CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE MONUMENTS
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**Taj Mahal:**

The Taj Mahal, derived from a Persian word and ultimately from an Arabic word, means "The Crown of Palaces". The construction began around 1632 and was completed around 1653, employing thousands of artisans and craftsmen. The **Taj Mahal** is a mausoleum located in Agra, Uttar Pradesh, India. It was built in the 17th century by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his third wife, Mumtaz Mahal. The Taj Mahal is widely recognized as "the jewel of Muslim art in India and one of the universally admired masterpieces of the world's heritage".

Taj Mahal is regarded by many as the finest example of Mughal architecture, a style that combines elements from Islamic, Persian, Ottoman Turkish and Indian architectural styles. The mesmerizing beauty of the Taj Mahal has captivated people for centuries.

In 1983, the Taj Mahal was declared a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** and cited as one of the universally admired masterpieces of the world's heritage. It is acknowledged as 'one of the Seven Wonders of the modern World'.

**Construction:**

The construction began around 1632 and was completed around 1653, employing more than 20,000 labourers for 20 years. Architects, calligraphers, and stone masons were appointed from all over the country and from places as far as Persia. The construction of the Taj Mahal was entrusted to a board of architects under imperial supervision, including Abd ul-Karim Ma’mur Khan, Makramat Khan, and Ustad Ahmad Lahauri. Lahauri is generally considered to be the principal designer.

During the reign of Shah Jahan, the mausoleum was known simply as the rauza (the tomb) and was only later called the Taj Mahal. The Taj Mahal sits on a platform surrounded by four minarets. It is flanked by two (almost) identical structures - a **Masjid** (mosque) to the west and a **Mehman Khana** (guest house) to the east.

The Taj Mahal incorporates and expands on design traditions of Persian architecture and earlier Mughal architecture. Specific inspiration came from successful Timurid and Mughal buildings including; the **Gur-e Amir** (the tomb of Timur, progenitor of the Mughal dynasty, in Samarkand), Humayun's Tomb, **Itimad-Ud-Daulah's Tomb** (sometimes called the Baby Taj), and Shah Jahan's
own Jama Masjid in Delhi. While earlier Mughal buildings were primarily constructed of red sandstone, Shah Jahan promoted the use of white marble inlaid with semi-precious stones, and buildings under his patronage reached new levels of refinement.

The Entrance:

The original entrance to the Taj, the darwaza-i-rauza, is a detached gateway, a distinct feature of Islamic architecture. Rising to three storeys, it is a four-walled, red sandstone forecourt. On either side of the gateway are several rooms and halls, with the ceilings and walls decorated with elaborate geometric designs.

The darwaza-i-rauza is aligned with the main mausoleum in such a manner that it provides a picture-perfect view of the mausoleum and its four minarets. The Taj Mahal also displays “line symmetry”, which means that the mausoleum and minarets are perfectly reflected in the lotus pool in front of it. The four chhatris that flank the central dome serve to balance the height of the dome.

Naubat Khana:

On entering the complex, two Naubat Khanas (Music Galleries) can be seen on the right and left, merging into the outer garden walls. In 1982, the Naubat Khana on the left was converted into a museum with three galleries. On display are Mughal miniature paintings, manuscripts, government decrees, and specimens of calligraphy, utensils, and arms.

Charbagh:

In Islam, four is the holiest of all numbers—most arrangements of the Taj are based on that number or its multiples. The charbagh (char means “four” and bagh means “garden”) style is a distinctive feature of Mughal, Arabic, and Persian architecture. Babur, the first Mughal emperor, introduced the charbagh. Complete the para from page 244 from the book.

Lotus Pool:

Like the charbagh, the lotus pool, too, is divided into quarters by shallow canals of water, lined by wide walkways. These are further divided into smaller quarters by broad causeways. Water is brought
to the waterways and the pool through underground copper pipes from the Yamuna. The pool contains five fountains and its corners are decorated with floral designs. In 1907, Lord Curzon added a marble bench on each side. This is a particularly popular setting for tourists who wish to be photographed with the Taj as a backdrop.

**Foundation and Plinth:**

The foundation of the Taj Mahal was laid on a solid base to support its massive weight. Workers were made to dig till they reached the water level and then the space was filled with lime mortar and stone. The red sandstone platform was constructed on this foundation, which takes the weight of the marble plinth (upon which the mausoleum and minarets rest), the Masjid, and the Mehman Khana.

**Marble Plinth:**

The secondary square plinth, about 95m (300ft) long, is centred on the red sandstone base. It is faced entirely with marble. This plinth supports the mausoleum and the minarets. Decorative motifs are minimal yet elegant—the base of the plinth is decorated with simple floral carvings, which also appear on the white marble cladding of the mausoleum.

**Central Doorway:**

The frame of the mausoleum’s main pishtaq, the vaulted entrance, is decorated with an inscription of a Quranic verse in the Thuluth script (a style of Islamic calligraphy). The triangular portions on either side of the arch are filled with an inlaid mirror-symmetrical pattern in pietra dura. The arch of the frame is outlined with rope-like mouldings. At the pishtaq’s highest point is a linear floral pattern in pietra dura that runs between two pilasters (shallow rectangular columns). This design of an arch within a rectangle has been used repeatedly in the complex to emphasize symmetry.

**Pishtaqs:**

The main pishtaq is flanked by smaller pishtaqs. The arched alcoves at the corners of the tomb. The pishtaq arches incorporate the calligraphy that decorates the tomb. It utilises bas-relief and pietra dura inlaid decorations with floral motifs. The vaulted ceilings and walls have elaborate geometric designs, like those found in the other sandstone buildings of the complex.
Tomb

The tomb is the central focus of the entire complex of the Taj Mahal. This large, white marble structure stands on a square plinth and consists of a symmetrical building with an iwan (an arch-shaped doorway) topped by a large dome and finial. Like most Mughal tombs, the basic elements are Persian in origin.

The base structure is essentially a large, multi-chambered cube with chamfered corners, forming an unequal octagon that is approximately 55 meters (180 ft) on each of the four long sides. On each of these sides, a huge pishtaq, or vaulted archway, frames the iwan with two similarly shaped, arched balconies stacked on either side. This motif of stacked pishtaqs is replicated on the chamfered corner areas, making the design completely symmetrical on all sides of the building. Four minarets frame the tomb, one at each corner of the plinth facing the chamfered corners.

Majestic Dome:

The dome of the Taj derives its shape both from Hindu temple design and Persian Timurid architecture.

The marble dome that surmounts the tomb is the most spectacular feature. Its height of around 35 metres (115 ft) is about the same as the length of the base, and is accentuated as it sits on a cylindrical "drum" which is roughly 7 metres (23 ft) high. Because of its shape, the dome is often called an onion dome or amrud (guava dome). The top is decorated with a lotus design, which also serves to accentuate its height. The shape of the dome is emphasised by four smaller domed chattris (kiosks) placed at its corners, which replicate the onion shape of the main dome. Their columned bases open through the roof of the tomb and provide light to the interior. Tall decorative spires (guldastas) extend from edges of base walls, and provide visual emphasis to the height of the dome.

Chhatris:

Four octagonal chhatris flank the main dome of the mausoleum. They replicate the design of the dome in miniature, complete with the inverted lotus motif and a gilded finial, and serve to balance the extraordinary height of the dome. They also echo the design of the chhatris on the four minarets.
**Portal Finials:**

Tall, minaret-like finials rise from the sides of the arched portals and openings on the Taj Mahal’s facade. Ageometric, herringbone pattern in black-and-white marble adorns each of these slender structures, which are capped by a marble guldasta (bouquet) and a brass finial.

The main finial was originally made of gold but was replaced by a copy made of gilded bronze in the early 19th century. The finial is topped by a moon, a typical Islamic motif whose horns point heavenward. Because of its placement on the main spire, the horns of the moon and the finial point combine to create a trident shape, reminiscent of traditional Hindu symbols of Shiva.

**Minarets:**

Four detached minarets flank the mausoleum, one at each corner of the plinth. They frame the mausoleum, highlighting the perfect symmetry of the Taj Mahal. Each of these is more than 47m (154ft) tall and is topped with a chhatri, which is supported by multi-cusped into three equal parts by two balconies that ring the tower.

They were designed as working minarets—a traditional element of mosques, used by the muezzin to call the Islamic faithful to prayer. Each minaret is effectively divided into three equal parts by two working balconies that ring the tower. At the top of the tower is a final balcony surmounted by a chattri that mirrors the design of those on the tomb. The chattris all share the same decorative elements of a lotus design topped by a gilded finial.

**Funerary Chamber:**

The mausoleum of the Taj Mahal houses an octagonal chamber within which lie the marble cenotaphs of Mumtaz Mahal and Shah Jahan. The actual graves, in a dark crypt below, are closed to the public, the dome-shaped ceiling is decorated with pietra dura. Jaali screens fitted on the external walls allow natural light and air into the hall, the muted light lends an aura of serenity, heightened by the magical glow of the almost translucent marble. Each chamber wall is decorated with bas-relief, lapidary inlay (engraving with precious stones), and refined calligraphy panels, reflecting the design elements on the exterior. At the corners of the chamber are four octagonal rooms.
Screen:

The delicate marble screen that currently surrounds the cenotaphs of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal was set up in 1643 in place of the original gold-enamelled one. Each side of this octagonal screen is divided into three panels; only one opens into the cenotaph. All panels have been delicately carved and inlaid with semi-precious stones in extremely intricate detail, forming graceful vines, fruits, and flowers.

