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CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Importance of the subject:

The term culture is derived from “Coler” a Latin word meaning “to till” and “to worship”. According to B. P. Basu, “but it is to Sir Frances Bacon that we owe this term and its proper significance.” ¹ One major feature of human communication is its variety of cultural expression related to arts, sculptures and painting when way of life and religion are interlinked culture is developed.

Cultural communication is a matter of constant and continuous interaction in the world of scholars. The study of sociology of culture shows that the most significant aspect of human culture is that it is deeply rooted within highly evolved social norms, traditions, values and patterns of worship and styles of living. With this background, Basu has rightly quoted Emersion that “culture implies all, which gives the mind possession of its own powers.” ²

Scholars have viewed culture from different angles. Taylor has opined that, “culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge belief, art, morals, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” ³ It means skills developed by humans to make livelihood and develop internal, as well as, external personality is considered as culture.

In this study only cultural expressions through architecture, sculpture and painting have been dealt with.

The significance of this study lies in cultural communication. Sondhi’s views can be testified through the study of Ajanta caves. As per Krishan Sondhi “the best possible mode of communication is art, and if one media is made artistic, there will be
communication. There will be no need to bother about development messages. They will follow automatically."  

Communication through art happens through systematic symbols of different motives, which can be unfolded by conducting a scientific study.

According to Rekha Jhanji "the cognitive dimension is the historical, cultural symbolism that an art work at hand may manifest." So the on-looker should be conversant with the association behind the symbols in order to share the intended effect manifested in the artwork. This study is related to cultural communication through Ajanta caves.

Art manifests cultural content. According to Veena Shekhar “existence of art is a social incident. Queries of how it existed, why it existed leads to looking back to the past is culture in a society. Art communicates the background of its existence. Art is the contribution of dynasties, who patronized artists and gave master pieces to the world. The earliest among the rock cut temples with wall paintings surviving are at Ajanta.” This study focuses on cultural communication through Ajanta caves.

Ajanta witnesses the beginning of cultural communication in the process of nation building.

According to Soundarajan, “to even a casual student of Indian history the central and western flank of upper Deccan strikes as a pivotal region in the dispersal of nation building impulses from time immemorial.” The Deccan plateau was weak in inhabitation and a source of raw material for structural temples. Buddhism over powered the cults of the region in the 6th Century A.D. and later halted them forever. Buddhists were the first to use stone as an architectural building material in the country. Their modes of cultural communication are examined in this study.
Ajanta is treated as an epic centre of classical art. Dr. H. Goetz opinions, “the classic period in Indian history lasted from 4th to early 8th Century. Such classic period is represented by Ajanta, Pitalkhora, Bagh, Bhaja, Sittanvasal, Bedsa and Kanheri.”

This fact can be examined in this research work.

The cave temples contained religious messages. According to Veena Shekhar, “from the ancient days religion and art in India have had a harmonious interdependent relationship.” Since times immemorial art and religion depended on each other harmoniously. Art in India was considered as a method of approach to reality and a sacred vocation. This study is based on the analysis of cultural messages through Ajanta caves.

This study would be conducted from a cultural communication viewpoint. The communication is a new approach. This approach can be explained through new social theories. Scholars have pointed out this theory from a new angle. Dance has pointed out that “communication is the most uniquely ‘humanizing’ element of the pattern. It is unique especially in its symbolic representation and recreation of aspects of the human condition in forms that can be learned and shared.” This study also deals with various aspects of content reflected through sculpture and paintings and its relevance regarding cultural communication has also been explored here.

It is interesting to note that all the caves in Western India area located on ancient trade routes. Most of these caves are situated in Maharashtra. At Ajanta, Ambivale, Aurangabad, Bedsa, Bhaja, Ellora, Jivadan, Viral, Junnar, Manmodi, Nasik, Pawala, Pitalkhora, Shelarwadi, Tuljana Lena.

Some of these caves were connecting to trade route to Ujjaini city of North. Ajanta lies on strategic position from Subrak (Sopara) to Tagarpur (Tel)
1.2 Concept of cultural communication:

While discussing this cultural communication through Ajanta caves, it would be interesting to study the concept of communication, in a brief manner.

Peter Little has rightly observed that, “communication is the process by which information is passed between individuals and/or organizations by means of previously agreed symbols.” Communication occurs between two parties and exchange of thoughts takes place. The process of putting the message in symbols is called encoding and understanding that symbols to the sender is known as decoding.

