

Cave 7.

It is the best monastery (12.17X17.55m) in the second group datable to circa 7th-8th century CE. This monastery belongs to Vajrayana faith. The monastery has a clusters of sculptures, which are the best specimens of Aurangabad Caves. The monastery consists of a pillared verandah flanked by pillared chapel, square sanctum in the centre, surrounded by a circumambulating passage with three cells on each side and two in back. The cells at the rear end of the circumambulatory passage as well as the sanctum consists of a sculpture of a Lord Buddha seated on a lion throne in *dharmachakrapravartan mudra*.

The pillared chapel in the verandah has a panel of Hariti-Panchika on the east and six Buddhist standing goddesses preceded by Padmapani and Buddha on the west. The entrance door of the verandah has Avalokiteshvara as savior from the *astamahabhay* (the eight great perils).

On either side of the sanctum entrance, Buddhist female deities are carved along with their attendants. Inside of the sanctum, on the western wall is a beautiful composition of a dancing female in the midst of seated female musicians playing different musical instruments. The square pillars are beautifully carved with foliage, geometrical designs, dwarfs at corners and couples in the circles.



Entrance of the Monastery, Cave no. 7

Cave 8-8a.

This is the only double storey excavation amongst all the caves in Aurangabad. It was intended to be a double storey monastery but the work was stopped after excavating a cell in upper floor. Both floors were left unfinished due to the limitations imposed by porous nature of rocks. The upper floor consists of similar Buddha panel. Due to unavailability of proper plan and sculptures, it is difficult to fix the date of excavation. This cave gives us an idea of the processes involved in excavating a cave.

Cave 9.

It consists of two excavations, which are marked as 9 and 9a, both of which are incomplete. Cave 9 (21.10 m X 26.80 m) is unique with three sanctum complexes approached from an oblong verandah. This cave belongs to the Vajrayana faith. The central sanctum consists of an antechamber fronted by a pillared verandah with two unfinished cells. All the sanctums house the figures of Lord Buddha in *dharmachakrapravartan mudra* and the doorway is guarded by serpent figures. The walls of the cave contain large figures of Buddhist deities. These figures with striking headdresses, big earlobes and

necklaces are carved gracefully. On the western wall of the verandah, a Buddha image is carved in *mahaparinirvana* (16 feet long). The square pillars are devoid of ornamentation.



General View, Group 2

Third Group.

The third group of Cave No. 10, 11 & 12 is located at the far end of the hill on the northern side, about 1 km from the second group. Cave 10 and 11 are unfinished cells and are totally dilapidated. Cave 12 is a vihara, consisting of an open facade with niches on both sides, a pillared verandah with 5 cells on both ends and a main shrine with incomplete circumambulatory passage. The authors and period of the third group is difficult to establish in the absence of any identifiable feature. There is no proper access to these caves.

The Aurangabad Caves present a glorious chapter of the Buddhist faith which was on the way to decline after 7th century CE in India. The famous Buddhist settlements at Ajanta and Ellora had vanished or were in a stage of declining. This period of Buddhism witnessed rise of Tantrism which is known as Vajrayana. This included increased set of gods and goddesses, complex rituals and elaborate esoteric canonical texts. This fact was also reflected in art and architecture. There are very few examples recording Vajrayana faith of Buddhism in western Indian rock cut architecture and Aurangabad group of Cave is one such shining example. The surviving form of Buddhism today in the world is largely based on Vajrayana faith of Buddhism. In this context the art and architecture at Aurangabad Caves have universal value.

Archaeological Survey of India has declared these caves as the monument of national importance vide notification No. LXXI of 1951, dated 28-11-1951.



Nearest Airport – Aurangabad 13 Km.

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

Contact no: 0240-2400620;

My heritage my pride

Come forward to save our glorious heritage



A lady dancer along with musicians, Cave no. 7

AURANGABAD CAVES

Archaeological Survey of India

Aurangabad Circle, Aurangabad

2023

Opening Hours : 6.00 to 18.00 hrs.

Entry Fee:

For citizen of India, SAARC & BIMSTEC countries (Citizens of Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri-Lanka, Afghanistan, Maldives, Pakistan, Thailand & Myanmar) – Rs. 25/- (on line Rs. 20/- Only) per person. For Citizens of other countries – Rs. 300/- (on line Rs. 250/- only) Per person. Children of the age of 15 years or below are admitted free.

वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्

ONE EARTH • ONE FAMILY • ONE FUTURE

The Aurangabad Caves in Aurangabad, Maharashtra (Lat. 19° 55' 01.91" N; Long. 75° 18' 41.76"E) situated in the eastern extension of the Sahyadri hills on the northern periphery of the city, are three groups of caves separated by each other by a distance of nearly one kilometer. All caves belong to the Buddhist faith. The third group is left unfinished and more over appear to be natural caves and these are inaccessible. In all there are 12 Buddhist caves (1 *chaityagriha* and 2 *viharas*) which fall into three separate groups. The first group consists of caves no. 1 to 5, the second from Cave No. 6 to 9 and third group from Cave No. 10 to 12. The caves are datable from circa 3rd century CE to 7th century CE.

Cave 1.