Crypt:

In accordance with Muslim tradition, which forbids elaborate decoration of graves, the actual graves of Mumtaz Mahal and Shah Jahan are laid in a relatively plain crypt beneath the chamber. The bodies are buried with their heads turned towards Mecca. Clad in marble, the crypt has an undecorated ceiling. The graves are lightly decorated as compared to the highly embellished cenotaphs on upper storey.

Calligraphy:

The calligraphy was created by a calligrapher named Abd ul-Haq, in 1609. Shah Jahan conferred the title of “Amanat Khan” upon him as a reward for his “dazzling virtuosity”. Near the lines from the Qur’an at the base of the interior dome is the inscription, “Written by the insignificant being, Amanat Khan Shirazi.” Much of the calligraphy is composed of florid Thuluth script, made of jasper or black marble, inlaid in white marble panels. Higher panels are written in slightly larger script to reduce the skewing effect when viewed from below. The calligraphy found on the marble cenotaphs in the tomb is particularly detailed and delicate.

Exterior Decoration:

The exterior decorations of the Taj Mahal are among the finest in Mughal architecture. As the surface area changes the decorations are refined proportionally. The decorative elements were created by applying paint, stucco, stone inlays, or carvings. In line with the Islamic prohibition against the use of anthropomorphic forms, the decorative elements can be grouped into either calligraphy, abstract forms or vegetative motifs.
Throughout the complex, passages from the Quran are used as decorative elements. Recent scholarship suggests that the passages were chosen by Amanat Khan. The texts refer to themes of judgment and include:

Surah 36 - Ya Sin
Surah 39 - Az-Zumar The Crowds
Surah 48 - Al-Fath Victory
Surah 67 - Al-Mulk Dominion
Surah 77 - Al-Mursalat Those Sent Forth
Surah 81 - At-Takwir The Folding Up
Surah 82 - Al-Infitar The Cleaving Asunder
Surah 84 - Al-Inshiqaq The Rending Asunder
Surah 89 - Al-Fajr Daybreak
Surah 91 - Ash-Shams The Sun
Surah 93 - Ad-Dhuha Morning Light
Surah 94 - Al-Inshirah The Solace
Surah 95 - At-Teen The Fig
Surah 98 - Al-Bayyinah The Evidence
Surah 112 - Al-Ikhlas The Purity of Faith

Abstract forms are used throughout, especially in the plinth, minarets, gateway, mosque, jawab and, to a lesser extent, on the surfaces of the tomb. The domes and vaults of the sandstone buildings are worked with tracery of incised painting to create elaborate geometric forms. Herringbone inlays define the space between many of the adjoining elements. White inlays are used in sandstone buildings, and dark or black inlays on the white marbles. Mortared areas of the marble buildings have been stained or painted in a contrasting colour, creating geometric patterns of considerable complexity. Floors and walkways use contrasting tiles or blocks in tessellation patterns.
On the lower walls of the tomb there are white marble dados that have been sculpted with realistic bas relief depictions of flowers and vines. The marble has been polished to emphasise the exquisite detailing of the carvings and the dado frames and archway spandrels have been decorated with pietra dura inlays of highly stylised, almost geometric vines, flowers and fruits. The inlay stones are of yellow marble, jasper and jade, polished and levelled to the surface of the walls.
Masjid:

The Masjid (mosque) on the left of the Taj lies on the sandstone plinth. It is capped with three domes, the central dome being the largest.

The ceiling of the Masjid is decorated in the sgraffito technique (layers of plaster tinted in contrasting colours). A coat of red plaster is laid over a white one and floral designs are carved through the red layer, to appear in white. The floor of the mosque is patterned in outlines of 569 prayer mats in black marble. The Masjid has a mihrab (niche for prayers) in its qiblah wall (indicating the direction of Mecca). The Masjid’s basic design is similar to the other mosques built by Shah Jahan, Particularly thejama Masjid in Delhi.

Mehman Khana:

Identical in design to the Masjid, the Mehman Khana is also called the jawab (response) as it was built opposite the mosque to establish architectural balance in the complex. The red sandstone of the Masjid and Mehman Khana provide the perfect contrast to the white marble of the Taj Mahal. It is believed that the Mehman Khana was used to accommodate guests during Mumtaz Mahal’s urs (death anniversary).

Builders:

Some of the builders involved in the construction of the Taj Mahal are:

- **Ismail Afandi** (a.k.a. Ismail Khan) - had previously worked for the Ottoman Sultan and is regarded by some as the designer of the main dome.

- **Ustad Isa**, born either in Shiraz, Ottoman Empire or Agra - credited with a key role in the architectural design and main dome.

- **’Puru’** from Benar, Persia - has been mentioned as a supervising architect.

- **Qazim Khan**, a native of Lahore - cast the solid gold finial.

- **Chiranjilal**, a lapidary from Delhi - the chief sculptor and mosaicist.

- **Amanat Khan** from Shiraz, Iran - the chief calligrapher.

- **Muhammad Hanif** - a supervisor of masons.

- **Mir Abdul Karim** and** Mukkarimat Khan** of Shiraz - handled finances and management of daily production.
AGRA FORT

UNESCO World Heritage Monument, the Agra fort is located (270 10' 47" N & 7801" 22" (E) on the right bank of the river Yamuna in the city of Agra in Uttar Pradesh. The Agra Fort was originally a brick fort, held by the Hindu Sikanwar Rajputs. It was mentioned for the first time in 1080 AD when a Ghaznavide force captured it.

History:

After the First Battle of Panipat in 1526, Mughals captured the fort and seized a vast treasure, including the diamond later known as the Koh-i-Noor. The victorious Babur stayed in the fort in the palace of Ibrahim and built a baoli (step well) in it. The emperor Humayun was crowned here in 1530. Humayun was defeated at Bilgram in 1540 by Sher Shah. The fort remained with Suris till 1555, when Humayun recaptured it. The Hindu king Hem Chandra Vikramaditya, also called 'Hemu', defeated Humayun's army, led by Iskandar Khan Uzbek, and won Agra. Hemu got a huge booty from this fort and went on to capture Delhi from the Mughals. The Mughals under Akbar defeated King Hemu finally at the Second Battle of Panipat in 1556.

Realizing the importance of its central situation, Akbar made it his capital and arrived in Agra in 1558. His historian, Abdul Fazal, recorded that this was a brick fort known as 'Badalgarh'. It was in a ruined condition and Akbar had it rebuilt with red sandstone from Barauli area in Rajasthan. Architects laid the foundation and it was built with bricks in the inner core with sandstone on external surfaces. Some 4,000 builders worked on it dairy for eight years, completing it in 1573.

The 94-acre (380,000 m²) fort has a semicircular plan, its chord lies parallel to the river and its walls are seventy feet high. Double ramparts have massive circular bastions at intervals, with battlements, embrasures, machicolations and string courses. Four gates were provided on its four sides, one Khizri gate opening on to the river.

Two of the fort's gates are notable: the "Delhi Gate" and the 'Lahore Gate.' The 'Lahore Gate' is also popularly also known as the 'Amar Singh Gate' for Amar Singh Rathore.

The monumental Delhi Gate, which faces the city on the western side of the fort, is considered the grandest of the four gates and a masterpiece of Akbar's time. It was built circa 1568 both to enhance security and as the king's formal gate, and includes features related to both. It is embellished with inlay work in white marble. A wooden drawbridge was used to cross the moat and reach the gate from the mainland; inside, an inner gateway called Hathi Pol ("Elephant Gate") - guarded by two life-sized stone elephants with their
riders - added another layer of security. The drawbridge, slight ascent, and 90-degree return between the outer and inner gates make the entrance impregnable.

The site is very important in terms of architectural history. Abul Fazal recorded that five hundred buildings in the beautiful designs of Bengal and Gujarat were built in the fort. Some of them were demolished by Shahjahan to make way for his white marble palaces. Most of the others were destroyed by the British between 1803 and 1862 for raising barracks. Hardly thirty Mughal buildings have survived on the south-eastern side, facing the river. Of these, the Delhi Gate and Akbar Gate and one palace - "Bengali Mahal" - are representative Akbari buildings.

'Akbar Darwaza (Akbar Gate) was renamed Amar Singh Gate by the British.

An interesting mix of Hindu and Islamic architecture is found here. In fact, some of the Islamic decorations feature haraam (sinful) images of living creatures - dragons, elephants and birds, instead of the usual patterns and calligraphy seen in Islamic surface decoration.
FATEHPURSIKRI

Fatehpur Sikri is a city and a municipal board in Agra district in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India. The city was founded in 1569 by the Mughal emperor Akbar, and served as the capital of the Mughal Empire from 1571 to 1585. After his military victories over Chittor and Ranthambore, Akbar decided to shift his capital from Agra to a new location 23 miles (37 km) W.S.W (west south west) on the Sikri ridge, to honor the Sufi saint Salim Chishti. Here he commenced the construction of a planned walled city which took the next fifteen years in planning and construction of a series of royal palaces, harem, courts, a mosque, private quarters and other utility buildings. He named the city, Fatehabad, with Fateh, a word of Arabic origin in Persian, meaning "victorious." it was later called Fatehpur Sikri. It is at Fatehpur Sikri that the legends of Akbar and his famed courtiers, the nine jewels or Navaratnas, were born Fatehpur Sikri is one of the best preserved collections of Mughal architecture in India.