The process of decoding is the reverse of the process of encoding.

In this thesis, we will try to understand the message by the artist in the by gone ages and try to decode to understand cultural communication in these caves.

D. E. McFarland has opined that, “communication may be broadly defined as the process of meaningful interaction among human beings. More specifically it is the process by which meanings are perceived and understandings are reached among human beings.”

Conscious or intended communication has a purpose. The sender or the source initiates the process of communication to the intended receiver to do something. In order to transfer an idea, the sender uses symbols, which stand for the message. The symbols may be words, signs, pictures, sounds etc. Both sender and receiver should be able to understand the meaning to the symbols used. So common understanding of the symbols is a necessary element of communication. Here symbols in Ajanta caves can be well explained for the future of humanity.

According to Ashley Montagu and Floyd Matson, “whether clear or garbled, tumultuous or silent, deliberate or fatally inadvertent communication is the meeting and the foundation of community. It is an essential human connection.” It means
messages are very important in communication. The sculpture and paintings in Ajanta caves truly testify to this phenomenon.

Common experience is necessary for communication to occur. In the process of communication encoding and decoding of messages should correspond to each other. Then only the derived response is produced. We constantly decode signs, from our environment and interpret these signs and encode some as a result.

Mass communication is used as a channel to inform, to influence, to convince, to inspire, to entertain, to interpret, to motivate, to persuade and transmit cultures. The pre-condition of successful communication is that the message should be clearly visualized and formulated before the process is set afoot.

Ranjan Ghosh has pointed out that, “The normal instance of communication implies two things.” (i) The reparability of communication and (ii) a deliberate intention behind (or before) the act of communication with respect to the nature and meaning of what is communicated. The latter is co-joined with the idea of un-relaxing control over what happens in both the creation and contemplation of art.”

In Ajanta caves the artists were well prepared about the cultural messages and they have thoughtfully reflected their ideas in a systematic manner.

Communication occurs because it is a primordial desire of human beings to share their experience with other human beings. I. P. Tiwari has rightly explained how communication process occurs. He has pointed out that “communication stands for all that emanates from an individual or group of individuals in the form of expression intended to reach another individual or individual, or a group of individuals.” In Ajanta caves such response is cultural experience, which viewer gets i.e. sharing the meaning encoded in the sculpture and paintings.
Ruesch and Bateson emphasize that, “communication refers to verbal, explicit and intentional transmission of messages also.” 16 All actions and events have communicative aspects as soon as another human being perceives them. Ruesch and Bateson further insisted that, “they conceptualize communication as including all those processes by which people influence one another based on the premise that all actions and events have communicative aspects as soon as they are perceived by another human being.” 17 Here in Ajanta, though the sculptures verbally do not speak yet they express cultural content and conduct dialogue with the viewers. Hence these messages are significant in this study.

The study of culture inculcates four points, namely, cultural evolutionaryism, cultural functionalism, cultural history and cultural ecology. Michael H. truly stated that, “cultural evolutionaryism refers to the cumulative, collective experience of human kind, culture write large.” 18

All cultural phenomenons are made of socially shared activities and must be considered the properties of the groups rather than of the individual alone. So the cultural systems should be re-examined in a potentially open system. In this context cultural functionalism emphasizes the society as a working system.

Kaplan and Manners have insisted that, “functional approaches to culture must be combined with other approaches which provide basic understanding of culture.” 19

The study of culture is a study of history, a study of contemporary history. Because when historical data is not placed in a functional evolutionary framework, the history remains narrative or chronology. History provides appropriate data for formulating relevant restrictive and supplementary conditions in studying culture.

In Ajanta caves cultural experiences are shared through social groups, and hence they provide a wide range of social significance.
Tiwari states that, “communication is an exchange of information and messages. The increase in the volume of communication brought about the development of media to store and retrieves the growing volume of information. The psychological and cultural impact of setting in an early village was significant.” 20

Truly Ajanta is an example of such a village where cultural experience of ancient Buddhists has been depicted properly through artwork.

