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CHAPTER – IV

AJANTA CAVES AS MEDIUM OF CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

4.1. Nature and salient features:

Ajanta caves were carved to disseminate the message of culture to the society. These caves were used to reveal cultural messages in the form of stones for generations to come. Buddha in his last discourses has expressed his wish of setting up of monuments. It has been pointed by D. N. Verma that “Buddha himself had indirectly pointed that out of the most effective centre for the artist to function when he suggested the setting up for memorial monuments primarily of spiritual if not, of artistic significance. In the famous dialogue with Ananda, shortly before his death, he had rested the Stupa, or earthen mounds containing his relics, he erected at the palaces of his birth, enlightenment, first sermon and final demise”. Ajanta caves were carved for the same purpose. The cave temples were located on ancient trade routes. So that those who can visit these caves through that routes they can receive that message. It is truly pointed by M. N. Deshpande that “the first thing that strikes one is the curious phenomenon that such an important centre of Buddhist art and religion located on an arterial trade route leading to Pratisthana, the capital of the Satvahana Dynasty...While the rich art tradition nurtured by Ajanta spread to distant lands to Asia.” Due to this strategic location, Ajanta has played an important role in cultural communication.

The messages through sculptures were more permanent than written messages and they were revealed in the form of symbols. It has been pointed by Philip Rawson that, “the skilful artist manipulates not only the conscious material but through it, the unconscious, thus provoking deep seated states of emotion. It is interesting that some
Indian aesthetic theorists have recognized such states of aesthetic exaltation as legitimate means of release.” 3 This aesthetic sense is truly reflected in Ajanta.

Sharing of ideas emotions and feelings was the core part of cultural communication; through paintings dialogue has been conducted from one generation to coming generation. Mathur has rightly pointed the process of cultural communication that “art is the visual expression of impressions and the result of some intense experience which the artist tries to the spectator.” 4 Ajanta caves are not an exception of this phenomenon.

Auboyer has observed that “Painting served the purpose of religious propaganda as when Buddhist monks explained the meaning of particular images with the aid of a painter. Sometimes painting is used as a medium for conveying news in the form of their scrolls. King Ajatasatru learned the news of the Buddha’s Parinirvana through paintings.” 5 Thus like sculptures paintings have also narrated the story of Buddha Jataka tales in Ajanta truly express this phenomenon.

About the role of painters in the communication, Philip Rawson has observed that, “Indian painters in particular have concerned themselves with finding symbols not for ‘optical sensations’ but for interior states of feeling which have been valued for their own sake. Certainly since painting is a visual art, these symbols must operate through the eyes and spread their roots in visual experience. But it is always internal relation with which they are concerned, not external. 6 Thus, the effective roles of painter were responsible for conveying cultural messages to the audience.

Sculpture and painting were vehicles of popular feeling. Communication through sculpture is more effective than books, because sculpture bespeaks about the culture even in volumes.
4.2. Ajanta discovery and its place in Indian art

Ajanta has become a symbol of Indian culture since its discovery. These caves became one of the wonders of Indian classical art. About the discovery of Ajanta Pupul Jayakar has observed that, “lost for centuries in the vast jungles of Central India, the mating ground of tigers, the caves of Ajanta were discovered by accident in the early nineteenth century (ref. map 1). A British soldier lost in the forest while hunting was led to the caves by a cow-heard. They came upon a vast gorge over looking a ravine, on the cliff face of which a series of manmade caves had been scooped out of the solid rock.”

Ajanta remained isolated in oblivion for a long time. It went into darkness somewhere in 8th century and remained unknown till the beginning of 19th century. About the name of the caves it has been pointed by Ajay Mitra that, “the place where these caves are situated is presently known as Ajanta. This name was given by the British officers of the Madras Regiment, who accidentally discovered these caves and brought them to light for the first time in 1819, after the village situated at a distance of about 11 km. from the site of the caves and this name has since become popular.”