According to contemporary historians, Akbar took a great interest in the building of Fatehpur Sikri and probably also dictated its architectural style. Seeking to revive the splendours of Persian court ceremonial made famous by his ancestor Timur, Akbar planned the complex on Persian principles. But the influences of his adopted land came through in the typically Indian embellishments. The easy availability of sandstone in the neighbouring areas of Fatehpur Sikri also meant that all the buildings here were made of the red stone. The imperial Palace complex consists of a number of independent pavilions arranged in formal geometry on a piece of level ground, a pattern derived from Arab and central Asian tent encampments. In its entirety, the monuments at Fatehpur Sikri thus reflect the genius of Akbar in assimilating diverse regional architectural influences within a holistic style that was uniquely his own.

Fatehpur Sikri was included in the list of World Heritage Sites by UNESCO in the year 1986. Architecture of Fatehpur Sikri:

Fatehpur Sikri sits on rocky ridge, 3 kilometres (1.9 mi) in length and 1 km (0.62 miles) wide, and palace city is surrounded by a 6 km (3.7 miles) wall on three side with the fourth being a lake at the time. Its architect was Tuhir Das and was constructed using Indian principles. The buildings of Fatehpur Sikri show a synthesis of various regional schools of architectural craftsmanship such as Gujarat and Bengal. This was because indigenous craftsmen used for the construction of the buildings. Influences from Hindu and Jain architecture are seen hand in hand with Islamic elements. The building material used in all the buildings at Fatehpur Sikri, palace-city complex, is the locally quarried red sandstone, known as 'Sikri sandstone'. It is accessed through gates along the five-mile
long fort wall, namely, Delhi Gate, the Lai Gate, the Agra Gate, Birbal's Gate, Chandanpal Gate, The Gwalior Gate, the Tehra Gate, the Chor Gate and the Ajmere Gate.

**Some of the important buildings in this city, both religious and secular are:**

**Buland Darwaza:**

Set into the south wall of congregational mosque, the **Buland Darwaza** at Fatehpur Sikri, is 55 metre high, from the outside, gradually making a transition to a human scale in the inside. The gate was added some five years later after the completion of the mosque ca. 1576-1577 as an Victory arch, to commemorate Akbar’s successful Gujarat campaign. The central portico comprises three arched entrances, with the largest one, in the centre, is known locally as the Horseshoe Gate, after the custom of nailing horseshoes to its large wooden doors for luck. Outside the giant steps of the **Buland Darwaza** to the left is a deep well.

**Jama Masjid:**

It is a Jama Mosque meaning the congregational mosque, and was perhaps one of the first buildings to come up in the complex, as its epigraph gives AH 979 (A.D. 1571 -72) as the date of its completion, with a massive entrance to the courtyard, the Buland-Darwaza added some five years later. It was built in the manner of Indian mosques, with iwans around a central courtyard. A distinguishing feature is the row of chhatri over the sanctuary. There are three mihrabs in each of the seven bays, while the large central mihrab is covered by a dome, it is decorated with white marble inlay, in geometric patterns.

**Tomb of Salim Chishti:**

A white marble encased tomb of the Sufi saint, **Salim Chisti** (1478-1572), within the Jama Masjid’s sahn, courtyard. The single-storey structure is built around a central square chamber, within which is the grave of the saint, under an ornate wooden canopy encrusted with mother-of-pearl mosaic. Surrounding it is a covered passageway for circumambulation, with carved Jalis, stone pierced screens all around with intricate geometric design, and an entrance to the
south. The tomb is influenced by earlier mausolea of the early 15th century Gujarat Sultanate period. Other striking features of the tomb are white marble serpentine brackets, which support sloping eaves around the parapet. On the left of the tomb, to the east, stands a red sandstone tomb of Islam Khan I, son of Shaikh Badruddin Chisti and grandson of Shaikh Salim Chishti, who became a general in the Mughal army in the reign of Jahangir. The tomb is topped by a dome and thirty-six small domed chattris, and contains a number of graves, some unnamed, all male descendants of Shaikh Salim Chisti.

**Diwan-i-Aam:**

Diwan-i-Am or *Hall of Public Audience*, is a building typology found in many cities where the ruler meets the general public. In this case, it is a pavilion-like multi-bayed rectangular structure fronting a large open space, south west of the Diwan-i-Am and next to the [Image]

Turkish Sultana’s House stands Turkish Baths.

**Diwan-i-Khas:**
The Diwan-i-Khas, or *Hall of Private Audience*, is a plain square building with four chhatris on the roof. However it is famous for its central pillar, which has a square base and an octagonal shaft, both carved with bands of geometric and floral designs, further its thirty-six serpentine brackets support a circular platform for Akbar, which is connected to each corner of the building on the first floor, by four stone walkways. It is here that Akbar had representatives of different religions discuss their faiths and gave private audience.

**Ibadat Khana (House of Worship):**

It was a meeting house built in 1575 CE by the Mughal Emperor Akbar, where the foundations of a new Syncretistic faith, Din-e-Ilahi were laid by Akbar.

**Anup Talao:**

It is an ornamental pool with a central platform and four bridges leading up to it. Some of the important buildings of the royal enclave are surround by it including, Khwabgah (House of Dreams) Akbar’s residence, Panch Mahal, a five-storey palace, Diwan-i-Khas (Hall of Private Audience), Ankh Michauli and the Astrologer’s Seat, in the south-west corner of the Pachisi Court.

**Mariam-uz-Zamani’s Palace:**

The building of Akbar’s Rajput wives, including Mariam-uz-Zamani, shows Gujarati influence and is built around a courtyard, with special care being taken to ensure privacy.

**Naubat Khana:**

Also known as *Naqqar Khana* meaning a drum house, where musician used drums to announce the arrival of the Emperor. It is situated ahead of the Hathi Pol Gate or the Elephant Gate, the south entrance to the complex, suggesting that it was the imperial entrance.

**Pachisi Court:**

A square marked out as a large board game, the precursor to modern day Ludo game where people served as the playing pieces.
**Panch Mahal:**

This five-storeyed palace is also known as Badgir (Windcatcher) because its structure, with the storeys rising in decreasing sizes, is designed to cool the interiors. The building is remarkable for the varied designs of the columns, with motifs ranging from the *fleur-de-lis* (stylized flower) to the bell and chain. The ground floor contains 84 pillars, which incidentally, is an auspicious number for Hindus. The Panch Mahal is topped by a graceful *chhatri*, and was probably enclosed by perforated stone screens to veil the ladies of the court from public view.

**Ankh Michauli:**

It is said that the ladies of the harem played *ankh inchauli* (blind man’s buff) in this labyrinthine building, but its secret alcoves and deep wall recesses suggest that it may have been part of the imperial treasury.
Khwabghah:

Within the Khwabghah (Chamber of Dreams) life the private sleeping-quarters of the emperor, with an ingenious ventilating shaft. A secret room behind the Kitab Khana or library (that according to Abul Fazl housed 25,000 manuscripts), as well as the emperor’s chamber, still bear traces of painted murals in yellow and blue that once covered the walls.

Harem Sara:

A maze of interconnected buildings, the Harem Sara (Imperial Harem Complex) includes Jodha Bai’s Palace, Panch Mahal, Maryam ki Kothi, and Hawa Mahal. The heart of the complex, where the high-ranking women lived, was screened to the east from the Daulat Khana. Avast pillared structure near the palaces may have been an enclosure for elephants, horses, or camels, but was probably used as servants’ quarters.

Jodha Bai’s Pake:

The most conspicuous building in the Harem Sara is Jodha Bai’s Palace. It is conjectured that Jodha Bai was Akbar’s Hindu queen, but the palace was actually the residence of several of the emperor’s wives. Built in a fusion of Hindu and Islamic styles, it features graceful pavilions and enclosed balconies.

Turkish Sultana’s Pavilion:

This pavilion overlooking the Anoop Talao may have been used by Akbar’s Turkish queens. It is also known as ‘Superb Jewel Casket’ for its intricately carved verandah pillars with arabesque designs. The brackets are decorated with bell-shaped, floral, and herringbone carvings and display fine filigree workmanship.

Maryam ki Kothi:

Probably the residence of Hamida Banu Begum, Akbar’s mother (known as Maryam Makani, or ‘equal to Mary’), this two-storeyed kothi (house) was covered with frescoes, representing scenes from the Persian epic Hamza Nama, and gilt work, which is why it is also called the Sunehra Makan.
(Golden House). Stone eaves supported by heavy brackets encircle the palace, with carvings inspired by Hindu imagery from the Ramayana.

**Birbal’s House:**

In the north of the harem complex is Birbal’s House (a misnomer, since Birbal, Akbar’s favourite minister, did not live here). It was probably occupied by Akbar’s senior queens, Ruqayya Sultana Begum and Salima Sultana Begum, or by Birbal’s daughter, who was one of Akbar’s wives. A two-storeyed structure, it stands on a massive platform, with a pyramidal roof capping the porch. The interior is divided into three bays separated by ornate pilasters that bear a variety of arabesque and floral designs.

**Sangin Burj:**

Unique for its monumental outer arch, which proclaims the might of its builder by its size, the Sangin Burj (Massive Bastion) is a structure that, together with the Hathi Pol, forms the grand gateway to the harem complex. Made of red and buff sandstone covered with semi-circular patterns, the Burj is in an octagonal form. Combined with its arches, the whole effect is one of strength blended with elegance.

**Nagina Masjid:**

A private mosque for the ladies of the imperial harem, the Nagina (or Jewel) Masjid stands at the north of the harem complex. Divided into three bays by square pillars, it has niches ornamented with finely carved rosettes on the spandrels above the arches.