This is an incomplete excavation (18.95 m X 23.16 m) datable to circa 6th century CE. It was intended to be a large pillared monastery but the work was stopped due to inferior quality of rocks. The cave has four pillars forming a portico in front of the *verandah* and supporting an overhanging rock mass.

The facade wall is pierced with windows, door and an elaborate central portal. The door-frame shows Nagas on both sides accompanied by their consorts acting as *dvarpalas* or 'door keepers'. The window frames are decorated with amorous couples and abstract linear designs. The special feature of the cave are its beautifully carved pillars with foliage, leaves, geometrical designs, dwarfs at corners and the brackets figures. It has Buddha panels flanked by Padmapani, Vajrapani and a stela in high relief depicting seven mortal Buddhas in *dhammachakrapravartan mudra*.



Pillared Monastery, Cave no. 1

Cave 2.

It is a small excavation (13.65 m X 6.45 m) belonging to circa 5th century CE and dedicated to Mahayana Buddhism. On plan, the cave resembles the contemporary structural temple which is rare in rock-cut examples.

The cave consists of a *verandah* and *pradakshinapath* surrounding the square sanctum which houses a figure of Lord Buddha seated in *dhammachakrapravartan mudra* on *simhasana* or lion throne. On either side, over the head of Buddha small figures are seen floating on clouds, carrying garlands and food for offerings. This panel was once painted little of which has survived. On either side of the sanctum door way, gigantic figures of Avalokiteshvara and Maitreya Buddha hold *buddha-dhvaja* (Banner of Buddha). The walls of the sanctum, circumambulatory wall and porch are relieved with various figures of Lord Buddha in *dhammachakrapravartan mudra*.



Attendants outside the Sanctum of Cave no. 2

Cave 3.

The Mahayana Cave (24.60 m X 19.10 m) is the grandest monastery of the first group datable to circa 5th century CE. It consists of a pillared verandah with a chamber at each end, a hypo style hall with two cells and one pillared chapel at each side and a pillared antechamber leading to a sanctum at the back.

The interior of the sanctum presents a most spectacular tableau with groups of devotees kneeling on the floor with folded hands facing Lord Buddha who sits in a *dhammachakrapravartan mudra*, attended by bejeweled Bodhisattva on either side. The door-frame of the sanctum consists amorous figures in small panels and *Nagas* acting as guards. The fluted square pillars are decorated with beautifully carved foliage, geometrical designs, dwarfs at corners and amorous couples in the circle. This cave is the only example in western India where a *Jataka* story is presented by stone carving.

Cave 4.

It is a Hinayana *chaityagriha* (10.25 m X 6.75 m) datable to circa 3rd century CE. It has a rectangular hall with an apsidal arrangement of pillars (broken) dividing the hall into nave and side aisles. The high cylindrical drum and its bulbous dome are placed at the rear end of the hall. The roof of the *chaitya* is vaulted and shows wooden design. The tri-forum above the pillars is divided into panels, which probably contained paintings that are missing now.



Hinayana *chaityagriha*, Cave no. 4

Cave 4 (a).

This cave belongs to Mahayana faith. In 1977, the Archaeological Survey of India discovered a Buddha image, carved directly into the living rock, which had been hidden buried in the debris between cave 4 and 5. It appears to have been carved in the style of the 5th century CE. The sculpture of Lord Buddha depicts him as seated on a lion throne in *dhammachakrapravartan mudra* flanked by Bodhisattvas.

Cave 5.

It is a small Mahayana monastery (7.70 m X 11.17 m) datable to circa 5th century CE. The facade is now missing but the available remains indicate that must have been there a cell at either end. On plan the sanctum resembles the contemporary structural temple which is rare in rock-cut examples.

The sanctum surrounded by a circumambulatory pathway houses an image of Lord Buddha in meditation (*dhyana-mudra*) flanked by Avalokiteshvara and Maitreya Buddha on either side, holding fly-whisks. On either sides are flying figures carrying garlands. The facade wall is also decorated with the number of panels of Lord Buddha accompanied by attendants.



General View, Group 1

Cave 6.

It has (17.50 m X 17.70 m) the combined character of a monastery and a temple, datable to circa 7th-8th century CE. This monastery belongs to Vajrayana faith, which introduced various deities in Buddhism. The pillared *verandah* (broken) consists of a sanctum with its antechamber in the centre, surrounded by a passage with cells on each side and two in the back. The Buddha image in the square sanctum is in *dhammachakrapravartan mudra* accompanied by kneeling devotees.

Eastern groups consists only of women patrons. Lord Buddha flanked by Bodhisattvas with fly-whisks and flying couples are shown holding garlands and food for offering. The sanctum is guarded by gigantic figures of Bodhisattvas accompanied by their attendants. The cells on the rear wall contain images of Lord Buddha and doorway flanked by Bodhisattvas. The *verandah* clearly shows some vestiges of painting with floral and geometrical designs.

Cave 6 (a).

This small cave was an attempt to combine the two religious faiths Buddhism and Hinduism. This cave was hidden under heavy debris for long and was exposed only recently. On the rear wall, the figure of Ganesha is flanked by the figures of Kali and Durga. A Saptamatrika panel with Virbhadrha Shiva standing gracefully is carved out on the western wall while the figure of Lord Buddha is carved in bold relief on the eastern wall.