Some scholars have tried to interpret about the name of these caves. Dr. Ranade has observed that “In one of the inscriptions of Ajanta we come across a notable name of scholar-statesman called Achintya. No one knows the real bio-data of this man, who might have lent his name to the cave complex of Ajanta.”

He further stated that, “the Sanskrit connotation of Achintya is something like beyond imagination.” The word Achintya is perhaps the most suitable and eloquent term that sums up the aesthetics of Ajanta. V. S. Agrawala observed about location of the caves in the words, “the caves at Ajanta, twenty-nine in number, are excavated in the face of an almost perpendicular scarp of rock about 250 feet high, sweeping round
in a semi-circular curve. Caves n°s IX, X, IXX, XX are Chaityas and the rest are Viharas or monastic residence. Originally the majority of the caves were embellished with paintings but now only in six of them n°s I, II, IX, X, XVI, XXVII paintings have survived."11 (ref. map 2).

The unique place of Ajanta, in the natural surroundings is the true manifestation of its environmental character. The discovery of Ajanta painting is a long story. About discovery of paintings Manohar Kaul has observed that, “the magnificent frescoes of Ajanta are dated between the 2nd century B.C., and the 7th century A.D., It was in the year 1819 that these paintings were discovered in sixteen caves. But by 1910, traces of many of the frescoes had vanished, leaving those in six caves viz., n°s I, II, IX, X, XVI, XVII still intact.”12 Earlier these caves were known as frescoes, but scholars today describe them as murals.

Walter Sprink has rightly observed about the significance of the discovery. He has pointed that, “the history of Ajanta’s evolution ....is a history of discovery, not so much the discovery of new as the discovery of the ability to incorporate the complex forms already known from the structured architecture of the day into this totally unfamiliar rock cut medium.”13 But ancient Indian people to communicate their ideas very smoothly used this medium.

Srinivasa Iyenger has highlighted the place of painting in Indian art. He has pointed that; “the Ajanta caves contain the most important mass of ancient painting extant in the world. Pompen only expected executed in this period and the next. This unique character of Ajanta remains unchallenged and unparallel.”14

About the place of Ajanta in Indian Art, Dr. Yazdani has observed that, “in the Art of Asia what a supreme and central position Ajanta holds! The grand Buddhist art of the Tsang dynasty in China was stimulated and influenced directly from the
formulas of Gandhara.... whoever studies the art of China and Japan, at whatever point he begins starts on a long road which will lead him ultimately to Ajanta.” 15

Thus, Ajanta is the supreme reflection in the realm of Buddhist art.

Thus, Ajanta enjoyed the key position in the Buddhist Art. Its every sculpture is a masterpiece and its every mural reveals classical touch, which is a true exuberance of Gupta-Vakataka period. On this background it would be interesting to study art, architecture and communication in Ajanta caves.

4.3. Ajanta, Art, Architecture and Cultural Communication

Communication is not only an oral phenomenon, but also based on visual art. Sculptures and paintings are visual reflections of art, which have become a vehicle of communication. Percy Brown has pointed out that, “Lethaby has approached the subject most merely in stating that ‘Architecture is the matrix of civilization. To such a definition it may be added that viewed historically architecture remains as the principal visible and material record, through the ages of man’s intellectual evolution...And in India man’s ideas have found expressions in numerous noble monuments showing that few countries possess a richer architectural heritage.” 16 India is one of those countries, which has a rich heritage of art and architecture.

About the relation between art and culture Gupta and Asthana observed that, “art in India includes Architecture. It is so because most of the works of art are the architectural members of some temple or shrine, only a portion of which is carved the remaining part is used to build the inside of the architecture. The independent images are many but not as many as the sculptured architectural pieces.” 17 Ajanta is a testimony of excellence of Indian art and architecture.

