

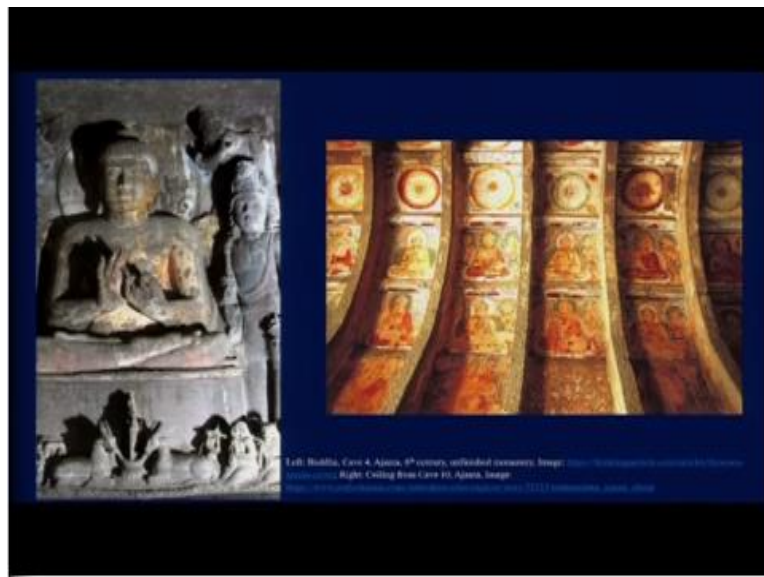
**Indian Art: Materials, Techniques and Artistic Practices**  
**Prof. Rajarshi Sengupta**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology-Kanpur**

**Lecture-12**

Hello everyone, we will be continuing on our module on pigment and that is our 3rd module and 3rd weeks. And in this one we have already started talking about the cave sites of Ajanta where there have been many of the caves and many of them have been painted. So, the continuing on this discussion of how there have been those painted surfaces.

So, if you can remember we have already addressed that in talking about the Gandhara's sculptures in which there have been some of the remnants of the stucco material as well as some of the pigments which give us a sense of how those images those sculptures were painted. Now in terms of Ajanta what we find that I mean similar to that there have been lime plasters onto this excavated caves and on the top of that there had been the paints which were added to that.

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Now some of the examples for example that we have here and this comes from the next phase of the paintings in Ajanta or the cave excavation in Ajanta and that will be between like 4th and 6th century. And here what we find that there has been already the kind of developments which were there from the second and first century B.C. From there have been more and more advancement

in terms of the making of the sculpture and also like their anatomical details and expressions and everything else in them.

And then how the painting technologies and also their implementations they have also been changed and transformed over time. Now the image that we have in the left side of the screen and here we have that is from cave 4 and it is one of the largest caves in Ajanta and it is also an unfinished monastery. So, in this one what we have that how this rock structures they have been carved and then they were not only just made into this columns and pillars and the ceiling but intricate details they were also added to this particular caves.

And cave 4 is not the only one where it was done; there are many other caves in which we find similar kind of activities. And then in this one what we have that there is a seated image of there is a mighty and monumental image of Buddha that we find and he is seated on this high seat which is a marker of his divinity. And in the bottom of that we have there are 2 deers and then there is also a representation of a bell.

So, deer park in Sarnath and then the wheel that also stands for turning the wheel of law or Dharma chakravartana that is something that is very much important in the life span of Buddha which became a very important event in the Buddhist art and architecture that we find to be here as well. Now in this sculptures that this sculptures which were carved out of the living rock in the site of Ajanta.

We mostly find that the sculptures either this show the images of Buddha and that started after the 1st century A.D or during 1st century A.D and later times. And then we have that have been flanked by the attendants or divine figures and so on the celestial beings. But it is not many of the other narrative scenes which were been carved out of stone. So, these are the central images which were carved out of stone the images of Buddha.

Or mostly the images of veneration where people can pray or where people can pay their homage, but not the other narratives which are perhaps belonging to the Jataka tales and the other events of life from Buddha. Now what we have here significant is that there are some of

the traces of the lime plaster as well as paints on this particular figure. Here we can see some of the traces of the red pigment and perhaps something that is yellow ochre or yellowish.

