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CHAPTER III
CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN INDIA

3.1 Introduction

Every society has its own culture, its own ways of thinking, behaving, and believing. Every culture is a body of readymade solution to the problems encountered by the group that gives to the people who participate in it a certain style of life that is peculiarity of their own. Hence every culture constitutes a unique value system.

In view of this, evolution of cultural communication in India is being examined here. S. K. Chatterji has rightly observed that, “a symbol does not subject, the infinite to finite, but renders the finites transparent. It aids us to see the infinite through it.”

It would be interesting to study how symbols have been developed in Indian culture through its art crafts, Icons and paintings. Further, art has been analyzed by many scholars.

Krishan Sondhi has quoted A. K. C. Swamy regarding a definition to art as “it is the principle of manufacture”, which means it is the guiding principle of how to make things that are at once of beauty as well as utility.

In cave temples, Indian artists as symbols of beauty and aesthetic sense have developed sculptures, as well as, paintings. Accordingly we have to study how symbols, art, crafts have evolved in India. The folk reflections of public vision of art can be well examined and analyzed by adopting new tools and techniques. G. V. Chalam has truly explained that “if art express life, as it assuredly does and if art is the language of emotions, then surely folk art is the truest expression of the creative genius of a race and is the best approach for understanding its national psychology.” Folk art is the art of the people, so it is natural and spontaneous in its expression of
the soul of the people. Through this, national psychology can be understood because it represents the people and their activities. And art is a mental process and an achievement of the bygone ages. Hence, in this research work we have to study how the folk expressions of local aspects of the Ajanta have become representative of the psychology of the ancient Indian people. Ajanta murals have become classical, because they reveal the cultural ethos of folk life of the Gupta-Vakataka age. The folk expressions were twofold in nature; both visual and oral. It is interesting that in India both in Hindu and Buddhist, traditional information was key to understanding the cultural ethos. Sondhi Krishan has observed that, "it is clear that the oral tradition is the key to the whole process of communication in traditional Indian society. Traditionally, the purpose of art was not commercial. It entertained and informed above all in form of worship. In the process of accomplishing this, it was also tremendously important social activity performing a socially unifying function, reinforcing collective solidarity." 4

Basically Indian heritage was transmitted through 'Sruti' and 'Smruti'. The scriptural and literary heritage was recorded in writing much after its evolution and development. The most important factor responsible for the uninterrupted continuity of cultural tradition are the rural folks, who lived in their scattered villages, cut off from the big cities where the cultural traditions underwent considerable changes from time to time on account of invasions of alien rule. In spite of all these obstacles, Indian culture remained protected and truly reflected through the medium of cave temples.

3.2 Culture & Communication

Culture and communication in India were closely related to each other since the Vedic period. Indian culture has been closely related with values, artwork and the
deeply rooted lifestyle of the people. Scholars have tried to focus the Indian concept of culture in the right manner. Srinivasa Murty has forwarded Pannikar’s definition. K. M. Pannikar defines cultures as “the complex of ideas, conceptions developed qualities and organized relationships and countries that exists generally in a society.”

Dr. Biren Roy has observed that “like literature, art, architecture and sculpture of India were dominated by religion. In fact, all manifestations of culture of India are strongly influenced by religious motifs.” Like Hindu art the Buddhist art is also reflected through religious motifs inspired by Lord Buddha. Ajanta is a mirror of this vision.

In ancient India the cave temple was the institution of education and communication. Regarding communication technology in ancient India Shanta Gandhi has opined that, “they used to have an institution called Yagna Satra. It might have been a seminar with some rituals added, in which the whole community participated. There could have been a seven day Satra or one month Satra, even one year long Satra in which people from various streams of life and intellectuals gathered and exchanged views on various problems.”

T. N. Mishra has pointed out that, “The purpose of art has been to communicate great truths to mankind through architectural sculptural and pictorial reconstructions of the power that maintains stars in their courses. Indian art depicts life as interpreted by religion and philosophy. Ancient Indian art in all periods of development was closely associated with the rhythm of life including the life of Gods and all living world as a manifestation of God.”

People at large were getting public education through these cave temples. The message was of the religion and culture in which they believed. Religion was a moral
force to guide the masses. Hindus as well as Buddhist and Jainas had also deep faith in religious morality.

According to Satya Murty "the cultural fragment of India is characterized by the influence of religion. The Indian way of life, it is said by most of the Indologists, to the care is religious. Hence there were attempts to identify the Indianism with religious vicissitudes. Certainly religion dominated the Indian scene, but never to that extent, which can be identified and magnified to have been eclipsing the other systems of life."\(^9\) Hence art also reflects religious life. The rock cut cave temple is also not an exception to this. The study of cultural communication through Ajanta caves can never be completed without understanding the religious Jataka tales and stories truly depicted in the paintings of Ajanta caves. The analysis of the content of these sculptures can help a great deal to focus the cultural communication.

