CHAPTER-I
APPROACHES TO EARLY INDIAN ART
AND ARCHITECTURE: THE CAVES OF
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APPROACHES TO EARLY INDIAN ART AND ARCHITECTURE: THE CAVES OF WESTERN DECCAN

The present study of early Indian art and architecture is confined to the Buddhist caves of western Deccan. The discussion in the present chapter is limited to various aspects of studying the rock-cut Buddhist cave monuments such as epigraphy, political history, and art and architecture. The Buddhist caves of western Deccan have always impressed not only scholars but also the general public because of their monumentality and impressive visual language. The Buddhist caves in the region have been abandoned since a long time and have ceased to be part of the living traditions for several centuries. Some of the caves have also been converted into shrines for the Liṅga, Gaṇapati, Bhavānimātā, Hīṅglājīmātā, and Vitthal-Rukmāi. Various dimension of studies of Buddhist cave monuments have been presented right from 18th century onwards. The beginning was made in the form of travel accounts, followed by reports and surveys of the caves during colonial rule. Gradually more systematic studies of cave monuments appeared from the late 19th century onwards. Broadly, the Buddhist caves in western Deccan are divided into two categories based on the two major religious sects— a) Hinayāna and b) Mahāyāna. The Hinayāna caves are identified on the basis of absence of the Buddha image whereas the Mahāyāna caves are identified due to the presence of the Buddha image. In the present analysis, review of studies on the Hinayāna and the Mahāyāna caves has been dealt with separately. As far as the Mahāyāna caves are concerned, they are discussed in the context of Ajanta caves.

Travel Accounts in 18th Century:

This was a time when many European travellers visited India and wrote their travel accounts. Their visits had more an element of curiosity for the exotic and romantic admiration for different facets of Indian culture. India was perceived as a picturesque land. The rock-cut caves around Bombay caught the imagination of early European travellers. They found these monuments fascinating and enigmatic. Some artists/painters made sketches and drawings, which became important not only as historical documents
but also as a helpful source for the restoration and preservation of cave monuments in the 20th century. Two British painters, William Daniel along with James Wales, made several water-colours of the sites they visited. Most of the time, their visits were confined to the caves around Bombay mainly—Elephanta, Kanheri, Kondivite and Mandapeshwar. Among the early travellers who specifically mentioned these caves were Castro, Orington and Fryer. Their journeys of curiosity also resulted in the exploration of the region. Many places were visited and the travel accounts were written on the monuments. It may be mentioned that during this time the ‘romantic’ movement in the west was on the rise and it generated a lot of curiosity and interest in distant travels. The romantic vision of the ancient world laid emphasis on the exploration of the ancient past, its antiquities and monumental remains.

A shift from mere curiosity to an effort to understand the cave monuments occurred with Anquetil-Duperson who visited India in 1754. He also made efforts to understand inscriptions in rock-cut caves and made drawings of ground plans, columns and stupas of Kanheri, Elephanta and Mandapeshwar, which were accurate. He identified the stupas of Kanheri as ‘Linga’.

**Studies in 19th Century:**

By the early 19th century, India had become a colonial country. Britishers used these rock-cut cave monuments as ideal picnic spots and the trend continues today with the Indians. The nineteenth century also began with some serious concerns. The work of Duperson perhaps changed the attitude of colonisers. In 1809 Lord Valentia visited Karle and took measurements, made copies of inscriptions.

The rise of Romanticism in Europe gradually laid the foundation for archaeological exploration and collection of local antiquities. Romanticism came as against the classical (Greco-Roman norms of beauty) age i.e. the Neo-classicism. This movement was led in Britain by the Society of Antiquities which was also involved with Indian studies in its early years until Indian studies in general were taken over by the Asiatic Society of Bengal. R. Gough was appointed as the director of the society in 1771 and he brought out in 1785 a comparative study of the cave temples near Bombay, based on the existing accounts of these monuments. Thus the ‘Travel Accounts’ became an
important source material for the study of the rock-cut caves. Erskin in 1809\textsuperscript{6} contributed a major work for the study of the Indian history. He pointed out the need for the study of the historical background of the three major faiths in India mainly-- 1) Hindu ii) Buddhist and iii) Jain. The most important aspect in his study was the grouping of the caves in Western India into three types-- mainly the Brahmanical, the Buddhist, and the Jain. He also formulated a typology of the monuments for the Buddhist and the Brahmanical caves.

**Studies Under Colonial Administration:**

It was the turn of the colonial administration to look into the monuments. Colonial rulers studied the past on account of their belief in the right to rule and to understand the past because of curiosity. It generated considerable interest among the colonial officers to undertake surveys and make records of the monuments. Thus in 1848 the Govt. of Bombay passed a resolution for the Bombay Cave Temple Commission which, included the contributors like Bartle Frere, Cap. Meadows Taylor, Dr. E. Impley, Dr. Bradey, Sir W. Elliot, Mr. West and others.\textsuperscript{7} Mr. West explored the region extensively and reported the existence of caves at several places. When the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society started its journal, the reports on the caves in western India were prepared and published. In the first volume of its journal in 1841 Rev. W.K. Fletcher reported the caves of the Bombay region, and in the 1844 edition, Mr. Westerguard gave the description and plans of Bhaja and Bedsa caves.\textsuperscript{8} The inscriptions of Bedsa were also copied and translated in these reports. John Wilson, who was deputed as president of the Bombay Cave Temple Commission, wrote the second Memoir on ‘Cave Temples of Monasteries and other ancient Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jain remains of Western India’. In this report he also mentioned the caves of Kondivite as Kondati and Konkan groups of caves like Chiplun, Patan and Khed.\textsuperscript{9}

The first voluminous work on the rock-cut caves of India appeared in 1880, co-authored by James Ferguson and Jas Burgess.\textsuperscript{10} For the first time, western Indian caves were described in terms of the overall development of the cave architecture in India. Ferguson described the caves of eastern India including Bihar and Orrisa. A lot of significance is attached to this book as for the first time an extensive documentation was
done on the rock-cut caves of India. While making an introductory note for the entire volume, like other Englishmen, Fergusson believed in diffusionistic principles for the spread of the cave activity. At the same time he could not desist from adopting a monogenesis view of the art. As an Englishman he formulated his observations within the confines of the classical notion and wrote—'the Indians borrowed the idea of using stone for the architecture purposes from the Greeks or to speak more correctly, from the Western foreigners bearing the Greek appellation of Yavanas, it is equally certain that they did not adopt any of the forms of Greek arch, or any details from the same source'.

The concluding remarks are noteworthy as these show his dilemma in accepting 'monogenesis' notion of art. It already had become possible for the Europeans to see non-European work of art from the non-classical aesthetic point of view as Romanticism in Europe departed from the traditional classical aesthetic point of view to the more grotesque and unrealistic imaginative world. Jas Burgess in his introduction to the Western Indian caves, maintained the view that 'the cave architecture in India cannot be a concept borrowed from Egypt or the west Asia, as there are no similarities in detail and chronologically these caves are distant in their respective date.' It was indeed Burgess who for the first time made the classification of western Indian caves into various categories, its regional distribution and the possible dates of monuments. His system of classification is based on the typological variations, mainly the stūpa or topes, the ornamental rails, the stambha or lats, the caitya halls or temples, the vihāras or monasteries, the podhis or cisterns. For the regional distribution of the caves, he followed a pattern based on the close proximity of the cave sites to major cities like Bombay and its surrounding regions for convenience of survey from their main administrative headquarters. Thus, he has geographically distributed cave sites into four groups:- 1) Kuda, Mahad, Kol, Karad, Wai, Chiplun as South Konkap and south western Maharashtra group. 2) Kondane, Bhaja, Bedsa, Karla, Shelarwadi, Ambivale as another group located around the Sahyadri ghats, and in the vicinity of Bombay. 3) Junnar, Nasik, Pitalkhora and Ajanta forming an important group of caves outside the vicinity of Bombay. 4) Kondivite, Kanheri, Elephanta, as Bombay group of caves. This regional distribution of the caves also included the Brahmanical caves. Burgess also suggested a
time bracket for each group of caves which though imprecise, was found useful in the next century for the chronology of the monuments. He seems to be the first person to observe that the Bhaja caityagriha must be the oldest excavation in the region and may be compared with Lomas Rishi cave of Bihar. Bhaja was followed by Bedsa, Karle, Nasik and Ajanta.

From 1876 to 1879 Jas Burgess made an extensive survey of Western Indian Caves and published a very detailed report under the archaeological survey of Western India series. The four volumes of this series consisted of all sorts of available information on the caves and their inscriptions. In many ways all these volumes of archaeological survey of Western India are supplementary to the earlier works. The caves, which have not been described in the 'Cave Temples of India', are also described in these volumes. Thus a comprehensive documentation was prepared including the ground plans of the caves, drawings of vertical sections, detailed measurements with accuracy. On the other hand, the caves of Thanala-Nadsur, Khadsamla and Nenawali have been described by Henry Cousen.