Now here also we find little bit of the red pigment that is existing here and red should not be a surprise because Buddha had also been associated with the red robe. So, his monk's robe which was basically it is a piece of cloth which covered one of his shoulder and then like leaving the other shoulder empty and it flowed until his ankles and so this is the kind of robe we are talking about. So, that is the reason we find that the entire robe is perhaps been painted in red.

And then the colour that is yellowish in tone that can be the colour of a skin, so these are some of the traces that we have and which also goes along with the iconographical traits those were already established during this time about Buddha. Now the other features that we also find that if this is one of the places where we find the remains of the paints, so this is something that also makes us think that most of the sculptures that we have in the cave here in Ajanta and many other different sites in the Indian subcontinent.

And not only just in the Buddhist context but in Buddhist, Jain and Hindu context many of those sculptures were actually painted. So, that is the reason this is important for us to think that even though today we see many of the sculptures in this archaeological sites as well as in the museums they are totally unpainted and there are no other pigments and so on, that we find.

But that was certainly not the case if we see them when they were built because this was a common practice across the Indian subcontinent to cover the sculptures of made of stone with a lime plaster or the other this soft material which will allow people to paint on the top of them or to have little more of the details which cannot be achieved on stone. And so this is a practice that persisted in various parts of the Indian subcontinent.

Now the other traces of the pigments that we find there are in the upper registers of the caves. And for example here that we have in the ceiling, so for example when we have this in the roof those areas are not really disturbed by the people who will go inside and perform their duties or

like the visitors or travelers and so on. They are essentially out of the reach of human beings, these are high on the ceiling and that is the reason perhaps that they have survived until today.

And there even in those areas like in the cave 10, we find that there are some of the examples of the earlier times. Like for example from the 2nd century to 1st century B.C those paintings are there. And they also coexisted with the ones which were added later on between 5th and 6th century A.D and that is also identified with the Gupta-Vakataka period. So, Gupta period that is the time which is also been very significant in the history of northern India.

And in the Deccan in the area where we find that Ajanta and Ellora this sites are situated, so those areas were under the rule of Vakataka dynasty. So, that is the reason what we call it that the Gupta-Vakataka period and their art making in this sites. Now if you remember that we have already said something about superimposed images or how there is one image and that is coexist with the images those are added later times.

So, some of this one example that we studied from the site of Bimbetka and we can see similar kind of tendency in the site here in cave 10 as well. So, there have been some painted images in cave 10 from the 2nd and 1st century B.C. And from there we also find that some of the images were repainted and in some cases we find that those images coexisted with the images which were added much later in the 5th and 6th century A.D and so on.

So, that gives us a sense of how this tendency towards superimposing images or re-decorating places of worship or of high importance that persisted in the prehistoric times but also in Ajanta. And we will find this kind of examples all across in the Indian subcontinent in the later times as well.

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So, from there I wanted to introduce this other material and that is the pigment blue. Now in the earlier paintings like for example the images from 2nd and 1st century B.C in Ajanta we do not really have much of the image much of the use of blue. And of course that when we also spoke about the images in Bimbetka and some of the pigment remains that is there in the Jogimara caves in Chhattisgarh and so on, we do not really have much of the use of blue.

So, in the Indian subcontinent we do have the indigo that is used for making blue pigment, however the plant-based pigments work very differently from the mineral based pigments. The plant-based pigments they work very well, they bind well with fabric or textile whereas the mineral based pigments they work well for making the murals or also working on paper. So, that is the reason we do not really see that indigo even though indigo was used in the Indian subcontinent for a long time.

But indigo was never used for doing this kind of mural paintings at least in Ajanta and some of the earlier sites. Now from where this blue pigment then came from? Now this is something that we find that this blue pigment and one of the most celebrated blue pigments that came from that is Lapis lazuli or Lapis lazuli. And again it is a mineral source and that is something that is not really found much in India but part of Afghanistan and the middle east and of course in parts of like central Asia.