The cultural essence includes both paintings and animal life. A new approach to cultural ecology reveals how man, eco-system and culture are inter-related. It has been rightly observed by T. V. Pathy that, "the Ajanta paintings and sculptures reveal several scenes of animal fight. Among them bull fight in caves n° I, the ram fight in cave n° II and the cocks fight and the goat fight in cave n° XVII are noteworthy."\(^10\) These examples amply testify how cultural communication in ancient India was closely related to animal life of the period. Culture and communication were thus closely linked with each other; both were enriching each other because they were based on human values. In this connection L. M. Joshi has rightly observed that, "culture is generally regarded as pattern of life and thought in a community. While it manifests itself historically in education and learning art and literature and inner being was configurated."\(^11\) It would be interesting to study how Ajanta caves reveal this phenomenon through its sculptures and paintings.
R. C. Muzumdar defined culture as the “sum of total of physical and mental attainments, which is carried forward from one generation to the other through customs and traditions.” According to K. M. Munshi, Culture has been the greatest integrating force in men. It is true that the artists of Ajanta have integrated this lifestyle of people through its artistic reflections.

Art, culture and communication is thus closely related to each other. S. P. Gupta has truly pointed out that “Indian art has been the product of Indian culture. Indian culture has been the product of streams of thoughts and practices. There are two traditions; one is folk belonging to the oral traditions operating at folk level in the villages and the other, classical belonging to the sophisticated society. But both the traditions are rooted in the same system.”

The artwork of Ajanta is also not an exception to this. It would be quite interesting to study cultural communication in ancient India through the symbolic artistic reflections of Ajanta sculptures and paintings.

All the processes in the value of cultural communication can be summarized in the words of B. Subbarao “it was the development of the transcontinental high ways or trunk roads that forged the bonds of unity between the various religious and strengthened the centripetal forces by enabling free movement of people, goods and ideas.” Ajanta caves are located on a point where the forces of cultural communication were meeting each other.

In Ajanta the trends of both North and South India art have met each other. Regarding uniform development of culture in time and space Subbarao opined that “the recognition of this fundamental principle – the geographic and ecological basis of Indian history and culture – will help us to understand the true significance of the physical and cultural diversity of the country based on deeper social, economic and
technological differences, which are the results of a slow penetration of higher cultures in different parts and at different periods.”

Hindu, Buddhist and Jain religions were brought together from this kind of diversity. The paintings of Ajanta are the testimony of this diversity. The cultural communication through the sculptures and paintings can be reviewed on these lines. About essence of tolerance in Buddhism, Soni has observed that, “if we dive deep below the surface diversities, the background is spiritual and the fountain of that spiritual unity is Buddhism.”

By virtue Buddhism’s tolerant and sympathetic attitude influenced others. Its rational outlook and progressive nature interlocked the heterogeneous masses of Asia. Its cohesive properties made a solid cultural block in Asian countries. Hence Buddhist caves of Ajanta can be truly examined as symbol of this diversity and tolerance. In this chapter we are going to explore about how this diversity is evolved.

According to R. K. Mookerjee, “art is the vehicle of the abiding values that civilization creates and nurtures in different countries and epochs. Man’s other institutions and traditions work from without, art transforms within.”

Man’s art is the medium of transforming cultural values from one particular country to other and transforms within too. Man’s emotions and instincts are communicated through the medium of art along with carrying the social experience and cultural heritage.

Ajanta caves truly testify this phenomenon and sculpture as well as paintings have become vehicles of cultural values. Even today these values are transformed from one person to another person.

Shashi Asthana has rightly observed that, “it was in 4th Century B.C. that countries like China and Central Asia came into contact with India in a meaningful way. The strengthening of political and cultural ties; with these far flung areas of Asia and Egypt was the outcome mainly of the efforts of the Mauryan Kings particularly
those of Chandragupta Maurya and Asoka.”\textsuperscript{18} Asthana has further observed that “from
the Megasthenes we learn that in the Mauryan municipal administration there was a
committee of five that looked after the foreigners. The deceased foreigners were
buried with their own proper rites and ceremonies and their estate were administered
by commissioners, who at the earliest opportunity transferred the assets to their
heirs.”\textsuperscript{19} So exchange of embassies, missionaries, devout pilgrims, carnival travellers,
traders were the major tools for the cultural relations of India with neighbouring
countries.

The caves have influenced neighbouring countries and it is presumed that
artwork at Bagh and Ajanta schools have also influenced Bamiyan caves. Cultural
communication has thus affected a vast geographical zone of the Indian subcontinent.

Culture and mass media are knitted along with art forms. R. K. Mookerjee has
observed that, “art is at once a social product and an established means of social
control. Art forms are largely socially conditioned and determined, while these are the
most effective modes of regulation of the lives of individuals and societies.”\textsuperscript{20} Mass
media are major tools in the transmission of the culture on both levels. Media
reinforces the consensus of values of society. It also introduces the seeds of changes
even in art forms. Cave temples have served the purpose of being living mass media
through bygone ages. On this background, the study of cultural communication
through cave temples can be conducted.

