

Painting holds a significant place among the diverse forms of fine arts. Even in the early stages of human civilization, painting served as a means for self-expression. As humans developed a connection with their environment and emotions, they instinctively turned to paintings as a medium of communication. An excellent example of it can be seen in the cave paintings of Bhimbetka, where individuals from the Upper Paleolithic and Mesolithic periods expressed their emotions through vivid paintings.

The Satavahana rulers played a significant role in the advancement of painting in ancient India. It is believed that the early cave paintings of Ajanta can be attributed to the patronage of the Satavahana rulers. Notably, caves number 9

and 10, which are part of the early caves, were developed under their reign. Additionally, the idols discovered from Bhaja and Amravati during the Satavahana era also found representation in the paintings of that period.

During this period, the Kushanas played a significant role in the advancement of painting. The painting style that emerged in the north-western region was heavily influenced by Greek, Roman, and Iranian styles, which were blended with elements of Chinese art. As a result, a distinctive and diverse painting style flourished under the Kushanas. Notable examples include a painting of Mahatma Buddha from the north-western region, adorned with the sacred symbol 'Srivatsa' on his chest. Additionally, a captivating Kushan painting portrays a woman emerging from a lake, cradling a child in her arms.

### ■ Ajanta Cave Paintings

The cave paintings of Ajanta hold great significance as a precious heritage of ancient Indian art. These paintings have been shaped and enriched by the artistic contributions of various dynasties, namely the Satavahana, Vakataka, Gupta, and Chalukya dynasties. Among the 30 caves at Ajanta, 29 are fully built, while one remains partially unfinished. Notably, Caves 9 and 10 belong to the Satavahana period, while Caves 16, 17, and 19 showcase the artistic brilliance of the Gupta era.

Cave number 16 holds a significant painting featuring a dying princess. She is suffering from the pain of being away from her husband, and her relatives are by her side. The painting beautifully depicts human compassion. The cave number 17, it is known as 'Chitrashala' due to the presence of numerous exquisite paintings on its walls. Among them, there is a remarkable artwork portraying the relationship between Buddha and his wife, Yashodhara. Yashodhara is shown offering their son, Rahul, to Buddha. This painting captures the profound depths of human emotions and consciousness.



The paintings of Ajanta exhibit a profound influence of Buddhism, with depictions of Mahatma Buddha and Bodhisattvas. These artworks adhere to classical norms and have a lasting impact on Indian painting throughout the ages.

#### ■ **Bagh cave Paintings-**

The caves associated with Bagh paintings are located near Gwalior and have revealed numerous paintings from the Gupta period. Out of the 9 caves in Bagh, caves 2, 4, and 5 hold particular importance. When comparing the Bagh paintings to those of Ajanta, we observe a distinction in their themes. While Ajanta paintings primarily depict religious subjects, the Bagh paintings focus on earthly and human themes. Furthermore, while the Ajanta paintings were primarily intended for the aristocracy, the Bagh paintings appeal to people from all social classes.

#### ■ **Badami Paintings**

The art of Badami painting flourished under the patronage of the Chalukya rulers. King Mangalesha, a prominent Chalukya ruler, commissioned the construction of several caves that showcased not only sculptures but also exquisite paintings. Among these caves, Cave Number 4 stands out as a remarkable example, featuring captivating portrayals of various forms of Lord Vishnu.

#### ■ **Ellora and Elephanta cave Paintings**

Located in Maharashtra, Ellora showcases evidence of both paintings and sculpture. The Chalukya and Rashtrakuta rulers have made significant contributions to the development of

paintings of Ellora. Notable paintings include Kailashnath, Indrasabha, and others. Elephanta, situated near Mumbai in Maharashtra, was originally known as 'Dharanagari' but was later named Elephanta by the Portuguese due to the presence of elephant-shaped rock formations. Elephanta is not only known for its sculptures but also for its paintings. One noteworthy example is the depiction of Shiva in the form of Ardhanarishvara, symbolizing the union of Purusha and Prakriti (Jiva and body).