Tiwari further interpreted that “aspect of discoveries of cave paintings or other artefacts is that these were preserved in dark places away from light.” 21 Ajanta caves are also located at a dark place and they can be explained through the use of light. According to Tiwari “they can be interpreted in two ways. One is magic – a figure substituting for a living thing and whatever acts on it acts on a living thing. So they were casting a magic spell over the picture of a deer or buffalo and gaining confidence and bringing the animal from the hunt. Another interpretation is education. The pictures were used in ceremonies.” 21

Ajanta caves amply testify these facts because they throw light on the life and career of Buddha. It is a magic reflection of his life and philosophy through sculpture and painting. Further they educate masses through their messages. The essence of the Ajanta caves is humanity and they truly guide about the eight fold path designed by the Lord Buddha. While conducting a study of the cultural communication through Ajanta caves three aspects are very important. The artists encoded cultural messages such as the Jataka tales, and the life of Buddha. These messages also have continuity and they narrate a perfect story through continuous messages. Further, this cultural experience throws a magical light on the past and it is essentially a cultural shading of past experience.
This is unique mass communication is conducted through the medium of cave temples. The artists of ancient times and the decoding by the modern receivers did the encoding. There is a gap of centuries in the process. A proper interpretation is needed to bridge the gap.

1.3 Cave temples as mass media:

Cave temples have played an important role as living media during the ancient period. According to Stella Kramisch “there are twelve hundred cave temples in the country, out of which nine hundred are Buddhist.” 22 The oldest of them are those of Ajanta (about 175 B.C.); preceding Bhaja, Karle and Kanheri in Western India.

These caves have been carved out from 2nd century B.C., to 14th Century A.D. The places of these caves were selected at a very strategic point far away from people easy and for meditation.

E. H. Longhurst has pointed out “like the Hindus, and Buddhist, Jainas also selected picturesque sites for cave temples at unique sites for their excavation.” 23 Natural surroundings far away from people suited for meditation. These cave temples were carved out to develop centres for propagation of religious messages and for social gathering of the people who believed the faith they had become an essential part of daily life in ancient India.

According to Lelio L’stourelles “the institutions have evolved over the centuries, the society has never become a static entity and customs changed gradually, but the essential fact is that many of these transformations occurred almost imperceptibly, without sudden shock or violent revolution....” 24 Ajanta caves amply establish that such a silent revolution occurred through art and culture.

Owen C. Kaul mentioned that, “in India from remote times, forest dwellers had practiced asceticism, living in isolation in leafy huts or in natural caves. These
ascetics later grouped their huts around an open space, which became the fore runners of the ancient monasteries.” 25 Further, it has been observed that, “Viharas, therefore, are of as great antiquity as that of Stupas and Chaityas or sacred spots.” 26

Buddhist monks were also living together in communities, so Vihara architecture was an arrangement for their accommodation. Cave n° XII is a fine example of a single storied monastery at Ajanta. These monasteries played an important role for preaching of religious messages. They became centres of learning for the communities.

Buddhist caves spread all over India. True enough as pointed by B.G. Gokhale “the tradition of the Buddhist cave temple and the monastery is carried on in continuity of great examples through the ages.” 27 Ajanta is an example of this legacy and it is placed at the focal point of Buddhist cave temples of north and east.

Jacobson has finely termed the beauty of Ajanta murals. To quote in his words, “intended to instruct the monks on the temptations of the world and on what the princely Buddha had given up when he became an ascetic wanderer, the cave murals depict court life in all its pleasurable nanopy sensuous dancers, rich caparisoned elephants, living and loving in worldly delight.” 28 The majestic manifestation of this in the Ajanta caves is a testimony of all these aesthetic reflections.

The aesthetic form of Buddhist religion was seclusion from the world and active business of life. Initially monks were taking shelter under the shade of trees and during monsoon used to move to natural caves formed in hill ranges. Later they learned to excavate. In the Western Ghats of India the cliffs and scarps of basalt rose in the form of fortress walls suited for shrines and cave dwelling. The heterogeneous stone and natural earlier caves led to the excavation of further more in the region. In
Maharashtra caves are excavated at Ajanta, Ellora, Bhaja, Karle, Nasik, Kanheri, Junnar, Kuda, etc. The site for excavation was based on many practical considerations like accessibility, water supply, natural beauty and last but not the least, proximity to trade route through which Buddhism crossed borders and reached till Central Asia. The symbols of faith expressed the intimate connection with the philosophy of Buddhism.

The cave temples reflected the social milieu and cultural ethos of the people. Bashan has rightly observed that, "Though painted for religious purposes, the murals of Ajanta bear rather a secular than a religious message. Here even more vividly than at Sanchi, we see the whole life of ancient India in panorama." People from all walks of life are represented in these caves.