Epigraphy:

Besides the notable work of Burgess on the caves, inscriptions were translated by Bhagwanlal Indraj, Buhler and Burgess himself. The earlier readings of the inscriptions which appeared in 1881 as 'The Cave Temples and their Inscriptions' were also corrected in the 'Archaeology Survey of Western India' series. Bhagwanlal Indraj explained various terms that are mentioned in the inscriptions and also identified the place names. Buhler contributed a small chapter on the paleography of the inscriptions and pointed out the close similarity in the alphabets of Kolhapur relic-box inscription, Pithalkhora, Ajanta cave X, Kondane and Bedsa inscription and placed them soon after the Mauryan times. He adds that the Naneghat inscription is also an early inscription. These inscriptions are followed by those of Nasik, Karle caitya, Uṣavadatta inscription of Nasik caves, Karla, Junnar, and others. Thus he observed 'from a comparison of the styles of the alphabets, the ages to which they respectively belong, when carefully examined and compared, lend their aid to that of architectural style and the two together often help to supply fairly accurate indications of the relative ages of different
monuments'. This provided a logical basis for the chronological studies of the early western Indian caves based on palaeography of inscriptions.

Studies In 20th Century:

Studies made during the second half of the 19th century resulted in systematic studies in different aspects of the region. It also became instrumental in exploring various other dimensions of the monuments.

A) Epigraphy:

The twentieth century began with comparatively better studies in the field of epigraphy. Bhagwanlal Indraji, Senart and Lüders made significant contributions towards a better interpretation of the western Indian cave inscriptions. Later Dehejia and Nagaraju used the paleography of cave inscriptions to study the chronology of caves. Their contribution has been dealt with separately in a subsequent section. In the recent times, there has been a new interest in the field of epigraphy. Gunindro Singh in his unpublished Ph.D. thesis made extensive paleographical studies of western Indian cave inscriptions and the dates he suggested are close to Dehejia's dates. Shobhana Gokhale re-examined the inscriptions of western Indian caves and proposed several new interpretations and readings. Her monograph on the inscriptions of Kanheri caves is a significant contribution.

B) Studies in Political History:

After the fall of Mauryan Empire, the Satavahanas were the major rulers in the region. Their chronology became a matter of controversy. Two groups of opinion emerged, one group suggested that the rule of the Satavahanas began in the first century BC. Another group considered that their rule began in the second half of the third century BC. The first group includes persons like Sircar, Roy Chaudhury, Barrett and later A.M. Shastri whereas the second group consists of Venkat Rao, Gopalchari, Smith and Altekar and Mirashi and later Nagraju. Their disagreements are in the Purāṇic
evidence on the genealogies mentioned in different Purāṇas. Besides, the Śatavāhana inscriptions do not specify any era. The chronology of the Śatavāhanas has specific bearing in the study of the western Indian caves especially in assigning their dates. However, only Nasik, Kanheri, Karla and Naneghat have inscriptions related with the Śatvāhanas. The political chronology of the Śatavāhanas is used to establish the general chronology of the caves especially by Dehejia and Nagaraju. The other ruling dynasties such as the Traikuṭakas and Vākātakas have been studied by V. V. Mirashi.

C) Studies in Historical Context Of Cave Monuments:

Locating the caves in their historical context received attention only after systematic documentation and explorations of sites. As stated earlier, political history was a dominant field of study and, therefore, the cave monuments and its inscriptions were used to locate the possible position of the rulers, while other areas of inquiries remained untouched. M.G. Dikshit used cave monuments and their inscriptions as an important source material to study the Buddhist settlements of Western India. The work made considerable progress in the understanding of the region and its historical geography. The cave sites and place names in their inscriptions were used as sources for identifying ancient Buddhist settlements. A few geographical names in the inscriptions have also been identified with the present names in the regions. Dikshit assigned the spread of Buddhism to the period of Aśokan rule when missionaries were sent to different parts of the empire to propagate Buddhism. Dikshit also hinted that there might have been possible trade links via natural passes from the inland centres to the sea-ports like Sopara and Kalyan. A few lesser known sites are also mentioned and architectural development is also discussed briefly.

It is D.D. Kosambi who studied the caves in the context of the trade, commerce and trade routes. He observed the location of caves on the possible trade routes via natural passes. Kosambi’s brief article in 1955 gave a new meaning to the study of caves from a different perspective. Kosambi observed the importance of trade routes and the locations of caves in the context of trading activities of the period and the role of monasteries as an agency for accumulation and supply of trade capital. This observation is based on the cave inscriptions, which mention donations and investments with the trade
guilds. Their profit from such investments accrued to the Buddhist Sangha. Thus the study of social and economic history became more meaningful and the cave monuments and their inscriptive evidences became important source material for the reconstruction of the early historical economy.

D. D. Das’s work in 1969 was one such early attempt to reconstruct economic history, followed much later by Meenakshi Kurpad’s unpublished Ph.D. thesis of 1986, as well as the work of H.P. Ray in the same year. H.P. Ray provides a better understanding of western Deccan in the early historical period by examining various factors such as expansion of the settlements and geographical condition of the region. Factors that are responsible for the growth of the region, according to her, include expansion of agriculture and trade mechanism and the link between the Buddhist monasteries and the merchants on the basis of archaeological excavations, surface findings, coins, epigraphical records and the texts like Jātakas and the Arthasātra. The emphasis is on trade, which, according to the author offers one such approach to human activities in terms of both economic and social relations. She writes—‘Buddhism owing to its relatively liberal rules regarding social status and the counting of wealth, provided a suitable social environment for facilitating long-distance trade’. She further adds that ‘the location of early monastic establishment in the fertile upper Godavari and the Bhima Valleys in close proximity to the passes shows their involvement both in trade and agriculture’. This study lays emphasis on the economic aspects rather than on the nature of patronage and the social groups involved. It may be observed that the maximum amount of donations recorded are from local people. The investments with the guild through donations to the Buddhist Sangha are an indication of long term patronage, which, therefore may be critically evaluated in the context of the norms which governed patronage to the religious order.

D) Studies In The Field of Art & Architecture:

I General

In the overall field of art-historical writing, there was a prominent interest in defending the romantic views of the Europeans in the context of classical norms of
beauty. Further progress in the archaeological researches led to a systematic reconstruction of ancient history and to many discoveries. Two problems confronting art-historians working on early Indian art and architecture and focusing on ancient art were- 1) establishing a chronological sequence and a theoretical frame-work. This was attempted through stylistic correlation as existed among different monuments in different regions and 2) aesthetic evaluation. Chronological sequence was attempted through a discussion of the morphology and evolution of styles whereas aesthetic evaluation was made against the classical norms of beauty. The major exponents were E. B. Havell and A. K. Coomaraswamy. Havell’s approach was perceptual (i.e. perception of formal qualities) and made a very thought-provoking statement that the Indian art was inspired by Yoga. On the other hand, Coomaraswamy took a ‘neo-platonist’ stand and said that Indian art was more an idealistic and artistic process of the inner spiritual world. However, his earlier book was a step forward in understanding a chronological and evolutionary (stylistic) framework of Indian art and architecture. Western Indian caves are discussed in this work as important art manifestations in the overall development of Indian art.

In 1933 Stella Kramrisch’s Indian Sculpture was an important landmark in understanding the stylistic development of Indian sculpture. The book emphasised more on the formal qualities of Indian sculpture. Her approach, though strictly ‘formalistic’, also made effective use of metaphysical notions to understand the plastic qualities of Indian sculpture. Using the morphological and evolutionary aspects of Indian art, Kramrisch explained the plastic idiom of the Indian sculpture, its peculiar development of sense of touch i.e. tactile quality and the Indian experience of ‘seeing’. She says, ‘structure (i.e. structure of space articulation) and consistency of the plastic idiom (i.e. formal language) are conditioned by the same bent of mind that gave its directions to the systems of Indian thought’. She formulated three periods of art-- i) Ancient, ii) Classical, iii) Medieval. Thus Indus valley and Mauryan sculpture are included in ancient section. According to her, the classical sculpture began to take shape from 200 BC and this phase is identified as the phase of ‘early maturity’ whose fulfilment is achieved by the eighth century AD. In her opinion, the relief at Bhaja caves are fundamental sculpture
(i.e. archaic or formative phase) and further concludes on the early phase of classical sculptures thus, ‘the Aryan, but to a greater extent non-Aryan forces have met and united’.\textsuperscript{57} But the different ethnic characteristics of the Aryan and non-Aryan were not clearly defined. Such remarks are based on the prevailing notions of the admixture of the Aryan and non-Aryan in Indian culture. While writing on the subsequent reliefs of western-ghats, she points out that the school of Mathura left its impress on the craftsman of the western ghats.\textsuperscript{58} Although her critical sense of seeing the plastic quality of Indian sculpture is unquestionable, nevertheless such conclusions are not supported by the other historical evidences like epigraphic or textual. The periodisation in her writing was more influenced by Winckelman’s periodisation of European art. Her interpretation on the stylistic aspects of Indian sculpture had an affinity with the Hegelian idea of art, according to which art expresses the innermost spirit of the people.