#### ■ **Pallavas Paintings**

The Pallavas developed a distinctive style of painting that showcased influences from the renowned Ajanta paintings. This artistic tradition, known as Pallava painting, further evolved into the Chola paintings (Cholakala). Under the reign of Mahendravarman I, several caves were constructed, and he actively promoted the art of painting. This artistic legacy was carried on by Narasimhavarman II, also known as Rajasimha, who adorned the walls of the Kailashnath temple with magnificent paintings depicting various deities. These paintings serve as vibrant examples of Pallava Paintings.

#### ■ **Chola Paintings**

Pallava paintings continued to develop during this period, and its exquisite paintings adorned the temple walls. Among the early temples, the Vijayalaya Choleswara Temple in Narthamalai holds significance. Its walls were adorned with beautiful paintings portraying various gods and goddesses. However, the most remarkable paintings can be found on the walls of the Brihadeeswarar Temple in Tanjore, which was built under the rule of Rajaraja I. These splendid paintings embellish the walls surrounding the inner sanctum, known as the Circumambulatory Path. Unfortunately, these paintings were covered by the Nayaka period paintings. Luckily, an esteemed scholar named Govind Swami rediscovered these precious paintings. Notably, the depiction of Nataraja Shiva holds immense importance in these

artworks. Additionally, a depiction of Shiva as Tripurantaka, the destroyer of three forts, is intricately depicted.

## ■ 2nd stage of the development of Paintings (Miniature Paintings)

The initial paintings were made on palm leaves. After that, miniature paintings were created on paper and cloth. It is believed that after the Ellora cave paintings, pillar paintings declined and were replaced by miniature paintings. The initial development was seen on the talapatra. Jains have contributed to its development. Gujarat and Bengal were the main centers of these paintings, with Gujarat being the center of Jains. The development of Jain paintings started in the 7th century.

## ■ Jaina Paintings

The Jaina style of paintings holds a significant place among the artistic styles that influenced the entire Indian subcontinent from the 9th to the 12th century. The earliest evidence of this style can be traced back to the exquisite five Jaina idols found in the Sittanavasal cave. Paintings on paper hold a special place in the realm of Indian paintings, and examples of this form can be seen on the covers and wooden book holders of Jaina texts. The Jain style also shows the influence of Mughal and Iranian painting styles.

## ■ Cloth Paintings (Pattachitra Kala)

This style of painting originated in Bengal and gradually spread to other regions such as Uttar Pradesh, Nepal, and Tibet. Renowned artists like Nilmani Das, Gopaldas, and Balram Das were closely associated with this art form. In this style, narratives from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Puranas were depicted on cloth, giving rise to its name - Cloth Paintings (Pattachitra Kala ).

## ■ Gujarati Paintings-

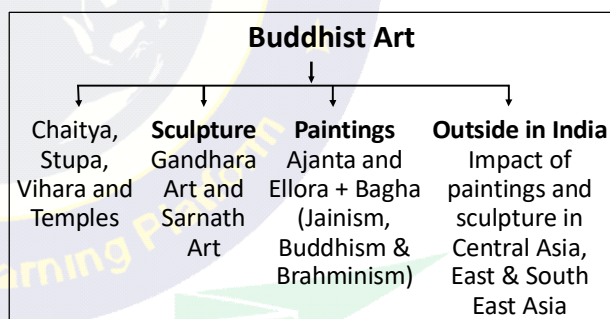
The uniqueness of this painting style lies in the use of palm leaves (talapatras) as the canvas instead of pillars. These palm leaves were transformed into book-like forms, giving rise to

the 'Pothi' style. Gujarati paintings emphasized the depiction of nature, including elements such as fire, water, clouds, and the sky, which were intricately painted and engraved on the palm leaves. The influence of this style can also be seen in Rajput paintings.