In India spiritual and cultural awakening has appeared not only through books, but also art and architecture. Majumdar has pointed the same aspect in an interesting
manner. He opined that, “rock architecture was specially suited to India because of the convenient physical texture of her rocks, particularly those of Western India, where the majority of such monuments may be found.”

In Maharashtra, Ajanta & Ellora keep Indian architecture at the top of Indian art.

Stone and rocks were selected as medium for carving their ideas. Percy Brown has observed that, “Finding expression from wood in another and more lasting material such as dressed stone is a decisive step in the cultural evolution of a people.” Stones were transformed into images of God or prophet and they became inspiring centres for common man.

About the significance of rock cut art. It has been pointed out by Percy Brown that, “the fashioning of architectural forms out of the living rock, or rock architecture occupies a very prominent place in the development of creative art in India.” This creative process has been reflected in Ajanta caves.

Not only sculptures of Gods and Goddesses, but exuberance of life through decoration, is also a character of Indian. It has been pointed that “the cave temples, convey some idea of the wealth; the decoration on door and pillar differs from each other in ornamental design.” The Ghatapallava style of Gupta period has become a symbol of prosperity in the classical age. Crowned base relief of sculptures is a character of rock...cave architecture. About sculptures on the walls it has been observed by Percy Brown that, “the characteristic of Indian architecture is: emphasized by the treatment of its wall surfaces. The scheme of sculpture, which often covers the whole of the exterior of the building, is notable not only for the deep significance of its subject matter. Here, it is not only the relation of architecture of life, but also transcendent life itself plastically represented.” These reflections can be seen on the walls of Ajanta. In Buddhist Art Chaitya and Vihara are two types in architecture.
One is reminiscent of early Hinayana phase and the later is a hall created for resting of Sanghas known as Sangharamas. Early Chaityas were in wood form and later they were reflected in stonewalls. About these forms of architecture Percy Brown has noted that, “of the kinds of structure, the Chaitya hall and the Vihara that were copied in the rock cut manner, the more important from every point of view was the Chaitya hall. There are eight of these belonging to the Hinayana period as follows. Bhaja, Kondane, Pitalkhora, Ajanta (noío) Bedsa Ajanta (No IX), Nasik and Karli probably executed in the order named.” 23

Different scholars have compared these executions. While stating their evolution, R. S. Gupte has detailed the evolution of Buddhist architecture in Western India. It has been observed that, “the Hinayana Chaitya had pillar support, when later in the Mahayana period the Vihara underwent transformation and came to include a shrine for workshop and an ante chamber. The dimension of the Vihara increased very considerably and the Vihara was given pillar support. 24 Vihara underwent many changes in its architectural dimensions. Cave n° X and IX belong to Hinayana whereas cave n° XI is the oldest of Mahayana period.

The art and architecture is also closely related to ventilation and the light system. In ancient times solar energy was the only source of light and in view of this care was taken by the planner to use the sunlight systematically. Krishna Chaitanya has observed “The interior is spacious, the space rhythmically ordered by the marching of the columns down the nave. The flow and effect of light coming in through the door and the horse shoe window magically change the luminosity within the hall as the sun out side gains in strength towards noon and mellows towards the evening. With strong light, the relief sculptures seem to advance from their ground
plan and they recede when the light ebbs away.” 25 Thus cave temples became a
source of cultural experience for generations.

About sharing of culture through these caves it has been pointed by Adris
Banerji that, “precious ages and preceding cultures, generally leave their legacies in
an area where they originated on which they occupied far away length of time. Art is
a creation of human intellect, it is a social habit, the proof of man’s ability to
appreciate nature.” 26 All these conditions and clauses of art and culture are found in
Ajanta caves.

4.4 Buddhist religion, architecture and study of Ajanta Caves

Buddhists were the pioneers of the concept of Indian art and architecture.
About the influence of Buddhist tradition, Manorama Jauhari has observed that, “a
chronological survey of Indian architecture shows that even when the Brahmanical art
had made its appearance, most of the products were Buddhists in the beginning
indicating thereby the triumph of the Buddha to whose glory these monuments were
produced. Symbolic representation of the Lord is the characteristic feature of the
earlier Buddhist architectural movement.” 27 This movement can be traced in Ellora,
Ajanta and at many places.