**Hawa Mahal:**

To the right of Jodha Bai’s palace is the Hawa Mahal, the Palace of Winds. A pavilion designed to catch the breeze, it is enclosed by square columns and exquisite stone screens that ensured privacy for the ladies of the harem. It overlooks a garden laid out in the chorbagh (quadrilateral garden) style, divided by channels.

**Quadrangular Courtyard:**

The spiritual focus of the vast quadrangular courtyard at the centre of the sacred complex (illustrated above) is Sheikh Salim Chishti’s dargah (shrine and tomb). The splendid Jama Masjid on
the west, the Buland Darwaza (Lofty Gateway) on the south, and the Badshahi Darwaza (Royal Gateway) on the east border this enclosure. An extensive area measuring 110 x 130m (320 x 425ft), it served as a namazgah (open-air prayer place). The entire sacred complex was planned and constructed as a mark of reverence to the saint.

**Jamat Khana:**

Enclosed by an elegant stone screen and an arcaded verandah, this square structure was once an assembly hall for Salim Chishti’s disciples and later, the tomb of his descendants. The doors have intricate relief carvings.

**Hiran Minar:**

Studded with stone projections resembling elephants’ tusks, the Hiran Minar (Deer Tower) is believed to be a memorial to Akbar’s favourite elephant, also called Hiran. It is a 22m (73ft) high tower, with rosettes ornamenting the spandrels of the arched doorway. Bordered by a stone panel and flanked by blind arches, the door leads to 53 steps that wind up to the top of the tower. Here, a panoramic vista stretches before the viewer.

**Stone Cutters’ Mosque:**

The oldest place of worship at Fatehpur Sikri, the Stone Cutters’ Mosque stands on the left of the Jama Masjid. Built in deep red sandstone by local quarrymen to honour Sheikh Salim Chishti, it shows slightly rough workmanship. Of the five bays, the central one has a richly cusped arch, where the saint would meditate, and behind it is an ornamented mihrab.

**Caravanserai:**

Building shelters for travellers passing through was considered the moral duty of a Muslim ruler, and caravanserais number in the thousands in India. Standing as a fortified enclosure with octagonal bastions at its corners, the Fatehpur Sikri caravanserai is very well preserved. The quadrangle is divided by a low terrace, in front of which is a water tank.
Rang Mahal:

This palace, now dilapidated, was constructed in 1569, before Akbar decided to shift his capital to Sikri. It is said that Akbar built it for his favourite queen Harkha, the mother of Prince Salim, who was born here. The eastern gate's wide archway displays cusps emerging from the mouths of small elephants. In one of the courtyards is a pair of tall twelve-sided columns with remarkable double capitals, the beautiful brackets shaped like the heads of horses. Stylized peacocks' tails adorn other columns of the palace.

Ajanta Caves:

The Ajanta Caves, located in Aurangabad near Jalgaon in the state of Maharashtra are about 30 rock-cut Buddhist cave monuments which date from the 2nd century BCE to about 480 or 650 CE. The caves include paintings and sculptures described by the government and the Archaeological Survey of India as “the finest surviving examples of Indian art, particularly paintings” which are masterpieces of Buddhist religious art, with figures of the Buddha and depictions of the Jataka tales. The caves were built in two phases starting around the 2nd century BCE, with the second group of caves built around 400–650 CE according to older accounts, or all in a brief period of 460 to 480 according to the recent proposals of Walter M. Spink. The site is a protected monument in the care of the Archaeological Survey of India, and since 1983, the Ajanta Caves have been a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The caves are generally agreed to have been made in two distinct periods, separated by several centuries.

Caves of the first (Satavahana) period:

The earliest group of caves consists of caves 9, 10, 12, 13 and 15A. According to Walter Spink, they were made during the period 100 BCE to 100 CE, probably under the patronage of the Satavahana dynasty (230 BCE - c. 220 CE) who ruled the region. Other datings prefer the period 300 BCE to 100 BCE, though the grouping of the earlier caves is generally agreed. Of these, caves 9 and 10 are stupa halls of chaitya-griha form, and caves 12, 13, and 15A areviharas. The first phase is still often called the Hinayana phase, as it originated when, using traditional terminology, the Hinayana or Lesser Vehicle tradition of Buddhism was dominant, when the Buddha was revered symbolically. However the use of the term Hinayana for this period of Buddhism is now deprecated by historians; equally the caves of the second period are now mostly dated too early to be properly called Mahayana, and do not yet show the full expanded cast of supernatural beings characteristic of that phase of Buddhist art. The first Satavahana period caves lacked figurative sculpture, emphasizing the stupa instead, and in the caves of the second period the overwhelming majority of images represent the Buddha alone, or narrative scenes of his lives.

Caves of the later, or Vakataka, period:

The second phase began in the 5th century. For a long time it was thought that the later caves were made over a long period from the 4th to the 7th centuries CE, but in recent decades a series of
studies by the leading expert on the caves, Walter M. Spink, have argued that most of the work took place over the very brief period from 460 to 480 CE, during the reign of Emperor Harishena of the Vakataka dynasty. The second phase is still often called the 'Mahayana' or the 'Greater Vehicle' phase.

According to Spink, the Ajanta Caves appear to have been abandoned by wealthy patrons shortly after the fall of Harishena, in about 480 CE. They were then gradually abandoned and forgotten. During the intervening centuries, the jungle grew back and the caves were hidden, unvisited and undisturbed, although the local population were aware of at least some of them.

Rediscovery:

On 28 April 1819, a British officer for the Madras Presidency, John Smith, of the 28th Cavalry, while hunting tiger, accidentally discovered the entrance to Cave No. 10 deep within the tangled undergrowth. There were local people already using the caves for prayers with a small fire, when he arrived. Exploring that first cave, long since a home to nothing more than birds and bats and other larger animals, Captain Smith vandalized the wall by scratching his name and the date, April 1819. Since he stood on a five-foot high pile of rubble collected over the years, the inscription is well above the eye-level gaze of an adult today. A paper on the caves by William Erskine was read to the Bombay Literary Society in 1822. Within a few decades, the caves became famous for their exotic setting, impressive architecture, and above all their exceptional, all but unique paintings. A number of large projects to copy the paintings were made in the century after rediscovery, covered below. In 1848 the Royal Asiatic Society established the "Bombay Cave Temple Commission" to clear, tidy and record the most important rock-cut sites in the Bombay Presidency, with John Wilson, as president. In 1861 this became the nucleus of the new Archaeological Survey of India. Until the Nizam of Hyderabad built the modern path between the caves, among other efforts to make the site easy to visit.

Paintings:

Mural paintings survive from both the earlier and later groups of caves. Several fragments of murals preserved from the earlier caves (Caves 9 and 11) are effectively unique survivals of court-led painting in India from this period, and "show the Satavahana times."

Four of the later caves have large and relatively well-preserved mural paintings which "have come to represent Indian mural painting to the non-specialist", and fall into two stylistic groups, with the most famous in Caves 16 and 17, and apparently later paintings in Caves I and 2. The paintings are in "dry fresco", painted on top of a dry plaster surface rather than into wet plaster.
Architecture:

The monasteries mostly consist of vihara halls for prayer and living, which are typically rectangular with small square dormitory cells cut into the walls, and by the second period a shrine or sanctuary at the rear centred on a large statue of the Buddha, also carved from the living rock. This change reflects the movement from Hinayana to Mahayana Buddhism. The other type of main hall is the narrower and higher chaitya hall with a stupa as the focus at the far end, and a narrow aisle around the walls, behind a range of pillars placed close together. Other plainer rooms were for sleeping and other activities. Some of the caves have elaborate carved entrances, some with large windows over the door to admit light. There is often a colonnaded porch or verandah, with another space inside the doors running the width of the cave.

The central square space of the interior of the viharas is defined by square columns forming a more or less square open area. Outside this are long rectangular aisles on each side, forming a kind of cloister. Along the side and rear walls are a number of small cells entered by a narrow doorway; these are roughly square, and have small niches on their back walls. Originally they had wooden doors. The centre of the rear wall has a larger shrine-room behind, containing a large Buddha statue. The viharas of the earlier period are much simpler, and lack shrines.

The four completed chaitya halls are caves 9 and 10 from the early period, and caves 19 and 26 from the later period of construction. All follow the typical form found elsewhere, with high ceilings and a central "nave" leading to the stupa, which is near the back, but allows walking behind it, as walking around stupas was (and remains) a common element of Buddhist worship (pradakshina).

Caves:

Cave 1:

Cave I was built on the eastern end of the horse-shoe shaped scarp, and is now the first cave the visitor. There are scenes carved from the life of the Buddha as well as a number of decorative motifs.

The squarish (35.7 x 27.6 m) monastery, consists of a hall sided by 14 cells, vestibule, sanctum sanctorum, an open verandah (19.5 X 2.82 X4.1 m) flanked by a cell on each side and a open courtyard with two cells on the sides, datable to 4th - 5th centuries AD.

There is a shrine carved on the rear wall to house an impressive seated image of the Buddha, his hands being in the dharmachakrapravartana mudra.

The two most famous individual painted images at Ajanta are the two over-life size figures of the protective bodhisattvas Padmapani and Vajrapani on either side of the entrance to the Buddha shrine on the wall of the rear aisle.
Besides it depicts Sibi, **Samkhapala, Mahajanaka, Maha-ummagga, Champeyya Jatakas** and the scene depicting temptation of Mara.