3.3 Cultural Communication through cave temples

These rock cut caves were sculptured up in the mountain, they have remained
as immortal heritage throughout the ages. From 2\textsuperscript{nd} Century B.C., to 13\textsuperscript{th} Century
A.D., these caves have served the purpose of cultural interaction. The social milieu
and cultural ethos reflected through the cave temple are the essence of Indian mainstream culture, Hindu, Buddhist or Jain. About the cultural potential of this media, numerous scholars advocated in their own viewpoint. R. K. Mookerjee has observed that, "art and religion develop together. Art fashions the deity cult in which Gods represent not the mysterious forces and events of the world but the aspirations and travails of the human soul. Thus, art, like religion, explores the entire meaning of life, the heights and depths of man's experience."21 Ajanta caves truly explain this phenomenon. The cultural communication must be explained in different dimensions.

While describing the concept of mass culture Dr. V. L. Dharurkar has quoted Prof. Dennis Mcquil. According to this leading Sociologist the concept of mass culture refers to a whole range of population activities and artefacts has become identified with the typical content of the mass media.... 22 As per sociologists and in terms of mass audiences mass culture is referred as the tastes, preferences, manners and styles of the mass or just the majority of people. The culture of the masses, taking its value from the idea of the ordinary people is seen as the main agent of progressive social change. Mass culture is culture of the people. The sociological viewpoint can be further explained. Art has both religious and social motives. It has been pointed out by Rouland that "nowhere else in Indian art, but at Ajanta do we find such a complete statement of indivisible union of what in the West is referred to as sacred and secular art."23

According to R. C. Mujumdar "par excellence medium is painting to express unique moods like frustration, fulfilments and sentiments of an individual. Dominant trend in painting is determined by the spirit of the people and environment. Then the painting may be saturated with a sense of architecture, sculpture or music or geometrical patterns as in that of Ajanta and Ellora."24 This blending of a sister art
and functioning is in practice in other arts also. So no art can be said to be autonomous and exclusive in its own sphere. According to R. K. Mookerjee "architecture becomes monumental in a mathematical setting and sculpture dominated by the spirit of architecture in its solid unity with the ground, i.e., the wall and the figure."  Ajanta is the true example of this phenomenon.

Ajanta is the embodiment of Buddhist values. Mukherjee has observed that, "when Buddhism became the religion of the masses, in Indian art fusion of anthropomorphic and abstract elements took place. Such achievement in art satisfied the requirements of both emotional fervour and intellectual comprehensions. Hellenistic influence encouraged anthropomorphism in the Buddhist art of Gandhara and Kapisa. Here Buddha was carved as a model of Apollo. In front of the sculpture there sits a monk with profoundly meditative face with serenity and vigour."  

Truly the message of Ajanta is studded with the philosophy of prophet philosopher Lord Buddha, who is projected throughout the caves. Unity in diversity is a great chapter of Indian art. It is true that "the geographical variations of the Indian landscape, the antiquity of heterogeneity of its history ensured that the culture of this country is multifarious. Further the linguistic, religious and tribal diversity of its people made its culture more rich and interesting."  Ajanta caves are located at strategic points, which is a meeting place of north and south Indian art.

The cave temples in Maharashtra are located on Godavari River. According to Vasudeva Agarwala, "Nasik on the banks of Godavari is religiously reputed centre from the earliest period. Patanjali mentioned it as Nasikya. Hence Buddhist monks chose it for their solitary retreat and meditation."
In view of this we can observe scores of cave figures at Nasik, Paithan, Ellora and Ajanta on ancient trade route.

3.4 Relation between art and cultural communication

Cultural communication has been deeply rooted in India from bygone ages. It has been pointed out by Manohar Kaul that, “the evolution of Indian art almost synchronizes with the evolution of Indian thought both speculative and religious and the works of art in painting, sculpture and architecture were the visual expression of the life of the period as it was evolved by Vedic culture.” 29 This synchronization further continued during Buddhist period.

The role of visual communication is significant. Kaul has further observed that “art in India has a continuous historical background which has influenced Indian life and outlook from times immemorial and whose traditions are still alive.” 30

The cave temples are very good examples of these expressions.

Margeret has observed that, “the artistic communication is an ongoing process such that generation after generation can enjoy classical art and literature.” 31 Ajanta is an example of such classical communication symbolic communication in art is a very good process of transmission of culture. It is truly observed by Rekha that, “communication is the raison d’etre of all artistic creativity. The creation of art essentially involves a symbolic transformation of an experience of world. And this symbolic transformation becomes meaningful only because there is an implicit presupposition of a receiver at the other end.” 32 The receiver must be able to decode these symbols. Cognitive essence is the essence of cultural communication. It is observed by Rekha Jhanji that “due to the formal dimension of art work that very often, in spite of being unaware of their cognitive or; emotive import, one can still partially respond to them. Thus one is often able to appreciate the design and
composition of art works from alien cultures without really being able to decode their cognitive and emotive dimensions.” 33 Understanding culture and spreading is a significant process.