So, one can imagine that this particular material which is not found in India that was also brought in the caves of Ajanta and those were utilized. And since those were utilized we also see that how in the representations? For example here that we have, the use of blue is there but it is very limited and very careful. So, unlike the other colours for example red, black, white and green which were found very easily, blue is used very carefully.

So, the scarcity of this material or the economic and social value of this material that adds to it is utilization in these paintings. So, when we talk about the pigments the economy of this pigment as well as its social value, it's cultural value that adds a lot to what will be the final outcome of its usage. So, for example if we take this particular image as an example then the very careful use of blue that was informed by the economic value as well as cultural value of Lapis lazuli.

That says something about how that also added to the aesthetics of Ajanta paintings. Now with that we can also imagine that how this blue is used there and of course that how those materials were not really very popularly used in the other sites. Now one of the reasons for that is that the location of Ajanta in Maharashtra that we see today it actually stood at the crossroads of different trade routes.

So, for that reason what we have there is that there are traders perhaps from the western frontier of the Indian subcontinent as well as from central Asia and so on. They arrived there or they send their material to the Deccan and then the people from the southern India they have also sent their material and so on. And that is the reason that this particular material blue was available that for the importance of this site of Ajanta being a very important trade site.

For that reason we find that this material the blue Lapis lazuli this expensive material was made available here which perhaps was not the case for many other sites from where we also find the image making practices utilizing the local pigments and so on. So, from there if we move little further into the images those we find in Ajanta and we find that the kind of ways in which these murals are painted; they differ from the fresco technique.

So, there are a few ways in which we can see that the murals are painted usually on the lime plaster and there are 2 major ways in which we find these images are made. So, one will be in which the paint is added on the top of the fresh lime plaster where the lime plaster is yet not dried and that is how we have this fresh the appearance of this paints. But it also sort of dries out very fast and that is the reason the images need to be drawn quickly something that we find in Italy and parts of southern Europe.

Now as opposed to that what we find here in Ajanta is that the lime plaster was there and the painting had started only after the lime plaster was completely dried. And that is the reason what we find here the image making technique is very similar to this celebrated water colour technique of tempera in the Indian subcontinent. In the tempera technique what we find there also is that how the pigments are added to a binder and sometimes with the white pigment little more.

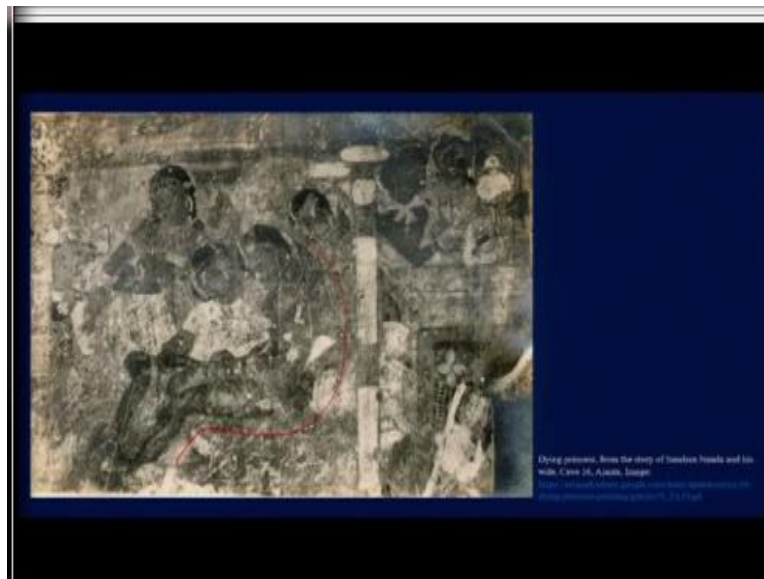
And then those are applied with the dry brush or like semi dry brush on the paper surface or on the other surfaces on which these images were drawn. So, this paints become slightly thick and opaque and that is how like the kind of the visual effect it creates, it becomes very different from a swift brush stroke or like the fresh the application of colour that can be distinguished from those the other counterparts in southern Europe and so on.

