**ARCHITECTURE & SCULPTURES**

**ARCHITECTURAL FORMS**

* Broadly architecture has three forms in India – **Rock Cut Caves**, **Rock Cut Temples** etc and **Structured** Temples/Buildings made of stone, mortar etc.
* It includes both caves and other architecture. Rock cut architecture flourished in India due to presence of a large number of hills and mountains.
* The Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka, a World Heritage Site, are the earliest example of Rock Cut cave-architectures.
* Another example of cave temple architecture are the Badami Cave Temples at Badami, the early Chalukya capital, carved out in the 6th century. *Badami shifted from Timber based rock cut cave architecture to stone* architecture.
* Another earliest example of rock cut temples is Ajanta temples which were influenced by Buddhist art and temples depict life of Buddha.
* Later rock-cut cave architecture became more sophisticated as in the Ellora Caves, culminating ultimately in the monolithic Kailash Temple by Rashtrakuta rulers.
* The Pallava architects in South started the carving of rock for the creation of monolithic copies of structural temples. Shore temple at Mahabalipuram is also an example of this architectural style. Rock cut caves were also produced by Pandyas as well.
1. **ROCK CUT CAVE ARCHITECTURE**

It progressed in three phases

I. Buddhist, Jain, Ajivika caves (3rd BC to 2nd AD) – Kanheri, Nashik, Udaigiri, Barbar

II. Ajanta, Ellora Cave (5th to 7th AD), Gupta period

III. Elephanta, and Mahabalipuram caves (7th to 10th)

Earliest rock cut caves belonged to Ashokan period Caves of Barbar (which Ashoka made for people of Ajivika sect) and Nagarjuni Hills are such examples in today’s Bihar.

Later from 2nd century BCE to 2nd century CE, cave architecture focussed mainly on Buddhist architecture and cave architecture took shape of viharas and chaityas. Examples included – Kanheri, Bedsa, Karla, Nasik, Bhaja and Ajanta. Buddha was portrayed through certain symbols.

From 5th century onwards, timber was eliminated from usage which was earlier used, starting from Badami caves in South. In West and Central India, images of Buddha emerged as dominant subject.

In South, Satvahan kings built many rock cut structure known as Amravati style focusing on Buddhist architecture. They made the largest and most famous artificial caves.

Dravidian architecture has mandpa and ratha as dominant features in Mahabalipuram. Early examples of cave architecture in south is also there of Pandaya’s times as in case of caves of Tiruchi.

A. Some of the famous rock cut caves and architecture monuments are –

1. **Barbar and Nagarjuni Caves near Bodh Gaya, Bihar** – They were built during Mauryan rule in around 200 BCE and were donated to Ajivika sect ascetics. They are oldest rock cut caves in India made for religious purpose.

2. **Udaigiri and Khandagiri Caves, Odisha** – The caves are situated on two adjacent hills, Udayagiri and Khandagiri and these were originally built for Jain monks by

Kharvela kings of Kalinga in 200 BCE. The most important of this group is Ranigumpha in Udayagiri which is a double storeyed monastery. These caves also have inscriptions of Khavela kings of which Hathimgumpha inscription is the most prominent one. Many elegant

statues were also made at Udaigiri of which elephant statues are most prominent.

3. **Nasik Caves** or **Pandu Leni Caves** – These are Buddhist caves belonging to Hinyana period carved between the 3rd century BC and the 2nd century AD. Most of the 24 caves which are there are Viharas. The caves were called Pundru which in Pali language means ‘yellow ochre color’ and Pundru was later deformed into Pandu. They were probably made by The Kshatrapas, The Satavahanas and The Abhirs.

4. **Kanheri Caves, Mumbai** – They are from 2nd Century BCE to 9th Century AD and represent both Hinyana and Mahayana Buddhism. There are more than 100 caves. Their main feature is a series of connected stairs and stone seats for monks to sit on. Kanheri comes from the Sanskrit Krishnagiri, which means black mountain which is due to dark basalt rocks from which these caves are

carved out. Most of the caves are used as the Buddhist viharas, meant for living, studying, and meditating. The larger caves were chaityas. Among the various figures that have been carved out, the *Avalokiteshwara* is the most distinctive figure. The large number of viharas at Kanheri demonstrates the well organized establishment of Buddhist monks.