About continued development Sherman Lee has interestingly observed that,
“the beginnings of Buddhist Art in India are necessarily associated with the previous
and the contemporary of Indian art. It should not be thought that Buddhist art began a
new set of forms, rather as in its dogma, the new faith adopted the forms at hand for
its own purposes. Nevertheless the formative period of Indian art coincides with that
of the great test Buddhist activity.” 28 This activity was the pioneer in the development
of art tradition.
The Buddhist tradition believes that Sheilagraha have been classified in its own fashion. Nagaraju has noted that, “The rock cut monuments seen in the western Indian centres of rock cut architecture belong to six major types, viz., Chetiyaghara, Lena, Matapa, Podhi, Kodhi and Asanapedhika. Each type often displays many sub-varieties. Geographical and historical causes are mainly responsible for the development of these architectural varieties and sub varieties.” 29 This varieties of architectural types reveal the evolution of Buddhist art which is culminated in Ajanta caves.

About constant and continuous revelation of architectural development Major Wancheope has observed that, “the description of the Buddhist caves of India does not pretend to be a complete record of every cave that exists, but it gives a more or less complete story of the growth of Buddhist cave architecture from the earliest times to the fall of Buddhism in India.” 30 The study of cave temples reveals that fact in a systematic manner.

The Viharas were places of rest for Sanghas known as Sangha-amas. T. V. Pathy observed that, “since the Buddhist advocated a life of wandering ascetic and mendicant priests, a phenomenon of passing from home to homeless; there arose the necessity of permanent accommodation during the rainy season. When their missionary activities hindered due to the swollen rivers and slushy countryside…when it grew into a powerful ecclesiastical organization, and spread over several parts of India, there arose the necessity of providing accommodation depending upon the availability of raw materials and congenial climatic conditions.” 31 These conditions have maintained the unique character of Buddhist caves. T. V. Pathy further observed that, “interestingly enough, the Deccan with its trap-rock was suited for carving and provided the sculptor and the artist at once a challenge and an
opportunity to fulfill his creative plenitude. Thus, the propagation of Buddhism and the merchant patrons adopted the medium of art as the handmaiden of religious persuasion and evangelical activism. As a result there came into being several cave temples in Western India.” 32

Ajanta caves are prominent among the western cave temples for propagation of Buddhism.

About essential characteristics of Vihara and Sangharama Ferguson has rightly conceptualized that, “a Vihara properly speaking is a residence or dwelling, whether for a monk or an image and a group of apartments for a community of monks is strikingly speaking, a Sangharama or monastery. The word Vihara, however, like Dagaba, came from Ceylon, where it was used to designate not only Cell but also any monastic; establishment and this extended application has come to generally understand by us and with this explanation we employ it.” 33 These significant aspects can be traced in Ajanta.

Architecture also changes as per division cult. It is observed that, “Buddhism split into two branches, the Hinayana (lesser vehicle) tended to extreme, conservation, a psychological rather than a theological approach and to the ideal of the arhat. Number two the Mahayana (greater vehicle) was strongly under the influence of a resurgent Hinduism and consequently mystic and theological in its methods. The popular ideal of the Mahayanist was the Bodhisattva, one capable of Nirvana but who renounces it till he has saved every living creature. This compassionate ideal emphasizes a future Nirvana rather than the present one of the Arhat.” 34 On this basis there are differences between Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana architecture.

The remains of the great prophet have been classified into three types. It is observed by Jauhari that, “objects, worthy of reverence according to Buddhists, are

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three fold – Saririka (bodily remains) e.g. bones, nails, hair, ashes and tooth etc. Paribhaugika (the articles of use) e.g., begging bowl, drinking vessels and seat, etc. and Uddesika (symbolic e.g. a wheel (Cakra), the three jewels (three Ratnas), etc. Stupas, constructed over the bodily relics of the Master can be cited as an example of the Saririka, stupa also known as Dhatu Chaitya.”

