Chapter 1
Introduction
The magnificent Ellora caves are now part of UNESCO’s World Heritage list. It is locally known as ‘Verul Leni’.\(^1\) It is located on the Aurangabad-Chalisgaon road at a distance of 30 km north-northwest of Aurangabad, in Maharashtra. Ellora represents the epitome of Indian rock-cut architecture and group of varied rock-cut designs. The Buddhist caves of Ajanta are 60 K. M. North and the Pitalkhora, also in North, is around 40 K.M. from Ellora.\(^2\) The caves are excavated in the scarp of a large plateau, running in a north-south direction for nearly 2 K. M., the scarp being in the form of a semi-circle, the Buddhist group at the right arc on the south, while the Jaina group at the left side on the north and the Brahmanical group at the centre.

In terms of simple geography, Ellora and its surroundings falls in a relatively flatter region of the mountain ranges called the Western Ghats. Geologists called this basalt scrap as “Deccan Trap”, Deccan being a term to refer south India in general and Trap often refers to the step like formations of rock.\(^3\) Nature had prepared the region right for rock-cut architecture by the way of ancient volcanic activities. The intense volcanic activity that went on for many millions years in this part of the south Indian plains brought out the mineral rich rocky crust on to the surface. There are many horizontal and tentatively parallel lines postulating the fact that molten lava once flowed and solidified.\(^4\) One can also notice the alternating shades of grey strips on the walls and carvings at Ellora on a close up view.

\(^2\) *Ibid* 8.
\(^3\) Gazetteer of Aurangabad. (1884). Bombay: The Times of India Steam Press. p. 11.
**Geological formations:**

Geological formations of the Ellora, beginning with the lowest, are as follows:\(^5\)

1. Middle Traps of the Deccan Tertiary.
2. Older Alluvial Deposits of the Godavari. Post-Tertiary

The lowest rocks belong to the great trapspean region of the Deccan trap, which covers an area of approximately 2,00,000 square miles.\(^6\) They consist of a series of basaltic flows, nearly horizontal or presenting the appearance of having been so originally. In some parts of the Western Ghats, their vertical thickness is from 4,000 to 5,000 feet, and probably, thickest may amount to 6,000 feet and more.\(^7\) But this is the thick end of the formation, and the flows thin out towards the extremities in a series of broad ledges or steps. The rocks are believed to have been formed between the highest Mesozoic\(^8\) and the lowest Cainozoic\(^9\) periods\(^10\), or between the Upper Cretaceous\(^11\) and the Lower Eocene\(^12\) formations.\(^13\)

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\(^5\) *Ibid*, p. 16
\(^6\) Gazetteer of Aurangabad, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
\(^7\) *Ibid*, p. 17.
\(^8\) Mesozoic: The Mesozoic Era is an interval of geological time from about 250 million years ago to about 65 million years ago. It is often referred to as the Age of Reptiles because reptiles, namely non-avian dinosaurs, were the dominant terrestrial and marine vertebrates of the time.
\(^9\) Cenozoic: The Cenozoic era, meaning "new life" is also known as the Age of Mammals, just as the Mesozoic era was the Age of Reptiles. The Cenozoic spans the time period covered from the final extinction at the end of the Cretaceous, approximately 65 million years ago, to the present. The Cenozoic era is divided into three periods, and seven systems.
\(^10\) Gazetteer of Aurangabad, *op. cit.*, pp. 16.
\(^11\) Upper Cretaceous: The Upper Cretaceous was a period in Earth history, from 100 to 65 million years ago. The Cretaceous is traditionally divided into Lower Cretaceous (early), and Upper Cretaceous (late), because of the different rocks. The rocks reflect the conditions in which they were formed as sediment. The Upper Cretaceous is the chalk. It is composed of countless millions of calcareous (CaCO\(_3\)) plates called coccoliths. They are so small they can only just be seen with a light microscope; details require an electron microscope. The plates are formed by single-celled planktonic algae called coccolithophores, and were laid down in the off-shore seas.
\(^12\) Lower Eocene: The Eocene epoch, lasting from about 56 to 34 million years ago is a major division of the geologic timescale and the second epoch of the Paleogene Period in the Cenozoic Era. The Eocene spans the time from the end of the Palaeocene Epoch to the beginning of the Oligocene Epoch. The start of the
The compact and amorphous rock, with semi-vitreous texture known as basalt, occurs on the highest summits of the hills. It is dark in the interior, containing small cavities coated generally with a reddish or black vitreous glaze, while the exterior is of a yellowish-brown colour.\footnote{14}