Rekha Jhanji has further observed that, “as it is true of the cognitive aspect, the formal dimension too, is only one of the facets of artistic communication.” 34 The other facets can be well explained by understanding communication.

About the character of the Ajanta art it has been observed by Sivarama Murty that, “the Vakataka tradition, as seen at Ajanta, are derived from the earliest Satavahana. This can be clearly seen in several echoes of the painted figures here from those of Amaravati. It is mainly the decorative element, chiefly composed of pearls and ribbons. So these characteristics of the Gupta-Vakataka age that distinguishes them from the simpler but nobler art of the Satavahanas.” 35 These characteristics can be studied on the basis of expression through sculpture and painting.

The development of Buddhist communication in the pre Ajanta period in early phase was mostly oral. D. N. Verma has observed that “the first attempt to communicate the tenets of Buddhism on a mass scale reveals total ignorance of any other approach except employment of the oral word and it was only a little later that the medium of writing too was used. It was Ashoka, the Great, who wanted all and sundry to be properly informed about the tenets of Buddhism and how it had transformed the emperor. Initially he could think of nothing else except the spoken word and he appointed Dharma-mahamatras for the purpose of addressing individuals and groups.” 36 These spoken words later were transformed in the form of Chaitya windows which can be observed through early art works of the Hinayana period.
Later on in the Mahayana period sculptural identity became a prime factor. It is true that “the greatness and continuity of Indian sculpture is due to the close connection between the religious and philosophical and the aesthetic mind of the people.” 37 This continuity can also be witnessed through development of art and sculpture.

In the past Gupta period Palas continued the tradition. During the Vakataka period Buddhism was supported as a part of religion and also as cultural catholicity. The Gupta Vakataka tradition of classical art is reflected in Ajanta.

Further “the final development of Buddhist art in India took place under the Pala and Sena dynasties in the Bengal Valley. The great centres of Buddhism from the seventh century onwards, were at Bodhgaya and Nalanda, where according to the testimony of the Chinese pilgrim Hsun-tsang the Mahayana faith was at its zenith.” 38 The classical works at Ajanta became the source of inspiration for the later period.

In Mahayana period icon worship became popular in Buddhism. It was observed by Rowland that, “it is generally believed that the earliest images of the Buddha were made in the ancient province of Gandhara towards the close of the first century AD.” 39 Such images were subsequently adopted by Ajanta artists also.

Stella Kramrisch has explained the relationship between art and culture in an interesting manner. She has pointed out that “just as Indian art is firmly rooted in nature, that is to say in the experience of its unconscious process, which are made conscious to man as much as they become firm, so it is securely established in its social context and its supra personal origin.” 40 This origin can be witnessed in the art of cave temples.

The spiritual relationship between the prophet and the disciple is a matter of interaction. It has been pointed out that, “in Mahayana Buddhism Sakyamuni the
mortal teacher is regarded as the early expression or appearance of a mighty spiritual being." 41 Hence, the numbers of Buddha images were carved in cave temples to re-establish this relationship.

Gupta and Vakataka dynasties of Ajanta were one step ahead than the previous ones. It has been pointed out that, "the articulation of all natural phenomena in terms of, the human figure was the basic artistic proposition before the Gupta sculptor, whereas his predecessors were content with representing man only as a part of nature. This discovery of the potentiality of the human figure was a major breakthrough, which enthused the Gupta sculptor to explore all possible comprehensive means to give expression to the new idea, viz., to epitomize the nature through the human body form." 42 About potentials of rock cut art, it has been observed by R. C. Mujumdar that "the idea inherent in the Indian mind of the unchangeable and immutable nature of the God and his abode is better expressed in a rock known than in structural form which even if constructed of the best and the most permanent of materials cannot be expected to be as durable. Hence it was that the rock cut form remained a characteristic mode of architectural expression in India for more than thousand years."43 Ajanta is the best example of such art.

3.5 Analysis of sculptures and paintings

Sculptures and paintings were media of expression during ancient times. The cave temples were carved to propagate religious and cultural message. K. Satyamurthy has observed that, "the religious aspect of sculpture includes carving out of idols. Many texts like Rupamandana, Kamikagama and Suprebhedagama bear testimony for the evolution of the principles to carve out different idols." 44 Like images paintings were also vehicles of public expression. Both of them have been used for illustrating social and cultural life.
About the expression in painting Stella Kramisch has rightly opined that, “the wall paintings at Ajanta show the internal space of consciousness and its contents. They are a picture of the world spectacles teeming with people, spirits and Gods, Goddesses, their mansions, hermitages and pleasances, with their arising and then being dismissed from the vast store of the mind.” 45

The effects of these paintings can be carefully examined through the network of content analysis and social survey. About the form and progression of paintings Kramisch has further observed that, “this is their ground, once arisen to take their proper place. This taking place of form, its progression from the store house of the mind into visibility, is painted in Ajanta a direction which leads from within the picture outward.” 46 The process of analysis of themes and ideas used by the artists was of unique in character.