Herman Goetz has truly described about architecture of Stupa. In his own words, “the stupa is a massive hemispherical structure, surrounded by a balustrade and crowned by a stone umbrella. So it is just a variety of the funeral tumulus surrounded by stone circle, such as had been usual in later pre-historic times, like those erected also by the Vedic-Indo-Aryans above the remains of prominent chiefs and kings.” Thus he has tried to co-relate Buddhist tradition with ancient Indian tradition.

Dr. Yazdani has described the placement of the great master’s images in main shrines in an interesting manner like this: “two scenes from the life of the Buddha – the ceremonial bath (Abhisheka) and the dawning of the mantle of a hermit. In both the Buddha is shown sitting in a pillared apartment. The drawing of the pillars shows that the artist was familiar with perspective and an idea of the depth of the building is fully conveyed by the drawing.”

Thus Buddhist art, architecture and culture are related aspects. They are not only related to each other, they have deeply rooted their tradition in Indian culture.

4.5 Salient Features of Cultural Communication through Ajanta Caves

Buddha – Prime centre of cultural communication: In Ajanta caves Lord Buddha is the prime centre of entire cultural communication. All the messages in Ajanta caves are surrounded with the philosophy of Buddha.
It has been rightly pointed by Benjamin Rowland that, “the anthropomorphic representation of the Buddha almost certainly went hand in hand with a change in the religion from the Hinayana to the Mahayana doctrine.” Truly all the sculptures and paints have connectivity with the philosophy.

Thematic continuity: There is a close thematic continuity in all the sculptures and paintings depicted in Ajanta caves. The Jataka tales reveal the life of Lord Buddha from his birth to Mahayanaism.

According to Mulk Raj Anand, “in fact the artistic intensity of many panels depends, in a peculiar way, on the infusion of the spirit of rhythmic movement into the figures of the various characters of the birth stories.”

All Jataka tales have been continuously presented with cultural messages, which have a relevance to each other.

Decorative element: Cultural communication depends on how religious messages are enriched with decorative designs. It has been observed by Albert Grunwedel that, “the wheel symbol...with or without trident upon it, representing the doctrine of Buddha belongs also to the decorative elements which the Gandhara sculptures have in common with other Indian ones. This wheel – which with two couchant gazelles besides it has become... a hieroglyph for the first sermon in the deer park at Baranasi – appears in compositions full of figures in front of the preaching Buddha as a presentation of the phrase, dhammachakkam pavatleri. He turned the wheel of the sacred doctrine.” This sacred doctrine is enshrined with rich decoration.

Effective symbols:

Communication is an interaction of symbols and in Ajanta caves these symbols have been loudly presented at different places. Walter Clark has observed
that, "the face of life, the earth, lotus, the world wheel, the lotus throne, and the fiery pillar tries to show that these symbols can be traced beyond their first representation in Buddhist iconography through the anionic period of the Brahmanical Vedas even into the Rigvedic period itself and that they represent a universal Indian symbolism and set of theological concepts." These symbols carry perfect meaning, which can be decoded systematically.

Enlightenment:

The artistic communication in different processes is spiritually awakening through their effective symbols. It has been pointed out by Sivaramurty that, "effects of light and shade were achieved by the process of streaks and dots illustrating the methods of Patravartana, stippling and hatching mentioned in the Silpa texts, the lines composing the figures painted at Ajanta are sure, simeous, rich in form and depth and recall the lines in praise of the effective line drawing in the Vidhasalabhanjika, api laghu likhiteyam drisyate purnamurthih, whereby a few lines sketched, the maximum effect is produced." Further, bright yellow and dark blue colour used for depicting the enlightenment of the great prophet.

