CHAPTER SIX

- Conclusion -

The palaeographical study of the Western Indian cave inscriptions from third century B.C. to the beginning of sixth century A.D. reveals the following peculiarities:

1. In the absence of exact date of inscription, script can be used as a chronometer for dating.

2. Writing styles diffused from one region to another due to cultural and political relations.

3. Western part of India particularly the coastal region had been a meeting place of different cultures since the early historic period which was due to the (i) periodicity of monsoon winds; (ii) Roman trade and (iii) prosperity of trade.

1. Script as a chronometer:

The palaeographical changes and developments from the Mauryan Brahmi script leading to the evolution of the different Western Indian scriptal styles till the beginning of sixth century A.D. occurred in a disciplined and sequential pattern. The study of these changes and developments in terms of time and space are obviously helpful in finding the relative chronology of the undated inscriptions. In fact, the comparative palaeographical study is the only ground for dating the early undated inscriptions. The scriptographic changes in the period following the Mauryan era
are so pronounced that Brahmi script used in different historical periods can be identified easily as Satavahana Brahmi style, Kshatrapa Brahmi style and vākāṭaka Brāhmi style. The peculiar scriptal style of each period can be used for dating the approximate date of an undated inscription. For instance; the inscription no. 1 of Bhaja; the inscription no. 1 of Nasik; the inscriptions of Pitalkhora and the inscription of Kondane could be dated as first century B.C. The obvious reason is that the characters of these inscriptions belong to the scriptal tradition of first century B.C. In the same way the Bhaja inscription no. 2 of Kosikiputa Vinhudata and the inscriptions of Maharathi Kosikiputa Vinhudata from Visapur are contemporary to the Karla inscription of Vasisthiputra Pułumavi (C.A.D. 137). The scriptal style of Maharathi Kosikiputa and the scriptal style of Vasisthiputra from Karla have close resemblance. In the context of Karla inscription of Vasisthiputra, the inscriptions of Visapur and Bhaja can be well dated in the middle of second century A.D.

The palaeographical analysis of the early inscriptions of Western India shows the following scriptal styles of the different periods:

I. Palaeographical style of first century B.C.

Most of the Western Indian cave inscription viz. Bhaja 1, Pitalkhora inscriptions, Ajanta 1, Nasik 1, Kondane inscription and Nanaghat inscriptions have the following scriptal styles.
(a) The verticals of a, ka are not elongated downwards.

(b) Letters like ta, qa, da and bha have maintained angular forms.

(c) Bases of the letters like ma, va, la, ha and pa have maintained rounded or circular bases.

(d) The vertical lengths of sa, ha, ya, la, pa and gha are reduced in comparison to the vertical lengths of the Mauryan Brahmi. However, there is no tendency of equalizing the verticals.

II. Palaeographical style of First century A. D.

Most of the Western Indian cave inscriptions of first century A. D. have the following scriptal peculiarities.

(a) The verticals of a and Ka are elongated downwards.

(b) The letters ta and qa are rounded which are generally angular in the inscriptions of first century B.C.

(c) Bases of the letters like ma va have shown the tendency of triangular shapes.

(d) The bases of ha, la and pa are flat.

(e) There is the tendency of equalizing the verticals of ya, gha, sa and pa.

III. There was a conspicuous change in the writing style of second century A. D. The Kshatrapa invasion made a remarkable stamp on
different cultural branches. The inscriptions of second century A. D. clearly show the characteristic of the Kshatrapa pen-style. The scriptal peculiarities of second century are as follows.

(a) The top of the letters are thickened. The verticals are tapered from top to bottom.

(b) The downward elongations of ा, ka and ra are bent to the left. In some regions like Karla, Bhaja Visapur the bent is curved like a fish-hook.

(c) The bases of वा and मा are triangular in shape.

(d) The bases of रा, ला and हा are straight.

(e) The verticals of रा, या, शा, ग्हा and हा are equalized. The shape of the letters are squarish.

(f) The semi-circular curve of दा becomes angular in shape.

(g) The letter चा is pear-shaped with a short vertical appended from the apex.

(h) The medial sign for ई is a semi-circular curve over the top of the letter. The medial sign for long ई is represented by a oval-shaped curve over the top of the letter.

IV. Palaeographical style of Third Century A. D.

The style developed during the third century A. D. have the following peculiarities: They can be seen in the
The head-marks become prominent and triangular in shape.

(b) The letter ta has a peculiar shape with a circle to the left base.

(c) The medial signs are ornamented. The long I sign is generally represented by a circle over the top of the letters.

(d) The medial sign for 'u' is represented by a downward elongation from the bottom of the letter. The lower end is curved to the left.

(e) The bottom end of the downward elongations of the letters a, ka, ra are curved to the left side.

The curve is like a

Writing in Western India during the second and third century A.D. There were parallel development of local and regional scriptal styles. They are: (i) scriptal style of Nasik region or Nasik school; (ii) scriptal style of Karla region of Karla school; (iii) scriptal style of Junnar region or Junnar school; (iv) scriptal style of Kuda or Kuda school and (v) scriptal style of Kanheri or Kanheri school.

(a) The Nasik style of writing is more akin in scriptal features to the Kshatrapas of Mathura and the Mathura Kushanas. It is the standard imperial or court style of the Kshatrapas. (The scriptal style of Nasik
resembles the later script of the Junagahr inscription of Mahakshatrapa Rudradaman (A.D. 150).

(b) The Karla style of writing is different from Nasik though they are contemporary. Even the scriptal style of Ushavadata's inscriptions from Karla and the scriptal style of Ushavadata's inscription from Nasik have shown striking differences. In the same way, the two inscriptions of Vasisthiputra from Karla and the inscriptions of Vasisthiputi from Nasik have also shown scriptal difference.