There are some magnificent groups of monuments in India which are famous for their aesthetic appeal and enormous size. Ellora caves are one of them. Even in the array of the monolithic architecture, it touches a new peak of grandeur in terms of architectural techniques. The 34 excavations on the vertical face of the Charanandri hills – being Buddhist, Hindu and Jain cave temples and monasteries are supposed to have been built between the 5th century and 10\textsuperscript{th} century\footnote{15}. The 12 Buddhist (caves 1-12), 17 Hindu (caves 13-29) and 5 Jain caves (caves 30-34), built in vicinity\footnote{16}, demonstrate the religious harmony prevalent during this period of Indian history.

Without a doubt, the most ambitious and impressive of these indeed, perhaps in all of South Asia is Cave 16, the Kailaśa temple. The proud patronage which created the magnificent Kailaśa has been ascribed to Raśtrakutas of Ellora.\footnote{17} It

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Kailash_Temple.jpg}
\caption{A View of Kailash Temple \textit{Courtesy}: Indra Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi}
\end{figure}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[16] \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 9-12.
\end{footnotes}
became an immortal monolith which enshrines the ages of faith and skills of the artisans. One of the last important Hindu excavations, it represents not only the most striking cave temple at the site, but also the culmination of the rock architecture in South Asia.\(^{18}\) It is a complex with all the essential elements of contemporaneous free-standing southern type temple units. It includes a main building, \textit{Nandi} shrine, gateway, surrounding cloisters, and subsidiary shrines.\(^{19}\) Architectural details seem to be inspired from the narratives of Hindu mythology. It is believed that abode of lord Śiva is in mount Kailaśa, so great care has been taken in carving the temple as a unique and apparently divine in beauty and grandeur.\(^{20}\) The Kailaśa temple as name suggests is dedicated to Śiva as the Lord of mount Kailaśa. The temple has a Śivalinga in its sanctum sanctorum. The Vaishnava images were given prominent position and complementary to that of Śaiva images.\(^{21}\) On the other hand Śiva-Śakti Āgama, sees in every manifestation of universe a product and outflow of the dynamic life power inherent in the God.\(^{22}\)

Kailaśa is situated near Ghriśnesvar Jyotirlinga, now a temple of \textit{nāgar} style made in late Maratha phase.\(^{23}\) According to legends, the word Ghriśnesvar means Śiva whose abode is in a meticulously carved out magnificent monolithic temple. The Elāpur or Ellora is one of the eight \textit{Jyotirlinga} and it is mentioned in the Dvādaś jyotirlingastrotam.\(^{24}\)

\begin{quote}
\textit{Elāpure ramyavisālake sminsamullasṁam cha jagatvatvareṇyam / Varṇle mahodāratarsvabhāvam ghriṣ neśvarākhyam sāranam prapadye //}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textit{Ibid, p. 204}
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\begin{flushright}
\textit{Ibid, p. 353}
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\textit{Berkson, Carmel.(2000). \textit{The Life of Form in Indian Sculpture}, Delhi: Abhinav Publications. p. 17.}
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\textit{Gazetteer of Aurangabad, \textit{op. cit.}, 355.}
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The above mentioned verse gives the description of the Kailaśaa temple’ ‘it is delightful, extensive resplendent and pre-eminent.’ The word Ghrisneśvara itself mean to rub or to chisel or polish which can be further elaborated as to carve out of rock and polished to become magnificent.

It seems that Raśtrakutas had faith on Brahmanical tradition and they were trying to create the loftiest and loveliest monuments to demonstrate the devotion towards Śiva. Narratives from myths and epics of Brahmanical traditions were taken as a subject for representation. Narratives from Puranas were conceptualised as a theme for the depiction of sculptures. The well-sculpted panels around the temple enhance the sacredness of temple complex.