Making an evolutionary study of Indian Architecture, Percy Brown gave due importance to the Buddhist caves and the stūpas.\textsuperscript{59} He too followed J. Burgess’s argument that the rock-cut architecture evolved through existing wooden architecture. One of the illustrations in his book shows a Toda semi-circular hut to explain the evolution of façade designs and thus he incorporated anthropological data in analysing the development of cave architecture. Brown is probably the first who thought of cave architecture not in terms of structural architecture but more in the form of sculptural activity where a positive rock is carved out and a negative space is created which itself becomes a positive utilitarian space. He ruled out the argument that the western Indian cave architecture evolved through Greco-Roman basilica type structure that evolved in Europe as the latter are late in date.\textsuperscript{60} But interestingly, his observations are contradictory to his approach. He chose to follow the diffusionistic line of thinking and wrote that ‘more than one form of early art in India was part of a widely spread cultural development in western Asia transmitted through the influence of Persia when that country was ruled by the Achaemenids towards the fifth century BC. It seems probable that the rock architecture of Buddhist, originated from the same source’.\textsuperscript{61} Brown also agreed with Burgess’s argument that Bhaja must be the earliest attempt and further wrote ‘for the reconstruction of the sequence of the caityas, the earliest (caitya) copies wooden
architecture with the utility of wood and later it is replaced by stone only'. Perhaps because of this hypothetical observation he dated Karla caitya to the first century BC, which is incorrect.

Immediately after independence, M. N. Deshpande cleared the site of magnificent caves of Pitalkhora. In his report he assigned the inscription of Pitalkhora close to that of Bhaja and dated them to the second century BC on paleographic grounds. Many sculptures were unearthed at Pitalkhora. Among them, a dwarf Yakṣa image was also discovered which has an inscription mentioning artist's name 'Kanhadāsa'. The image has close resemblance with the Sanchi Stupa-I bhāravāḥakas i.e. load-bearer on the South-gate Torāṇas. Interestingly, the inscription near the image, which is carved on the entrance of Kondane caitya-grīha, also records that image was made by Balaka, a disciple of Kanha- who is identified with the artist of Pitalkhora, pointing to the nature of art-activity in the region and the possible migration of the artisans from one place to another (place). Later, Deshpande also discovered a few inscriptions at Bhaja. Another important contribution was the clearing of the cave site at Thanal-Nadsur cave-complex. In the lecture organised and published by Vidarbha Samshodhan Mandal on Thanal-Nadsur caves and Panhale-kaji, he proposed the identification of the cave-hill with Śrīṭhana-mountain of Nasik inscription. His work makes an extensive analysis of the caitya, vihara and the memorial stūpa cave together with their chronology. For the first time, caves of Panhale-kaji's Nātha-smpradāya are discussed. His extensive field work also led to a sequence of excavation of the western Indian rock-cut caityas. In a recent keynote address to Ajanta Seminar (1992) he made some interesting observations and put forward arguments regarding the possible grouping of the caves and a sequences of caitya excavations. The grouping has been done on the basis of the political geography of the Sātavāhanas. Pratisthan was the capital city of the Sātavāhanas, located in the present Aurangabad district of the Maharashtra state. Accordingly, these caves can be grouped in four regions-- i) Capital group of caves: Ajanta, Pitalkhora, Aurangabad, Ghatotkatch, Ellora and also Nasik as they lie within a radius of 100-150 kms from Pratisthana (i.e. Paithan). ii) Sopara group: Kondivite, Kanheri, Ambivali, and Kondane. iii) Mawāḷ Group: Karla, Bhaja, Bedsa, Shelaṛwadi, Junnar, Shirwal, Karad, Pohale, iv)
Konkan Group: Thanala-Nadsur, Kharsamala, Chaul, Kuda, Pali, Kol, Khed, Panhale-Kaji and Chiplun. But it may be noted that this grouping is historically incorrect: for example, in the third group, Karad and Pohale are included whereas Karad and Pohale do not fall under the Maval region. He also suggests a comparative study of the caityas of Aurangabad and Nasik with Ajanta. He further observed that the earliest sculptural activity in the Deccan began in the capital region and then craftsmen moved to the Māmala region through the Borghat and adds that the sculptural decoration at Bhaja, Kondane and Thanala is nearly contemporaneous. While commenting on the sequence of the caitya caves, he considers Thanala caitya cave as the oldest together with Kondivite caitya, as the former is apsidal in plan but without any pillars and the later owes its architectural set up to Lomasrishi cave in the Barabar group in Bihar; Bhaja caitya is earlier than Ajanta, Pitalkhora caitya and is almost contemporaneous with cave 10 of Ajanta and is followed by the Kondane, cave 9 of Ajanta, Nasik 18, Bedsa, Karle and Kanheri. However, the sequence suggested by him needs to be examined further in the context of the changing architectural patterns, the external forces like patronage and the method of rock-cut excavations which went through various alterations, changes at Junnar and elsewhere. In a recently published monograph on Panhale-kaji, the caves are described in detail, and apart from identifying the late Hinayāna caves, he also assigns the Mahāyāna phase to fourth century AD. This is very significant as for the first time, the Mahāyāna cave activity in the western Deccan is shifted from fifth century AD to fourth century AD because so far it has always been maintained that the Mahāyāna rock-cut cave activity in the region started in the fifth century AD.

II Studies on chronology of the Hinayāna Caves:

The first organised study of the early western Indian caves comes from Vidya Dehejia who aimed at determining the chronology of the cave architecture. Dehejia used effectively the process of synthesising paleography of the cave inscription with the development of cave architecture as suggested earlier by Buhler. However, Dehejia also draws attention to the fact that occasionally the sequence suggested by architecture, sculpture and paleography do not wholly agree with each other such as in the case of Nadsur and Kondane. Her frame-work for the analysis of cave architecture is inspired
by the 'organic situation' as propounded by Erwin Panofsky, and explains that 'the individual monuments and documents can only be examined, interpreted and classified in the light of general historical concept, while at the same time, this general historical concept can only be built upon individual monuments and documents. Every new discovery of an unknown historical fact and every new interpretation of known one, will either 'fit in' with the prevalent general conception and thereby corroborate and enrich it, or else it will entail subtle or even fundamental change in the prevalent general concept, and thereby throw new light on all that has been known before'.

In short, organic situation is the aesthetic recreation along with archaeological research, which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion. She elaborates the process in terms of the prevalent general understanding of cave architecture and its chronology with the addition of her proposed methods and concepts and says that 'some are consistent features in the architecture and some come haphazardly at the same time.' The above observation would indicate that the general historical situation prevalent at the particular time instrumental in choosing certain motifs and designs. However, such a phenomenon cannot be studied merely by revealing the spirit of age in that particular historical context as it disregards the internal dynamism of the tradition in relation to the makers and their sensibilities and allied problems. While analysing the sculptures, she followed the concept of 'schema and correction' of E.H.Gombrich. But she failed to understand that Gombrich's 'schema and correction' is based on the nature of circumstances and the existing knowledge, technique or method of making visual form in relation to the internal sources such as schema, power of tradition, and external sources (like taste, patronage and necessity) in the given historical situation. Therefore, the use of an organic situation together with schema and correction seems to be conflicting in nature. While formulating the chronology of the caves, Deheja's analysis of palaeography is a departure from the earlier analysis and suggests a 'time-bracket' for the early inscriptions and prefers to assume the 5aka era for the later dates of the Sātavāhanas. To arrive at a chronology of the Sātavāhanas, she solely depends on the paleographical evidence and rejects the shorter and longer chronology of the Purānic tradition. On the basis of palaeography, she put the beginning of Sātavāhana rule to 120/110 BC. The issue
needs serious considerations especially in the light of the new studies that have been made in recent years.

Dehejia’s analysis and chronological sequence no doubt represents progression over the earlier studies. Nevertheless, she did not forget to add that ‘palaeography does not give a firm date’ (such as in the case of Vākātakas, the palaeography analysis of their inscriptions suggested the date to 8th century AD, but soon after, the discovery of the Pune copper plate of Prabhavati Gupta put the Vākātakas as contemporary to the Guptas of the northern India. Similarly following the discovery of the inscription of the Konkaṇ Mauryas dated 400 AD, the Traikutkas who were placed in the late fifth century AD, are now assigned to a period before the Konkaṇ Mauryas.)

Dehejia has chosen to distinguish the architectural stylistic phases from early types to later types. In the early types she observes the use of wood, simple plan of caityas like Lomas Rishi, Guntapalle and Thanala-Nadsur, the use of wooden screen wall etc. whereas in later types she points out how such devices have changed; for example, the wooden screen wall is replaced by a stone screen wall. It is very appropriate but she makes no attempt to deal with the other related problems such as change in the method of rock-cut excavations as well as the likely effect of patronage on architectural language. Nevertheless she hints at such possibilities in the sixth chapter of her book, which deals with the social, economic aspects and craft-organisations. She maintains that the craftsmanship of the artisan is hereditary vocation and the main craftsman must have been involved in selecting the site, whereas the Buddhist monk ‘Navakammika’ is not an expert in technical matters but it was he who must have taken care of the religious requirements. The role of the Buddhist monk needs to be defined with the help of the Buddhist text. Other noteworthy possibilities she has suggested are as follows :- i) The method of carving from top level to the bottom level. ii) Artisans must have travelled with traders. iii) Individual taste of the craftsman in choosing the particular art motif. iv) Possibilities of community patronage. v) The foreigner’s accounts of their respective country, which might have influenced/contributed to the imagination of the master craftsman. However, she does not explain the visible effect of such a phenomenon in the architectural study.
Dehejia has proposed the following sequence of the caitya caves:

Kondivite- 100 BC.
Nadsur & Pitalkhora 12- 70 – 30 BC.
Bhaja- 90-70 BC

After Bhaja are Kondane, Pitalkhora 3 and 13, Ajanta 10, Pitalkhora 10 between the same time period of 90-70 BC.
Ajanta 9, Nasik 18 are between 70-60 BC.
Junnar Bhutleni No. 40 between 50-70 AD and later followed by Amba-Ambika, Shivneri 48 of Junnar, Kuda, Shelarvadi, Karad and Mahad.