In the world of Buddhist conception of cosmic, world is very much significant. In order to understand this work Gupta has observed that, “the Buddhists conceive the world as being composed of five cosmic elements which have no beginning and no end. These five elements are form Rupa, sensation (Vedana), name (Samjna) conformation (Samskara) and consciousness (Vijiana). In Vajrayana mythology the cosmic elements are given an anthropomorphic form and made divinities, which like the Hindu Hiranya garbha (Golden gem) and the first duality, crate the world of form.” 47 Ajanta art is also not an exception to this.

The spiritual value of art is truly reflected in Ajanta. It has been observed that, “the sculpture of ancient India, originating as it did in religious tendencies and destined to serve religious purpose could only follow its own immediate purpose in sacred representations. Otherwise, it would have remained simply decorative and
always connected with architecture." 48 This religious base is the essential part of Indian art.

About the process of enlightenment in Buddhism, Gupte has observed that "'Bodhi' is knowledge (enlightenment) and Sattva is essence. The Bodhisattva is one who has become enlightened, acquired Bodhi, knowledge, but who refuses to enter nirvana since he desires to guide all mankind to the true path of the Buddha. The Bodhisattvas originated from the five Buddhas of meditations (the Dhyani Buddhas)." 49 Those Buddha images are exhibited in Ajanta caves.

Hinayana period was a period of symbol worship in which meaningful content was transmitted through significant artistic symbol. Owen C. Kaul has observed that, "the sculpture of the Hinayana Buddhists has often been described as austere and puritanical mainly because of the absence of imagery and the pre-dominance of the Chaitya architectural and dagoba pattern." 50 The early Chaitya caves in Ajanta amply testify this but in the later phase of Mahayana this symbolic art is transmitted to iconic art.

Ajanta paintings reveal immortal reflection of human values. These paintings are treated as classical due to their perfection and treatment. About their period Kaul has observed that, "Mahayana paintings belonged to two periods. Some of them were having been painted over the earlier ones. This can be seen on the inner side of the front wall above the left window as well as on the left wall. At the extreme left of the former are the heads of two 'bhikshus' with a painted record of the fifth century." 51 More matured reflections can be seen in Gupta-Vakataka period. The Ajanta sculpture is no less than paintings of Ajanta. While appreciating sculptural beauties of Ajanta, Dr. Pathy observed that, "on the left wall below is carved the seated 'Nagaraja' and his consort and despite rough surface of the sculpture, this panel is
known for its security and royal dignity. In tune to the painting the composition of this panel is extremely remarkable with light and shade effect consciously achieved by the figures within the plastered frame. Due to verifying depths of the recess, the contrast between the light and shadow specially the serpent hoods and the crown and the lady attendant, are the artistic highlights.” 52 The sculptors of Ajanta also achieved the light and shade effect like that of the painter’s colour scheme. While appreciating magnificent sculptures of Buddha in cave no I of Ajanta T. V. Pathy further opined that, “the Sanctum contains the seated figure of Buddha, and his attendants are carved in high relief. His cross-legged (Padmasana) posture and the expounding (Dharma chakra Pravartana) attitude, the five disciples and the flexed wheel flanked by deer suggest symbolically Buddha’s first sermon after achieving enlightenment at the deer park, Sarnath near Banaras. The four gigantic Bodhisattva figures flanking the main figure are exquisite and add to the general ensemble of the sculptural composition.”53

The spirituality of Buddhism is depicted in Bodhisattva Padmapani, Yazdani has rightly observed that “no discourse on the Buddhist art of India can be complete without a representation of this fresco, which embodies the deep spirituality of Buddhism on the one hand and its joy in all the beauties of the universe on the other. The fresco is a master piece of its technical qualities, such as its bold and vigorous outline, the delightful colours and the very skilful composition.” 54 The spirituality of Buddhism is depicted in an extraordinary way in this painting.

The subjects dealt in cave no XVII are human sentiments of reverence, wonder and love and spiritual grandeur. Manohar Kaul rightly observes this that “the colossal figure is no doubt, the Buddha after illumination, conceived no longer now as mere ‘human being’ but divine and superhuman, sublime in body and peace and grace, diffusing in his looks and presence. He is shown with a begging bowl in his hand,
come to beg at the door of his erstwhile wife and son to bestow blessings. Very few
colours are used but the treatment of line is perfect." 55 The colour contrast and brush
strokes are at par with the stone carving work on the same sentiments and superhuman
expressions in another cave of Ajanta.

In order to study cultural communication it would be interesting to examine
Buddhist philosophy reflected through sculptures and architecture. The Buddhist
religion was essentially spiritual; knowledge based, and had value orientation.

3.6 Evolution of cultural communication

Cultural communication has undergone many changes. There are three phases,
which can be minutely observed. In the first there was domination of oral tradition
during the first Hinayana phase, while in the second phase symbol worship was
dominant. In the third phase first shade represented beginning of image worship and
in second shade some tantric symbols began to appear. The first shade was known as
Mahayana and the second tantrayana. These processes can be explained further.

