

Ajanta Cave Paintings

Special Project
Guide – Prof. Shilpa Ranade

Vaishnavi Bangar
126340006
M.Des (Animation and Film Making)
Industrial Design Centre
Indian Institute of Technology

APPROVAL SHEET

This Special Project entitled
Ajanta Paintings is approved in partial fulfillment of
the Master's Degree in Animation and Film Design.

Date:

Guide:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The project has been a helpful to my learning and experience in studying and understanding Ajanta paintings. My sincere gratitude to my guide Prof. Shilpa Ranade for giving me the opportunity. I thank my friends and family for being supportive all the time and making it successful.

DECLARATION

I declare that this written submission represents my ideas in my own words and where other ideas or words have been included have adequately cited and referenced the original sources.

I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misinterpreted or fabricated or falsified any data/idea/fact/source in my submission. I understand that any violation of the above will be cause for disciplinary action by the institute and also evoke penal action from the sources which have thus not been properly cited or from whom proper permissions has not been taken when needed.

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ABSTRACT

Ajanta paintings are the paintings of Ajanta Cave are situated in the district of Aurangabad in the state of Maharashtra. The paintings depict scenes from Jataka tales and the life of Lord Buddha. In the caves there are beautiful murals adorning the walls, ceiling and the pillars bear testimony to the versatility of ancient artistes. Caves were built from 2nd century B.C. to 6th century A.D under various kingdoms.

Introduction

An Overview,

Ajanta is situated in Aurangabad district in Maharashtra, India. It is the home to rock cut Buddhist cave, which is built from 2nd century B.C. to 6th century A.D., under various kingdoms. Ajanta is known for the unique architecture, paintings and sculptures. Here, for the Buddhist monks use to pray in Chaityas (chapels) and in Viharas they lived and taught. There are about 30 caves in which 9, 10, are stupa hall of chaityagrihas and 12, 13 and 15A are viharas and 19, 26 and 29 are chaityagrihas .In many caves there is detailed carvings on the walls, pillars and entrances as well as wall paintings.

The caves were constructed over a thousand years, started under the backing of Satvahana rulers in 2nd century B. C. during Thervada Buddhism (also known as Hinyana period) and were carried further by Vakarakas after a pause of 400 years. The later stage of the development was carried by the followers of Mahayana Buddhism, and is remarked as the Golden period of Ajanta. All paintings shows heavy religious influence and centre around Buddha, Bodhisattvas, incidents from the life of Buddha and the jatakas. The caves include paintings and sculptures, which are masterpieces of Buddhist religious art, with figures of the Buddha and depictions of the Jataka tales. The word Jatakas refer to a voluminous body of literature native to India concerning the previous births of the Buddha. These are the stories that tell about the previous lives of the Buddha, in both human and animal form. The future Buddha may appear in them as a king, an outcast, a god, an elephant—but, in whatever form, he exhibits some worth that the tale thereby inspire.

In Ajanta the paintings and sculptures are as storehouse of information about the civilization of the period and tell us about their art, preparation of the ground, execution of painting with the sense of perspective, line, space – division, colour pallet and the pacing of the narrative being depicted. In the caves there is division of the art between ceiling and wall murals, into geometric design and narration. The pillar has been used as partition of the painting as story narration in a beautiful way. Ajanta painting influenced the religious art of the whole Asia. Through the paintings and sculptures they painted the life around them.

Painting Techniques

The basic painting techniques

First, the rough-stone surfaces were primed with a thick coating of paste made from clay, cow-dung, animal hair and vegetable fibre. Next, a finer layer of smooth white lime was applied. Before this was dry, the artists quickly sketched the outlines of their pictures using red cinnabar, which they then filled in with an undercoat of terre-verte. The pigments, all derived from natural water-soluble substances (kaolin chalk for white, lamp soot for black, glauconitic for green, ochre for yellow and imported lapis lazuli for blue), were thickened with glue and added only after the undercoat was completely dry. Thus the Ajanta paintings are not, strictly speaking, frescoes (always executed on damp surfaces), but tempera. Finally, once dry, the murals were painstakingly polished with a smooth stone to bring out their natural sheen. The artists' only sources of light were oil-lamps and sunshine reflected into the caves by metal mirrors and pools of water (the external courtyards were flooded expressly for this purpose), a constraint that makes their extraordinary mastery of line, perspective and shading – which endow Ajanta's paintings with their characteristic other-worldly light – all the more remarkable.