Veena Shekar has explained the purpose of the cave temples. She has pointed out that, "the large halls of the cave temples became the centres for social gatherings. Dance and music performances in the praise of the Lord became a regular feature." So these places served the purpose of moral, spiritual as well as cultural centres of learning.

The cave temples are strategically located with a proper natural setting. John Griffith described it in these words "the caves are generally lighted like most Indian territories by reflection from the ground in front and from the opposite hill. Cave nos I to XI are clearly illuminated in every part by reflected light and towards evening the rays of the setting sun shine directly through the windows and doorways and are reflected from the floors on the wall paintings which are then most distinctly seen." Accordingly to Chopra "all the monuments and sculptures were the result of royal patronage."
Scooping of caves was a costly affair. So the Royal houses supported it. Vakataka Kings of Vatsagulma mostly patronized Ajanta caves.

Ajanta caves amply testify these facts because they throw light on the life and career of Buddha. It is a magic reflection of his life and philosophy through sculpture and painting. Further they educate masses through their message. The essence of the Ajanta caves is humanity and they try to guide about the eight-fold path designed by Lord Buddha, while conducting study of cultural communication through Ajanta caves. These aspects are very important, the artists encoded cultural messages through Jataka tales from the life of Buddha.

1.4 Cave temples and everyday life

Every country develops its living style through centuries. In India everyday life style is an evolution of traditions from Vedic, Buddhist and Jain period. It is very difficult to web the fabric of social life reflected through art work of the old age. By studying literature and painting one can understand what type of process lay down by social matrix of the land. In order to understand the cultural communication through Ajanta caves it would be interesting to examine the content and messages reflected through the cave temples of Ajanta.

S. P. Singh has interestingly analyzed these phenomena. According to his opinion “each great cultural movement in this country has made its own contribution to the art of building. The result is that aspirations of the people and even their way of life stand revealed in substantial form. The meaning and significance of the temple has persisted from age to age.”

Like Hinduism, Buddhism has also contributed to the philosophy and social milieu in ancient period.
Architecture remains a place of social portrait to reveal a message on the canvas of the artist. S. P. Ghosh has rightly quoted Stella Kramrisch that “at the height of its architectural development, the Indian temple was the spiritual centre from which religious and social life was regulated.” 

By such regulation a tremendous impact was made on society regarding social and cultural values.

The cave temples were not only shrines of worship, but they were also places of social interaction. James Burgess has noted that, “the caves were almost the only object of antiquity in India.” These cave temples supply ample of material regarding social history. Hence many historians of east and west have analyzed cave temples architecture, sculpture and paintings.

The rock cut caves scooped up from stones were a magnificent reflection of social and cultural movement. B. N. Datta has argued that, “in this stone evidence we find that the Indian life in essence was not much different in those days from today.”

So it’s a proven fact that there is a lot of similarity in every day life of present day and the days when the caves were excavated as depicted in sculptures and paintings. In Ajanta caves some of the foreign travellers were also shown and this can be described as interaction of the west India.

Varied aspects of India have been depicted in Indian cave temples. According to Janhari “the temples were the centres of the cultural, social, political and economic life of people in general and religious life in particular.”

Buddhist cave temples unlike Hindu temples are meant for congressional workshop and being living media of every day life. This can be truly examined through the content of Ajanta caves varied aspects of India have been depicted in Indian cave temples.
There is a good deal of spiritual interaction through this temple. It has been observed by Jatthari "most of the monuments are devotional in character, connected either with the Brahmical religions or with Buddhism or Jainism. Besides giving an idea of the rich artistic heritage, these monuments deserve attention also because in them the aspirations of the people and even their way of life stand revealed in substantial forms for all to see." 38

The rich artistic heritage of by gone years reveal that people of these were religious minded and social political life was normal and hence life was flourishing through these ages.

Stella Kramrisch has rightly signalized the value of the cave temples. She has pointed out that "caves were at all times sacred in India. Making of art is a ritual. Its magic acts on the form. By performing the rites of art the craftsman transforms himself as well as his materials. Form, ritual, performance and transformation are simultaneous and inseparable aspect of Indian art. They are inherent in its creation and produce their effect in its concrete shape." 39

They were conducting a dialogue with the philosophy of the prophet on one hand and socio cultural life of the masses on the other hand. So the cave artists have external vision of surroundings and everyday life and internal vision of spirituality.