(c) The Junnar style of writing is again different from the above two schools viz, Nasik and Karla. The Junnar inscription of Kshatrapa Kshaharata shows a different pen-style. Here, in the inscription of Ayama, the prime-minister of Nahapana, the scriptal style is much influenced by the local-style of Junnar.

(d) The scriptal style of Kuda is different from the school of Nasik, Karla and Junnar. The inscriptions of Kuda are mostly ornamented and emphasized both on squarishness and downward elongations of the verticals. The style of Kuda resembles the scriptal style of the inscription Virapurushadatta from Nagarjunkonda (second half of third century A.D.)

(v) The Kanheri style of writing shows the Kshatrapa style of writing with triangular distinct head marks.
V. Palaeographical styles of Fourth & Fifth century A. D.

The pen-styles of fourth and fifth century A. D. are the nail-headed cursive and the box headed scripts. The script of this period can be identified easily by their peculiar head-marks. They can be seen in Kuda, Kanheri, Ajanta and Ghatutkacha Caves.

2. Diffusion of writing styles

Writing styles diffused from one region to another. It is clearly evidenced by the palaeographical study of Western Indian cave Inscriptions, viz Nasik, Karla, Kanheri Junnar and Ajanta etc. The Nasik cave inscriptions of Ushavadata and other Satavahana inscriptions of Gautamiputra Satakarni, Vasisthiputra Pulumavi and Yajna Satakarni have close relationship with the Mathura Kushanas and Mathura Kshatrapas. According to Dani (1963:95) the Sakas and the Yavanas made a solid contribution to the writing styles in Western India which developed in second century A. D. particularly at Nasik.

Historically too, the Kushana power extended through the Western Kshatrapas. The beginning of second century A. D. was the period of Kshatrapa supremacy over the whole of Western India, some of the foreign elements in design and motifs of Junnar and Nasik cave can be credited to those Kshatrapas (Dhavalikar 1985:78).

The pen-style which was popular during the second and third century A. D. diffused from the Northern India due to
the cultural and political contacts with the Kshatrapas. In Nasik inscription nos. 17 and 18 there are instances of mentioning Saka professional writer "Sakasa Damachikasa lekhakasa" the writer of Saka Dāmachika (Jurgess 1975:114). This is a clear evidence to prove that there were Saka professional writers who used to write royal records.

In the Nasik cave inscription of Ushavadata of the 42nd year, in line no. 4 of the inscription it is recorded thus "Kāpurāhāre cha gāme chikhalapadre datāni nāligerāna nāula sahasrani athā 8000 eta cha sarva srāvita nigamasadhaya nibadha cha phalakavare charitro ti". And in the village of chnikhalapadra, (situated) in the district of kāpura, eight thousand, 8000, have been given as the price for cocoanut-trees. and all this has been proclaimed in the guildhall and has been written on board according to custom. (Jurgess 1975: 102, 3). From this inscriptional evidence it can be well said that there was the tradition of recording the donations on the wooden board.

In the Nasik cave inscription of Gautamiputra Satakarni and queen Balasri Gautami mention the court writers 'Tapasa' and 'Pujitina' (Jurgess 1975:104-105). The appearance of different professional writers and their names suggest that Nasik was an important centre of learning and writing.

In Visapur inscription of Kosikiputra Vīṅhadata the writer's name Mugudapalita is mentioned. It is interesting
to note that, the scriptal style of Karla inscription of Pulumavi (24th regnal year), the inscription no. 2 of Bhaja and Visapur inscriptions are written exactly in the same style and possibly written by the same writer Mugudapalita who might have been the court writer. Kuda inscription no. 1 also mentions the writer, Siwabhuti.

These inscriptive evidences which record the professional writers suggest that Nasik, Karla and Junnar were important writer's centres. The writing style of Kuda resembles the writing style of the Ikshavakus. The scriptal style of the Nagarjunkonda inscription of Virapurushadatta shows close resemblance with the scriptal style of Kuda inscription nos. 1 and 5.

The box-headed style of Brahmi can be seen in the Eran inscription of Samudragupta, Udaygiri inscription of Chandragupt II, and the Ajanta inscription of Varahadeva. The appearance of box-headed and nail-headed writing at Kanheri and its close resemblance with the scriptal style of Varahadeva's (prime-minister of Vakata-king Harisena) inscription suggests the Vakataka phase at Kanheri (Gokhale, eds. Deo and Paddayya, 1985: 115).

The above references have suggested that writing styles diffused from one region to another due to cultural and political relations.
3. Western India: the Meeting Place of Diverse Cultures.

The palaeographical analysis of Western Indian cave inscriptions clearly shows the appearance of different scriptal traditions of different regions. During the third century B.C., the Mauryan Asokan script appeared at Sopara. Towards the beginning of the second century A.D., the Saka Kshatrapa pen-style appeared and adopted the style in Western India till the end of the third century A.D. During the fourth and fifth century A.D., the northern style of nail-headed script appeared in the caves of Kuda and Kanheri. The appearance of different scriptal styles suggests that there were continuous waves of different writing styles from different regions.

Besides these Brahmi inscriptions, there are inscriptions written in Pahlavi script of Persia (Burgess and Bhagwanlal Indraji 1976:62-65). Not only the Pahlavi inscriptions even the Chinese inscription is found at Kanheri (in cave no. 90). These evidences clearly show that Western India particularly, the coastal region of Maharashtra, had been a meeting place of different cultures since the early historic days.