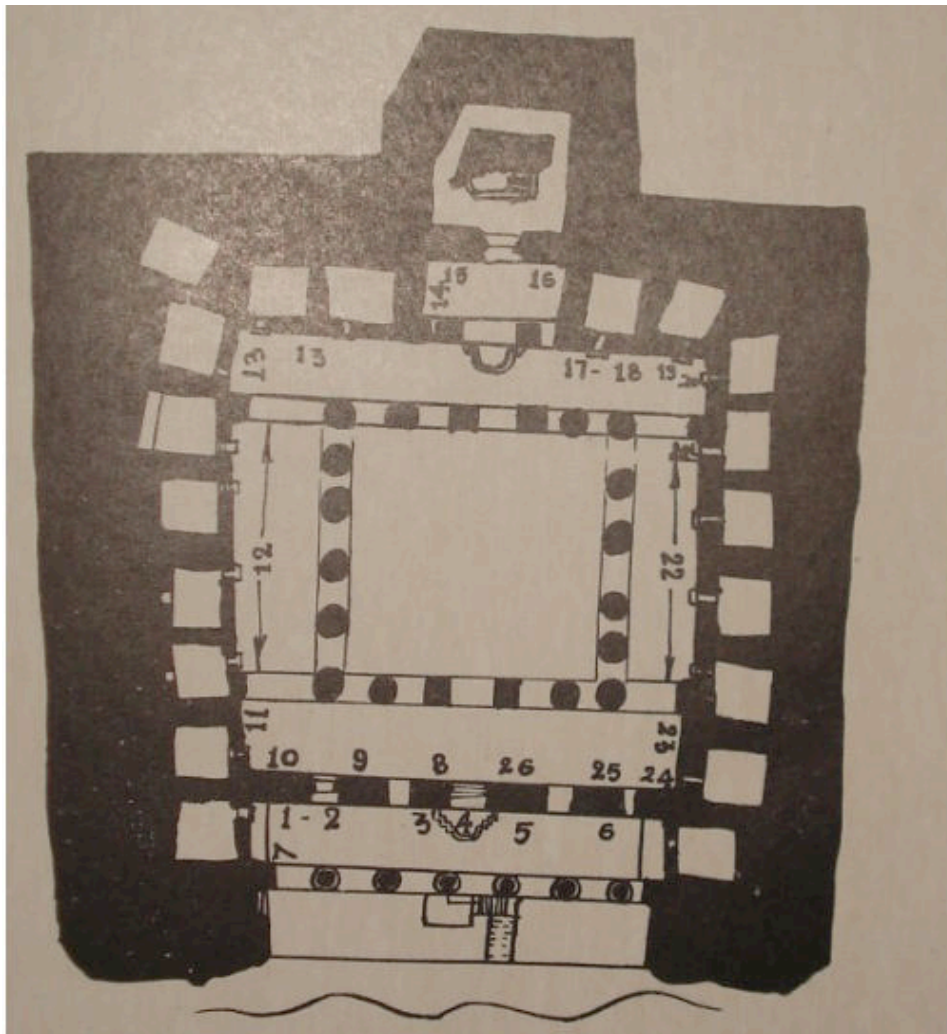
Paintings contain decorative and secular forms. They fill up all the available space on the ceiling, pillars, etc. by mythical birds, floral design, geometrical design and animals. Composition of the painting over the period is an interesting part. In these paintings narratives proceed from scene to scene and from act to act harmoniously.

The colours used for Ajanta painting were made from pebbles and vegetable. These were crushed and mixed with glue. The colour used in Ajanta paintings is a major medium. It helps to express the emotions and moods through manipulating colours, their density, tones, light, shades, tones etc.