**Cave Two:**

Cave 2, adjacent to Cave 1, is known for the paintings that have been preserved on its walls, ceilings, and pillars. It looks similar to Cave 1 and is in a better state of preservation.

This **monastery** (35.7 x 21.6 m) consists of cells, sanctum sanctorum and two pillared sub-shrines datable to first of sixth century A.D.

The paintings on the ceilings and walls of this porch have been widely published. They depict the Jataka tales that are stories of the Buddha's life in former existences as Bodhisattva.

While the seated **Buddha** in dharmacakrapravartana mudra is enshrined in the sanctum, the side sub-shrines contain two **Yaksha** figures (popularly known as Sankhanidhi and Padmanidhi) to the east and Har'rti & her consort Pancikato the right.

**Cave 3:**

This is an incomplete **monastery** (10.08 x 8.78 m) and only the preliminary excavation of pillared verandah exists.

**Cave 4:**

This squarish **monastery** consists of a hall, sanctum sanctorum, pillared verandah and is datable to first half of sixth century A.D. This is the largest monastery at Ajanta measuring (35.08 x 27.65 m). The door frame is exquisitely sculpted flanking to the right is carved Bodhisattva as reliever of Eight Great Perils.

The sanctuary houses a colossal image of the **Buddha** in preaching pose flanked by bodhisattvas and celestial nymphs hovering above.

**Cave 5:**

This monastery (10.32 x 16.8 m) is an unfinished one. However, the richly carved door frame, and female figures on **makaras** are important ones.
Cave 49:

This is a double storeyed **monastery** (16.85 X 18.07 m) consisting of hall, sanctum sanctorum and a pillared hall in the lower storey and a hall with cells, subsidiary cells and sanctum sanctorum in the upper storey **Buddha** in preaching attitude is housed in both the shrines. The depiction of 'Miracle of Sravasti' and **Temptation of Mara** are the important paintings. Sculptural depiction of Buddha in various attitudes and postures can also be noticed here.

Cave 7:

This **monastery** (15.55 X 31.25 m) consists of a sanctum sanctorum, an oblong open hall with two small porticos supported by heavy octagonal pillars and eight cells. **Buddha** in preaching attitude is housed inside the sanctum. Other sculptural panels include 'Miracle of Sravasti', seated **Buddha** under the protection of **Nagamuchalinda**, etc.

Cave 8:

This is an unfinished **monastery** (15.24 X 24.64 m) at Ajanta, located at the lowest level and perhaps earliest among the monasteries. Major portion of the frontage has been swept away by a landslide.

Cave 9:

This apsidal **chaityagriha** (18.24 X 8.04 m) is datable to second century B.C. and belongs to the 'Hinayana' phase of Buddhism. The **chaityagriha** consists of an entrance door, two side windows, central hall, nave flanked by side aisles (pradikshana) on either side separated by a row of 23 pillars and a stupa, the object of worship.

The **chaityagriha** exhibits reproduction of wooden architectural styles, in the form of inward tapering octagonal pillars, evidence of fixing wooden beams & rafters, etc. The chaitya was in use during later period also as indicated by the sculptures of **Buddha** on the façade and side walls facing the court. Inside the chaitya is seen two layers of paintings, the earlier dating back to the second half of 1st century B.C. and the alter to 5th - 6th centuries A.D.
Cave 50

In April 1819, John Smith, a British Army Officer noticed the huge arch of this cave from the viewpoint which ultimately led to the discovery of Ajanta Caves. This cave is the earliest chaityagriha at Ajanta. A Brahmi inscription on the facade dated to the 2nd century B.C. reads Vasithiputa Kataladi🎃.

The cave (30.5 X 12.2 m) consists of a large central hall, nave flanked by two aisles (pradikshana) separated by a row of 39 octagonal pillars and a rock stupa at the apsidal end, the object of worship. The cave consists of two period of paintings, the earlier dated to 2nd century B.C and the later 4th - 6th century A.D. Two Jataka stories of this period have been identified, namely, the Sama (Shama) Jataka and the Chhaddanta Jataka. The later period paintings contain Buddha figures in various poses mainly over the pillars.

Cave 11:

This monastery (19.87 X 17.35 m) datable to beginning of fifth century A.D. consists of a hall with six cells and a long bench, a pillared verandah with four cells, a sanctum sanctorum. Buddha in preaching attitude is housed in the sanctum against an unfinished stupa. Few paintings that available here depicts Bodhisattvas, figures of Buddha, etc.

Cave 12:

This Hinayana monastery consists of a hall (14.9 X 17.82 m) the front wall is completely collapsed sided by twelve cells arranged on three sides. An inscription on the back wall of the monastery records the gift of this cave by one merchant 'Ghanamadada' and palaeographically datable to 2nd - 1st century B.C. perhaps slightly later than Cave 10. The cell frontage is decorated with chaitya window motifs above the door opening.
Cave 13:

This is a small monastery and belongs to the first phase. It consists of an astylar hall with seven cells on three sides. The cells are provided with rock-cut beds.

Cave 14:

This unfinished monastery (13.43 x 19.28 m) was excavated above Cave 13 at a higher level. It was originally planned on a large scale. The depiction of ‘sala bhanjikas’ on the top corners of doorway is beautifully depicted.

Cave 15:

The monastery (19.62 X 15.98 m) consists of an astylar hall with eight cells, an antechamber, sanctum sanctorum and a pillared verandah. The sculptural depictions include Buddha in various postures, seated Buddha on ‘simhasana’ inside the sanctum sanctorum. The traces of paintings indicate that it was originally painted.

Cave 15 A:

Smallest of all the excavations at Ajanta this cave consists of a small central astylar hall with one cell on three sides. The front wall had an inscription in shell characters (which is now lost). The hall is relieved with chaitya window pattern rising from vedica pattern.

Cave 16:

According to an inscription found here, the excavation of this cave was caused by Varahadeva, the minister of Vakataka king Harishena (circa A.D. 475-500). The cave (19.5 X 22.25 X 4.6 m) which is a monastery consists of a central hall surrounded by 14 cells on three sides, vestibule and a sanctum for Buddha image. The important painted themes depicted are the conversion of Nanda; Miracle of Sravasti; Maya’s dream; and certain incidents from the life of Buddha. The
Jataka stories depicted are Hasti, Maha-ummagga, Maha-sutasoma. Painted inscriptions can also be noted inside the caves.

Cave 17:

A Brahmi inscription found here records the excavation of this cave by a feudatory prince under Vakataka king Harishena. This monastery (34.5 X 25.63 m) consists of a spacious hall surrounded by 17 cells on three sides, a vestibule and a sanctum containing the image of Buddha. The cave houses some of the well preserved paintings of the Vakataka age that includes Vessantara Jataka (right of door), a huge and gigantic wheel representing the Wheel of Life; flying apsara (to left of door), subjugation of Nalagiri (a wild elephant) by Buddha at Rajagriha, Buddha preaching to a congregation. The Jatakas depicted here are Chhaddanta, Mahakapi (in two versions), Hasti, Hamsa, Vessantara, Maha-Sutasoma, Sarabha-miga, Machchha, Mati-posaka, Sama, Mahisa, Valahass, Sibi, Ruru and Nigrodhamiga.

Cave 18:

This consists of a rectangular excavation (3.38 X 11.66 m) leading into another cell. The hall has two pillars with moulded bases and octagonal shafts.

Cave 19:

This chaityagriha (16.05 X 7.09 m) is datable to fifth century A.D. and could be the gandhakuti. The stupa is carved with a standing image of Buddha.

This cave is known for it sculptural grandeur of the facade and particularly the two life size Yaksha images on either sides of the chaitya vatayana (arch). The hall has painted depictions of Buddha in various postures.

Cave 20:

A pillar less monastery consists of hall (16.2 X 17.91 m) cells, sanctum sanctorum and a pillared verandah datable between A. D. 450 and 525. A Brahmi inscription in the verandah records the gift of the mandapa by one Upendra. Buddha in preaching attitude is housed in the sanctum. The sculpture of seven Buddhas accompanied by attendants is another important sculptural panel in this cave.

This monastery (28.56 X 28.03 m) consists of a hall with twelve pillars and twelve cells on three sides, sanctum sanctorum, pillared verandah (pillar’s restored now). Out of 12 cells four are with pillared porches. The sanctum house seated Buddha in preaching attitude. Trace of paintings are noticed which consist of a panel depicting Buddha preaching a congregation.
Cave 21:

This monastery (28.56 X 28.03 m) consists of a hall with twelve pillars and twelve cells on three sides, sanctum sanctorum, pillared verandah (pillars restored now). Out of 12 cells four are with pillared porches. The sanctum house seated Buddha in preaching attitude. Trace of paintings are noticed which consist of a panel depicting Buddha preaching a congregation.

Cave 22:

This monastery (12.72 X 11.58 m) consists of an astyler hall four unfinished cells, sanctum sanctorum and a narrow verandah. Buddha seated in prakanta paddana is carved on the back wall of the shrine. The sculptural depiction of Buddha in different forms, painted figures of Manushya Buddhas with Maitreya can be noticed here.

Cave 23:

This is an unfinished monastery (28.32 X 22.52 m) and consists of an astyler hall, sanctum sanctorum, antechamber & side cells and a pillared verandah. The cave is known for the rich decoration of pillars and pilasters and the naga doorkeepers.

Cave 24:

This is an incomplete monastery (29.3 X 29.3 m) and second largest excavation at Ajanta after Cave 4. The plan consists of a hall with pillared verandah and sanctum sanctorum. A chapel with pillared porch is excavated outside the verandah. The sanctum houses a seated Buddha in prakambapadasana.