The tradition of rock-cut dwellings in India is supposed to have been developed during the Maurayan period in Barabar hills. This in the succeeding centuries spread widely and resulted in the blooming of a large number of cave temples across the country. These rock-cut version of the architecture were predominantly wooden prototypes which were copied into stone. In the beginning, the rock-cut enterprise was nurtured by the votaries of Buddhist faith and later by the Jaina and Brahmanic faith as well. The Guptas were the first to patronise Brahmanical cave excavations as evidenced at Udaigiri caves near Vidiśā. Scholars have unanimously agreed that under Guptas the resurgence of Brahmanic faith took place on a national level. Udaigiri caves are the first site for the Brahmanical cave temples in India. The cave no. 7, locally known as Tawa cave, is a monolith with well finished chamber. A medallion is carved out on the ceiling. It is basically a Śaiva temple as shown by the Śaiva guardian on

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25 Ibid, p. 252
26 Ibid, p. 252
27 Boner, Alice op. cit., p. 40.
31 Ibid, p.3
32 Ibid, p. 4
33 Ibid, p. 4
the doorway. The germs of monolithic architecture, however, lies in the stūpas and chaityas of Western Ghats.

Rock-cut shrines of the early fifth century C.E. present two imperative metaphors for the temple: the sanctum as womb (garbha), in which the seed of divinity can be made manifest, and the temple as mountain.\(^{34}\) As the cave opens up the earth, so the sanctum opens up the temple. It is the concept of divinity made manifest and the practice of devotional worship (bhakti) that make the temple possible. The cosmic mountain and its cave ultimately shelter a divinity in the form of an image. It gives shelter to the worshipper, who approaches the central point of cosmic manifestation along a longitudinal axis.\(^{35}\)

Ellora’s is multidimensional aspect of architectural heritage transcended during the three major phases of different patronages. These phases were contemporary with the age of Ajanta and Badami for the first. The second phase was associated with the Raśtrakutas. The third phase was associated with the closing stages of the Raśtrakuta Empire before it was superseded by Vajrayana Buddhism together with rising Brahmanical religions were preoccupations of the first stage.\(^{36}\) In the second stage, the focus shifted to Digambara Jainism.\(^{37}\) Ellora began where Ajanta of Vakataka ended. The decline of Ajanta’s Buddhist art is very crucial after the end of Hrisena’s branch dynasty in the late fifth or early sixth century.\(^{38}\) It transformed the shift of patronage from Buddhism to Brahmanism. A segment of this picture was enacted further east in Vidarbha, extended the period of transition of Ajanta and Ellora.\(^{39}\)


\(^{38}\) Rajan, K. V. Soundra, op. cit., p. 135.

\(^{39}\) Ibid, p. 136
The difference between Buddhist caves Ellora is much greater than the latest Buddhist caves compared with Ajanta. Hence, studying changes in conventional features, like pillars or Buddha images can be fruitful at Ellora. The distinctions with assessments of situation generally found in other western caves, where changes in such conventionalized elements create confusion for chronology.

Comparisons of sculpture and architecture of the other regions in India show that general trends in art of the period are reflected at Ellora. It also confirms the proposed seventh to early eighth century dates. The Ellora caves were destined to be a new political power centre which by the time moved into the next stage of Krishna I. Apart from influences from the Chalukya’s Pattadkal a similarity to Ganga and Pallava sculptural style, progressively tinged with the early Chola as well as time progressed from the eighth into the ninth and the early part of the tenth century CE.

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The cross current of the Badami Chalukyas carried forward the same composition in essentially two dimensional relief sculpture. At Ajanta, mural painting was often than its stone sculpture. Even at Badami, in cave no. 3 mural painting was a shade superior to its glorious sculpture. But when we come to the second stage of Ellora, painting receded to a secondary position, produced by a technique different from the tempera of Ajanta. Sculptural art, at Ellora carved in nearly three-dimensional relief is a vibrant compositions. It denotes a pervasive sensualism of the earth. The third stage was the end of an era but tediously it repeated its Rastrakuta heritage. From this perspective, both the first and last stages were derivative, carrying forward antecedent traditions. Only the middle stage achieved a level in tone, technique and culture. Its great visual power is central element of the grandeur of Ellora.