Dehejia has also observed that during the conflict between Nahapāna and Gautamiputra Śatarkeri there was a lull in cave activity as no inscriptions are found pertaining to this period i.e. between 70 BC - 50 AD. It may be noted that the observation with regard to the proposed ‘hiatus’ has not been supported by art-historical evidence. On the other hand, stylistic evidence would indicate that there was no pause in rock-cut activity as may be seen on the façade sculpture of the Tulja vihāras 12, 15 and 16, which are dateable to the period of hiatus of Dehejia, when compared to the relief of Bhaja and Nadsur.

The political chronology of the Śatavāhanas continued to dominate the study of chronology of caves. Jeanne L. Trabold’s long article on the Nasik caves in relation to the Śatavāhana chronology attempts to establish the chronology of the sculptures at Nasik caves. One section is devoted to the Śatavāhana chronology. The prevalent views have been discussed at length about the early Śatavāhana chronology but these do not get associated with any of the earlier claims. Surprisingly, the author prefers to reproduce the reading of the inscriptions, which was done by Senart and Mirashi. Another section of the paper deals with the analysis of style in which the author considered only the physical description of the cave as an analysis of ‘style’. The criterion for the analysis according to the author is- the composition of figures; effect of two-dimensionality and three-dimensionality; overlapping elements etc. However, Trabold sidelined the proposed criterion while making the analysis of the monument. Even while analysing cave three of Nasik, the author considers that the initial work was done during the time of Gautamiputra Śatakarpī as the inscription of the same is mentioned in the cave. But the
inscription does not record that the cave was made during his time, instead, it acknowledges the glory of Gautamiputra Sātakarṇī and records numerous donations during the time of Puṇḍumāvi.

The next important work comes from S. Nagaraju, a voluminous, thoroughly documented work on various sites of western Deccan with the description of each cave site with critical comments and possible dating along with the chronological sequence of the cave excavations. For the first time, the vihāras are also studied from the chronological perspective. The many known sites he has covered are-- Ajanta, Pītalkhora, Aurangabad, Ambivale, Bedsa, Bhaja, Jivadhan-Virar, Junnar, Kanheri, Karla, Kol, Kondane, Kondivite, Kuda, Mahad, Naneghat, Nasik, Pawala (Pohale) and Shelarwadi. The entire discussion of the monuments is aimed at establishing chronology of the caves, for which, he chose three criteria: i) Satavahana chronology ii) Evolutionary sequence against the stylistic comparison iii) Radio-carbon dating of Karla wooden ribs. He attributed stylistic variations to-- a) religious and social demands b) taste c) new ideas from other centres / schools. But how these reasons are incorporated in the architectural language is not explained in the analysis of the monument. The method he prefers is a typological analysis of the monument. But the typological similarity does not always indicate the same date, for example, Nagaraju dates the front pillars of Karla caitya soon after or contemporary to Bedsa pillars while remaining part of Karla caitya is dated by him to a later period as it is different from that of Bedsa. It also implies that the artisans finished one portion of the cave and suddenly took up the other site without finishing the earlier one. It is true only in a few cases and even if it is so, then, the stylistic variations in ground plans as well as decoration which involves pre-planning, would indicate that the plans and designs do not follow any chronological order, which is incorrect. Such typological analysis fails to explain the conditions in which the work of art is created and the various options, which are explored by the artisans while employing their skill on a particular project.

Nagaraju also traces the evolutionary sequence from the simplest to the complex; for example, in the case of the stūpas, he observes that the early stūpas were simple undecorated, cylindrical drums with high domes and wooden harmikās fitted over them.
along with the polished surface. Accordingly, the stūpas of Bhaja No.26 and Kanheri 2e are the earliest stūpas. However, it is rather too naive to accept such contentions as i) the surface of these stūpas is not polished. The kind of polish which is observed today is largely due to a) the color of the rock, several such surfaces are found at Junnar Tulja and Amba-Ambika group, which are later in date i.e. first- second century AD, b) it is also due to handling of visitors, ii) use of wooden cchatra on the stūpas cannot be considered as the earliest feature because it is not only used at Bedsa and Tulja circular caitya alone but also on many other later stūpas, iii) similarly, the size of the stūpas depends on several factors such as the space provided for the stūpa and the size of apsidal hall. Examples of this kind are numerous. Hence, the evolutionary process from simple to complex is not a viable proposition for the analysis of western Indian caves.

When Nagaraju assigns the stages of work to different dates on typological grounds, he seems to have disregarded the planning of the cave before the excavation of the hillock, for example the typological similarity between the front pillars of Bedsa, Karla and Kanheri would indicate a contemporary date. But he forgets that the Karla pillars are made in the small courtyard of the cave and are very different from Bedsa 7. Besides, the later pillars are an integral part of the veranda. On the other hand, at Kanheri 3 the pillars are planned in the big courtyard of the cave with a very different treatment. According to his analysis, the sequence of stages of excavation of Kanheri 3 points to four stages, which began in 100 BC, ended in 200 AD and later some additions were made in the fifth century AD. Thus, the initial stage took hundred years to complete in which the front pillars, veranda, stone screen wall and the facade were made along with the Karla or slightly later, whereas the interior was finished by 200 AD. However, such arguments lack a correct understanding of the method of planning and execution. The courtyard, pillars, stone screen wall, verandah, facade and an apsidal hall are an outcome of a unified plan. Besides, the work of interior hall was done in two stages, as may be observed through the degree of difference in the fashion of interior pillar but it could not and need not have taken hundred years to be completed. Perhaps the work might have stopped in between as the inscriptive evidence would indicate that the cave was established by two brothers but it was completed by the patronage from other members.
Typological analysis, provide valuable information pertaining to the types of motifs, pillars, sculptural decorations etc. At the same time, similarity and variations in the use of motifs do not really indicate a single date as motifs keep recurring and they also travel from one centre to another centre. Nevertheless, none of the typological analysis in the overall study makes an attempt to explore the psychology of decoration, external demands i.e. patronage and the role of mastermind in arriving at better solutions and at certain architectural language in the given historical circumstances.

Suresh Vasant Jadhav’s unpublished thesis is a good documentation of Junnar caves. He discovered a few settlements near the cave groups of Junnar and also the important cave group of Ganesh Pahar, which is known as an isolated cave group. He has described Junnar caves in great detail; analysed the rock-cut excavation method in order to establish a chronological sequence of Junnar cave monuments. Certain remarkable observations are made through extensive exploration that the other cave sites such as Kanheri, Karad, Kuda, Mahad, Nenaval, Khed, Shellarwadi, Shirwal, Wai, Yerphal and Pohale also have peculiar flat roofed caitya-grihas along with Junnar. However Jadhav does not explain as to how the artisans could arrive at such an architectural format. In the subsequent article on the unfinished Ganesh Pahar isolated caitya, he observes a close similarity with Bedsa caitya and with the detailed photographs, he explains how the interior of the caitya is also intended like the Bedsa caitya. The illustrations reveal how the interior carving of apsidal hall is done, i.e. the method of interior carving. It may also be studied further through comparative analysis with the other caityas of Junnar and elsewhere to understand the changing methods of the rock-cut excavations.

M. K. Dhavalikar bridges the gap between the early Hinayāna caves and late Hinayāna and fully developed Mahāyāna caves. He observes that these late caves have no sculptural or mural embellishment nor are they majestic in conception. His work is based on the cave sites of Kanheri, Kuda, Mahad, Wai, Chiplun, Khed, Nenaval, Khadsamla, Thanala-Nadsur, Karad, Yerphal, Pohale, Shirwal, and Shellarwadi. Dhavalikar attributes the change from Hinayāna to early Mahāyāna vihāras to the contribution of Yavana donor, which began in the unfinished cave 17 of Nasik. He writes the cave has a verandah with a hall and separate cell provided for the stupa in
antechamber. It was made during the time of Nahapāna and is contemporary to cave 10. The cave remained unfinished because Nahapāna’s rule was overthrown by Gautamiputra Sātakarṣṇi and therefore the Yavanaś were not in a position to make further financial arrangements.92 The issue is made unnecessarily too complicated as the evidences that are available in Nasik and elsewhere do not suggest such a possibility. The inscription in the cave which records the donation of Indragnidatta a Yavana does not mention any date, hence palaeography is the only instrument for dating and, accordingly, it is dated to mid-second century AD. The date suggested by the palaeography of this inscription does not tally with the time of conflict between the Nahapāna and Sātakarṣṇi Nahapāna’s rule was overthrown by Gautamiputra Sātakarṣṇi much earlier i.e. in the first century AD. Besides the question also becomes relevant to cave ten and three at Nasik. If this argument is taken for granted then according to his chronology, cave three comes later than cave 17, in which case, it is not clear why a votive relief stūpa is carved instead of a separate shrine chamber? Hence, it would be more fruitful to examine such issues in the context of improvisations over the existing conventions in relation to the religious demands. He traces the activity of late Hinayāna caves till fourth century AD. Dhavalikar’s argument of the Yavana contribution is further enlarged in a subsequent article on Nasik caves where he has declared ‘Nasik a Yavana centre’.93 The evidences he observes for the Yavana centres are the depiction of joint animal heads, triskelion motifs etc. But much before Nasik such motifs were commonly found at Barhut, Sanchi and Pitalkhora. Similarly the triskelion motif is also found on the punch-marked coins.