Jataka Tales

Lisit of jataka paintings in Cave XVI at Ajanta

- 1.The Dream of queen Maya. 2.The Visit of the sage Asita
- 3.Siddhartha At school and his Practice of Archery.
- 4.Scenes from the life of the Buddha; the four signs.
- 5.The Offering of Trapusha and Bhallika: The Offering of Sujata
- 6.The Buddha Preaching to The Congregation.
- 7.The Visit of Ajatasatru to the Buddha
- 8.Flying Apsarases; the Buddha in the teaching attitude.
- 9.The Manushi Buddha's.
- 10.The Buddha's Visit to Kapilavastu: nanda's Coronation:
His Conversion.
- 11.Dying Sundari.
- 12.The Maha-Ummagga Jataka.
- 13.The Hasti jataka.
- 14.The Buddha Preaching in Tishita heaven.



List of jataka paintings in Cave XVII at Ajanta

- 1.Scences from the Visbantara Jataka.
- 2.Flying Indra And Apsarases adoring the Buddha.
- 3.Flying Indra And Apsarases.
- 4.The Manushi Buddha.
- 5.Gangharvas And Apsarases adoring the Buddha.
- 6.The Taming of the Furious Elephant Nalagiri.
- 7.The Wheel of Samsara.
- 8.The Shad-danta jataka.
- 9.The Mahakapi jataka.
- 10.The Hasti Jataka.
- 11.The Hamsa Jataka.
- 12.The Visvantara Jataka
- 13.The sutasoma Jataka
- 14.The Buddha preaching in the Tushita Heaven.
- 15.The Buddha Yasodhara And Rahuta.
- 16.The Miracle at Sravasti.
- 17.The Sarabha jataka.
- 18.The Matri-Poshaka Jataka.
- 19.The Maatsya jataka.
- 20.The Syama jataka.
- 21.The Mahisha jataka.
- 22.The Simhalavadana.
- 23.The Sibi jataka.
- 24.The Mriga jataka.
- 25.The Riksha Jataka.
- 26.The Nvaarodha-mriaa Jataka.

Symbolism in Ajanta painting

In Ajanta painting the posture of the human figure is resemble to the shape of leaf, flower, and animal figure. Bodhisattva Padma-pani's divine face has the shape of egg, shoulders are like massive domed, head of an elephant and arms like tapered trunk and hands are like flower bud. Women are in different postures mostly elegant poses. The gesture, postures of the body and face expression express the feelings. In painting will see mostly front and $\frac{3}{4}$ profile of the human figures.



Mudras of the Buddha

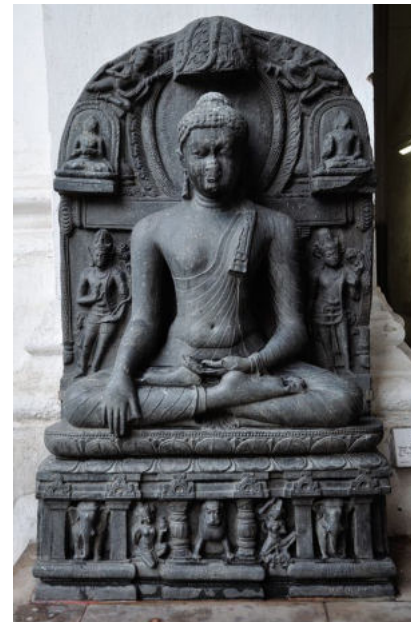
Mudras are non-verbal way of communication and self – expression, consisting of hand gestures and figure postures. Based on finger patterns they are symbolic sign. Compositions of mudras are based on highly stylized forms of gesture communication and it is an external expression of inner resolve and they are more powerful than spoken words. It gives significance to a sculpture, a dance moment or a meditative pose. And these mudras have invisible forces magical art of symbolical gestures through which the invisible forces may operate on the earthly sphere. There is interpretation of each fingers with one of the five element are sky, wind, water, fire and earth. These are five mudras of the Buddha

Dharmachakra Mudra

(The Wheel of the teaching of the Dharma-The middle finger represents the 'hearers' of the teachings The ring finger represents the 'solitary realizers' The Little finger represents the Mahayana or 'Great Vehicle'.)