![Figure 3: A View of Badami](image)

**Figure 3: A View of Badami**

**Courtesy:** Lalit Kala Akademy, New Delhi

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The sculptural programme of Ellora became remarkable as they were trend setting. Monoliths were already designed by the time of Dantidurga, as visible in the Mandapa unit in front of his Dasavatara Cave no. 15.\textsuperscript{48} In some cases as in the upper story of cave 15, Brahmanical images were carved in deep relief to replace existing Buddhist panel.\textsuperscript{49} Here was the origin of relief sculpture in three dimensional form. It gave rise to a new urgency for regular monolithic architecture. And it was, no doubt, inspired from the \textit{rathas} of Mamallapuram.\textsuperscript{50}

The early stage both Buddhist and Brahmanical, continued Gupta-Vakataka and early Chalukyas forms of mellowness and technique.\textsuperscript{51} The style of execution into the second stage was thus abrupt, charismatic and vibrant. There was true insight into modelling. Soft fleshy contours of the first stage are shed in favour of slender figures contributing to the portrayal of the body in flexibility.\textsuperscript{52} Multiple movements in group compositions within the same panel show a trend toward the release of physical energy. The \textit{mithunas} of cave 16 are among the most sensitive renderings of responsive, intertwining couples.\textsuperscript{53} Limbs are portrayed in realistic manner. This style of execution has been ascribed to the Ra\textit{\'strakutas}. They have been criticized as medieval by some scholars, but Soundra Rajan\textsuperscript{54} has the view that \textit{“in the south it had not started until the beginning of the tenth century and surely does not mark early Ra\textit{\'strakuta art at Ellora. Here it is evident from the style of execution that this sight might had nourished South Indian sculptures.”}

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid, p. 141.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid, p. 160.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid, 79
\textsuperscript{54} Rajan, K. V. Soundra, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 115.
An unbroken series of rock-cut art at Ellora for nearly five hundred years is in itself an unrivalled phenomenon. This suggests that guilds of sculptors were permanently stationed in the area. There seems a planning, both necessary for major presentations of sculptural art. When it subsequently became the capital of the Rastrakutas, Ellora benefited from this multi-faceted background. It had the prolific and intense tradition of rock-cut art that developed there. Its guilds had not only a continuous tradition of artisanship but also knowledge of their rituals and tradition.

Throughout its history, form a little earlier than CE 600 up to the end of the 9th century, its artisans had consistently assimilated a variety of art and architectural forms and ad skilfully and sensitively transformed them to serve the aims of Mahesvara Shaivism. It can be said as a perfect blend of Agnic Brahmanical religion like Shaivism, Vaishnivism and Shaktism, as well as the sublime Jaina faith. There is no doubt that it was Ellora’s location in the golden triangle that supplied the initiative, stimulated by political transformations, which brought under the control of imperial circumstances more favourable to the Brahmanical faith.

The presence which originates in the cliff is communicated through the spaces made within it, both from the point of view of the architect and the worshipper. The divinity which is embedded in the cliff is expressed through and experienced within the caves themselves, especially since caves are understood to be the ancient residences of the gods. Kramrisch refers to the Vayu Purana when she writes "on the Visakha Mountain there is a great dwelling belonging to Guha, the secret one...the god who is very fond of living in

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55 Havell, E. B., op. cit., p.190.
56 Malandra, Geri H., op. cit., pp. 4-5.
57 Boner, Alice, op. cit., p. 47.
58 Ibid, 48
Then cave is basically the middle of the earth, a place of formation, conception and generation.

The presence of Ellora was conspicuous before any excavation began there, the combination of cliff and waterfall serving as a dramatic backdrop and inspiration for construction. This presence is literally expressed in the act of making the caves, for in that process human activity and natural effect become inextricably linked. What is felt in presence is made visible in form, and the form then affords the means and inspiration for the activities which allow access to that presence again. The cave temples at Ellora might be considered first as a site. As already mentioned, Ellora is a village located Northwest of Aurangabad in the Western Deccan, and the thirty four carved temples line one of its rocky cliffs for a mile. A waterfall interrupts the linear progression of the caves as they stretch just underneath the crest of the cliff. Given Ellora's place in history as a *tirtha*, or center of worship and ritual, the element of water is almost expected as a purifying, fertilizing element. Quite visibly, the caves are at once a subtle and dramatic addition to the dry, rugged landscape. Because of their location in the cliff, they are not visible from above, on the side of the cliff where the waterfall originates. This might explain their use as a place of refuge after their status as a *tirtha* began to fade in the thirteenth century. They are located on a well-travelled, ancient route which once connected Paithan on the Godavari River with Aurangabad, Maheshwar and Ujjain.