The oral tradition in Hinayana phase can be recorded from the first sermon of
Buddha. It has been observed by R. S. Gupte that, "the Buddha began his forty five
year ministry in the deer park at Benaras, where he preached his first sermon and
made his first five disciples. The dialogues of the Buddha are as lucid and full of
learned reasoning as the dialogues of Socrates." 56 This shows classical reflection of
Buddha's philosophy, which became a base for his cultural communication.

Righteousness was the essentialness of cultural communication. It has been
observed that, "action, right living, right effort, right mindfulness and right
concentration, these four sacred truths that the Buddha has preached at Benaras form
the pivotal part of his teaching." 57
His disciples in three boxes collected the preachings of the Buddha. This was a kind of documentation of oral tradition. It is observed by Gupte that, “soon after Buddha’s death, the elder Kashyapa called a council of 500 which met at Rajgriha. Kashyapa presided over this council and Vinaya and the Dhamma were thoroughly examined and rewritten with the help of Upali and Ananda respectively. Thus a beginning was made of the two Pitakas, Sutta and Vinaya.” 58 The third Pitaka was later on named as Adi Dhamma Pitaka. These three Pitakas represent the essence of the original philosophy of Lord Buddha.

The period of Ashoka was a climax in cultural communication. It is observed by L. M. Joshi that, “Ashoka convened the third council of Pataliputra in order to recognize the Samgha and put an end to the vertical growth. The Katha Vattnu a canonical treatise supposed to have been compiled during this time by Tissa, discourses and criticisms of the tenets of these various sects.” 59 During Ashoka’s time Buddhist religion was organized and Samgha recognized.

The first phase of Hinayana Buddhism was dominated by symbol worship. It has been observed by Gupte that, “in the first phase of the development of Buddhist art, the Hinayana phase, the Buddha was represented symbolically. The popular art forms of excavation were (1) the Chaitya hall (Cathedral) and (2) the Vihara (Monastery). The former built in imitation of the structural form is the more important of the two.” 60 This was imitation of woodwork into stonework.

Chaitya, Vihara one and two respectively are two reflections of early Buddhist art. They were simple and not much decorated. It has been observed by Gupte that, “a Vihara is a residence or dwelling for monks. It is an excavation with a separate opening into a big or small central hall, with cells in the sidewalls for habitation and
meditation. The caves at Ajanta afford an excellent opportunity of tracing the development of the Buddhist Vihara architecture.”

At Ajanta earlier and later examples are found, thus these caves can be cited as examples of evolution of architecture as well as cultural communication.

The Hinayan impact can be traced in Ajanta caves. It is true that, “the pillars of caves no X and IX which form the earliest of the Ajanta group show plain octagonal pillars with no base and no capital. They slightly taper as they proceed upward. These caves were excavated in the 2nd and 1st Century B.C. respectively.”

They represent early Hinayana phase. References about Stupa appearance can be exemplified in the Buddhist texts also. Sheila Weiner observed, “in fact, as the religion evolved, the significance of the Stupa itself changed. The change is apparent in different ways. Stupa worship is regarded first in the Pali canon and then in the Sanskrit scriptures of the Mahasamghikas.”

Later these Stupas have been evolved and in Mahayana period images of prophet have been carved. The birth of Mahayana cult was important for two things. Firstly, it gave birth to Buddhist iconography and secondly Sanskrit was accepted as a language of communication, which spread Buddhism outside India.

The beginning of Mahayana cult can be marked as dawn of Buddhist iconography. Gupte opined, “There is no doubt that the Mahayana doctrine was preached by the Buddha. Mahayana brought into Buddhism image worship and the worship of images gradually brought an entire pantheon, which was not very much different from that of Hindus. A natural corollary of image worship was the evolution of a devotional cult.” Because of image worship in Buddhism Ajanta artists introduced different verses and Mudras of Buddha.
In Mahayana period sculptures and paintings became vehicles of popular feeling. It has been observed that, "the sculptures or pictorial representations of the blessed one, of various episodes from the traditional biography and of the principal legends of his former lives must surely have helped his followers to properly remember (whose achievements promised highly desirable benefits). Such illustration assisted not only those who went on pilgrimage to the four holy places but all the others as well. Since of course, it was quite acceptable, to recall the four major events while not physically present at the site, where they occurred." 65 These are evident through paintings to express changes in the Buddhist religion.

The changes in Buddhist Church have been reflected in Buddhist art. About these changes in Ajanta it has been observed by Weiner that “the principal sculptures at Ajanta are weighty cult images with the exceptions...narrative portrayals area limited to paintings, but numerous other sculpted figures of demi-Gods and Goddesses adore the door ways, pillars and facades. The lithesome and slender or podgy dwarfish qualities of these minor deities are more in keeping with the visual character of the painted figures that populate the Jataka scenes depicted on the walls than with ponderous and massive shrine images intended for worship. The dichotomy is an iconographic one and is rooted in the development of Buddhist imagery.” 66 Many examples can be cited in Ajanta, which reveal Mahayana cult influences.