5. **Jogeshwari Cave, Mumbai** – They are Buddhist and Hindu caves and largely Belong to Mahayana Buddhism. The caves date back to 520 to 550 CE. They are one of the earliest major Hindu cave temple in India. The cave also has purported footprints of goddess Jogeshwari (Yogeshwari), whom the area is named after and also considered as a Kuladevi to some Maharathi people.

6. **Karla, Bhaja and Bedsa, near Pune** – They are near Mumbai and are Buddhist caves. Karla caves belong to Mahayana Buddhist and have one of biggest Chaityas in India. They house many sculptures like that of elephants, lions etc with beautiful railings. Bhaja Caves are near Pune. They are supposedly built for Buddhist nuns. They are older that Karle caves and perhap belongs to 2nd century BCE and belong to Hinyana sect and stupas and other architecture is very plain. These caves are notable for their indications of the awareness of wooden architecture. Bedsa Caves are also near Pune and are from a period slightly later than Bhaja Caves.

7. **Ellora and Ajanta Caves, Aurangabad, Maharashtra** – Built by Chalukya and Rashtrakuta rulers from 6th to 12th century. Ajanta are Buddhist caves and are unique because they have all three forms of art – Paintings/fresco, sculpture and architecture. They have works from Hinyana as well as Mahayana phase of Buddhism. There are total of 29 caves – 15 Viharas and 4 Chaityas. Dying princess is one of the most famous frescos. Ellora Caves are unique as they have caves from three religions – Buddhist, Jain and Brahmnical. Unlike Ajanta, they are not on a perpendicular cliff, but are on the slope of hill. Famous Shiva temple was built by Rashtrakuta rulers and it is one of the largest monolithic structures in the world. Ravan ki Khai is another prominent Hindu cave.

8. **Eladipattam** – These are Jaina caves in today’s Tamilnadu and were used as places to live by Jaina monks. Jaina monks used to do penance at these caves.

9. **Sittanvasal Caves, Tamilnadu** – They and a lot of other caves were made by Pandyas. Many of them existed earlier also as Jain viharas. Pandyas also built caves around Tiruchi. Caves

made during Pandyas were mainly Shaivite and Vaishnavite in nature.

10. **Udaigiri Caves near Vidhisha, Madhya Pradesh** – They were built during Gupta period in 4th – 5th century CE. They are Hindu caves. Varah Cave is one of the most famous of the 20 caves. The site also has inscriptions of the Gupta dynasty belonging to the

reigns of Chandragupta II and Kumaragupta. The caves also have a reclining statue of

Vishnu and Vishnu as Narshimha as well. (*This Udaigiri should not be confused with other Udaigiris as there are a number of places in India with the same name, the most notable being the mountain called Udayagiri at Rajgir in Bihar and the Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves in Odisha*).

11. **Bagh Caves, Madhya Pradesh** – The Bagh Caves are a group of 9 rock-cut monuments, situated in MP. They are rock cut caves having fresco paintings from life of Buddha. They belong to Gupta period period.

12. **Elephanta Cave, Mumabi** – They got their name from a giant elephant statue at the entrance. They were probably made by Rashtrakutas and with some contribution from Chalukyas as well, though no concrete proof is there about their builders. They are a group of 5th – 8th century caves and consist of two groups of caves—the first is a large group of five Hindu caves, the second, a smaller group of two Buddhist caves. The caves are hewn from solid basalt rock like many other caves like

Kanheri caves. They have many sculptures inside them. Masterpiece is a three faced image of *Trimurti Shiva* which resembles the figure of Shiva made by Rashtrakuta in Kailasha temple at Ellora.

13. **Undavalli, Andhra** – They are 7th century Hindu and Buddhist caves. Main attraction is giant reclining Vishnu figure cut out o single granite rock.

14. **Badami Caves** – They were made by Chalukyas of Badami and they are Hindu, Buddhist and Jainist caves. They marked the culmination of the rock-cut cave architecture in India. They were carved out of softer soapstone and hence figures in these caves were very elegant.