

## 3

# Ajanta Caves

### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

Ajanta was a Buddhist settlement situated near Aurangabad in Maharashtra. It was discovered by some British soldiers. Some 29 caves have been cut from a horseshoe-shaped hillside. Paintings have been found in six of these caves. These caves are of two types viz. Chaityas and Viharas. Chaitya was a place for worship while the Vihara was the dwelling-place of the monks. The walls, ceiling and the front part of the Chaityas and Viharas are beautifully decorated with sculpture and painting. The themes of these art-works are based on Buddhist scriptures, and mainly the stories of Jataka.

The technical methods of Ajanta paintings is tempera. A rough mud Plaster, containing cowdung and animal hair was first pressed on the rocks. A coat of fine lime plaster was laid over it. The colour was applied after the ground was completely dry.

### 3.1 OBJECTIVES

After studying the lesson the learner will be able to:

- describe the arts of Ajanta caves;
- state the title of the enlisted wall paintings of Ajanta;
- explain the technique, method, size and style of these paintings;
- describe the characteristic features of Ajanta cave paintings.





*Padmapani Bodhisattva*



### 3.2 PADMAPANI BODHISATTVA

<i>Title</i>	-	<i>Padmapani Bodhisatva</i>
<i>Medium</i>	-	<i>Tempera on wall</i>
<i>Date</i>	-	<i>Late 5th C.A.D.</i>
<i>Finding site</i>	-	<i>Ajanta cave No 1</i>
<i>Size</i>	-	<i>5' 9½"</i>
<i>Artist</i>	-	<i>Unknown</i>
<i>Place</i>	-	<i>Ajanta, Aurangabad, Maharashtra</i>

#### General Description

This painting is considered to be a masterpiece of Indian art. The slightly inclined posture gives the suggestion of grace. The elegant features of the face and downcast eyes give an impression of serene meditation and compassion. The ornamentation is very rationally done. He wears a pearl and sapphire necklace. He is holding a blue lotus in his right hand. The size of the figure is quite large.

#### INTEXT QUESTIONS (3.2)

Fill in the blanks

- It is called Padmapani because the figure is holding a .....
- The medium of this painting is .....
- It is found in cave no ..... of .....





*Mara-Vijaya*



### 3.3 MARA-VIJAY

<i>Title</i>	-	<i>Mara-Vijaya</i>
<i>Medium</i>	-	<i>Tempra on wall</i>
<i>Date</i>	-	<i>Gupta Vakataka 5th-6th century</i>
<i>Finding site</i>	-	<i>Ajanta cave No 1</i>
<i>Size</i>	-	<i>12' X 8'</i>
<i>Artist</i>	-	<i>Unknown</i>
<i>Place</i>	-	<i>Aurangabad, Maharashtra</i>

#### General Description

Theme of Mara-Vijaya narrates the story of the conquest on all the vices and temptation of the material world by Buddha during his meditation. In this painting, the defeat of the young women is shown, who tried to disturb the concentration of Buddha. The female figures are depicted in different postures and gestures of frustration and guilt feelings. The Ajanta painters were masters in portraying feminine emotions and elegance.

#### INTEXT QUESTIONS (3.3)

Choose the right answer

- (a) The story of conquering temptation by Buddha is known as -
- DigVijaya
  - Tapasya
  - Mara-Vijay
- (b) The Mara Vijaya Painting is found in
- Ajanta cave No 1
  - Ajanta cave No 2
  - Ajanta cave No 3
- (c) Size of this painting is
- 12'X20'
  - 10'X10'
  - 12'X8'



### 3.4 SUMMARY

Almost all the caves of Ajanta belong to the Vakataka period. The paintings in cave No 1 are of later date than cave No.9 and 10. Though the subjects of these paintings are religious, there is a keen interest in the common world. The main aim was to teach the basic principles of Buddhism through Jataka Stories.

Ajanta painters followed the traditional method of Indian wall painting. The principle colour in use were red, yellow, blue, white and green. All the colours were locally available. These paintings are basically linear, though the painters were masters in handling colour.

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### 3.5 ANSWERS OF INTEXT QUESTION

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- 3.2 (a) blue lotus (b) Tempera on wall (c) Cave no 1, Ajanta  
 3.3 (a) Mara Vijaya (b) Ajanta cave (c) 12'X8'
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### 3.6 MODEL QUESTIONS

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1. What do you know about Ajanta caves?
  2. Write a short note on the techniques of Ajanta paintings.
  3. Briefly assess the artistic achievements of Ajanta painters.
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### 3.7 GLOSSARY

Scriptures	-	religious writings.
Tempera	-	painting with pigments mixed with egg or other binder.
Sapphire	-	Blue gem.
Vakataka	-	A dynasty that ruled almost same times of the Guptas.
Jataka	-	Stories of Buddha's previous birth in different forms like animal, bird, plants etc.