III Studies in Patronage:

Patronage is often thought in terms of the political history. But now it is a discarded notion as it reduces the nature of patronage to mere political authority and disregards social history. Patronage is also studied in a very narrow context of merchants and their trade activity. Niharanjan Ray was the first art historian to give a different perspective to the sociological studies of early Indian art by the effective use of archaeological data together with the formalistic approach.94 Rarely are the external factors such as patronage along with the religious ideas directly linked with the visual forms as may be seen in the works of R. Champakalakshmi95 and Devangana Desai.96 To explore the nature and
pattern of patronage in the making of cultures is relatively a recent development. Romila Thapar’s contribution is very significant in such studies. Very recently, in the collection of papers edited by Barabara Miller Stoller, she raises a very fundamental question as to what the nature of the bonds between artists and patrons is and later the visible effects of shifting and changing nature of patronage along with the socio-religious ideas. Such problems are studied and conceived by the growth of art historical discipline in the west mainly by the works of Ervin Panofsky, E.H. Gombrich, Georg Dubey, Arnauld Houser, Rudolf Wittkover, Michael Baxandall, T.J. Clark, Francis Haskell and to some extent Norman Bryson and Swetllana Alpers. In the same collection of papers, Vidya Dehejia observes that it was a collective and popular patronage in the early centuries of Christian era, which was a pan-Indian phenomenon at that time. Dehejia describes the collective basis of the patronage in Barhut, Sanchi, Mathura and Western Indian caves and concludes that patronage of religious art was not the prerogative of merchants and the banker. But the author fails to analyse the fundamental problems i.e. the nature of bonds between the artist and patrons and, above all, its ‘visible effects’.

The above analysis shows that initially it is the romantic notion of the past that generated lot of interest in exploring the monuments. The extensive documentation is an outcome of the romantic admiration for India’s past culture. The second phase concentrated on the epigraphical studies and the possible dates are suggested for the monuments. Later, the idea of evolution of style resulted in ‘monogenesis’ view of art and architecture and the formalistic approach overpowered the notion of evolution within and outside the cultural pattern of the region. Subsequently, the chronology of the cave became the most important issue. Therefore, further analysis of the monuments needs to be approached in the wider context of how the power of tradition made artisans to work with certain conventions; and how they arrived at certain architectural language in relation to the historical circumstances, the options they had for innovation or modifications together with their relationship with the social and religious groups; and how the patronage influenced the architectural language (in relation to the needs of the Buddhist Sangha.)
IV Studies on Mahāyāna caves of Ajanta & Others:

After discussing works on the early Hinayāna caves, in this section works on the Mahāyāna caves will be discussed in the context of Ajanta and other important sites like Kanheri caves. It may be observed that the caves around Bombay region attracted many travellers during the colonial rule, but Ajanta remained undiscovered until it was noticed in the second-half of the nineteenth century. Though it was an accidental discovery, it became an important centre of all Buddhist studies on account of its cave paintings. As stated earlier, the Mahāyāna rock-cut cave activity has been generally determined on the basis of the presence of the Buddha image. Ajanta has prolific Mahāyāna excavations. The Mahāyāna caves of Ajanta have attracted considerable attention for various reasons. The most prominent reason of attention is the presence of numerous paintings in the caves. Mostly the studies are confined to various aspects of paintings such as their thematic nature, style, and techniques. Although earlier works are the outcome of romantic admiration for India's past, text produced on Ajanta paintings were mainly due to the Westerners' criticism against India that it never produced fine arts except the multi armed monsters. Thus Ajanta paintings received more attention than its sculpture and architecture. Burgess in the late 19th century started documentation and Yazdani followed him in 1931. Afterwards various aspects of Ajanta were studied.

a) Jas Burgess and Yazdani

As has been discussed earlier, the systematic documentation of western Indian caves was taken up by Burgess whose work was largely confined to the description of the monuments. Ajanta is also mentioned in this work. Measurement of caves, plans, line-drawings of the pillars, capitals etc. were prepared. The description of the caves was more oriented towards the physical nature of the caves. Further, Burgess also put certain additional information on Ajanta Caves and produced few more line drawings and plans of the caves together with types of pillars. Paintings also received due attention but there was less focus on the themes of the paintings. The overall emphasis was more on architectural details. The work of Burgess describes certain architectural components of the caves, for example, certain pillar capitals, which no longer exist. Graphic description of the caves and its surrounding also gives us a clue to the conservation measures taken.
up by the ASI. In the initial work of 1880, Burgess tried to suggest certain chronology for the caves. Accordingly he suggested the time of excavation of the *Mahāyāna* excavations from AD 250 to 650 AD or even later. He also observed that cave No.11 must be the earliest *Mahāyāna* excavation, which was altered from the *Hinayāna* to *Mahāyāna*. Although at present this argument is not accepted, nevertheless his observation with regard to cave 11 as the earliest *Mahāyāna* cave at the site stands correct. In the subsequent work, Burgess divided the caves into two distinct groups. Group one comprises caves No. 6, 7, 8 and 15 to 20 which are assigned from 5th century AD to the end of the sixth century AD and the second group, consists of caves No. 1 to 5 and 21 to 28, which have been placed in the seventh century AD. This grouping and dating have considerable influence on the subsequent studies related to the dating of caves. Burgess put the rock-cut cave activity of the *Mahayanist* to the 5th and 6th century AD reducing the activity almost to one century or so. This grouping was based on the typological and decorative variations of the caves. This basis of grouping served as an important tool to determine progress of excavations on the site. The typological studies suggested by Burgess became an important tool in subsequent studies.

The next scholarly work on Ajanta was done by G. M. Yazdani. Its main aim was to describe and document the paintings of Ajanta. The paintings and their themes have been described in great detail with their location on the cave walls along with description of the story with the help of texts. Before describing the paintings, a brief account of the cave is provided. Yazdani did not go into the chronology of the caves and confined himself to general observations and the themes of the paintings. For the first time it was observed that some of the paintings of Ajanta have a lot of similarity in their composition structure with the Krishna Valley sculptural compositions. While suggesting the chronology of caves, Yazdani suggested a 5th century AD to 6th century AD date for the excavation of the *Mahāyāna* caves. Caves like 16, 17, 20 belong to the last quarter of the fifth century AD and caves 1 and 2 were assigned to the end of the fifth century AD and caves 23 onwards to the 6th century AD. This Chronological frame-work is very different from that of Burgess and is based on the political history of the region as well. The location of the caves has also been taken into account. Yazdani further observes that
the plan of cave 7 was changed at various times due to its location and the unfinished nature of carving on the left side of the cave. He placed cave 11 in the latter part of 6th century AD. Thus, he disagreed with Burgess who put cave 11 as one of the earliest Mahāyāna caves excavated at Ajanta. Broadly, Yazdani's grouping is as follows:

- **Group-I** caves No.16, 17-20- last quarter of 5th century AD the caves are finished.
- **Group-II** caves No.1 & 2 – end of 5th Century AD.
- **Group-III-** caves No.23 onwards – 6th Century AD, dividing the rock-cut excavation of the Mahāyāna Caves into three phases.

While describing the subject matter, Yazdani cited texts like the Jātakas, Mahāvastu, Divyāvadāna etc. The Jātaka stories have been briefly mentioned and the episodes in the paintings have been adequately identified. Even a comparative stylistic analysis of the painting has also been attempted though the main aim was largely documentation and cataloguing. Each and every painting in the cave has been documented.

**Epigraphy:**

The studies of Burgess and Yazdani on Ajanta influenced various other works. The inscriptions of caves have been studied by Burgess, Buhler and Indraji. They documented many of the inscriptions and translated them with explanatory notes. Further John Allen and P.N. Chakravarti worked on the inscriptions of Ajanta in association with Yazdani’s work on paintings, which has been mentioned above. The Cave 2 inscriptions are translated by John Allen whereas the rest of the cave inscriptions are translated and studied by P.N. Chakravarti who assigns the painted inscriptions to 5th & 6th Century AD on the paleographic grounds. Further D.C. Sircar read the inscription in cave No.4, which is inscribed on the throne of the Buddha image in the shrine. V. V. Mirashi corrected the earlier readings of caves 16, 17 and 20 inscription along with the Ghatotkacha Cave inscription. A few inscriptions were noticed by Walter Spink and Suresh Vasant Jadhav in cave 10,11, 16 and No.22. These include engraved as well as painted inscriptions and have been translated by M. K. Dhavlikar.

**After Burgess and Yazdani: Studies in Painting, Sculpture & Architecture:**
Stella Kramrisch in 1937 contributed an essay on Ajanta paintings where a formal analysis of the paintings is attempted and for the first time the text *Chitrasūtra* of the *Viṣṇuḥarmottarapurāṇa* is used to analyse the qualities of Ajanta paintings. Kramrisch being a formalist, emphasized on the development of formal language by using the principles of composition. Her essay is divided into two sections i) Principles ii) Phases. Each section is divided into subsections, such as space, internal space, direction of forthcoming, receptacles, group and figures. Outer limits and rhythms, upper limit, inner limit and colour are sub-sections of Principles. Under Phases, she has seen the development from one cave to another; accordingly, she has described caves 9 & 10 as the earlier groups and then moved on to cave No.16, 17 and 1 and 2.