Bhumisparsha Mudra



(Symbolizes the Buddha's enlightenment under the bodhi tree, the union of method and wisdom.)

Abhaya Mudra



(a gesture of life within, reflecting into our external life.)

Dhyana Mudra



(The Dhyana mudra is the mudra of meditation, of concentration on the Good law, and of the attainment of spiritual perfection)

Varada Mudra



(The five extended fingers in this mudra symbolize the following five perfections: Generosity, Morality, Patience, Effort and Meditative concentration)



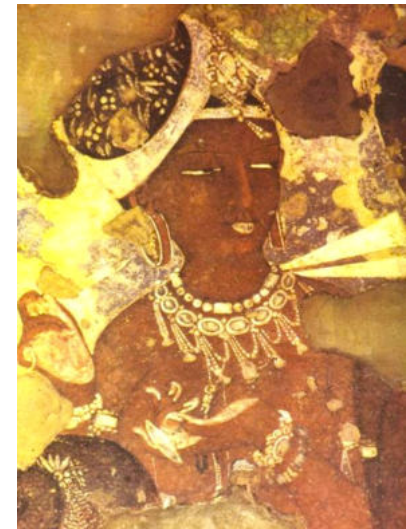
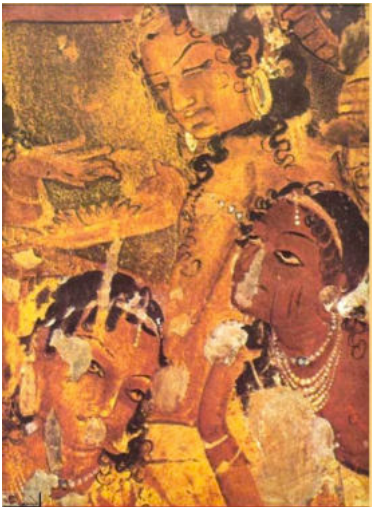
Source: Ulrich Von Schroeder, The Golden Age of Sculpture in Sri Lanka, 1992, p. 134

<p>ABHAYA assuring protection</p>	<p>VARADA bestowing a favour</p>	<p>AHAYA VARADA beckoning to bestow</p>	<p>KATAKA MUKHA holding a flower</p>
<p>KARTARI MUKHA fingers held like scissors to hold a weapon</p>	<p>KATYA VALAMBITA making a gesture a little below the waist to signal the easing of sorrow</p>	<p>LOLA going freely</p>	<p>SUCHI or TARJANI designating by name or inspiring terror.</p>
<p>VISMAYA suggesting astonishment</p>	<p>CINMUDRA instruction by silence of contemplation</p>	<p>AÑJALI adoration</p>	<p>DANDA HASTA gesture of Shiva indicating that the devotee should seek refuge under his lifted foot.</p>

Mudras

Portray of Women in Ajanta paintings

Women of Ajanta paintings has painted the whole range of women characters like ladies of court and their maids, dancers, common women in their house hold areas. The women have given full scope for expression of creative genius for the Ajanta artist. We can see that artist had reproduce the soft roundness of her breasts, the curves of her hips, turn of her head, gestures of her hands and glance of her eyes. The heroines of Ajanta paintings are depicted naked and while all the others in the same scene are fully clothed and usually maids are in fully cloths. They also had wear lots of jewelry. In Ajanta painting heroines are dark complexioned and it is an attractive complexion of skin.