The Viharas were described as Sangharama a place for the rest of Buddhist sanghas. About the climate security of these caves, Havell has observed that, "a dwelling carved out of the living rock when it is designed with due regard to lighting and ventilation, is not only an ideal retreat for the student and religious recluse, but it affords better protection from the torrential rains of the monsoon and from the exhausting heat of the dry season, than a building which the utmost skill of the carpenter, brick layer, and stone mason could construct." 40 So the cave temples were
designed to serve the dual purpose of spiritual and materialistic aspects of every day life of a Bhikshu.

Paintings were vehicles of social and cultural feelings. Basham has observed that, “some of the artificial caves dedicated to religious purposes, have samples of highly developed schools of painting. And few would dispute Ajanta paintings are among the greatest surviving paintings of ancient civilization.” 41 Being the oldest, they truly receive testimony of social and cultural life.

The role of cave temples in ancient times was multi-purpose in nature. Havell has pointed out that, “in India cave temples represent a refinement of luxury for the users, an exceptional trial of skill for the craftsman and a special act of devotion and of course creation on the part of the individual or the community for whom the work is performed.” 42 Certainly this work was performed for the community welfare and community life can be amply studied through this reflection.

There was a continuous interaction between Vedic and Buddhist religion. Havell has pointed out that, “Buddhism began to elaborate and adopt ancient Vedic ritual and the symbolism of the Indo-Aryan art to the structure and adornment of its Chaitya houses and monasteries were decorated.” 43

Initially Buddhism was dominated by Hinayana phase in which there was no decoration but later in Mahayana period Buddhist Iconography was developed and Jataka tales were reflected through art and painting. Ajanta can be sited as an ideal example to study how Buddhism travelled from a symbolic religion to a faith, which turned into image worship in the Mahayana period.

All these points explain about every day life in cave temples. Every day life was characterized by social harmony, economic prosperity and cultural richness of the by gone ages. Ajanta caves thus were for not only religious, but also were a testimony
of social diversity and cohesion of the community life in the ancient period. This can be studied on the basis of exchange of cultural motives, which is examined in this research endeavour.

1.5 Objectives of study

The study of cave temples has been carried out to study iconography and due to the fact that little research work has been conducted regarding cultural communication through cave temples.

The following are the objectives of the present study:

(1) To study cultural communication through Ajanta caves

(2) To focus social and cultural aspects of communication through artwork.

(3) To understand material culture reflected through the artistic expressions.

(4) To study the messages encoded through Jataka tales in Buddhist religions

(5) To describe the impact of Ajanta caves on foreign tourists.

Specific objectives are essential for completing any research endeavour. Bhandarkar and Wilkinson have rightly observed that, “where there is a practical program to be carried out, a realistic or objective appraisal of means and aspects becomes inevitable.” 44

The first amongst the objectives set forth is to study cultural communication through Ajanta caves. Cultural communication through Ajanta caves is not yet pursued fully. About cultural communication it has been observed by D. N. Varma “the Jataka stories painted on the walls of Ajanta caves were repeating the stories to every visitor, who entered the precincts of the caves. The paintings were communicating. They were broadcasting information making an impact on the thought process and influencing the attitudes of all those who had a look at them.” 45
The second objective is to focus social and cultural aspects of communication through artwork.

Cave temples through their sculpture and painting explain about the life in ancient India. About social and cultural values of Ajanta, P. V. Ranade has observed that “the rock cut cave complex of Ajanta nestles in its bosom a lyrical travelogue of some of the pleasant most features of Indian aesthetics.” 46

The different aspects of this aesthetic sense can be examined in this thesis. There is ample scope for explaining these aspects on the basis of artists’ expressions.

The third objective is to understand material culture reflected through the artistic expression. Material culture is revealed through various objects, utensils and patterns of culture reflected through different articles can be explained. They throw light on the type of objectives and standard of living enjoyed by those people. K. Satyamurty has observed that, “the evolution of human cultures has necessarily given way for the rise and spread of utilitarian skills, which are rather entwined with the routine way of life and non-utilitarian skills which call a higher plane of living.” 47