So, when we see this kind of application that made these paintings in Ajanta possible, so why those also are important for us to understand? And that is because the amount of detail and the amount of not only just the detail but also the amount of expressions and the emotion those are embedded in this paintings. That is something that came with much dedication and time which perhaps been very different if they were drawn very quickly.

So, with the swift brush strokes, with the dynamism, the expression of this emotion as well as like these different situations which are depicted in this Ajanta murals would have been very different. And that is the reason for us it is also important to understand the significance of this materials as well as how these materials are employed on to this surface for making the murals, basically the technique of them.

So, the material technique they are very important part of understanding the final outcome of this images as well as the way we appreciate them today. Now the images that we find in the caves of Ajanta and they range from various different these Jataka tales to the veneration of Buddha as well as like there are some of the very important bodhisattva figures. So, these different kinds of images that we find to be part of the Ajanta murals.

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And here on screen we have one of the very celebrated images and this image is popularly known as the dying princess. So, dying princess comes from the story of Sundara Nanda and Nanda being this prince who was about to marry his lover. And then at the verge of it he encountered Buddha and Buddha convinced him to denounce everything and become a monk, this material world cannot really fulfill all his aspirations.

And with Buddha's advice and inspired by him he sent a message to his lover saying that he will not be able marry her. And this is a particular scene in which we find this particular person the princess Sundari she is dying, she apparently turned blue and she left her this earthly body. So, that is the story and in which we find that this entire episode, this sad episode is depicted here with much emotion and the situation has been depicted with all these different figures who add to the emotion of this particular scene.



In the center stage we find there is the image of the princess and the princess as we see that she is very lyrical at the same time she is elegant and the way she is sitting there the bends and the movement in her body, they add to the dynamic quality of it. However it also adds to her mental state, a drooping head and then also her drooping eye leads and her expression in the face that adds to that how her feeling after receiving the message that her lover had abandoned her.

And then what all we find that there are all these attendant figures like here and here and here. So, all these attendant figures we see that they appear there with different kind of gestures and they try to attend to the needs of this dying princess and try to convince her to come back to life, however they are also empathetic to the princess's situation. So, that is something that we find that in this paintings of Ajanta, it is not just the depiction of anatomy, it is not just the beauty standards or making things beautiful that has been prioritized.

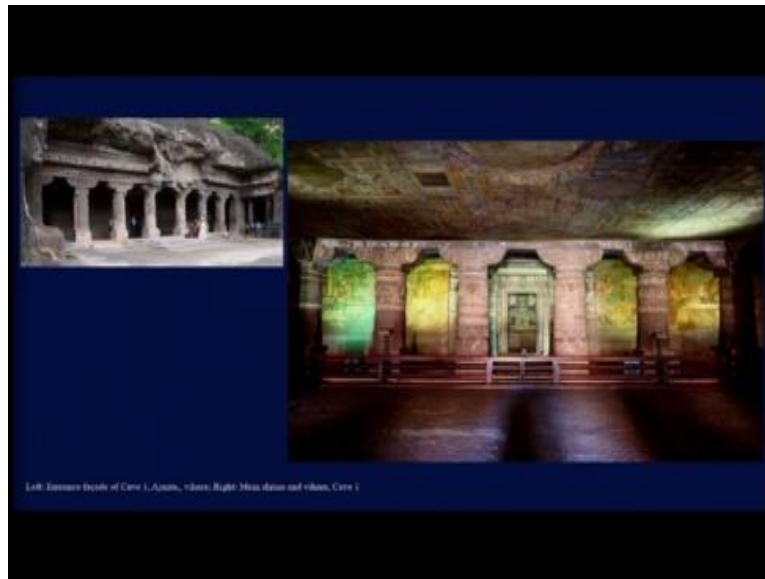
But it is also the expression, the emotion and how to convey a story with outmost care as well as to make it close to the life of the people who are encountering them. So, these are some of the things we find there. And Ajanta paintings also we find a very interesting blend of 2 things that will be the naturalism as well as the ideal standards. And so for example by ideal standards I refer to the iconographic details of how to paint an image or how to paint an ideal woman or an ideal man.