Cave 25:

This monastery (11.37 X 12.24 m) consists of an astyler hall, pillared verandah and an enclosed courtyard and excavated at a higher level. Two cells are noted on the left end of the verandah and the hall has no cells. The hall is devoid of shrine.
Cave 26:

This chaityagriha is quite similar to Cave 19, but of a larger dimension (25.34 × 11.52 m) and more elaborately and exquisitely provided with sculpted figures.

The chaityagriha consists of a hall, side aisles (pradikshana) and a rock-cut stupa front by an image of Buddha. The façade, the inner pillars, the triforium (between pillars and roof arch), aisles side walls are extensively carved with images and decorative designs. However, the most striking and prominent image is that of Mahaparinirvana of Buddha on the right aisle wall and the assault of Mara during Buddha's penance adorns the same wall.

Cave 27:

This could have been part of Cave 26 and it consists of two storeys, the upper one partially collapsed. The monastery consists of a hall with four cells, antechamber and sanctum sanctorum. Buddha in teaching attitude is housed inside the sanctum.

Cave 28:

This is an unfinished monastery of which only the pillared verandah was excavated.

Cave 29:

This is an unfinished chaityagriha (22.8 × 12.84 m) in its first stage of excavation and located at the highest level, located between Caves 20 and 21.
ELLORA CAVES

The Ellora caves, locally known as 'Verul Leni' is located on the Aurangabad-Chalisgaon road at a distance of 30 km north-northwest of Aurangabad, the district headquarters. The name Ellora itself inspires everyone as it represents one of the largest rock-hewn monastic-temple complexes in the entire world. Ellora is also world famous for the largest single monolithic excavation in the world, the great Kailasa (Cave 16).

The Ellora Caves were recognized as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in the year 1983.

Ellora represents the epitome of Indian rock-cut architecture. The 34 "caves" are actually structures excavated out of the vertical face of the Charanandri hills. Buddhist, Hindu and Jain rock-cut temples and viharas and mathas were built between the 5th century and 10th century. The 12 Buddhist (caves 1-12), 17 Hindu (caves 13-29) and 5 Jain (caves 30-34) caves, built in proximity, demonstrate the religious harmony prevalent during this period of Indian history. It is a protected monument under the Archaeological Survey of India.

The caves are hewn out of the volcanic basaltic formation of Maharashtra, known as 'Deccan Trap', the term trap being of Scandinavian origin representing the step like formation of the volcanic deposits

**Etymology:**

Ellora, also called Verula or Elura, is the name form of the Ancient name 'Elapura.'

**History:**

Ellora is known for Hindu, Buddhist and Jain cave temples built during (6th and 9th centuries) the rule of the Kalachuri, Chalukya and Rashtrakuta dynasties. The Jagannatha Sabha a group of five Jain cave temples of 9th century built by Rashtrakuta.

**The Buddhist Caves:**

These caves were built during the 5th-7th century. It was initially thought that the Buddhist caves were one of the earliest structures, created between the fifth and eighth centuries, with caves 1-5 in the first phase (400-600) and 6-12 in the later phase (mid 7th-mid 8th), but now it is clear to the modern scholars that some of the Hindu caves (27,29,21,28,19,26,20,17 and 14) precede these caves. The
earliest Buddhist cave is Cave 6, followed by 5,2,3,5 (right wing), 4,7,8,10 and 9. Caves 11 and 12 were the last. All the Buddhist caves were constructed between 630-700.

These structures consist mostly of viharas or monasteries: large, multi-storeyed buildings carved into the mountain face, including living quarters, sleeping quarters, kitchens, and other rooms. Some of these monastery caves have shrines including carvings of Gautama Buddha, bodhisattvas and saints. In many of these caves, sculptors have endeavoured to give the stone the look of wood.

Most famous of the Buddhist caves is cave 10, a chaitya hall (chandrashala) or Vishvakarma cave, popularly known as the 'Carpenter's Cave'. Beyond its multi-storeyed entry is a cathedral-like stupa hall also known as chaitya, whose ceiling has been carved to give the impression of wooden beams. At the heart of this cave is a 15-foot statue of Buddha seated in a preaching pose. Amongst other Buddhist caves, all of the first nine (caves 1-9) are monasteries. The last two caves, Do Tal (cave 11) and Tin Tal (cave 12) have three stories.

**Cave 10:**

Cave 10 is a vihara with eight cells, four in the back wall and four in the right wall. It had a portico in the front with a cell which possibly served as a granary for other viharas.

The Vishwakarma (Cave 10) is the only chaitya griha amongst the Buddhist group of caves. It is locally known as Vishwakarma I or Sutar ka jhopda "carpenter's hut". It follows the pattern of I construction of Caves 19 and 26 of Ajanta. On stylistic grounds, I the date of construction of this cave is assigned to 700 A. D.

**The Vishwakarma:**

At the front is a rock-cut court, which is entered through a flight of steps. On either side are pillared porticos with chambers in their back walls. The pillared verandah of the chaitya has a small shrine at either end and a single cell in the far end of the back wall. The corridor columns have massive squarish shafts and ghatapallava (vase and foliage) capitals. The main hall is apsidal on plan and is divided into a central nave and side aisles by 28 octagonal columns with plain bracket capitals. In the apsidal end of the chaitya hall is a stupa on the face of which a colossal 3.30 m high seated Buddha in vyakhyana mudra (teaching posture) is carved. A large Bodhi tree is carved at the back. The hall has a vaulted roof in which ribs have been carved in the rock imitating the wooden ones.

**The Hindu Caves:**

The Hindu caves were constructed between the middle of sixth century to the end of the eighth century. The early caves (caves 17-29) were constructed during the Kalachuri period. The work first commenced in Caves 28, 27 and 19. These were followed by two most impressive caves constructed in the early phase - Caves 29 and 21. Along with these two, work was underway at Caves 20 and 26, and slightly later at Caves 17, 19 and 28. The caves 14, 15 and 16 were constructed during the Rashtrakuta period. The work began in Caves Hand 15 and culminated in Cave 16.
The Kailasanatha Temple:

Cave 16, also known as the Kailasa Temple, is the unrivaled centerpiece of Ellora. This is designed to recall Mount Kailash, the abode of Lord Shiva - looks like a freestanding, multi-storeyed temple complex, but it was carved out of one single rock, and covers an area double the size of Parthenon in Athens. Initially the temple was covered with white plaster thus even more increasing the similarity to snow-covered Mount Kailash.

All the carvings are done in more than one level. A two-storeyed gateway resembling a South Indian Gopura opens to reveal a U-shaped courtyard. The courtyard is edged by columned galleries three storeys high. The galleries are punctuated by huge sculpted panels, and alcoves containing enormous sculptures of a variety of deities.

Within the courtyard are three structures. As is traditional in Shiva temples, the first is a large image of the sacred bull Nandi in front of the central temple. The central temple - Nandi Mantapa or Mandapa - houses the Lingam. The Nandi Mandapa stands on 16 pillars and is 29.3 m high. The base of the Nandi Mandapa has been carved to suggest that life-sized elephants are holding the structure aloft. A living rock bridge connects the Nandi Mandapa to the Shiva temple behind it. The temple itself is a tall pyramidal structure reminiscent of a South Indian Dravidian temple. The shrine -complete with pillars, windows, inner and outer rooms, gathering halls, and an enormous lingam at its heart - carved from living stone, is carved with niches, pilasters, windows as well as images of deities, mithunas (erotic male and female figures) and other figures. Most of the deities at the left of the entrance are Shaivaite (followers of Shiva) while on the right hand side the deities are Vaishnavaites (followers of Vishnu). There are two Dhvajastambhas (pillars with the flagstaff) in the courtyard. The grand sculpture of Ravana attempting to lift Mount Kailasa, the abode of Lord Shiva, with his full might is a landmark in Indian art. The construction of this cave was a feat of human genius - it entailed the removal of 200,000 tonnes of rock, and took 100 years to complete.

The temple is a splendid achievement of Rashtrakuta Karnata architecture. This project was started by Krishna I (757-773) of the Rashtrakuta dynasty that ruled from Manyakhet in present day.
Karnataka state. His rule had also spread to southern India, hence this temple was excavated in the prevailing style. Its builders modelled it on the lines of the Virupaksha Temple in Pattadakal. Being a south Indian style temple, it does not have a shikhara common to north Indian temples.

The Dashavatara:

The Dashavatara (Cave 15) was begun as a Buddhist monastery. It has an open court with a free-standing monolithic mandapa at the middle and an two-storeyed excavated temple at the rear. The layout of the temple is closely related to caves 11 and 12. Large sculptural panels between the wall columns on the upper floor illustrate a wide range of themes, which include the ten avatars of Vishnu. An inscription of grant of Dantidurga is found on the back wall of the front mandapa. According to Coomaraswamy, the finest relief of this cave is the one depicting the death of Hiranyakashipu, where Vishnu in man-lion (Narasimha) form, emerges from a pillar to lay a fatal hand upon the shoulder of Hiranyakashipu.

Other Hindu Caves:

Other notable Hindu caves are the Rameshvara (Cave 21), which has figurines of river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna at the entrance and the Dhumar Lena (Cave 29) whose design is similar to the cave temple on Elephant Island near Mumbai. Two other caves, the Ravan ki Khai (Cave 14) and the Nilkantha (Cave 22) also have several sculptures. The rest of the Hindu caves, which include the Kumbharvada (Cave 25) and the Gopilena (Cave 27) have no significant sculptures.