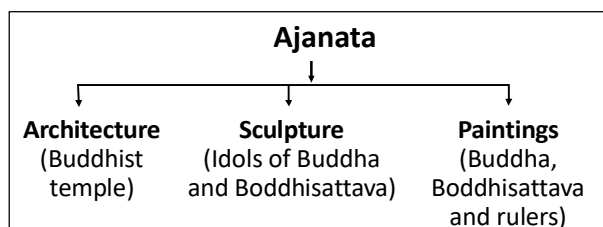
## ■ Pala School:

The Pala School of paintings emerged during the reign of Dharmapala and Devapala, who were rulers of the Pala dynasty in Bengal from the 9th to the 12th century. This school of paintings was greatly influenced by Buddhism. Initially executed on palm leaves and later on paper, the Pala paintings depicted scenes related to Vajrayana Buddhism. The style, characterized by its dominant illustration style, has also influenced the painting art of Tibet and Nepal. While its primary center remained in North-East India, paintings of this style can now be seen in museums located in various parts of the India.

**Question- Describe the contribution of Buddhism in the field of art.**



**Question- Ajanta is a great heritage of Indian culture. Comment on this statement.**



Ajanta marks a significant turning point in the development of Indian art. By the time of Ajanta, various art styles in India had reached a level of maturity that not only influenced later



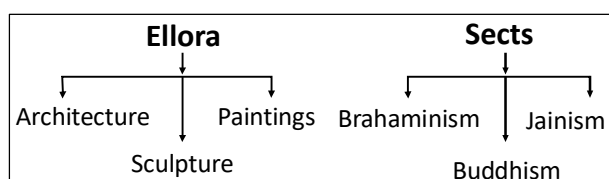
Indian art but also had an impact on art styles beyond India.

Ajanta stands as a remarkable artistic achievement in India, showcasing not only exquisite paintings but also remarkable architecture and sculpture. Spanning nearly a millennium, from the 2nd century BCE to the 7th century CE, the site encompasses the remains of 30 caves, comprising both Chaityas and Viharas. one of the earliest examples where both Chaityas and Viharas were built together. The cave temple from the Gupta period in Ajanta serves as a prime example of a Chaitya cave temple.

Noteworthy for its contributions to sculpture, Ajanta has unveiled numerous statues of Buddha and Bodhisattvas. These discoveries underscore the profound influence of Buddhism on artistic inspiration of Ajanta. The sculpture of the Gupta period is almost similar to the Sarnath art style.

Above all, Ajanta represents the pinnacle of development in the field of painting. Caves 16, 17, and 19, belonging to the Gupta period, exemplify classical standards in painting. Ajanta art received patronage from various dynasties such as the Shunga, Kushan, Satavahana, Gupta, and Chalukya dynasties. However, the art of Ajanta is not solely a reflection of the ruling elite. The general public also played a crucial role in its development, with sages, ascetics, and independent artists contributing to its diversity. As a result, the paintings of Ajanta encompass a wide range of subjects, depicting both rural and urban life. Its significance in the history of Indian art extends to its influence on East Asian art as well.

**Question-Ellora is not only a great heritage of Indian culture, but also a unique example of religious harmony. Comment on this statement.**



The history of Indian art would be incomplete without exploring the remarkable site of Ellora. Located around 50 km from Ajanta, Ellora boasts a collection of 34 caves that hold significant cultural and religious importance. What sets Ellora apart is its unique amalgamation of Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Jainism, representing a rare example of religious harmony in India. In fact, only a few centers in the country exhibit such remarkable unity across diverse beliefs, with Ellora being one of them, alongside Mathura.

One of the most captivating aspects of Ellora is its diverse artistic styles. Notably, the caves showcase impressive architectural advancements, representing a refined form of cave architecture that traces its roots back to the Ashoka period. Furthermore, Ellora is renowned for its exquisite sculptures and paintings. The site have a rich collection of idols depicting Brahmin deities, Buddha, and Jaina Tirthankaras. These sculptures bear the influence of the renowned Sarnath art tradition.

Ellora's paintings, while influenced by Ajanta, exhibit a distinct character that sets them apart. Unlike the profound emotional depth found in Ajanta's masterpieces, Ellora's artworks bear traces of this influence but don't reach the same level of emotional depth.

Upon studying the artifacts of Ellora, one can identify a shared expression found in the sculptures and paintings made by different religious sects. Despite their varying beliefs, the artistic vision of the art remains united. Thus, Ellora stands as an exceptional example of "Unity in Diversity" in the realm of art and spirituality.