The fourth objective is to study the messages encoded through Jataka tales in Buddhist religion. Jataka tales reveal different miracles in the life of Buddha and these have been in the public memory from the beginning of the post Buddha period in Indian history. Those folk tales reveal the separate message of Buddhist philosophy. About Jataka tales Varma has rightly observed about the significance of Jataka tales that, “Gautama Buddha himself was a communicator par excellence and invented a wonderful device the communications of these abstract ideals for his followers. The device consisted of the previous births of the Buddha and pre-supposed that all our good and bad actions in the current life follow up in our future times.” 48
Fifth objective is to describe the impact of Ajanta caves on foreign tourists. The foreigners are true audience of the caves. They respond to mass communication encoded by the artists of those periods. Verma has rightly opined about this process in the words of “mass communication has emerged as a discipline only in the recent years.” 49

Though scholars and art historians have explained about these caves yet the aspect of mass communication has not been carefully examined. These messages can be conveyed to the foreign tourists and their responses can be examined critically.

The study of temples helps one to know contemporary religions, social, economic and political life of the people. Ghosh has stated that, “the temples supply material for a kind of social history which could not be otherwise.” 50 While conducting this research work all these aspects need to be explained.

In this research maximum importance is given to the study material collected through the books of authentic writers. Then interviews of eminent personalities in the concerned field are taken. A survey is conducted among visitors to the Ajanta caves. Opinions of tourists from foreign countries are also taken.

Ghosh rightly pointed out that “in cave temples the changes that occurred from time to time in the political, economical, social and cultural life of the people of this part of our country stand revealed.” 51

The changes that occurred in the life of the people are revealed in these cave temples from ancient period. Good will, genius, economic, resources of any community and patronage are evident as part of daily life in those times. It is a source of lucrative livelihood for skilled and unskilled workers. Regarding institutional aspect of these caves a big number of people gather here on Buddha Pornima day. So
cave temples function as a great unifying force. All these aspects of mass communication can be studied here sufficiently.

Satya Murty has rightly observed that, “the cultural studies throw light on the achievements of a tribe’s living in an area. They expose the process of understanding the environment physical and social, economic and political.” Cultural studies are instrumental to understand the behavioralism of human beings. This study is inevitable to make out the modern social framework and adjust to the odds. The significance lies in providing a goal to assess humanity. This work will also throw light on different facets of cultural life in a critical age.

About culture Mathew Arnold has observed that “culture is the study of perfection and of harmonious perfection, general perfection and perfection which consists in becoming something, rather than in having something, in an inward condition of the mind and spirit, not in an outward set of circumstances.” All these aspects can be explained here.

The analysis of the cave art and architecture makes us feel that the artists were given essential framework and freedom to produce designed work. From the study of form, structure of caves, architecture, sculpture, icon and paintings and legends, connected with them, the history of the region is found. Changes occurred in different fields of life like religious, economical and political are revealed. Religious sentiments or thoughts economical resources of the country and political stability combined together resulted in artistic constructions.

1.6. Survey of literature

Survey of literature is mostly essential for understanding the status of research problem. About survey of literature Wilkinson and Bhandarkar opined that, “Frequently an exploratory study is concerned with an area of subject matter in which
explicit hypotheses have not yet been formulated. The researcher's task then is to review the available material with an eye on the possibilities of developing hypotheses from it.” 54 In view of this, brief highlights of important research works conducted on Ajanta caves have been presented in this section.

John Smith discovered the Ajanta caves in the year 1819. About the reporting of discovery of this to the British Government it is to be noted that eminent persons visited the caves and sent descriptions of the caves to journals. Lieutenant James E. Alexander of the Lancers sent an account to the Royal Asiatic Society, which was published in their “Transactions” in 1829. Mr. Ralph’s descriptions appeared in the Journal of Bengal Asiatic Society in 1836. Dr. Bird published an account in his historical research in 1847. Lieutenant Blake’s was article published in the Bombay Courier in 1839. Mr. Fergusson forwarded a paper to Royal Asiatic Society on Rock cut temples of India in 1843.

James Fergusson appreciated the art and wrote, the Illustrations of the Rock cut temples of India in 1845. He stated that he was “placing Ajanta first because it is the most perfect and complete series of Buddhist caves in India, without any admixture of Brahmanism and contains types of all the rest.” 55 However, in this book there is no communication viewpoint.

James Burgess, being an archaeologist, gave description in his text Archaeological Survey of Western India (1879). He highlighted the art of Ajanta in the following words: “having divided the ceiling into a number of panels by the method of ancient system of flooring, with a circle for variety in the central division, we find these panels fitted with ornaments of such variety and beauty, where we have naturalism and conventionalism so harmoniously combined as to call forth our highest administration.” 56 Here communication view is not dealt with.
The discovery of Ajanta caves arose interest in the world of scholars.

