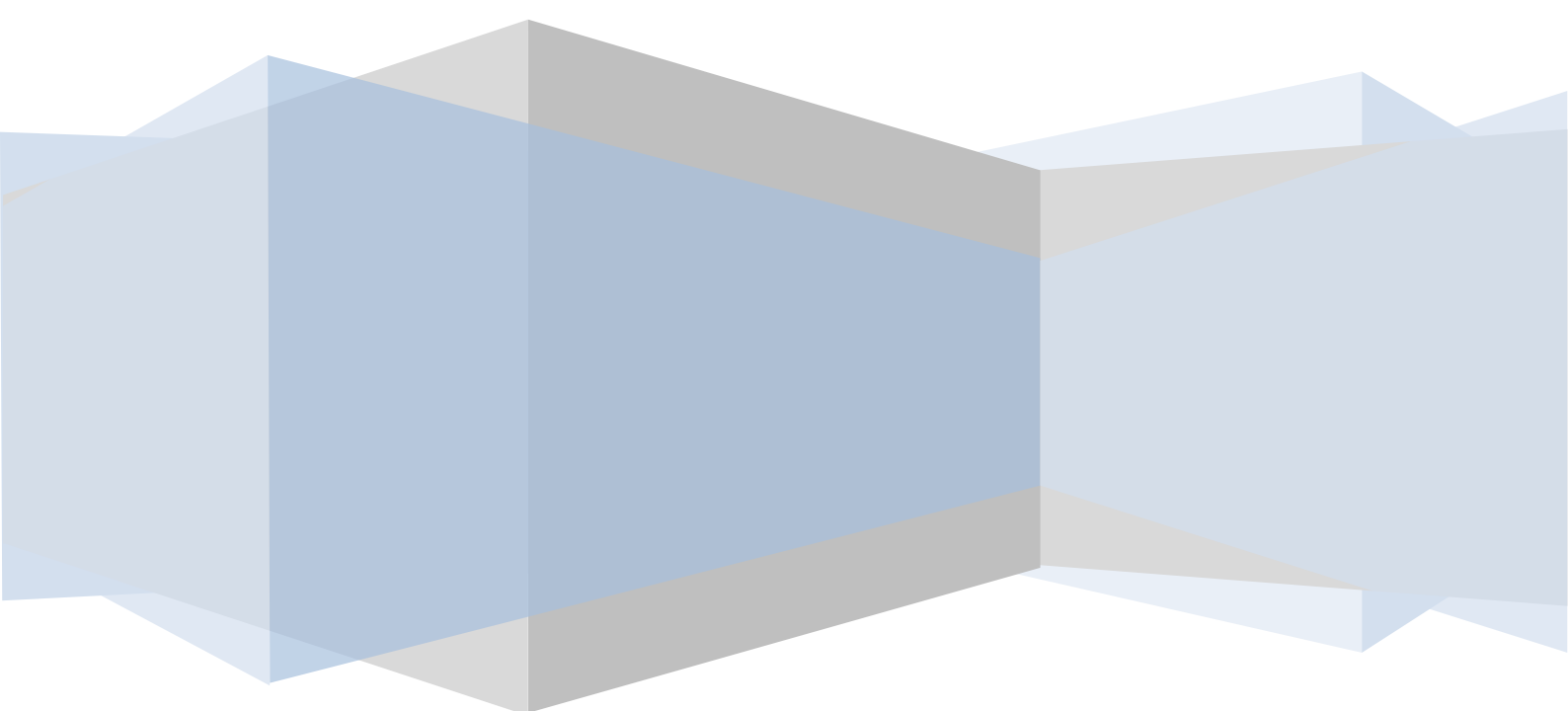


Chapter 4: Buddhist Mudras

Short Answers

CSM 02: History of India and Indian National Movement

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This chapter contains:

- Dhyana Mudra
- Abhaya Mudra
- Vajra Mudra
- Vitaraka Mudra
- Jnana Mudra
- Karana Mudra
- Uttarabodhi Mudra and Anjali Mudra
- Cave Architecture
- Ajanta and Ellora Caves
- Elephanta Caves

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1. Dhyana Mudra

Mudras are a non-verbal mode of communication and self-expression in Buddhism, consisting of hand gestures and finger- postures. The Dhyana Mudra, one of the most important mudras in Buddhism, is a hand gesture that embodies the mind to go deep into meditation, to reflect and contemplate.

1.1 Dhyana Mudra

- The Dhyana mudra is a mudra used for **meditation, focusing on the Dharma, and achieving spiritual perfection.**
- This mudra is said to be derived from the one used by the Buddha before enlightenment while **meditating under the Bodhi tree.**
- Yogis have used this gesture in their meditation and concentration activities since the beginning of time.
- **Amitabha**, also known as Amitayus, the **fourth Dhyani Buddha**, uses this mudra. By concentrating on him, the misconception of attachment transforms into discernment wisdom. The Dhyana mudra facilitates this change for mortals.