Use of Folk Tales (Jataka tales):

Folk tales contain an essential part of Indian art. It has been rightly observed by Ratan Parimoo that the "Jataka stories based on animal fables in which the Bodhisattva happens to be the protagonist in the animal form, are easily recognized as direct derivation from folk tales. But when the Bodhisattva happens to be born as a human being, it is only a motif analysis of the above kind, which brings out the derivation from a folk story including so many of the motifs." Jataka stories are essential part of Buddhist philosophy. They have been reflected in paintings at Ajanta.
Parallel themes, Sculptures and paintings: The themes in sculptures and paintings are closely related to each other. According to Karl Khandelavala “in truth one is forcibly struck by the fact that the early paintings in caves n° IX and X both in treatment and in composition, immediately invite comparison with the stone carving at Sanchi of the same period. These are the passages such as the Chaddanta Jataka in cave n° X where one feels that sculptors of Sanchi laid down their hammers and chisel and took up the brushes and colour pallets to create the same scene in another medium. Both Sanchi and early Ajanta belong to the period of artistic activity under the Satvahana Kings (who ruled in Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh) and the outcome of a common art tradition.” 44 This relation can be examined on the basis of comparison.

Common man:

Common man was the epicentre of cultural communication. Hence at many places male and female figures represent present common man. It has been pointed by Yazdani that, “most prominent among them are a Benaras Pundit and an Oriya Brahman. Their dresses and features are so characteristic that even now they can be easily identified as inhabitants of the provinces to which they were meant to belong.” 45 These different characters of common man are unique in all respects. He has further observed that, “the bushy moustaches, the shaved head, forehead with religious symbols painted thereon and the facial features are very typical of a Brahman of Central India. Such a complete mastery over characterizations could hardly have been possible for parishoners of a primitive art.” 46 Minute observations of vivid personalities is clearly reflected in these humanistic art forms.
Foreign citizen:

In Ajanta a few of these figures have also been represented. They show the influence of foreign culture. It has been pointed out by Griffiths that, "Mr. Fergusson says with regard to the members of the embassy that they are Persians is nearly certain from their complexion and general appearance as well as from their customs, which is carefully contrasted with those of the Indians in the same picture, whoever they were, they certainly are a people who inhabited countries west of Indus and south of the Hindukhush and who reached their destination on horse back, for their horses are shown in the picture. The most distinguishing feature in the custom of these messengers is the high conical caps they all wear." 47 Such aspects are significant because they show India’s intercourse with foreign culture.

Rich Social Life:

Ajanta art reflects the rich social life, with varied interaction, customs and traditions. It has been observed by S. Nagaraju that, "the socio economic climate of contemporary times was quite salubrious to the growth of religious art. In fact it is this factor, which is mainly responsible for the development of rock cut architecture in western India. It would have been never possible to the homeless begging monks to achieve this, but for the social patronage." 48 The social patronage was responsible for carving of caves. Further, it has been pointed by Kaul that, "the palace scene, the prince seated in a balcony offering his consort, who appears to be seated on his lap, a cup of wine surrounded by a large group of mendicants ascetics and others." 49 The scene reveals the glory of the royal courts. Richly decorated ornaments and their details amply testify the glory and grandeur of this period.
Economic prosperity:

Economic prosperity is responsible for the efflorescence of art. It has been truly observed that, “art reveals man’s wealth of life which seeks its freedom in forms of perfection, which are an end in them.” 50 Ajanta is not an exception to this.

Cultural identity:

Indian culture is the essence of artwork reflected in cave temples. The glory of Ajanta highlights the identity of Indian culture. It has been pointed that, “the active penetration of the three religious faiths, Vedic Brahmanism, and the more organized and missionary faiths of Buddhism and Jainism, produced its reactions on the cultural life of the South. Religious edifices of a monumental character began to engross; the attention of the people. Besides the impetus derived from these religions there were commercial contacts with the Western World and the Far East.” 51 In Ajanta these cultural contacts have been reflected from the basis of some figures of foreign origin.