The Jain Caves:

The five Jain caves at Ellora belong to the ninth and tenth centuries. They all belong to the Digambara sect. The Jain caves reveal specific dimensions of Jain philosophy and tradition. They reflect a strict sense of asceticism - they are not relatively large as compared to others, but they present exceptionally detailed art works. The most remarkable Jain shrines are the Chhota Kailash (cave 30), the Indra Sabha (cave 32) and the Jagannath Sabha (cave 33). Cave 31 is an unfinished four-pillared hall and a shrine Cave 34 is a small cave, which can be approached through an opening on the left side of Cave 33. Amongst other devotional carvings, a place called Samvatsarana can be found in Elora caves. Samvatsarana is of special interest to Jains, as it is a hall where the tirthankara preaches after attaining omniscience.
**The Indra Sabha**

The **Indra Sabha (Cave 32)** is a two storeyed cave with one more monolithic shrine in its court. It has a very fine carving of the lotus flower on the ceiling. It got the appellation "**Indra Sabha**" probably it is significantly ornate and also because of the sculpture of the yaksha (dedicated attendant deity) Matanga on an elephant, which was wrongly identified as that of Indra. On the upper level of the double-storied shrine excavated at the rear of the court, an U image of Ambika, the yakshini of Neminath, is found seated on her lion under a mango tree, laden with fruits.

**Other Jain Caves:**

All other Jain caves are also characterized by intricate detailing. Many of the structures had rich paintings in the ceilings -fragments of which are still visible.

**Inscriptions at Ellora:**

Several inscriptions at Ellora range from 6th century to 15th century. The best known of them is an inscription of **Rashtrakuta Dantidurga** (c. 753-57 A.D.) on the back wall of the front mandapa of Cave 15, which gives an account of his conquests. Inscriptions on the Kailash temple itself range from 9th to 15th century. Jain cave Jagannatha Sabha has 3 inscriptions that give the names of monks and donors. A Parshwanth temple on the hill has a 11th-century inscription that gives the name of the donor from Vardhanapura.

**Elephanta Caves**

The **Elephanta Caves** (Gharapurichya Lenee) are a network of sculpted caves located on **Elephanta Island**, or Gharapuri (literally "the city of caves") in Mumbai Harbour, 10 kilometres (6.2 mi) to the east of the city of Mumbai in the state of Maharashtra. The island, located on an arm of the Arabian Sea, consists of two groups of caves—the first is a large group of five **Hindu caves**, the second, a smaller group of two **Buddhist caves**. The Hindu caves contain rock cut stone sculptures, representing the Shaiva Hindu sect, dedicated to the god Shiva.

It is a designated **UNESCO** World Heritage Site since 1987. It is currently maintained by the Archaeological Survey of India.

The rock cut architecture of the caves has been dated to between the 5th and 8th centuries, although the identity of the original builders is still a subject of debate. The caves are hewn from solid basalt rock. All the caves were also originally painted in the past, but now only traces remain.
The island was called Gharapuri and was a Hindu place of worship until Portuguese rule began in 1534. The Portuguese called the island Elephanta on seeing its huge gigantic statue of an Elephant at the entrance. The Statue is now placed in the garden outside the Bhau Daji Lad Museum (erstwhile Victoria & Albert Museum) at the Jijamata Udyaan (erstwhile Victoria Gardens) at Byculla in Mumbai.

**Main Cave:**

The main cave, also called the Shiva Cave, Cave I, or the **Great Cave**, is 27 metres (89 ft) square in plan with a hall (mandapa). At the entrance are four doors, with three open porticoes and an aisle at the back. Pillars, six in each row, divide the hall into a series of smaller chambers. The roof of the hall has concealed beams supported by stone columns joined together by capitals. The cave entrance is aligned with the north-south axis, unusual for a Shiva shrine (normally east-west). The northern entrance to the cave, which has 1,000 steep steps, is flanked by two panels of Shiva dated to the Gupta period. The left panel depicts *Yogishvara* (The Lord of Yoga) and the right shows *Nataraja (Shiva as the Lord of Dance)*. The central Shiva shrine (see 16 in plan below) is a free-standing square cell with four entrances, located in the right section of the main hall. Smaller shrines are located at the east and west ends of the caves. The eastern sanctuary serves as a ceremonial entrance. Each wall has large carvings of *Shiva*, each more than 5 metres (16 ft) in height. The central Shiva relief Trimurti is located on the south wall and is flanked by Ardhanarishvara (a half-man, half-woman representation of *Shiva*) on its left and Gangadharato its right, which denotes river Ganges's descent from Shiva's matted locks. Other carvings related to the legend of Shiva are also seen in the main hall at strategic locations in exclusive cubicles; these include Kalyanasundaramurti, depicting Shiva's marriage to the goddess Parvati, Andhakasuravadamurti or Andhakasuramardana, the slaying of the demon Andhaka by Shiva, Shiva-Parvati on Mount Kailash (the abode of Shiva), and Ravananugraha depicting the demon-king Ravanashaking Kailash.

**Layout:**

**Main Hall:**

1. Ravana lifting Kailash
2. Shiva-Parvati on Kailash
3. Ardhanarishvara
4. Trimurti
5. Gangadhara
6. Wedding of Shiva
7. Shiva slaying Andhaka
8. Nataraja
17. Yogishvara

**East Wing Shrine:**

10. Kartikeya
11. Matrikas
12. Ganesha
13. Dvarapala

**West Wing Shrine:**

14. Yogishvara
15. Nataraja
Shiva-Parmati on Kailash and Ravana lifting Kailash:
The carving on the south wall to the east of the portico depicts Shiva and Parvati seated on their abode Mount Kailash. The four-armed Shiva is seen with a crown and a disc behind it (all damaged), the sacred thread across his chest, and a dressing gown covering up to the knees. Parvati, dressed in her finery with her hair falling to the front, looks away. Behind her at the right is a woman attendant holding the child, identified with her son Kartikeya, the war-god. Many male and female attendants are seen behind the main figures. Shiva’s attendant, the skeleton-like Bhringi is seated at his feet.

Other figures, not distinct, depict, among others, a royal-looking tall person, ascetics, a fat figure, a dwarf, a bull (the mount of Shiva), features of a Garuda, and two monkeys. The scenic beauty of the mountain is sculpted with the sky background amidst heavenly beings showering flowers on Shiva-Parvati. This scene is interpreted as a gambling scene, where Parvati is angry as Shiva cheats in a game of dice. The carved panel facing this one is a two level depiction of Ravana lifting Kailash. The upper scene is Mount Kailash, where Shiva and Parvati are seated.

Attendants of Shiva are also seen in the relief but mostly in a damaged state. Bhringi is seated near Shiva’s feet and to his left is the elephant-headed son of Shiva, Ganesha. In this ensemble, the ten-headed demon-king Ravana is seen, with only one head left unscathed, and out of his twenty arms, only a few are discernible. Around Ravana are several demons. Numerous figures are seen above Shiva: the god Vishnu, riding his mount Garuda, to his left; a skeleton-figure; and in a recess, Parvati’s mount, atiger is depicted.

Trimurti, Gangadhaara and Ardhanarishvara:

Described as a “masterpiece of Gupta-Chalukyan art”, the most important sculpture in the caves is the Trimurti, carved in relief at the back of the cave facing the entrance, on the north-south axis. It is also known as Trimurti Sadashiva and Maheshmurti. The image, 20 feet (6.1 m) in height, depicts a three-headed Shiva, representing Panchamukha Shiva. The three heads are said to represent three essential aspects of Shiva — creation, protection, and destruction. The right half-face (west face) shows him as a young person with sensuous lips, embodying life and its vitality. In his hand he holds something an object resembling a rosebud, depicting the promise of life and creativity. This face is closest to that of Brahma, the creator or Uma or Vamadeva, the feminine side of Shiva and creator of joy and beauty. The left half-face (east face) is that of a moustached young man, displaying anger. This is Shiva as the terrifying Aghora or Bhairava, the one whose anger can engulf the entire world in flames, leaving only ashes behind. This is also known as Rudra-Shiva, the Destroyer. The central face, benign and meditative, resembles the preserver Vishnu. This is Tatpurusha, “master of positive and negative principles of existence and preserver of their harmony” or Shiva as the yogi Yogeshwar in deep meditation praying for the preservation of humanity. The aspects Sadyojata and Ishana (not carved) faces are considered to be at the back and top of the sculpture. The Trimurti sculpture, with the Gateway of India in the background, has been adopted as the logo of the Maharashtra Tourism Department (MTDC).
The **Gangadhara** image to the right of the **Trimurti**, is an ensemble of divinities assembled around the central figures of Shiva and Parvati, the former bearing river Ganges as she descends from the heaven. The carving is 13 feet (4.0 m) wide and 17.083 feet (5.207 m) high. The image is highly damaged, particularly the lower half of Shiva seen seated with Parvati, who is shown with four arms, two of which are broken. From the crown, a cup with a triple-headed female figure (with broken arms), representing the three sacred rivers Ganges, Yamuna, and Sarasvati, is depicted. Shiva is sculpted and bedecked with ornaments. The arms hold a coiling serpent whose hood is seen above his left shoulder. Another hand (partly broken) gives the semblance of Shiva hugging Parvati, with a head of matted hair. There is a small snake on the right hand, a tortoise close to the neck, with a bundle is tied to the back. An ornamented drapery covers his lower torso, below the waist. Parvati is carved to the left of Shiva with a coiffured hair dress, fully bedecked with ornaments and jewellery, also fully draped, with her right hand touching the head of a female attendant who carries Parvati’s dress case. The gods Brahma and Indra, with their mystic regalia and mounts, are shown to the right of Shiva; Vishnu riding his mount Garuda, is shown to the left of Parvati. Many other details are defaced but a kneeling figure in the front is inferred to be the king who ordered the image to be carved. There are many divinities and attendant females at the back. The whole setting is under the sky and cloud scenes, with men and women, all dressed, are shown showering flowers on the deities.