Charles Fabri contributed an article in 1955. It is more an appreciation than an art historical analysis. Further documented work on Ajanta paintings was done in 1967, in which some paintings and also the sculptural works are described. This work claims itself to be the extension of the earlier work of Yazdani on Ajanta paintings.

While writing on the caves, M. N. Dehspande put the caves in distinct phases. Caves 26 and 27, according to him, belong to the period of Rashtrakutas of the eighth or ninth century. He also adds that as the Buddhist character of the inscription is doubtful, it may indicate that by then the Ajanta Caves had been deserted by the Buddhists. Caves 16 &17, on the basis of inscriptions, are dated to the end of the fifth century AD. On the other hand, cave 4 is dated either as contemporary to or very slightly later than caves 1,2, 16 and 17 on the strength of a recently found inscription on the pedestal of the image of Buddha in the shrine of cave 4 itself. Deshpande further observes that the cave 15 is likely to be the earliest vihāra in the series. This appears to be an important observation. He also observes that the caves of Aurangabad are later and drew inspiration from Ajanta. The rest of the work deals with Ajanta paintings, their themes, composition and the preservation of the murals. The observation with regard to cave No.15 remained as a foot-note and has never been taken seriously. The reason is that the earliest Mahāyāna cave has not been adequately explained and further probe has not been attempted in this regard. M. N. Deshpande is the only scholar who has worked on early as well as later caves.
Walter Spink who is now associated with Ajanta, started working on Ajanta in sixties and his first publication appeared in 1963, in which he wrote the historical perspective of the monuments in relation to the political history of the Vakātakas. His first work became crucial on the Mahāyāna cave development at the site and also the nature and extent of the patronage. Walter Spink since then has been publishing on Ajanta. All his works are centred round Ajanta. With his extensive study of the monument, for the first time, the development of cave activity at Ajanta has been attempted and a different chronological frame-work has been suggested. The importance of his work lies in the fact that he studied the Vākātaka history in the context of the Mahāyāna caves of the Ajanta. At first, the most accepted tool of his analysis was the epigraphic record of caves 16 and 17, which mention the name of the Vākātaka king Harīśeṇa and his Minister Varāhadeva, and the local king Upendragupta. Spink accepted the dates of V. V. Mirashi who assigned the date of Harīśeṇa to 475–500 AD. The date mentioned in Mirashi’s study is tentative, as these inscriptions do not mention any date. Mirashi proposed this date on the standard basis of assigning 25 years of rule to each king as is normally done in the absence of dated inscriptions. Spink with slight modification i.e. AD 460–495 accepted Mirashi’s dating and linked the date to the development of the caves.

In 1966 Spink wrote an article on a preliminary analysis of Ajanta and Ghatotkacha where he maintained that Harisenā’s reign must have ended by AD 500 at the latest and suggested AD 460–495 as the more appropriate though approximate date. He further stated that the Vākātaka power and patronage came to an end in circa 500 AD, Varāhadeva the known donor of the Ghatotkacha cave, probably continued to serve as minister after Harīśeṇa’s death as evidence in the Daśakumāračarita would imply, thus, he (Varāhadeva) may have inscribed the cave during the reign of Harīśeṇa’s son. Spink set forth four main objectives for the analysis of the caves:-

1. The caves or elements within the caves, developed in a particular sequential manner.
2. Such basic sequence should be useful in establishing tentative developmental sequences for a whole variety of motifs, which appear within the caves considered.

3. Location can be useful but not an infallible criterion.

4. The state of completion as a criterion, cannot be the standard of judgement while dealing with the chronology of caves.

Considering the nature of the above criterion and keeping the date bracket of last quarter of the 5th century AD, he observes that the location of cave 14 and upper 6 and 3 all of which are placed somewhat above the general level (i.e. level of excavations on the hill) of excavation were so chosen because more ideal areas had already been utilised, cave 11 and cave lower 6 whose plans seem somewhat less developed than that of cave 16, and which therefore may represent slightly earlier conceptions, and must have been under way when caves 16 and 17 started, as the former connect so closely with the later in style and iconography. Similarly cave 17 began when 16 was in progress and cave 1 started while cave 17 and other early caves were still under way, on the basis of comparison of their decorative motifs (which must be in terms of paintings- my observation). Thus he started making a sequential analysis within the internal development of the site. He also observes that cave 23 was left incomplete in the rear of cave as well as a portion of the double and pillared cell at the right end of the porch, was never finished, whereas in Ghatotkacha cave, it was rather eclectically and illogically following the plan-precedents established at Ajanta in such a cave as cave No.21. Spink assigned Aurangabad and Ellora Buddhist caves in the middle or the last half of the sixth century AD. All the arguments are based on the pillar types and the decorative motifs they follow but at the same time Spink does not attempt to describe the stylistic features of the sculptures as is observed from one cave to another cave, instead, he prefers to make mere statement without an analysis of it. Thus the rock-cut activity development at Ajanta was being viewed as a simultaneous development in relation to location and plan of the caves in the context of internal progression of the cave along with the downfall of the Vākātakas.
While writing in Marg in 1967, Spink more or less followed the same chronology and sequence and also drew our attention to the similarity between Ajanta and Ellora in terms of the decorative motifs, pillar types and such other details.\textsuperscript{121}

Again in 1968 Spink showed the development at Ajanta from 460 AD to 495 AD.\textsuperscript{122} Making a detailed analysis of cave 11\textsuperscript{123}, Spink observed that the paintings in the cave show a later date and draws our attention to the painted inscription which is dated to the last quarter of the 5\textsuperscript{th} century AD on the basis of its palaeography.\textsuperscript{124} He observed two phases of excavations in cave No.11 and noted that the Buddha image in cave 11 was completely carved but the \textit{pradaksināpatha} was never finished, it seems evident that the first phase of work on the cave was broken off just at this point whereas work on cave 6 began very early and progressed so slowly that it was still going on when patronage at the site was finally interrupted. The work method, as is understood from his analysis is seems to be that the painters followed close on the heels of the excavators. They generally painted the porches, while the cutting out of the interior was still underway; and then often began the paintings of the main hall while the shrine and lesser cells were still being excavated. This is easily discernible from the evidence provided by many of the partly finished caves at the site. Spink pointed out several interruptions of work on caves No.16, 20 etc. Thus, Walter Spink set forth two ideas,-- i) The work-span of the Ajanta cave lasted for a short time and ii) That there was a disruption of the activity. It should also be noted that Spink takes into account the evidence of paleography whenever it suits his hypothesis.

In the year 1967 Shobhana Gokhale deciphered the date of Hisseborala inscription of Devasena as 458 AD on the basis of the reference to the \textit{saka} era.\textsuperscript{125} This helped Walter Spink in his postulation that Hariçeṣa’s reign began in 462 AD. The entire discussion now shifts the emphasis on to the ‘short chronology’ and is linked up with the downfall of the Vākātakas.\textsuperscript{126} In order to prove his pet ideas, Walter Spink reviewed the whole history of the Vākātakas. A period of disruption is heavily emphasised in his writings. He suggested that the reason for disruption was the conflict between two feudatory-kings on the basis of the cave 17 inscription, which V.V. Mirashi interpreted as a conflict between the Riṣikas and the Aśmakas.
Consequently, Walter Spink studied the other cave sites such as Ellora and Elephanta.\textsuperscript{127} In the Marg issue of 1967, he already prepared the ground-work for the stylistic relationship of the sculptures and decorative motifs. Thus, he started assigning Ellora's earliest phase close to Ajanta cave 17 and the migration of artisans due to the disruption of political conflict between the Aśmakaś and the Riśikaś.

In 1974 Spink\textsuperscript{128} assigned Hariśeṇa's rule between 462 - 485 AD on the basis of i) the Hisse Borala inscription which mentions the date of Devasena 458 AD ii) The content of cave 16 inscription which mentions that king Devasena having entrusted (the government of the Kingdom) to him (Hariśeṇa) became free from care and engaged himself in the enjoyment of pleasures, acting as he liked, then his son became King.iii) Hariśeṇa who iv) the inscription as interpreted by V.V. Mirashi further mentions that Hariśeṇa conquered Kuntala, Avanti, Kalinga, Kosala, Trikuta, Lāta, Āndhra, etc. v) Traikūṭa dynasty according to Mirashi by 490 AD was in independent control of the western coast on the basis of copper-plate inscription of the Traikūṭaka.\textsuperscript{129} The date recorded in this inscription is considered as Kalachuri era by Mirashi) and as Trikuta was conquered by Hariśeṇa in his early age, so Vākātakas must have lost control of it by 490 AD which is considered as the date of the downfall of the Vākātakas. v) The account of Daśakumārśarītām by Dandin, which mentions the political conspiracy against the Vidarbha King. In 1974 and 1975 Spink published two papers respectively where a cave to cave analysis was made and where a disruption of activity and its subsequent resumption was stressed on the basis of analysis of paintings in caves where he observed certain overlapping of paintings in a hall and shrines.\textsuperscript{130} He attributed the disruption in cave activity to the conflict between the two kings (i.e. Aśmaka and Riśika) and further non-completion of several cave excavations to the downfall of the Vākātakas. Since then, Spink's analysis is confined to the frame-work of the 'rise and fall' of the political dynasty for the interpretation of the work of art.\textsuperscript{131} Often his articles carry the same tone with certain modification, as in a recent publication he assigns the death of Hariśeṇa to 477 AD and claims that by 480 AD patronage at the site had come to an end.\textsuperscript{132} So far no scholar took for granted that caves no.26, 27 and 25,24 are the caves that can be assigned to the date of Hariśeṇa. Spink even went on as
far as to argue that cave no.1 was patronised by the king himself on the basis of the scenes depicting royalty on the exterior as well as the interior of the cave. But such scenes need to be read in the context of Patronage from Hariṣeṇa alone as in the earlier Buddhist monuments also depiction of such scenes were common and more over the Vākāṭakas were Vaiṣṇavite and never patronised Buddhism.