It is observed by George that, “the culture of a country is the expression of the spirit of a country that spirit is both sprung from and in turn reincarnates itself in material civilization of land, its literature, art and architectures and the temples at Ajanta.” 52 The Ajanta temples express this cultural height of India.

Ajanta as a seat of learning: Ancient Indian universities like Nalanda, and Taxila, Ajanta also was a University of Buddhist religion. Shobhana has observed that, “since most of the scriptures have been written by this time, the deep knowledge of monks about these scriptures is evidently reflected in Ajanta inscriptions. They bear perfect harmony with the Buddhist sacred texts and the Buddhist philosophy which is beautifully interwoven in the eulogies composed in classical Sanskrit.” 53 Ajanta was a centre of knowledge creation, expression and mass participation.
The cultural communication on Ajanta caves amply highlights social and ethical values. The socio-cultural life of the ancient Indian people was varied and rich. The entire society was well organized and economic life was rich, which led to the overall development of cultural life. The identity of Indian culture is truly reflected in Ajanta caves. These remains of paintings as well as sculptures highlight the unique characters of Indian culture such as live humanity, brotherhood and equity. All these aspects can be well examined in the remains of paintings. Overall need and perspective is required to understand these aspects.

4.6 Impact of Ajanta Art on Indian and Global art

Ajanta has been treated as classical school of painting, which has influenced not only the Indian school of art, but also of the world. Yazdani has rightly observed that, “the teachings of the Buddha, from the very beginning, seems to have appealed to the indigenous tribes of India, and this is the reason why in early Buddhist art we find such characters as Nagas prominently represented.” 54

These characters have influenced not only sculptures but also paintings.

The Ajanta school of painting has made a long travel in India as well as foreign countries. B. A. Opte has observed that, “actually Ajanta style was carried to Bagh (Madhya Pradesh), Badami, Siltana Vasal and Kanchipuram in South India and thence to Ceylon from where it went to other countries.” 55

About the influence of Ajanta on Bag paintings in Central India, it has been noted and further it is also rightly observed by scholars that from Central India these currents made upward movement and they reached western Indian and North-west India. It has also influenced Bamiyan caves in Gandhara. Halsas has opined that, “the composition of the Bang paintings consist of the Ajanta paintings of a close combination of different objects and it is very attractive.” 56
About the influence of Ajanta schools, many scholars have interpreted in their own angle. The influence of Ajanta can be witnessed even in different places of Gaya of Bihar and Karle of Maharashtra. Dr. Meshram has observed that, “in the cave paintings of Ajanta (Cave no X) is a female shown wearing a girdle of three stranded beads. Comparable examples occur at Bodh Gaya railing, where Lakshmi is shown wearing a girdle of three beads. In another instance to the left end Verandah at Karle and Panni amorous ladies are seen wearing the belt of the same pattern.” 57 Thus, these examples can be described as facts of Ajanta traditions have a long influence.

While analyzing continental radiations and the art of Ajanta and its influence in Afghanistan, Krishna Chaitanya points out that, “the feminine figures especially are clearly Indian in type and attitude with lotus petal eyes and long eye lashes and flexible. In the male figures, the cut of the facet, the arrangement of hair and above all the drapery follow the familiar Gandharian iconography. Fondoukistan near Bamiyan has also yielded art which recalls Ajanta.” 58 The clear reflection of Ajanta style is just visible in the paintings of Gandharadesha.

The strategic place of Ajanta in the history of art is significant. Nagpal has noted that, “scholars recognized that Ajanta was the fountain head of the art of painting in ancient Asia on the one hand and of local schools in different parts of India, on the other. The age of renaissance in modern Indian art owes largely to the study of Ajanta and Bagh paintings.” 59

This can be observed by doing a careful analysis of Ajanta school of painting.