In Archaeological Survey of Western India James Burgess gave important characters of these caves in 1880. He has observed that “they are excavated in the face of an almost perpendicular scarp of rock, about 250 feet high, sweeping around in a curve of a full semicircle, and forming the north or outer side of a wild secluded ravine down which comes a small stream.” 57 However, he does not deal with the mass communication perspective.

E. B. Havell has also studied in a systematic manner. In 1915 he has observed that “Ajanta reveals the wreck of the great masterpieces of Indian painting.” 58

This masterpiece has remained neglected as a communication source for a long time.

Yazdani in his text “Ajanta” four volumes in 1930 gave full details of all most all panels and sculptures with details of dress, ornaments, and architectural details of palace and interior decoration also. He has observed that “the familiarity of the Ajanta artists with court life is amply illustrated in the four caves (I-XI and XVI-XVII). The royal pavilions contain richly decorated thrones and curtains and awning with pearl fusels. The princes and princesses wearing gorgeous jewels and draped in expensive silks or gold and silver brocades of exquisite designs.” 59 The designs form the part of their cultural communication, which can be studied carefully.

According to Percy Brown, “each great cultural movement has made its own particular contribution to the art of building so that the aspirations of the people and even their way of life stand revealed in substantial form for all to see. And in India man’s ideals have found expression in numerous noble monuments showing that few centuries possess a richer architectural heritage.” 60
A. Ghosh edited seven articles on Ajanta and framed it as Ajanta Murals. In his article M. N. Deshpande pointed out that, “no subject could achieve this purpose better than the stories from the previous lives of the master (Jataka), where the would be Buddha, in his careers as the Bodhisattvas, outshine others by his supreme intelligence, the nobility of his character, his spirit and selfless service and sacrifice and his boundless compassion.” He further observed that, “each Jataka story exemplifies the efforts that Bodhisattva made to develop one of the ten virtues Paramita.” These stories are helpful to understand cultural communication in them.

M. K. Dhavlikar was first among Indian scholars who highlighted cultural aspects of Ajanta in 1973. He pointed out that “the material culture that is depicted in the paintings is extremely helpful in building up a picture of life in ancient India in general and in the Deccan in particular.”

Sheila Weiver wrote at length regarding historical setting, iconographic developments, stylistic trends and developments. In her book “Ajanta: its Place in Buddhist Art” she pointed out on iconography that “the evolution of the iconography, ground plans and style of the caves suggest that the tradition born at other sites took root and prospered at Ajanta. From there they were in time transplanted in a further evolved form to neighbouring sites and other regions.”

So these sentences clearly confirm that cultural communication occurred through Ajanta caves, since art and culture travelled along with Buddhism.

Ratan Parimoo edited a book in 1991 on “The Art of Ajanta” in which topics like Ajanta rediscovered, chronology, cult patronage, emerging sculpture, styles and contents of painting, problems of technique and conservation, connections with the West, Ajanta influence in Deccan and South India, Ajanta influence in Asia were written by eminent authors in two volumes. In the preface of the first volumes,
Parimoo has explained his perspective on Ajanta caves. He has opined that, “Ajanta stands at a juncture where the gradual development process of ancient art forms culminated to a prime position during the fifth century A. D., along with the advent of the Gupta art at Mathura, Sarnath and Madhyadesa.”

In an article on murals Ingrid Aall stated that, “from the artistic point of view the painting on ceiling shows power of imagination perhaps even excelling the wall murals.” In this statement murals were appreciated but cultural communication was not dealt with.

D. N. Verma has written an article titled “Ajanta– Aspects of Mass Communication” in the book Edited by Ratan Parimoo entitled “The Art of Ajanta”. This book is the first of its kind on cave temples of India with a cultural viewpoint. In one of the articles based on his research work he has pointed that Buddha himself suggested a centre for communication. As per D. N. Verma “Fortunately the Buddha himself had indirectly pointed the most effective centre for the artist to function when he suggested the setting up of memorial monuments primarily of spiritual, if not of artistic significance.”

According to Shobhana Gokhale “a large number of monks among the donors and the different categories within themselves suggest that Ajanta was not only flourishing epigraphic evidence, but also furnishes the most eloquent testimony to its prevalence at Ajanta.”