In the chamber to the east of **Trimurti**, is the four-armed **Ardhanarishvara** carving. This image, which is 16.75 feet (5.11 m) in height, has a head dress (double-folded) with two pleats draped towards the female head (Parvati) and the right side (Shiva) depicting curled hair and a crescent. The female figure has all the ornamentation (broad armlets and long bracelets, a large ring in the ear, jewelled rings on the fingers) but the right male figure has drooping hair, armlets and wrist-lets. One of his hands rests on Nandi’s left horn, Shiva’s mount, which is fairly well preserved. The pair of hands at the back is also bejewelled; the right hand of the male holds a serpent, while the left hand of the female holds a mirror. The front left hand is broken but conjectured as holding the robe of the goddess. The central figure is surrounded by divinities.
Shiva slaying Andhaka and Wedding of Shiva

The engraved panel is considered to be a unique sculpture in the north end of the aisle, and shows Bhairava, or Virabhadra, a frightful form of Shiva. In the carved panel Shiva’s consort is seen sitting next to him, looking terrified. A female attendant is next to her. The central figure, which is much ruined below the waist, is measured at 1.15 feet (3.5 m) high, is posed as if running. His headgear has a ruff on the back, a skull and cobra over the forehead, and the crescent high on the right. His facial expression is of intense anger discerned from his furrowed brow, swollen eyes, and tusks. The legs and five of the eight arms are broken, attributed to Portuguese vandalism. The smaller broken image Andhaka is seen below Bhairava’s image. It is interpreted that Shiva is spearing him with the front right hand, as conjectured by the spear seen hanging without any hold. Also seen is the back hand lifted up and holding an elephant’s skin as a cover; the elephant’s head, carved tusk, and trunk are seen hanging from the left hand. The second left hand depicts a snake coiled round it. The hand holds a bowl to collect the blood dripping from the slain Andhaka. Furthermore, pieces of a male and two female forms, figures of two ascetics, a small figure in front, a female figure, and two dwarfs are also seen in the carved panel. An unusual sculpture seen above the head of the main figure of Shiva is of a “very wide bottle with a curved groove in the middle of it”, which can interpreted variously as: the aum or thelinga or Shiva's shrine.

The niche image carved on the south wall is an ensemble of divinities assembled around the central figures of Shiva and Parvati shown getting married (Kalyanasundara icon). Parvati is seen standing to Shiva’s right, the ordained place for a Hindu bride at the wedding. The carvings are damaged substantially; only one of Shiva’s four hands is fully seen and the right leg is missing. Shiva has a head dress with a shining disc attached to it. His garments are well-draped, and well-tied at the waist. The sacred thread is seen across his chest. Parvati is carved as a perfect figure with coiffured hair dress, well-adoired with jewellery and is draped tightly to display depressions below the waist only. She is seen with a coy expression and is led by her father who has his right hand on her shoulder. Even though both her hands are damaged, it is inferred that her left hand clasped Shiva’s right hand as a mark of holy alliance. Brahma is sitting as the officiating priest for the marriage. Vishnu is witness to the marriage. Mena, the mother of Parvati is seen standing next to Vishnu. The moon-god Chandra, seen with a wig and a crescent, is standing behind Parvati holding a circular pot with nectar for the marriage ceremony. Just above the main images, a galaxy of divinities, bearded sages, apsaras (nymphs), Vidyadharas, Yakshis, Gandharvas, Bhringi, and other male and female attendants are seen as witness to the marriage ceremony showering flowers on the divine couple.
**Yogishvara and Nataraja**

The panel to the east of the north portico is Shiva in a Yogic position called Yogisvara, Mahayogi, Dharmaraja and Lakulish. Resembling a Buddha, Shiva is in a dilapidated condition with only two broken arms. Shiva is seated in padmasana yogic posture (cross legged) on a lotus carried by two Nagas. His crown is carved with details adorned by a crescent, a round frill at the back, and hair curls dropping on either side of the shoulders. His face is calm in mediation, his eyes half-closed. This represents Shiva in penance sitting amidst the Himalayan mountains after the death of his first wife Sati, who was later reborn as Parvati. He is surrounded by divinities in the sky and attendants below. Also seen is a plantain with three leaves already open and one opening, as well as a sunflower blossom. These are flanked by two attendants. Other figures discerned from a study of the broken images are: Vishnu riding Garuda on a plantain leaf; the Sun-god Surya riding a fully saddled horse (head missing); a saint with a rosary; two female figures in the sky draped up to their thighs; a faceless figure of the moon with a water container; three identical figures of a male flanked by two females; the skeleton of a sage; Brahma (without one arm) riding a swan; and Indra without his mount (elephant missing).

The panel carving in the west niche opposite Yogishvara depicts Shiva as Nataraja performing the Tandava (cosmic dance). The niche is 13 feet (4.0 m) wide and 11 feet (3.4 m) in height and set low on the wall. He wears well-decorated headgear. The Shiva image displays a dance pose and had ten arms, but the first right and third left hands are missing. The remaining first right arm is held across the breast and touches the left side, the second right hand that is seen damaged with an out-flaying pose is broken at the elbow. The third arm is damaged at the elbow, and the fourth is also broken but inferred to have held a Khatvanga (skull-club). The left arms, seen hanging, are damaged near the wrists. The third hand is bent (but broken) towards Parvati standing on the side and the fourth hand is raised up. The right thigh (broken) is lifted up, and the left leg is not seen at all, the elaborate armlets are well-preserved and a skirt round the waist is tied by a ribbon. A tall figurine of Parvati stands to the left of Shiva, which is also seen partly broken but well bejewelled. An airborne female figure is seen behind Parvati. Other figures seen in the relief are: Vishnu riding a Garuda; Indra riding his elephant; the elephant-headed Ganesha; Kartikeya; Bhrngi; sages and attendants.

**Main Cave Shrine:**

The central shrine is a free-standing square cell, with entrances on each of its sides. Each door is flanked by two dvarapalas (gate keepers). The Linga, the symbol of Shiva in union with the Yoni, and the symbol of Parvati together symbolise the supreme unity that is deified by the shrine. The Linga is set on a raised platform.
above the floor of the shrine by 6 feet (1.8 m). Six steps lead to this level from the floor level. The height of the eight dvarapalas varies from 14.833-15.167 feet (4.521 -4.623 m). All are in a damaged condition except those at the southern door to the shrine.

**East Wing:**

Several courtyards to the east and west of the main cave are blocked, though there is a 55 feet (17 m)-wide courtyard that is accessible by entering the eastern part and climbing nine steps. A temple on the southern wall of the court depicts a well-preserved fresco. The circular pedestal seen in the courtyard in front of the Shiva's shrine near the east end, in the open area, is said to be the seat of Nandi, Shiva's mount.

On each side of the steps leading to the temple-cave portico is a winged lion, or leogriiff, each seated with a raised forepaw. The portico has chambers at each end and a Linga-shrine at the back. Five low steps and a threshold lead into the central Linga-shrine which is 13.833 feet (4.216 m) wide and 16.0833 feet (4.9022 m) deep and has a circumambulatory path (Pradakshina-path) around it. At the back of the portico, near the east end, is a gigantic statue of a four-armed doorkeeper with two attendant demons. At the north end is a standing figure holding a trident. His left hand rests on a defaced demon-figure. The west wall depicts the Ashta-Matrikas (eight mother goddesses), flanked by Kartikeya and Ganesha, the sons of Shiva. Some of Matrikas are depicted with children, but all of them are shown by their respective mounts (bull, swan, peacock, a Garuda, etc.)

**West Wing:**

The west wing, entered through the main cave, is in a semi-ruined state. It has a small chapel and a cistern enclosed within the pillared cave, which is believed to be Buddhist. Another shrine to the west of the courtyard, with a portico, has carvings of Shiva in a yogic pose seated on a lotus carried by “two fat, heavy, wigged figures”. This carving also depicts a three-faced bearded B ram ha and several other figurines. Entering through the back door of the portico is a cave enshrined with a multifaceted Shiva Linga erected over roughly hewn salunkhs. At the door entrance on both flanks, statues of gatekeepers standing over demons and two fat, poised figures are seen. On the southern side of the door, is an ensemble of a number of statues. Prominent among these is the Shiva carving, which is depicted with six arms and the third eye in the forehead. Though in a partly ruined state, the carving shows Shiva with an ornamented crown fixed with a crescent, seen carrying a cobra in the left hand, a club in another hand, and discerned to be in a dancing pose. Next to this image are a figure under a plantain tree and a Shiva image (Yogishvara) seated on a lotus. Also seen in the panel are a male figure riding a bull with a bell fastened to its neck, a female figure and another carving to left of Shiva, a female figure with a jewel on her forehead with neatly looped head-dress, Indra riding an elephant, Vishnu with four arms, holding a discus in one of his left hands and riding on Garuda flanked by a small flying figure, and a male figure with crescent in his hair.