Inscriptions in Buddhist cave sites throughout the Western Deccan indicate that monks, nuns and lay devotees travelled this route. There was a strategic

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60 *Ibid.*, 170
62 Kramrisch, Stella, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17. (Kramrisch points out that the word "tirtha" refers to a ford or passage, and water is clearly related to both).
63 Malandra, Geri H. *op. cit.*, p. 10.
64 *Ibid.* (Malandra notes that a famous Maharashtrian Saint, Cakradhara, used the Ellora caves for protection in the early thirteenth century).
connection between Ellora's role as a religious center and its position on a commercial path. During that time, Ellora might have served the immediate recognizable as the juncture of spiritual and physical paths.

The making of the caves involves a complex series of preparations similar to those engaged by the worshipper in many Indian rituals. The earth and the architect must be readied before construction is to begin, since the architect's work is to be an image and reconstitution of the universe. The ground is purified, the soil is judged for smell, sound, taste, shape etc., and any extraneous matter in the soil is removed. According to Kramrisch, "magic is active and divinatory science establishes the correspondence between the soil to be built on and the body of the builder." This correspondence is later extended to the worshipper as well, who prepares his body and mind to meet the spirit of the architecture and the character of its foundation. The presence which is originally recognized in the natural site is preserved in the architect's sense of wonder about the architectural operations at hand. The architect is guided by a priest, and when the work is done the architect must be able to say "Oh, how was it that I built it." While the architect is recognized as a master, he cannot claim mastery of his work for it is dependent on the spirit of the site as much as on his own spiritual state. Here, it seems that architecture is, like enlightenment, something to be attained. As Kramrisch has written, "a settlement...takes place in the intellect itself at the moment when its work is being given concrete form. The substance is its support and form is the nature of its activity. The form of the concrete work is the final seal of the process which leads to it." This can be said appropriately in case of Kailaśa Temple.

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69 Ibid, p. 17.
The difficult part in the study of Ellora is in asserting its time lines and the patrons behind its execution. That’s mainly because the historic evidences available in the form of inscriptions. And what little is available is sketchy leaving it open for challenging interpretations. Things get complicated by the fact that Ellora was active as a centre for cave architecture for many centuries, even before the intensified cave excavations began during the latter part of the 6th century CE. On top of it separate groups of caves were built by the three religious sects – Hindus, Jains and Buddhists have overlapping chronology.

However, Ellora was yet to come to limelight, rather the caves were still to be made at Ellora, at least in a significant way. Those days the important spiritual centres were Pithalkhora, Nasik, Ajanta and so on. All with its own cave complexes. Once those sites along with prime locations suitable for cave cutting got saturated Ellora was the natural choice for building newer cave complexes. This can be compare with to modern day situation where a city expands into suburbs and satellite locations for its growth. The Ellora was too tempting from a rock cut architectural point of view.

So for the first time the focus was shifted to Ellora. Historians put this around the period 475-575 CE. That’s when the activities at the Ajanta Caves started declining. This theory of coincidence was one of the assumptions made with respect to the beginning of Ellora’s history.

The interesting thing about Ellora is from its origin till present it was in the constant know of people. That stands in stark contrast with the case of Ajanta caves that was lost into oblivion by around 500 CE and later ‘discovered’ some 1200 years later when a hunting team of colonial officers ran into one of the caves.

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70 Malandra, Geri H., op. cit., pp. 5-7.
71 Mahajan, Malti op. cit. pp. 59-61.
72 Malandra, Geri H., op. cit., p. 25.
For the sake of simplicity historians classified the cave making at Ellora into following phases—early Hindu, Buddhist, later Hindu and Jain. However, Ellora is notable for smooth, apparently peaceful artistic transitions from period to period. So, while we see a distinct shift around 600 CE. It may be inferred that the architectural style is shifted from Hindu to Buddhist activities. The similar style of the late sixth century Hindu and early seventh century Buddhist cave temples suggest that the same artisans shifted from one end of the site to the other. They were also set at work by a new set of patrons. This physical continuity illustrates the power of the tirtha to attract patrons, resources and artisans. This further resulted in creation of a cultural and economic momentum that carried over into a Buddhist phase not connected in any doctrinal way to the Hindu basis of the tirtha.