So, there are certain kinds of beauty standards that we find and there are different kinds of references to the natural forms. For example the stems of lotus and then the bow as the eyebrows and then like the shoulder, the man's shoulder like a shoulder of a Vrisha so that that is called like Vrishaskanda. So, all these different kind of things and they are implemented in this images.

So, in one hand this is the study of anatomy that we find from our surrounding and which is also effortlessly blended with this iconographical convention as well as the beauty standards which were popular during this time. And when I say the popular beauty standards I mean that there had already been those celebrated poems of Ashvaghosha as well as Kalidasa and so on. So, in their literary works we find this kind of the depiction of beauty had been there.

So, a reflection of that we also see in these images. So, Ajanta sort of brings together these different modes of knowledge in these paintings and that is perhaps one of the ingenious things for which Ajanta paintings are even celebrated today.

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So, this is another image that I wanted to show here to give us a sense of where these images are situated and how these images perhaps there had been images in the exterior walls of this cave sites as well? But for the weathering and for like monsoon rains and so on, not all those images could survive. So, we have that and this also gives us a sense of like how the exterior and the interior surfaces will be different in Ajanta.

So, this shows the entrance facade of cave 1 in the left side and then we also have the main shrine and the Vihara, so this particular cave 1 is a Vihara. And so in this one we have the main shrine and then there are also those individual cells around the main shrine where the monks and the nuns can live. So, this is the interior scene of or the interior shot from this Vihara or the cave 1 in which we find that profusely drawn and painted surfaces all across.

And we find that how the walls are painted profusely, the columns, the pillars were also painted and then we also have traces of the paint on the ceiling as well. So, there are different kinds of images those we find to be part of this area. Now one question one might ask that if Buddhism started with this humble idea of having structures which are not really monumental and which

are not really palatial or which do not really have too much of effort for the monks and the nuns to stay.

Then in that case how do we justify this kind of structure which are grand? So, what we know about the Ajanta caves that this caves were patronized not by one person but many people like the important merchants from royals and so on. And something similar to what we have already seen in Sanchi and Bharhut. Now what we have here is that the idea of punya or the spiritual merit had also been a driving force for them to have these caves made in this careful fashion.

So, the sculpture, the architects and so on they had worked perhaps for dedicating their best work to the god and that is the reason we find all these details have been there. And similarly the patrons who would like to have these caves excavated, they also perhaps wanted to make this caves as beautiful as possible almost like a representation of the Buddhist heaven inside this caves.

And that is the reason why we find that there have been tremendous amount of effort and of course perhaps there have been much of resources which have gone for making this cave site. So, for attending spiritual merit that is applicable to the patrons as well as the artisans who had worked for these sites. So, for them it became very important and that is the reason they had put their best effort to make these caves.

So, even though the monks and the nuns are the ones who have inhabited these caves. But they also the sculptors, the painters as well as the patrons also wanted to have their best effort in these sites, so that they can have more of the spiritual merit granted by the Buddha. So, this is also something that we find that what were the consequences of that? So, in one sentence I can say that they were able to make this illusion of this Buddhist paradise within this cave structures.

So, Ajanta is situated at a place where we can find that which is dry in weather, only in the monsoon it receives rain and in the other times of the year it is pretty dry, the summer being really hot. And then in this place when one enters a monk or a nun or a pilgrim when they enter this cave site in this dark interior of the cave. Once there is a lamp or whatever source of light

then one could see that all these paintings of these magnificent paintings, they are there which is a star contrast from what we see outside of this cave sites.

So, these paintings all over the walls and on the ceilings and everywhere that makes us an illusion, that gives us an illusion of the space which is this ideal Buddhist paradise or the heaven. And that is the reason we find these images which are there which depict the life of Buddha as well as the Jataka stories and so on. They are not just there as people to learn from them but overall, they also create this idea of how a Buddhist paradise might look like for the people who diligently follow the path of Buddha and where they are going to end up in. Thank you.