Spink’s chronology has generated a lot of controversy. Karl Khandalwala became his most bitter critic and dismissed his arguments but without a proper explanation. Many others, such as Prof. R. N. Mishra and Brahmananda Deshpande, do not agree with Spink. Similarly Joanna Williams who worked extensively on the sculptures of Gupta period finds Spink’s argument too reductive and unacceptable. Spink, while defending his own ideas draws attention to the art historical evaluation of the site itself, and argues that Indian scholars do not see the evidences at Ajanta itself. Spink’s assumptions are not only based on his own work but also the work of V.V. Mirashi and the groupings of the caves as visualised by Burgess and Yazdani. But, nevertheless, his chronology has not been viewed with critical evaluation in relation to the available art historical evidences outside Ajanta. However what is important in this context is that he assigned precise dates to the caves on the basis of assumptions and not any historical evidence as such. The whole argument of Walter Spink is centred around a sudden death of Hariṣeṇa and on the basis of Subendu’s inscription of Bagh. He concluded that Harisena’s rule must have ended by 478 AD as he identified Subendu with Viṣruta Kumāra of Daśakumārīcarita. It may be noted that if any inscription is discovered which records Hariṣeṇa’s rule beyond 478 AD, then, Walter Spink’s contentions will have no meaning. However, so far no inscription has come to light mentioning Hariṣeṇa’s date. Besides there is complete disregard to a relationship between the Vidarbha sculptures and Ajanta.

Stern, on the other hand, divides the excavations into three phases primarily on the basis of typological variation of columns. According to his divisions:

Period I- caves 11,15 and lower 6.

Period II- caves 16,4, 7 & 17.
Period III- caves 19,21,1.

Period IV- Caves No.20, 21, 23, 24 & 26.

Stern followed a longer chronology for the Mahāyāna excavations. However, one may agree, that caves No.11, and 15 are of earlier groups, but cave No.7 cannot be placed as an earlier excavation where as caves 17, 19 and 20 can not be divided into different groups because-- i) the shrine chamber of cave 7 has not only a single Buddha image but also attendants are carved along with it and other Buddha images are carved on either walls of shrine chamber. They are stylistically later than caves No.11 and 15 but more close to caves 17 and 20 shrine images. ii) caves No. 19 is a part of the whole complex of caves No.17 to 20 which were patronised by a local king Upendragupta. iii) The typological grouping based on decoration cannot be taken as an adequate criterion for dating of cave monuments as decorative motifs keep appearing and disappearing, and they are sometimes followed with an interruption.

Wayne Begley\textsuperscript{140} on the other hand, assigned nearly 150 years for the development of the Mahāyāna cave excavations at Ajanta. He divides the cave into four groups:--

Group I-11,7 and lower 6.

Group II-16,17,14,15 and 5.

Group III-1,2,19 and 20.

Group IV-26, 21, 23, and 14.

Begley assigned caves of group IV around 575, which is based on the palaeographic considerations of inscription on cave 26 and thus dated the latest cave group to the last quarter of the 6\textsuperscript{th} century AD. He also emphasised on the details of ghata-pallava motifs. However, his dating of group-IV is not a viable proposition as there is total disregard for the various conventions of the artisans, which were being used for long. Besides the fully developed ghata-pallava motif has a logical growth within the Ajanta cave itself. Before
it is used as full-fledged motifs for the exterior decoration of the vihāras, it has also been used on a small scale perhaps as an experiment to judge its visual understanding/impression in Ajanta cave No.19.

To explain the iconographic programmes of Ajanta caves, Sheila Weiner attempted to uncover the origins of Ajanta, the religious and artistic tradition from which it was derived and within which it functioned. While discussing these set of questions, an attempt has been made to relate the iconographic and visual elements at Ajanta in their sequence of development with other sites along with development of Buddhism. It is interesting to note that Weiner started with Vākātaka political history and then moved back to the Sātavāhanas and Ikṣavākus and Ābhiras. She concluded from inscriptive evidences of the Hinayāna caves that the region had proto-Mahāyāna Buddhism and there was a wide spread contact with the Krīśnā valley region. Weiner neither put forth any specific date nor explained on the basis of visual imagery the transition from the Hinayāna to Mahāyāna cave sculpture and architecture.

While discussing the evolution of the Mahāyāna caitya-vihāras, Weiner traced the development from Nasik, Mahad, Kuda, Bagh, Hadda and Nagarjunakonda as external influences. Further she placed Hadda, Nagarjunakonda and Bagh as precedents to Ajanta and the vihāra plans (at Ajanta) have been derived from these centres. She observes that the concept of shrine antechamber is derived from Bagh and Nagarjunakonda. Commenting on the nature of Buddha images, Weiner emphasised that the influences reached Ajanta for the development of Buddha images from Nagarjunakonda, Amaravati, Mathura and Sarnath via Sanchi. According to her, the façade of cave 19 is derived from the design of the drum-slabs of Nagarjunakonda. The observation is based solely to see the external sources for Ajanta’s development. In sculpture, Weiner observes ‘a general reductive urge in form’. She further argues that shrines with a Buddha image engaged against the rear wall precede those with circumambulatory passage around the image, and that the antechamber associated with the former shrine type is an early feature, later to be eliminated. Similarly Weiner uses the inscriptive evidence to set forth the line of
development by accepting date of Subandhu copper plate of Bagh to the Kalachuri-çedi era.¹⁴²

However, it may be observed that Weiner's contention to trace the external source of influences for the development of Ajanta cave shrines seems to be very imaginative as the shrine-antechamber is developed at Kuda rock-cut excavations of the Hinayāna Buddhism in western Deccan. Further, the integration of śūpa with the image worship also may be observed at Kanheri as well as at Anakapalle in Andhra Pradesh. On the other hand, cave 19 façade of Ajanta has to be seen in the tradition of cave excavations in the region and has to be correlated to Bedsa, Karla, Kanheri and Nasik façade designs. As for the evolutionary sequence of the shrine Buddha image against the rear wall and image with circumambulatory path is concerned, it is difficult to arrive at such an evolutionary sequence. For example, cave No.11 and caves No.16 and 17 have a circumambulatory path. The former is earlier than the latter two caves. (This will be discussed later).

Weiner reads the inscriptions at Ajanta and Ghatotkacha very differently. In fact she accepts the translation of inscriptions as is suggested by V.V. Mirashi.¹⁴³ According to her, the vihāra of Ghatotkacha mentions only the name of Hariśeṇa, whereas cave 17 of Ajanta mentions Harisena as prince and cave 16 of Ajanta mentions Hariśeṇa as king (as per the translations of Mirashi) and thus, there is a chronological sequence from Ghatotkacha to Ajanta 17 and then to 16. She further adds that palaeographically the inscription of Subendhu is earlier to the inscription of cave 16. The whole chronological sequence is based on the misreading of the inscriptions. Inscription in cave No.17 does not mention Hariśeṇa as prince at all, it says 'paripalayati kṣhitindrachandre Hariśeṇa hitkāriṇi prajaśām'. At the same time, there is no doubt that the caves of Bagh are earlier to those of some of the caves of Ajanta as is suggested by copper-plate inscription of Subendhu and more over Bagh caves have stupas in the shrines and not the Buddha images like those at Ajanta. The Buddha images are carved in shrine antechamber at Bagh. Both Weiner and Spink agree that the pralambopādasana images at Ajanta are late images. Weiner¹⁴⁴ further adds that cave No.16 of Ajanta must have been executed after AD 493 on the following grounds: -- i) inscription on cave No.16 records Hariśeṇa's so
called conquest in which, Trīkūṭaka is also mentioned; ii) the region must have been conquered after 493 AD as Kanheri copper plate records year 245 of Trīkūṭakas (which is considered in Kalchuri-Cedi era); iii) and she accepts the date of Hariṣeṇa from 475 to 500 or 525 AD, thus supported the longer chronology. Weiner does not discuss the later groups such as from cave No.21 onwards. Nevertheless, her discussion on the Mahāyāna Buddhism is a significant contribution although it has metaphysical overtone. Weiner fails to see the development within the region and also the sculpture style of the Vidarbha, which has lot of affinity with the late fifth century AD Ajanta sculptures.