There was a parallel and inter-related growth of temple architecture in the cities of the Chalukyas and the Pallavas. The developments of style and the Dravidian idiom stems from the same school of craftsmanship. It draws the same point of origin illustration of migration of design across vast distances reaching the Deccan ruled by the Raśtrakuta dynasty. The Raśtrakuta consisting of several closely related but individual clans ruled large parts of southern, central and northern India between the sixth and the thirteenth centuries. The earliest known Raśtrakuta inscription is a seventh century copper plate grant that mentions their rule from the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh. Several conflicting claims exist regarding the origin of early Rastrakutas, their native place and their language. The clan that ruled from Elichpur was a feudatory of the Badami Chalukyas and during the rule of Dantidurga, it overthrew Chalukya Kirtivarman II and went on to build an impressive empire with the Gulbarga.

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74 Malndra, Geri H., op. cit., p. 23.
75 Ibid, pp. 4-5.
region in modern Karnataka as its base.\(^{79}\) This clan came to be known as the Raśtrakutas of Mayakheta, rising to power in South India in 753. During their peak reign, the Raśtrakutas of Manyakheta ruled a vast empire stretching from Ganga and Yamuna doab in the north to Cape Comorin in the South.\(^{80}\) Their political expansion corresponded to an impressive period of architectural achievements.\(^{81}\) The gigantic monolithic Kailaśa temple at Ellora is one of the most spectacular and awesome accomplishments of the multifaceted Raśtrakuta kings in India.\(^{82}\)

![Figure 4: A View of Shore Temple of Mahabalipuram](image)

**Figure 4:** A View of Shore Temple of Mahabalipuram  
**Courtesy:** American Institute of Indian Studies, Gurgaon

The Raśtrakuta ruler who numbered 23 in succession ruled Maharashtra and the adjoining territories from 570 to 974 CE. Some of them are in followings:\(^{83}\)

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\(^{82}\) *Ibid*, 108

\(^{83}\) Dawne, S. G., *op. cit.*, p. 6
1. Nannarja Yudhasu (630-650)
2. Govindraja (690-730)
3. Karaka I (710-730)
4. Dantidurga Khadgavaloka (745-56)
5. Shubhatunga Krishnaraja or Krishna I (756-775)
6. Dhruva Dharvarsha (780-793)
7. Amoghvarsha I (814-880)
8. Karka II (972-974)

The Aurangabad District Gazetteer asserts that they were the Rajputs. The Rastrakuta ruler were tolerant in the religious matters. The opening verse in the Rastrakuta copperplates pays homage to both Śiva and Vishnu. Also at the site of Ellora, caves related to Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina are carved in the vicinity. Their seal is sometimes the eagle (garuda) the vehicle of Vishnu and sometimes in the posture of a seated Mahayogi in contemplation. The Rastrakutas were originally the natives of Latur in the present Osmanabad District in the Maharashtra State. Govindaraja was a staunch Shaivite while his successor Karka I was a Vaishnavite. A Sanskrit rock cut inscriptions in cave No. 15 at Ellora testifies that Dantidurga, a Śaiva, had visited this cave. Krishna I was mainly responsible for getting excavated the famous Kailaśa cave at Ellora and it was again he who had adorned the great Śivalinga enshrined therein with gold and jewel ornaments. Amoghavrsha I ruled for about 66 years. He was a great patron of Digambara Jainism. It can be said that the Rshtrakuta period was the most flourishing in the history of Jainism. Therefore, Digambara Jain caves at Ellora can be attributed to later Rastrakuta ruler.

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84 Gazetteer of Aurangabad, op. cit., p.294.
85 Altaker, A. S., op. cit., pp. 8-12.
87 Altaker, A. S. op. cit., 76-77.
Review of Literature:

In the study of the Ellora most scholars have confined their approached to the study of chronology, pillar and other design elements, iconography and the spirit of the art. While all these are legitimate concerns, they seems to sideline the scheme of genesis of monolithic architecture at Ellora.

