SYNOPSIS

"CULTURAL COMMUNICATION THROUGH AJANTA CAVES"

1. Introduction:

Ajanta caves amply testify the socio-cultural ethos in the Indian art in general and Buddhist art in particular. In this thesis cultural communication through Ajanta caves was carefully examined and properly highlighted. Now a total recall of previous chapters has been presented and findings have been discussed.

Rabindranath Tagore has rightly pointed on communication values of art work. He stated that, "communication through sculpture is more effective rather than books, because sculpture bespeaks culture in volumes. Those who run through it can easily read it." Communication in ancient period was based on two institutions namely kingship and temples cave temples were expressing aesthetic sense. Paintings were vehicles of popular feelings. Culture and continuity moves from the past, adjusts itself to the present and moves forward to shape the future. The art and paintings in Ajanta truly express these feelings.

The study of Ajanta sculptures and paintings was conducted from a cultural communication perspective and now synopsis has been presented in a nutshell.

The most significant aspect of Ajanta caves is that this artwork is an example of excellence in creative age. The Gupta Vakataka period in ancient India can be rightly described as golden period. The efflorescence of art and architecture can be described as an outcome of economic prosperity in the period.

Art works of sculpture as well as paintings can be described as symbols of delightful interaction of knowledge and values. The medium of art was well developed and truly evolved by ancient Indian people. The micro-aspects of Ajanta artwork have been studied here and the entire theme is presented below:
2. Major findings:

The major findings are based on constructive and continuous explorations made in this work. All these findings have been listed below and discussed accordingly:

(1) Cultural communication through cave temples of Ajanta revealed the message of Buddhism and Indian culture during the ancient times. It has been truly pointed that the message of Ajanta is related to Buddha and his Dharma. All the themes in sculptures and paintings reveal regarding philosophy and cultural activities of the period. The overall new approach of cultural communication is the basis of the present work. The communication angle is the core approach of the study. The study of symbols, motifs and artwork is truly the basis of the cultural communication.

(2) It is also evident that Ajanta caves are a testimony to the changes in philosophy and religious cult in Buddhism. The study of cave temples has been carried out through iconography and very few research works have been conducted regarding cultural communication through cave temples. In Ajanta both Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism has been reflected. The Chaityas or Stupas were symbols of early Hinayana period and Viharas were symbols of Mahayana period. The beautiful images of Buddha amply testify this phenomenon.

(3) Ajanta caves, which were carved in ancient India during 2\textsuperscript{nd} century B.C. to 6\textsuperscript{th} century A.D., can be described as masterpieces of cultural communication related to Buddhism as a highly developed religion. Ajanta caves are described as the best example of this phenomenon. Buddhism as a well developed religion had a highly evolved system. The Chaitya and Vihara art was well
presented and amply discussed. The most glaring aspect of this study was that the cultural prosperity and spiritual awakening was co-related, well presented in this study.

(4) The material culture reflected through these caves cannot be understood without studying the philosophical background of the religion. The message which gets reflected through these cave temples justify this fact in an interesting manner at Ajanta through selected Jataka tales related to the life of Buddha have been decoded. The highly developed material culture in dress, drapery and ornaments reveal the core of rich life. The Jataka tales, which were explained here, can be justified as moral cannons of the entire theme. The impact of the Jataka tales can be described as highly supreme and spiritual.

(5) The mural paintings in Ajanta caves reflect social milieu and cultural ethos of India. This has been explained after decoding selected Jataka tales, which were encoded in the past. The study of painting and sculptures unfolded was a significant contribution of this study. Among a few selected panels, the theme was well documented and rightly presented. These Jataka tales create a lasting effect on viewers and tourists as well.

(6) The Buddhist sculptures and painting reveal well developed material life in the past, which was highly sophisticated and richly ornamented. The study of material culture was considered to examine this properly. The dress and drapery, costumes and coiffeurs as well as flora and fauna were carefully explained about these aspects of a well developed cultural life in the period.

(7) There were harmonious relations between Buddhist and other communities such as Brahmanical and Jainas reveal harmonious exchange of art motifs and
symbols. The social harmony among various social groups can be well explained on the basis of exchange of symbols. Many of the social symbols like Lotus, Kalasha, and Ghata-Pallava were common in all the three religions. This kind of exchange has been testimony of smooth social relations. A new outlook of cultural exchange can be seen through these symbols.

(8) The costumes and coiffures as well as various types of furniture and ornaments reflected through these caves reveal the advancement in socio-cultural life. All these aspects were unfolded in material culture. The economic prosperity was examined in this work. The minute observations about prosperity show the glory of culture of the bygone ages. The cultural life had reached the high watermark in the period.

3. Brief summary of previous chapters:

Now a brief summary of Research work conducted in each chapter has been presented.

Chapter-I: Introduction.

In this chapter historical background regarding development of art and architecture in ancient India was provided with special reference to western India. The nature of cave temples as mass media was also examined. The cultural communication through these cave temples and objectives of the present work has been noted and a few glimpses of previous studies were highlighted. Herc, opinions of James Burgess and Ferguson, Dr. Yazdani, B. G. Gokhale, M. K. Dhavlikar, E.B.Havell, Dr. P.V.Ranade, were documented. The survey of literature provides insight for further understanding of the subject. In this chapter cultural viewpoint has been explained including the significance of the study also. The first chapter was thus
mainly related to theme as a backgrounder. The entire theme is highly valuable for understanding of the subject.