Very recently Weiner attempted to link the tradition of western Indian caves with the Nubian caves in spite of the difference of almost 600 to 700 years between the two and their geographic distance.145

It is Joanna Williams146 who dismissed any link between the workshops of Ajanta and Gupta areas and observed no relationship between the designs of doorways of the Gupta temple and caves of Ajanta. Williams also adds that there is no depiction of river goddess at Ajanta except in cave No.20 where a female is shown seated on the tortoise and until Ellora cave No.21 the river goddess in the western Deccan is not clearly defined i.e. either with the tortoise or crocodile. Thus one has to see development at Ajanta as internal i.e. local context, and external i.e. with regional context. This needs to be situated in the larger context of the development of western Deccan caves, especially the development in Kanheri and Kondivite caves, which will be discussed at length in this work.

The aesthetic beauty of Aurangabad cave sculpture was recorded by Amita Ray in 1963.147 Deborah Brown Levin148 attempted a stylistic analysis. She observed that the Aurangabad caves preserved the anatomy of transition:- caves belonging to the earlier Mahāyāna Buddhist world (the world of Ajanta) side by side with caves belonging to the later post-Gupta period (i.e. the “Hindu” world of Ellora and Elephanta). She drew a close line between the Aurangabad caves and the late Mahāyāna caves of Ajanta. In her analysis, Levine sees a consistency in the development of the shrine antechamber imageries from Ajanta to Aurangabad and Ellora. Levin also observed that in the
paintings of the *Boddhisattva* Padmapani and Vajrapani on either side of the entrance of the shrine-chamber or antechamber at Ajanta are replaced by the images of the Avalokitesvara and the Maitreya Boddhisattvas and later a panel of the Avalokiteśvara, is shown with the female consorts. However Levin does not offer any explanation for such a change. Her article remains a mere description of caves.

Marilyn Edwards Leese worked on the *Mahayana* excavations of Kanheri.\(^{149}\) It is a good documentation on the *Mahayana* caves. Her interpretation follows the frame work of Spink’s and assigns the *Mahayana* activity to the rise of the Traikutaka dynasty. More recently, the proceedings of Ajanta Seminar have been published.\(^{150}\) Various aspects of Ajanta have been discussed. Walter Spink sticks to his chronology and defends it. On the other hand, Khandawala opposes it. Works on Ajanta paintings show better understanding of the pictorial devices that are employed by the artisans. For instance, Dr. Upadhyay extensively used the gestalt psychology theories for the analysis of paintings through the *Kṣyavriddhi* principle (diminution and augmentation), Ratan Parimoo used the method of narrative structure and explained the story of *Vidhura Paṇḍita Jātaka*. In the same collected works, Suresh Vasant identified the images of Diparzkar Buddha and its association with the episodes of life of the Buddha.

The above review shows that initially documentation marked the studies of the caves. Later the focus shifted to the problem of chronology, and patronage was viewed in the context of the political dynasty, disregarding the nature of patronage and its relationship with the architectural and sculptural language. The sources for the development of the *Mahayana* caves have been seen outside western Deccan because of the accepted notion that the *Mahayana* rock-cut cave activity began in fifth century AD. The transition in the region to the *Mahayana* caves from that of the *Hinayana* cave tradition needs to be seen within the context of the regional development. Several questions such as the influence of Ramtek and Mandhal style of sculptures in the Vidarbha region on Ajanta sculptures, the concept of the shrine images, the program of the shrine antechamber, the pictorial vocabulary as developed by the artisans, application of skill of artisans, the way the *Mahayana* sites in western Deccan became epicentres of
cave activity in relation to the existing sites need to be examined in order to get a fresh look at the Mahāyāna caves of Western Deccan. The present work is an attempt to answer the above question with the help of sculptural and architectural language, and available inscriptional evidences.

NOTES

2. Ibid p.1-40
3. Ibid. p- 107.
4. Ibid. p- 131.
5. Ibid p- 141.
7. See Fergusson and J. Burgess, *The Cave Temples of India*, 1880 pp. XIV.
10. Fergusson and J. Burgess 1880 cpcit.
12. Ibid p- 166.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. See *Archaeology Survey of Western India*, vol. I, IV, V, IX.
19. *Archaeology Survey of Western India*, vol.-IV.
20. I bid pp. 70-81.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. See Archaeology Survey of Western India series.
26. 1912, Appendix to Epigraphia Indica vol.X.
27. 1972, Early Buddhist Rock Temples: A Chronological Study.
28. 1981 Buddhist Architecture of Western India.
1989 ‘Junnar Inscription’ Bulletin of Deccan College Post-Graduate Research Institute Vol. XL.
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32. Sirkar D.C. in The Age of Imperial Unity, ed. by Majumdar R.C.
37. Gopalchari, in A comprehensive History of India and by N. Shastri
38. Smith V. – Early History of India, 1904.
40. Mirashi V. V. Satvahana Ani Paschim Kshatrapa Yancha Itihas Ani Koriv Lekh, ( Marathi), 1979, Mumbai.
41. 1981, Nagaraju S. Buddhist Architecture Of Western India.
42. Dehejia, opcit.
43. Nagaraju S. opcit.
44. Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol-IV, V.
45. The Buddhist Settlement Of Western India, PhD thesis submitted to Bombay University in 1942.


51. I bid.p-207.

52. Havel E.B. *The Ideals of Indian Art*, London 1911, and *Indian Sculpture and Painting* 1908.

53. See Coomaraswamy A. K. *The Transformation of nature in Indian Art*.

54. ‘*History of Indian and Indonesian art*’ published in 1927.

55. *Indian Sculpture*, 1933.

56. Ibid. see preface.

57. I bid p. 36.

58. I bid p. 43.


60. Ibid.p-20.

61. Ibid.p-19

62. Ibid.p-35.

63. The Rock-cut caves of Pithakhora, in *Ancient India* XV pp. 63-93.


67. I bid.

68. Ibid.


71. I bid p. 149.

72. I bid p. 76.

73. I bid pp. 149-185.

74. I bid p. 133-134.

75. I bid See Preface.

76. I bid pp. 149-185.

77. I bid pp. 135-147.

78. I bid.
82. *Artibus Asia* XXXII pp. 49-88.
83. *Buddhist Architecture of Western India*, 1981.
84. Ibid pp. 47-50.
85. Ibid. p. 65.
86. Ibid. pp. 108-110.
87. Ibid. p. 313.
90. Suresh Vasant Jadhav, 'A Little Known Chaitya Hall At Junnar', in *Art Orientalis*, vol. XVI, pp. 103-10.
91. *Late Hinayana Caves of Western India*, Pune 1984.
92. Ibid. p. 165.
94. See Ray Niharajan, *Maurya and Sunga Art*.
95. I am specifically referring to her work Vaisnava Iconography, in Tamil Country; although number of researches have been made in the field of Iconography especially by Gopinath Rao, Banerjee and Kalpan Desai but the importance of this work lies in the fact that Iconography is not viewed merely as decoding the signs but how the signs are evolved by the social and cultural process where the codes of recognition of a particular sign is not merely reflection of the religious prescription of the image but it is beyond the periphery of the prescription where the relationship is seen with the existing ideas, which formulated particular norms and the very functioning of such norms in the society through the visual codes, also see 'Iconographic Programme and Political Imagery in Early Medieval Tamilakam: The Rajasimhesvara and the Rajesvara' in *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization*, Gen. Editor D. P. Chattopadhyaya, VOL. VI, part-3- Indian Art: Forms, Concerns and Development in Historical Perspective, Ed. B. N. Goswamy( in association with Kavita Singh), Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, pp-217-240, 222.
100. Burgess and Fergusson, *Cave Temples of India*, 1880.


102. Burgess opcit 1880.

103. Ibid.

104. Burgess opcit 1883.


106. See ASWI, vol. IV.

107. Ibid.


111. A Survey of Painting in the Deccan, Hyderabad; Archaeological Department 1937, later reproduced in *The Selected writings of Stella Kramrisch*, Ed. by Barabara Miller Stoller 1986.


115. 1880, Burgess, opcit p-20.


117. Ibid. and also see his subsequent works especially the more recent works.


119. See Mirashi opcit.

120. ‘Ajanta and Ghatotkacha: Preliminary Analysis’ in *Ars Orientalis* in vol. VI, 1966 pp. 135-156.

121. opcit


123. Ibid.

124. The dates are suggested by M.K. Dhavalikar, opcit.

125. See *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. XXXVII part I pp. 1-4, 1967, ‘Date of Hisse Borala Inscription of Devsena, saka 458 AD.


128. Opcit.

129. See Mirashi V.V. *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* on IV pp-25-32 Surat plate.

130. Opcit.
134. See Karl Khandalwai- ‘The dating of Ajanta Cave No.16,17, 19,20, 1,2, and 26’ in Ratan Parimoo & others (Eds.) The Art of Ajanta opcit 1991 and also see Maharashtra Pathik Vol. No.2 No.1 September 1990 pp. 389-397.
135. Personal communication.
136. See Samshodhak (Marathi) 1991; and ‘The Datings of Ajanta Caves’ in Maharashtra Pathik, opcit.
138. See Maharashtra Pathik vol. 3 No.4 July 1992 pp. 16-25.
139. cf. Joonna Williams opcit.
140. Ibid.
143. opcit.
144. opcit, 1977.
145. see her essay in The Art of Ajanta (Eds.) Ratan Parimoo and others, op. cit.
146. Jonna William op. cit.
150. see Ratan Parimoo and others (Eds.) op.cit.