There began minute fractional changes during Mahayana and Tantrayana. Differentiations and changes are significant. Weiner observed that “... in the late fifth and early sixth centuries, we are almost contemporaneously overwhelmed by a proliferation of indistinguishable emblematic Buddha figures and the introduction into India, most probably from the north west, of the teaching Buddha in Pralambapada asana...with the sudden proliferation of emblematic images. The inclusion of the
Tathagata in the crown of the guardian figures of caves no XIX the appearance of crown bearing Vidhyadharas hovering above the head of each of the Buddhas on either side of entrance to cave no XIX, and the introduction of the shrine figure in Pralambapada asana in cave no XVI that we have crossed the Mahayana threshold and are confronted with a striving towards if not an actual visual expression of the concepts inherent in the evolution of the Trikaya doctrine as they appear particularly in the Ratnagotra Vibhaga Mahayanaottra Tantra Sastra and the Lankavatara Sutra. Both are Mahayana texts." 67

In Ajanta, very few examples of tantric cult can be cited but in Ellora the tantric Goddess Tara has been profusely reflected.

Fourth Buddhist Council was held at Kashmir. In this aspect Hazra Kanailal observed that, “it was at the time of Kanishka that the fourth Buddhist council was held in Kundalvana of Kashmir where some important Buddhist treaties were composed and Buddhist scholars of great eminence flourished.” 68

In Mahayana period different types of images of Buddha were developed.

Aswaghosa in Sanskrit biography of Buddha, i.e., Buddha Charitam has reflected important episodes from the life of Buddha. It was also performed in the form of drama. Some iconographies have been found in Central Asia through text of this book. It is observed by Romila Thapar that, “Drama (Nataka) has survived in the Sanskrit plays of Ashvaghosha and Bhasa manuscripts of Ashvaghosha’s plays originally written in the first century A.D., were found in a monastery in Turfan (Central Asia). Both plays deal with Buddhist themes, one of them being a dramatized version of the life of the Buddha.” 69 Thapar further observed that, “Ashvaghosha faithfully followed the rules laid down by Bharata in his study of Dramatic Arts Natya Sastra (The Natyashastra having a position in Sanskrit literature similar to Aristotle’s
Bhasa wrote for the limited audience of the court circle, whereas Ashwaghosha’s plays could well have been performed at religious assemblies before a wider audience.” 70 This clearly evidences the spread of Buddhism in Asiatic countries.

3.7 Theoretical analysis of cultural communication

Buddhist philosophy started when Gautama became the Buddha after his enlightenment. Griffiths has observed that, “the history of the Buddhist faith says Dr. Oldenburg in his work on Buddha begins with a band of mendicant monks who gathered round the person of Gautama the Buddha in the country bordering on the Ganges, about five hundred years before the commencement of the Christian era.” 71 It is more than two thousand and five hundred years that the philosophy of the Buddha rooted in this soil. This philosophy has reflected in the cultural communication of the land through different art works.

The symbolism began during the lifetime of Buddha himself. In this aspect Hazra has observed that “the Buddha’s first sermon in the deer park at Sarnath, was suggested a wheel, the symbol of the eternal movement of the sun and the fully blossoming lotus flower.” 72

Hazra has further observed that, “the Buddha was symbolized in the form of a Stupa or as the Bodhi tree under whose vast spreading branches he awakened to supreme wisdom. In places he was represented by an empty seat a stone slab or by the soles of two feet.” 73

Since Siddhartha attained enlightenment under a Bodhi tree during his first sermon, he turned the wheel of life, being supreme lotus throne and his followers to feel his presence-depicted feet in reverence. These symbols reveal the meaningful cultural interaction with the society. The transmission of Buddha from king to prophet
is a unique process. About this cultural significance it has been observed by Lokesh Chandra that, “the Buddha Sakyamuni was transformed from Master into Lord. Solar myths, fire cults, and immemorial fantasies transmuted him into an idealized figure...from an individual he became a symbol.” 74 This process can be examined through different cave temples and art works.

In Buddhism, there are two cults Hinayana and Mahayana. The earlier represents original philosophy of Buddha. It has been pointed by R. S. Gupte that, “in the Hinayana form, the Buddha image had no place as the Buddha himself was against image worship. The new school, which sprang up in Gandhara defied the Hinayana school and gradually the new school spread its influence in India and elsewhere. “in all these places, therefore, a rich pantheon was created.” 75 Theses aspects can be observed in Ajanta caves also.

About the interaction in the 2nd Buddhist council it has been observed by Gupte that, “a second council was summoned a hundred years later at Vaisali by the Venerable monk Revata, as differences had arisen in the order regarding the Vinaya. It seems that the differences between the orthodox and the dissidents were not only regarding the Vinaya but also regarding the attainment of Buddhahood. The orthodox school believed that Nirvana could be attained by observing the rules of the Vinaya. The dissidents considered Buddhahood an inborn quality which was to be developed for the attainment of that state.” 76 These ideas were developed in the process of evolution.