The holistic vision of the artists encompassed the idea that the place was not only built as sacred spot but also was deemed a sacred place of royalty. Especially in Rastrakutas times, multiple models in the caves and monolithic styles were introduced from stage to stage, in caves of Western India which resulted in the natural grouping of the various creations.\(^8\)

Most of the western caves including Ellora, have been studied by several western scholars Indian and European. However, researches on Ellora are limited to research articles and few books. The first exhaustive work on Ellora was done by Dr. R. S. Gupte who wrote his thesis on the iconography of the

\(^8\) Rajan, K. V. Soundra, op. cit., p. 125.
Buddhist sculptures at Ellora and an earlier book on Buddhist, Jain and Hindu iconography at Ellora. There were several scholars worked on Ellora, including Charles Mallet, Thomas Daniell, John Seely, James Fergusson, James Burgess and R.G. Bhandarkar, Herman Getoz, Sengupta, M.K. Dhavlikar, K.V. Soundra Rajan, Walter Spink, Ratan Parimoo and Geri H. Malandara.

Ellora is the one of the most complex group of caves with a profusion of sculptures and architecture. An attempt had been made to study these caves exhaustively through a seminar in 1985 at Ellora with wide range of themes and different perspectives it came in a book form in 1988. 89

Because of multi-faceted aspect of the seminar no attempt was made for its systematic integration. Scholars to this day have been trying to achieve intellectual ownership of Ellora in different aspects of the art and architecture. The most exhaustive work on Ellora has been by K. V. Soundra Rajan. He has covered various aspects of the Ellora caves and even written a book on typology of Ellora monoliths. The book has inspired the present research work to bring out further work in the direction of tracing the genesis of the monolithic architecture at Ellora.90 The Kailaśa temple has been chosen as a reference point in this regard. Even writing Soundra Rajan has said about the Kailaśa temple, “How was it actually achieved? Much have been said about this, but it merits fresh scrutiny.”91

The way the work Spink has done for Ajanta, there is no such work on Ellora done by a single scholar, though attempts have been made but lack of consistency kept the work incomplete.

89 The proceeding of the seminar on Ellora was published in book form in 1988. Ratan Parimoo, Deepak Kannal and Shivaji Panikkar edited the papers of many scholars like M.N. Deshpande, Geri H. Malandra and others.

90 The book ‘The Ellora monoliths’ by K. V. Soundra Rajan has ample evidences of monoliths at Ellora and their architectural designs. The book talks about different aspects of cave temple architecture.

A progress on the studies of Ellora had started with the first full length descriptive work by Burgess and Fergusson. During the 1960’s proceeds a step further to Dr. Ramesh Gupte first full length work devoted completely to Ellora as an Iconographical study. The later work started including the study of social and political picture in those days. Michela Soar has gone to study the spiritual context of caves and writes on the puranic accounts and in the mahatmaya of Ellora does suggest the social/religious context of the tirtha.\(^{92}\) M. K. Dhavalikar in an article written during a seminar on Ellora, Kailaśa- A structural analysis also mention the tirtha and a Medieval Marathi story about the queen Manikavat and the king of Elāpura.\(^{93}\)

The previous work has been limited to the different aspects of monuments either it is structural or artistic, in this investigation I have tried to investigate e

**Genesis of Monolithic Architecture** at Ellora. Its methodology is driven by a primary question and its content by a series of related queries of the evolutionary process.

Regarding the evolution of Kailaśa temple, the indigenous origin of technique and methodology cannot be ignored. The ritual and formal importance of that culture which will be discussed in the following chapters. Instead, it acknowledges biases and usages to gain access to an aspect of Ellora which has not often been clarified in the scholarship about it.

The texts are devoted specifically to Ellora are less in numbers. It is normally considered in the general context of Indian temples. The works mentioning Ellora or which take the cave temples as their primary subject still lack the comprehensive theory. The aim of this study is not filling the gaps of this history by providing a theoretical base. In order to extend ideas about genesis of

\(^{92}\) Soar, Micaela *op. cit.*, pp. 102-03.

monolithic architecture at Ellora the current theme has been selected to work on the available sources.

The objects which constitute Ellora's physical existence are not only the supports for ritual or the frames for culture but also they exist individually. The artisans at Ellora made use of its picturesque setting for symbolic purposes. Most of the rock-cut cave shrines of Buddhist as well as Brahmanical religions are found in secluded and naturally stimulating environments. Interestingly, Ellora stands out with its major water fall and cascade to the south of the Dhumar Lena (cave 29) rising from and running over an upper slope of the hill. At present there is a running stream at the foot of the hill. This stream helps other streamlets in other parts of the hill slope to flow and enhances the natural appeal of the Ellora caves.

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94 Rajan, K. V. Soundra, _op. cit._, p. 129.