Ajanta reveals an immortal style of classical age, which first influenced Srilankan paintings in South Asia. It has been noted that, “a style which developed originally in close association with religious motives, has crossed the seas along with religious doctrines and has been employed later in the representation of secular
themes. In the preparation of the surface and the technique of applying the colours, in
the spectrum which consists of earth reds, greens and yellows and a copper blue in
place of lapis lazuli and in the treatment of figures, the derivation from Ajanta is
unmistakable.” 60

These derivations in Ceylon are some times local but they are mostly
reflecting influence of Ajanta style. These influences can be seen at different places.
Griffith has pointed out that, “there are resemblances in symbolism, decorative
materials, and arrangement of figures in the art of Tibet, Nepal, China, Japan, Burma
and Java with Ajanta art.” 61

Ajanta had thus become a base for the entire Asian art covering South Asia,
Central Asia and East Asia.

About the impact of Indian art on far east, it has been observed by Visser that,
“it has been said that Indian influence on far eastern art concerns, with minor
exceptions, only one category, of that art namely Buddhist art. This is such an
important fact that it merits our most earnest attention.” 62 These traces have been
observed and studied by many scholars in the Far East.

Local philosophy has influenced Buddhism and it has enriched it. According
to Adris Bannerji “Buddhism one of the greatest international religions, is remarkable,
for its elasticity and adaptability...Founded in eastern India, in course of time, it
crossed all racial frontiers went and conquered the inhospitable regions of Central
Asia, rugged Afghanistan and snow capped Tibet. It fascinated the Chinese and
through Korea it went to Japan.” 63 Further, “in the South East it spread amongst the
tropical jungles of Siam, Java, Bali, Cambodia and Sumatra. But wherever it went it
was transformed by existing creeds and philosophies.” 64
Thus Buddhism in India became a prime source of inspiration for human arts in the world.

About perfect drawing of female figures Radhakrishna has observed that, “the contribution of Ajanta artist to the world art as regarding human figure is the female form.” 65 The female figures at different places show true Indian image of Indian woman.

It is true that the transfer of Buddhist art to Hindu art is an interesting phenomenon. It has been truly observed by Radhakrishnan that, “Buddhist monuments influenced Hindu temples. The influence and changes occurred were well defined by Fergusson, “the circular forms of the Buddhists have entirely disappeared, and the cell has become the base of a square tower as it remained ever afterwards. The nave of the Chaitya has become a well defined Mandapa or porch in front, but distant from the cell.” 66

Thus, in the Rastrakuta period, just four hundred years after the Vakatakas, the tradition of art and architecture was continued, in their own fashion. Buddhist art and painting of Ajanta have enriched entire Asian art as well as the tradition of Indian art in the coming centuries.

4.7 Summary

Architecture means organizing space artistically. The desire or building a permanent habituation for the religious purposes is the reason that brought a change from perishable wooden to more durable stone occurred in architecture. No change is sudden, the artists adopted aesthetic rules of life. Buddhist art evolved from the urge and zeal of monks. It served the purpose of propagating the faith through visual agency. Buddhism flourished because it appealed to the masses and got royal patronage. Hinayana Chaityas were simple with few symbols but Mahayana cult
introduced image worship and icons of Buddha adorned the Chaityas in various 'mudras'.

Thus the discussion in the chapter reveals that the Ajanta art and architecture has correlation with India as well as Asian art. The cultural communication of Ajanta, which took birth in India, has tremendous perfection and clear reflection of social and cultural life, which is reflected in many places like Bagh, Bamiyan, Far East Asia and Ceylon.

Buddhism is still communicating through its inscriptions; one thousand rock cut sanctuaries, monasteries, innumerable number of icons, sculptures, paintings, emblems, etc. The style of painting methods of linear, draughtsman, shilpe and colour designing have also influenced the style of Asian art.

In the next chapter we will be discussing the material culture.

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