Humanity was the essence of Bodhisattva cult. Weiner observes that, “around the beginning of the first century A.D., some Buddhists came to think that surely Bodhisattvas unknown to the ancient scriptures must presently exist somewhere in our immense universe like the Blessed one in his many former lives. They prepared their
way to future Bodhihood by practicing all the virtues as perfectly as possible. The enormous popularity and multiplication of the Jataka as well as their sculptural and pictorial illustrations, certainly contributed to engendering this new belief.”

As per the Jataka tales narrated in Ajanta caves Bodhisattva whether in the form of a bird or animal or human form preached the sacred law to human beings. Cultural communication of Buddhist philosophy spread all over the world through their educational system. It has been observed by Joshi that, “a host of Buddhist doctors of Indian Buddhist Universities were engaged in their scientific and cultural mission in distant parts of Asia.” These universities were symbols of interactive learning and centres of cultural communication.

Mahayana phase was significant for being rooted image worship and promotion through Sanskrit knowledge. About Mahayana cult it has been observed by Kuppuraman and Kumudamani that “among the greatest of the Buddhist books are the Lalitavistara (lovely details) supposed to be genuine epic, strength and carrying religious sentiments with full dedication to Buddha’s teachings, Saddharma Pundarika (lotus of the good law) is one of the famous classics of the Mahayana school written probably towards the end of the second century A.D. ” These texts highlighted how new ideas are rooted in the social mind.

The Buddha’s extra-physical greatness was always emphasized as if to show the charismatic nature of a super-human being. In this aspect Perera observed that “the most esoteric and mystic cults crept into Buddhism during the Vajrayana phase which ramified itself into various other vehicles like Tantrayana Mantrayana, Sahajayana, etc.” These cults were new addition to the original philosophy. They became part of artwork. There were many transmissions in Indian spiritual awakening about which Mukherjee has observed that, “a warm current of mystical, romantic or
lyrical idealism in Bhakti, whether Buddhist or Brahmanical, leads to a gradual approximation of sculpture to a pattern of painting picturesque and multifarious linear expression penetrates into the integral volume and the geometrical harmony of structure as the vitalistic impulses wax stronger than the metaphysical notions.”

Truly Indian Bhakti philosophy has inspired the Artists to carve out their imaginary. Even Kalidasa’s classical literature has inspired Indian artists to carve their masterpieces.

Symbolism, which was purely original, later on became mystical. It is observed by Mukherjee that, “Tantrika plastic form exhibits the fourth classical stage in Indian art by establishing a balance between the urge of the transcendent and the experience of the senses and emotions. It absorbed the earlier classical modes of expression of the transcendent into what was time born and sense born and achieved a new rhythm and balance through a reconciliation of apposite principles in metaphysical art viz., abstraction and individualism reason and emotion monumentality and naturalistic modelling. Again, the classical Tantrika ideal of the perfectly clear form became the heritage of South and East Asia.” These Tantric ideas have later reflected in Ellora art work.

The development of philosophy and art go hand in hand. It has been observed by Mookerjee that, “through the ages Indian civilization has discovered new philosophies and myths, and art has embodied them in appropriate figures and patterns of symbolism in significant forms and expressive flowing lines and sinuous curves. Art has voiced the truths and values of India’s endless metaphysical quest.”

Ajanta is the best specimen of this metaphysical quest evolved from sculpture and painting as the Buddhist philosophy began from Hinayana and reaching to
3.8. Summary

Art and literature are the communicators of traditions, customs. So they are the basic factors of continuation of a culture. Hence evolution of cultural communication occurred. Wherever Buddhism flourished it has left its visible traces in the form of Stupa monuments. Variation in details is due to changes of times and art acquired new dimensions.

Mauryan Empire witnessed the movements of traders and monk pilgrims across the Hindukush and overseas to Ceylon and Suvarnabhoomi.

Greek sources evidenced that even prior to the establishment of Roman Empire the country had contacts with India, Ceylon, Arabia and Egypt.

Ajanta caves are located at the head of a pass that links the plateau. It connects a high way connecting Ujjaini in the North, with Pratistana (present Paithan), which was the capital of Satavahanas in Deccan.

The Satavahanas played an important role in the history of Deccan and of Maharashtra in particular.

Indian culture can be appreciated through her sculpture, because the outward form lies traditions, symbolism, sentiments and feelings so truly Indian. The foundation of any culture is communication. There is vital connection between basic communication and social life. In India religions influenced the character of the cultural filament. In India, the rock cut Chaitya caves are 1200 in number out of which 800 are Buddhist. They fall under two phases, Hinayana of second and third centuries B.C., and Mahayana forth to seventh centuries.

During Hinayana period Buddhist philosophies used symbols like pair of feet, wheel, lotus and throne to feel the presence of the Buddha. The age of symbol was gradually replaced by the age of representation in Buddhist sculptures because of
splits in Buddhist philosophy itself. To popularize Buddhism Mahayana cult believers adopted and introduced image worship of Buddha. Brisk business on overseas enhanced Mahayana faith. Vainiks abundantly donated caves and participated directly as patron of Buddhist art both in India and abroad.

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