attempt in this regard.

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However, the responsibility for any errors of facts and arguments remains mine alone.

Y. S. Alone