Chapter- II: Research Design

In this chapter research design, selected for this study was properly explained being a subject of cultural value, historical method was used and descriptive design was explained. The two methods used here, content analysis and social survey, are described properly. The method of development of questionnaire and unit setting in content analysis has been explained.

Thus the second chapter was mainly developed to research design and the strategies of research work was minutely observed and explained here in this chapter.

Chapter –III: Cultural communication in India

This is a background chapter, which is theoretical, providing only information regarding original development of cultural communication in ancient India. Opinions of R. K. Mujumdar, V. S. Agrawal, and R. K. Mookerjee were traced here in order to provide right perspective to the subject matter. The entire discussion throws light on evolution of cultural communication prior to carving of Ajanta caves. This chapter is thus a theoretical framework of the theme, which is explained properly in the work.

Chapter –IV: Salient features and nature of cultural communication in Ajanta caves.

In this chapter the nature of cultural communication through Ajanta caves were explained, which includes history of art, architecture, painting, sculpture and tracing its original development. The evolution of art, architecture, sculpture, and painting were co-related here in Indian aesthetic view leading to effective communication. In this chapter the entire focus was on Ajanta caves and architecture. It was a sincere experiment to deal the theme of cultural communication.
Chapter –V: Cultural Communication through Paintings and Sculptures with special reference to Material culture.

This chapter is based on content analysis of selected painting on Jataka tales and different sculptural panels were also analyzed. The statistical chart is provided as a part of quality analysis and quantitative analysis is also made based on critical view. This study is unique and presents a first hand report of its kind. This was a newer approach to the study of communication in general and mural culture in particular.

Chapter –VI: Impact of cultural communication.

In this chapter on one side salient features of socio-cultural communication were highlighted and on the other side a report regarding survey of two hundred tourists and 10 experts and scholars in this field was undertaken and neatly presented on the basis of graphs, tables and charts. All these efforts have helped to decode the message encoded in the murals and sculptures of Ajanta. This is a model approach to the theme. The most useful aspect of the work was presented in this chapter.

Chapter –VII: Epilogue

In this chapter on one side a brief survey of previous chapter was undertaken and finally few salient features were highlighted. The new theoretical framework was provided to focus theory of cultural communication. In this chapter a new model of cultural communication has also been prepared and a final epilogue regarding unique contribution of the work is presented.

All the seven chapters were presented one after another in a systematic manner. The entire theme is a two way communication leading towards knowledge, creation and cultural development. On one side the theoretical framework was presented and on the other side practical aspects were also explained. The socio-
cultural communication through Ajanta caves was thus a significant aspect, which was a neglected feature previously has been highlighted in this study.

4. New theoretical frame work:

Hitherto Ajanta caves were studied in iconographic and architectural view. The present work is the first of its kind regarding cultural communication. Up till now no such effort was made to explore the fact.

Communication through sculptures and paintings is more important than communication through words. The artistic communication is based on visual communication. The use of concept, symbols and motifs used by artists of Ajanta was their prime success. The new approach has helped to focus and decode cultural communication.

The following five aspects can be described as cultural communication through Ajanta caves:

1. The cave temples were used and developed as a means of cultural communication by ancient Indian people.
2. The sculptures reflected pure Indian perfection of cultural life and they can be witnessed through selected masterpieces.
3. The Jataka tales were well developed as themes of cultural communication and they have revealed the essence of cultural life.
4. The moral and religious life of Buddhist philosophy can be revealed through the symbols and art motifs at Ajanta caves.
5. The cultural prosperity was the outcome of economic stability for the period and this can be witnessed through the remains of material culture.

The best of the sculptures and paintings amply testify about the rich cultural life of the Gupta-Vakataka age. The originality and genius contribution of artists can be
described as significant addition of the Ajanta artwork. There was a close similarity between sculptures and paintings of Ajanta. This can be witnessed at many places. The anatomy of sculptures and philosophy of human figures can be well appreciated.

5. Cultural communication through Ajanta caves: A new model:

In this chapter the cultural communication through Ajanta caves can be explained in the form of a model. The following diagram can be a new approach.

\[ a \Rightarrow b = c \Rightarrow d \]

\[ a \Rightarrow b \Rightarrow \text{Message of Buddha} \Rightarrow b \]

\[ c \Rightarrow d \Rightarrow \text{Cultural communication} \]

The philosophy of Buddhism is based on 'philosophical such as Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana' stage. The reflection of cultural symbols is reflected through 's'

The philosophy of Lord Buddha and symbolic reflection of the same is the base of communication, which is reflected in 'c d'. 'c d' is a level of cultural deposits reflected through sculptures and paintings. The cultural communication in Ajanta is a horizontal communication where the sender and receiver stood on equal footing and they share the philosophy of Buddhism.
6. The last word

A careful analysis of Ajanta caves revealed that this place remained a centre of cultural communication throughout the ages. In spite of different theoretical frameworks the present work is a new addition to the knowledge regarding the area of cultural communication. No culture can sustain where there is no effective communication. Buddhist cultural communication forms the essence of Ajanta caves and the message of Buddha was highlighted through every nook and corner. A superior cultural communication can remain evergreen at all time. Ajanta continued this tradition.

Thus the study of Ajanta caves conducted in this work has been a unique contribution, because previously iconographic studies were conducted, but socio-cultural approach was missing. A new communication approach has been developed here based on the study of few Jataka tales in the Ajanta caves. The study of the painted panels or sculptures in this work highlight that the entire effort of the genius artists went on to highlight new cultural message. Humanity and humanitarism was the core of the message and it has revealed a more harmonious and coherent social and cultural life of the period. This message echoes from every artwork of the Ajanta caves.

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