

The world famous paintings at Ajanta also fall into two broad phases:

The first is noticed in form of fragmentary specimens in Cave 9 and 10, which are datable to second century B.C. The headgear, ornaments of the images in these painting resemble the bas-relief sculpture of Sanchi and Bharhut. The second phase of paintings started around 5th- 6th centuries A.D. and continued for the next two centuries. The example of these exemplary paintings of Vakataka period could be noticed in cave nos. 1, 2, 16 and 17.



Damsel with mirror, Cave 17

The subject matter of the paintings deals with various *Jatakas* (the story related to previous births of Buddha as *Bodhisattva*) they also depict important events from the miracles performed by Buddha and various floral and faunal motifs, geometrical designs and various other motifs suggest the forceful brushstrokes and firmness of the outlines. The important paintings associated with the life of Buddha can be seen at Cave 1 (Miracles of Sravasti, manifestation of Buddha into thousand forms), Cave 2 (Birth of Buddha), Cave 16 (Conversion of Nanda), Cave 17 (Subjugation of Nalagiri, the instigated elephant; Buddha preaching at Tusita heaven; Buddha's visit to Kapilavastu and meeting his wife Yasodhara and son Rahula).



Interior of Cave 26, Ajanta

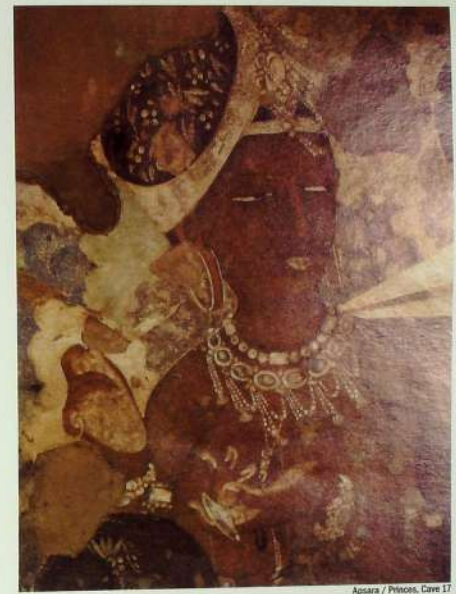
The important Jataka stories can be seen at Cave 1 (Sibi, Hamsa, mahajanaka Jataka); Cave 2 (Vidhurapandita Jataka), Cave 10 (Sibi, Chhaddanta Jataka); Cave 17 (Chhaddanta, Mahakapi, Hamsa, Mahaummaga, Matripasaka, Mahisa, Matsya, Mriga Jatakas). Apart from the painted representations of events from Buddha's life, sculptural panels of the Great Departure (Buddha leaving Kapilavastu, Cave 1), Miracle of Sravasti (Cave 7), Buddha visiting Kapilavastu (Cave 19), and Subjugation of Mara, Mahaparinirvana (Cave 26) are also well represented. The most famous paintings however are the representation of Bodhisattva Padmapani and Vajrapani (Cave 1), flying apsara, toilet scene (Cave 17) etc.



Mahaparinirvana, Cave 26, Ajanta

The group of caves is inscribed by the UNESCO as a **WORLD HERITAGE MONUMENT** in 1983.

E-mail: circleaur.asi@gmail.com
Website: www.asiaurangabad.in



Apsara / Princess, Cave 17

AJANTA CAVES



Archaeological Survey of India
Aurangabad Circle, Bibi-ka-Makbara, Aurangabad

Cave Opening Hours: 0900 to 1730 hrs
Entry Fees:

For Citizen of India & SAARC & BIMSTEC countries Citizens (Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri-Lanka, Afghanistan, Maldives, Pakistan, Thailand, Myanmar)Rs. 10/- per person
For Foreign Citizen of other countries.....Rs. 250/- per person
Children of the age of fifteen years or below are admitted free.
Approach: Nearest Airport- Aurangabad 110 km.
Nearest Rail Station- Jalgaon 40 km



Cave 1, Ajanta Caves

Ajanta Caves (75° 40' N; 20° 30' E) caves are called after a nearest village by name Ajanta, located about 12 km from the caves. These caves were noticed by an Army Officer of the Madras Regiment of the British Army in 1819 during one of his hunting expeditions. These caves were excavated in horse-shoe shaped bend of rock surface nearly 76 m in height overlooking a narrow stream known as Waghora. The caves were excavated in different periods (circa. 2nd century B.C. to 6th century A.D.) according to the necessity.



Cave 1, Pillar Capital showing four deer with common head

In all 30 caves are hewn out of the living rock including an unfinished one. Out of these, five (cave no. 9, 10, 19, 26, and 29) are *chaityagrihas* and the rest are *viharas*. In date and style also these caves can be divided into two broad groups. The earliest excavations belong to the Hinayana phase of Buddhism consisting 5 caves belong to this phase out of the 30 caves, viz., cave No. 9 and 10 which are *chaityagrihas* and 8, 12, 13, and 15A which are *viharas*. These caves are datable to the pre-Christian era, the earliest among them being Cave 10 dating from the second century B.C. where the object of worship is a stupa. These caves are imitation of contemporary wooden



Decorated Pillar Capital, Cave 2

constructions even to the extent of fixing of wooden rafters and beams even though they are non-functional

The period of Vakatakas, the contemporaries of the Imperial Guptas was a vibrant phase responsible for most magnificent creations at Ajanta. These were caused to be excavated by the royal family and also the feudatories owing allegiance to the Vakatakas.



Mahajanaka Jatak, Cave 1

Varahadeva, the minister of Vakataka king Harishena (475-500 A.D.) dedicated Cave 16 to the Buddhist Sangha while Cave 17 was the gift of a prince Upendragupta.



Story of Krishnauddayan in Cave 17, Ajanta



Cave 19, Ajanta Caves

A flurry of activity at Ajanta was between mid-5th century A.D. to mid-6th century A.D. Hieun Tsang, the famous Chinese traveller who visited India during the first half of 7th century A.D. has left a vivid and graphic description of the flourishing Buddhist establishment. A solitary Rashtrakuta inscription in cave no. 26 indicates its use during 8th-9th centuries A.D. The second phase departs from the earlier one with the introduction of new pattern in layout as well as the centrality of Buddha image, both in sculpture as well as in paintings.