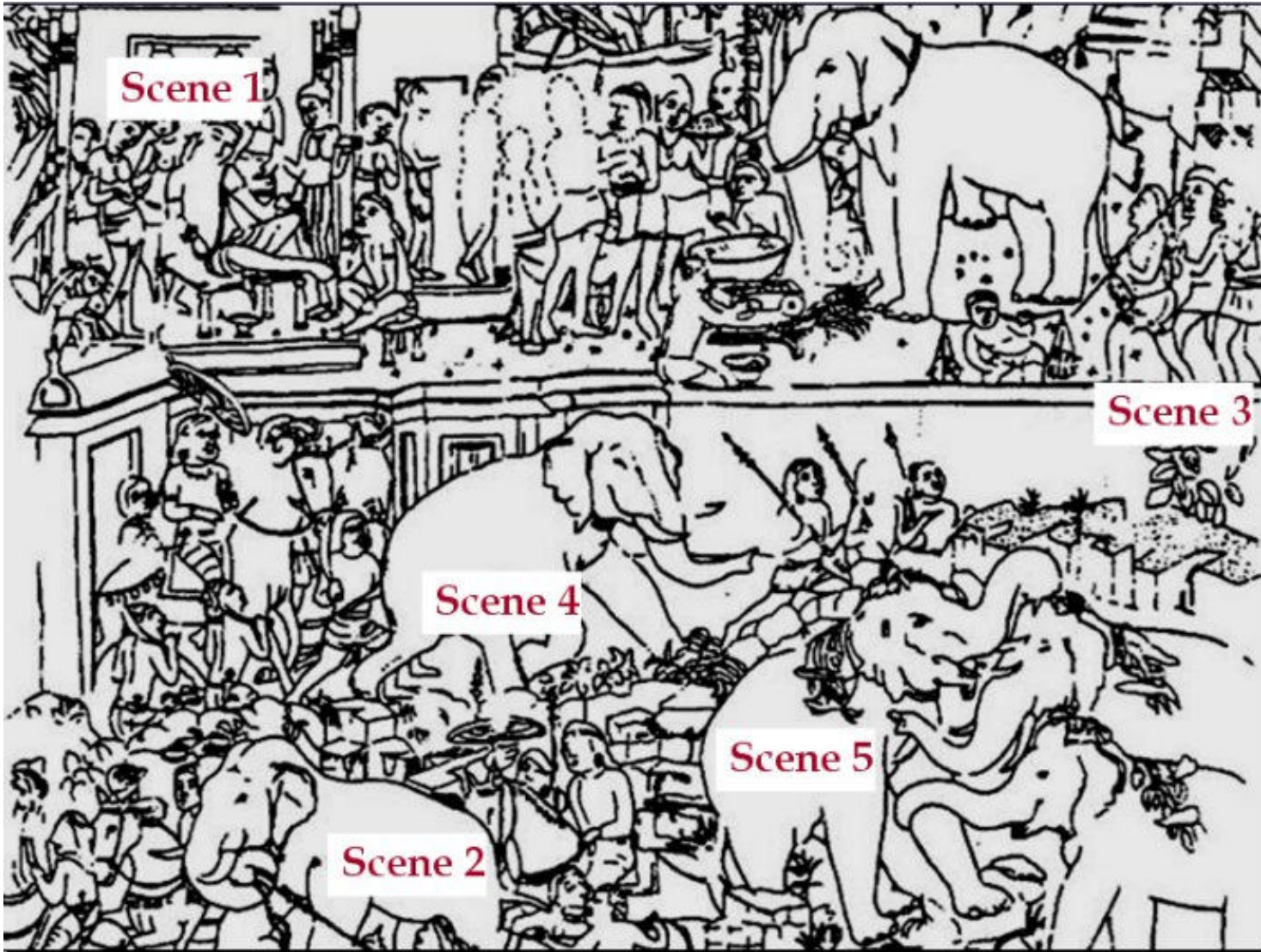
Composition of Ajanta paintings

Composition of the painting over the period is an interesting study

In earlier phase i.e. in 2nd – 1st century B.C. narration is in the form of long canvass and was at eye level, progressing from episode to episode.

In later phase i.e. in 4th century AD onwards paintings were overspread the entire surface of the wall. In these paintings narratives proceed from scene to scene and from act to act. The scenes are not separated into frames that might disturb the concentration of the viewing devotees. In this times there was no chronology of events was not followed. In many panels scenes are grouped according to the location of the scenes.

Example Matriposhaka Jataka. – In this jataka Bodhisattva born as Matri-poshaka a white elephant lives in a forest taking care of his blind parents. Once the elephant rescues a man and request him not to tell his presence to anyone.



Scene 1

Scene 3

Scene 4

Scene 5

Scene 2

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