According to D. N. Verma “indeed there was not much of philosophical abstraction in such a gospel, but all the same it was not easy to communicate such injunction in a gripping manner.”
The theme of the sculpture and paintings in Ajanta caves was depending on the previous births of the Lord Buddha. These Jataka stories were represented in a systematic manner.

Amina Okada has observed that, “Pali literature preserved over five hundred Jatakas that constituted a huge collection of tales, poems, ballads, stories and anecdotes deriving from diverse literary and religious sources. Attributed to Buddha himself who supposedly recounted them to his disciples, these sacred, edifying narratives retrace the multiple incarnations of the blessed one.” 70

All these details are used to study cultural communication through Ajanta caves.

However, the present study is based on cultural communication, which is a micro aspect of this subject.

A brief review of the previous study exemplifies the number of scholars who worked on Ajanta caves. Except M. K. Dhavlikar and D. N. Verma, nobody has explained about culture and communication.

In this work we want to explain cultural communication through Ajanta caves.

1.7 Plan of research work

In any research endeavour plan and period of research work are highly significant tasks. Wilkinson and Bhandarkar have observed that, “the operation involved in a research process is so interdependent that the earlier steps or operations determine to an appreciable extent to the native of the later ones.” 71

In this work the study of cultural communication through Ajanta caves has been planned. V. A. Smith has observed that, “the various sources of, or original authorities for, the early history of India may be arranged in four classes. The first of these is tradition, chiefly as recorded in native literature; the second consists of the
foreign travellers and historians, which contain observations on Indian subjects. The third is the evidence of archaeology, which may be subdivided into monumental, the epigraphic and the numismatic and the fourth comprises of the few works of nature contemporary or nearly contemporary literature which deals expressly with historical subjects.” 72

While conducting this study pilot study was undertaken and processes were examined. Gauri Parimoo has observed that “recounting the discussion on Gupta and Vakataka influence assimilated and localizing itself, one can notice osmotic action at work.” 73

In this work localization aspects are more carefully examined. Misra opined that, “the studies of Walter Spink and others in this sphere are devoted more pertinently to isolating characteristic elements in architectural and decorative designs and patterns of the Ajanta caves and establishing by comparison a sequence of their development an effort to date them.” 74

R. N. Misra has tried to interpret that, “art of the Vakataka branch has received fair attention especially the last two decades have seen the focus on Ajanta sharpening.” 75

However, in this study Ajanta caves have been examined in cultural viewpoint in the following manner.

Chapter I Introduction, Chapter II Research Methodology, Chapter III Cultural Communication in India, Chapter IV Cultural Communication through Ajanta Caves, Chapter V Cultural Communication Through Paintings and Sculpture (Material Culture), Chapter VI Sociological and Cultural aspects, Chapter VII Conclusion. Chapter scheme is rational and made in a scientific manner.
1.8 Summary

Art in India has a continuous historical background. It seems cave temples and society living, are simultaneous occurrences. Caves are among the earliest examples of architecture in India.

Rock cut caves of India is divided into two types. Buddhist monks mean Chaityas for assembly and prayer. Vihara means a place of shelter for the monks since the monks were not expected to stay at a place for more than three nights. So the cave dwellings were meant for Vanavasa. So heretical mendicants began to settle down to monastic life. Buddhist monks from 1st Century B. C., to 7th Century A. D. built monasteries in these caves of Ajanta. They were accidentally re-discovered in 1819 by John Smith of Madras Cavalry. There are twelve hundred cave temples in India. Out of these nine hundred are Buddhist, two hundred Hindu and one hundred Jainism. John Griffiths and Lady Herringham pioneered the systematic study of these masterpieces of Indian classical art. Actually all the published material for the study of the caves has been derived from the copies carefully traced by hand.

Communication is a function of life. As a function, it is rooted in human existence. So also the artistic communication is an on going process such that generation-to-generation might appreciate art works. Art is a social incident that takes us back to centuries. Culture means a way of life. It is a historically derived system. Human life can be treated as human communication. In all communication system messages, which are the outcome of some events or shared experience, are coded and sent through some medium or channel and decoded by the receive. Like wise Buddhist artists shared their aesthetic values through sculpture and painting. They were decoded by on lookers.
Discussions conducted in this chapter reveal that Ajanta caves were discovered in 1819. Since then they became a subject matter of research and examination of facts.

The survey of literature provides the background to understand the future currents of the subject. In the next chapter the research design adopted for the study has been discussed.

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