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Research Paper

A Study of Jatak Tale of Ajintha Caves Painting

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ABSTRACT

Ajantha a world Heritage houses an ancient Buddhist monastery that developed across two phases the satavahana phase (Late 3rd c BCT- 1st CBCE) and the vakataka Phase (CA 462-480 CE) it has preserved some of the finest examples of ancient rock-cut art architecture and material culture.

INTRODUCTION:

The western Ghats of the Deccan plateau are bedrocks of ancient history and art, deep in the Sahyadri range of the Ghats lies the Sahyadri range, housing the rock-cut caves of Ajanta the Ghats Characteristic of the Deccan Plateau lent themselves for the excavation of humorous sangharamas (Lodging of the Buddhist Community) Even Hindus and Jains selected them for cave dwelling and cave temples. Many sangharams have not survived time which was made with less resilient media like brick wood or stone.

The Ajanta caves were named after Ajintha a herby village in Aurangabad district of the western state of Maharashtra in India the caves are located about 62 km from Jalgaon and 100 km from the district of Aurangabad.

This district is home to more rock-cut cave sites namely Banoti, Ghatotkacha, Bhokardan, Aurangabad, Ellora and Pitalkhora, they are at a distance of 65 km, 40 km, 60km, 100 km, 130 km ancient Buddhist texts relate that the Buddha had directed the monks to dwell neither too far nor too near the city. That is why such recessed spots, often near a waterfall, were chosen near trade routes or human settlements this allowed the monks to maintain a distance from worldly life as well as be close enough for their daily rounds of begging for alms. The caves were primarily meant for the Annual rainy season (Varsavasa in Sanskrit and Vassava in Pali)

The caves are numbered 1-29 all belonging to the Buddhist faith however this numbering has nothing to do with the sequence of excavation. The caves are generally described under two conventional nomenclatures: The 'Hinayana' phase and the Mahayana phase during the earlier phase the region fell in the kingdom of the powerful Satavahana rulers so the earlier group of caves 9, 10, 12, 13, 15(A) be called as the Satavahana period caves'. The latter group of caves was excavated when the region was being governed by the powerful Vakataka dynasty with maximum territorial control during late fifth century.

Ajanta caves are classified in two categories: Citygrha and vihara (ignoring the Buddha image) carved on the stupas as in caves 19, 26) earlier caves provision/Aims. Only for dormitories but were begun to be converted as temples.

Even inscriptional evidence would disapprove of the classification as 'caityagras' and 'Viharas' consider for example the fact that the temples termed 'Viharas' caves 16 and 17 in contrast to the 'caityagras' caves 9, 10, 19 and 26

have been called 'Caityamandiram' and 'Munirajacaityam' in cave 17) inscription these edifices (Caves 16 and 17 have Buddha Shrines not the stupas shrines combine with this the seldom noticed evidence that some of the Buddha shrines were ultimately being added with stupas at the rear of the images as in caves 1 and 11

NARRATIVE WALL PAINTINGS

Bhagavatprasuti – (The Birth of the enlightened one)

Bodhisattva in conversation with the gods of Tusita Heaven is planning his last birth in samsara (Cave-2) when the time had come for the Bodhisattva to have his last re-birth after that he went to the Assembly of the gods and informed them about when, where and how he would take his last birth on earth. Then on a full moon night he took the form of a young white, six tusked elephant. The queen Maya wife of king Sudhodana of Kapilavastu saw this sequence in her dreams and related it to her husband in the morning. On the king's request the Brahmins interpreted the queen's dream saying she would give birth to a son who would become either a universal monarch or an enlightened Buddha the king pleased by this prediction offered presents to the needy people in his city. A place was built by the deities so that the queen could stay there during her pregnancy she neither suffered physical or mental anxieties associated with women her state nor did she feel lust for man the Bodhisattva in her womb as the time for delivery neared Maya requested her husband to send her to Lumbini park where she could enjoy nature in full bloom. The king arranged her trip and she left in a chariot with a number of attendants in the grove she found a fig tree decorated with clothes and pearls as soon as she held a branch of that tree with her right arm the Bodhisattva appeared from the right side of her body then Indra and Brahma appeared. Received the infant and covered him with a divine silk cloth when the Bodhisattva stood on the ground two Naga Kings Nanda and Upananda emerged from the earth with a flow of warm and cold water to cleanse the Bodhisattva then the Bodhisattva opened his divine eyes looked over the world took seven steps in all directions and announced his mission though the queen's body was clean and intact ponds of water and fragrant oil materialized before her with heavenly girls to serve her one week after the Bodhisattva's birth the queen died and the infant was taken to Kapilavastu and handed over to his aunt the Bodhisattva was to be offered to the gods according to custom as soon as Sudhodana entered the temples with the gods moved from their respective positions and fell at the Bodhisattva's feet to

worship him.

Bhuridatta :- (Cave-2)

A Naga king sent his representatives to propose to the daughter of the king of Banaras but the king was not agreeable to the concept of a human Naga union later he agreed on the condition that the Nagas would not harm anybody after marriage the princess gave birth to four sons her second son, Bhuridatta was not satisfied in his magnificent palace and departed with the avowed aim of practicing asceticism so that he could be born in Indras heaven he suffered many hardship because of evil Brahmins finally he was brought back to his palace by his relatives where he exposed the futility of sacrifices and rituals performed by Brahmins and shed light on their caste – related hubris.

Sibi-Kapota :- (Cave-I)

When lord Indra complained about the imperfections of human beings his architect Visvakarma drew his attention to king sibi who was an archetype of justice and compassion to test sibi Indra asked Visvakarma to assume a pigeon's (Kapota) appearance while he became a falcon chasing the pigeon. When the king granted a word of protection to the pigeon the falcon argued for his right to the prey. Complaining that he would otherwise die of hunger the king known for this justice announced that he could sacrifice his own body to save the life of the pigeon then the king chopped off a portion of his own flesh as much as the weight of the pigeon on the balance. However Indra as pigeon kept on increasing his weight. The king too continued cutting more and more flesh from his body to match the weight when this was not enough, king sibi attempted to offer his whole body on one side of the balance there upon Indra and Visavakarma assumed their original forms and explained the scenario the king was given back his original body. (Cave-1)

Maravijaya :-

Indra disguised as a grass-cutter, offered a bundle of straw to the Bodhisattva who had reached the stage just before the enlightenment the Buddha first sat in the Vajrasana posture then Paryankan Buddha (Crossed lagged) he decide to remain in this position till he achieved the enlightenment meanwhile Mara the ruler of the world of sensuality was hell-bent on making the Bodhisattva and other human beings permanent prisoners of sensuality.

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