1.2 Posture

- When making a single-handed gesture, the left hand is put on the lap while the right is used elsewhere.
 - In such instances, the left hand doing the Dhyana mudra represents the female left-hand principle of knowledge.
 - In the open palm of this left hand, ritual artifacts such as a book or, more popularly, an alms bowl signifying renunciation may be put.
- The hands are usually held at the level of the stomach or on the thighs when done with both hands.
 - With the palms facing upwards and fingers extended, the right hand is placed over the left. The thumbs of both hands may contact at the tips in rare situations, making a mystic triangle.
 - The esoteric religions clearly ascribe a variety of meanings to this triangle, the most prominent of which is its association with the spiritual fire that destroys all impurities.
 - This triangle is also considered to represent the **Three Jewels of Buddhism**, which are **the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.**

1.3 Conclusion

On a spiritual level, the practice of Dhyana Mudra helps students to build self-awareness, seeking for answers, go inwards, intuition, insight, etc. Dhyana Mudra has a deep impact on controlling the stress levels in the body, hence is practiced to keep anxiety and depression in control.

2. Abhaya Mudra

Mudras are a non-verbal mode of communication and self-expression in Buddhism, consisting of hand gestures and finger- postures. The Abhaya Mudra, one of the most important mudras in Buddhism, is a symbol of fearlessness and protection. Here we will discuss the various aspects of Abhaya Mudra, which will be helpful in preparing Art and Culture for the UPSC IAS Examination.

2.1 Abhaya Mudra

- In Sanskrit, the word Abhaya denotes **fearlessness**. As a result, the Abhaya mudra represents **safety, tranquility, and the removal of fear**.
- The right hand is lifted to shoulder height, the arm bent, and the palm of the hand facing outward, and the fingers are linked and erect.
- The left hand is dangling from the ceiling. the opposite side of the body.
- This mudra is popular in **Thailand and Laos**, connected with the **walking Buddha** (also called 'the Buddha placing his footprint').
- This mudra, which appears to be a natural gesture at first, was probably used as a sign of good intentions from prehistoric times - the hand raised and unarmed suggests friendship, or at the very least peace.
- It has also been a gesture asserting power, such as the Magna manus of the Roman Emperors who legislated and gave peace at the same time.

2.2 Legend of Abhaya Mudra

- Devadatta, the Buddha's cousin, caused a rift among the Buddha's students because of envy.
- As Devadatta's arrogance grew, he sought to assassinate the Buddha. One of his ideas involves releasing a raging elephant onto the path of the Buddha.
- But, when the elephant approached, Buddha made the Abhaya mudra, which instantly calmed the beast. As a result, it not only denotes the calming of the senses, but also the lack of terror.

2.3 Other Features

- This mudra was sometimes employed in Gandhara art to represent preaching activity.
- This is also true in China, where it is highly popular in Buddha representations, particularly from the Wei and Sui dynasties (fourth to seventh centuries).
- **Amoghasiddhi**, the fifth Dhyani Buddha, uses the Abhaya mudra.
- In the Buddhist pantheon, he is also known as the Lord of Karma.
- Amoghasiddhi aids in the defeat of the jealousy illusion. The fallacy of envy is changed into the insight of accomplishment by focusing on him. The basic purpose of the Abhaya mudra is hence changed.

2.4 Conclusion

Abhaya mudra is a general symbol of fearlessness and good intentions, but depending on the place and age in which it was employed, it can also have a more specific connotation. This gesture is claimed to be a way of prohibiting relatives from fighting when represented on depictions of the Buddha using just the left hand, relating to an episode in which he utilized Abhaya mudra to settle a family feud over water rights.

3. Vajra Mudra

Mudras are a non-verbal mode of communication and self-expression in Buddhism, consisting of hand gestures and finger- postures. The Vajra Mudra, one of the important mudra used in Buddhism, is a hand gesture that represents fearlessness. Here we will discuss the various aspects of Vajra Mudra, which will be helpful in preparing Art and Culture for the UPSC IAS Examination.

3.1 Vajra Mudra

- This gesture represents the **five elements of air, water, fire, earth, and metal**, which are represented by the **fiery thunderbolt**.
- It's done with the right fist and the left-hand forefinger, which is encased in the right fist with the tip of the right forefinger contacting (or wrapped around) the tip of the left forefinger.
- Vajra Mudra is a Buddhist gesture that symbolizes the unity of all Buddhist beliefs.
- This mudra is concerned with the **Vairochana Buddha** or the celestial buddha that illuminates one's insight towards the world.

3.2 Conclusion

Mudra or Mudras are hand postures that are frequently shown in Buddhist art and utilized in meditation to create a certain mental state. The most famous mudras are those seen frequently in Buddha depictions. Mudras take on esoteric importance in the Vajrayana system and are frequently paired with mantra (recitation) and tantric vision.

4. Vitarka Mudra

Mudras are a non-verbal mode of communication and self-expression in Buddhism, consisting of hand gestures and finger- postures. The Vajra Mudra, one of the most important mudras used in Buddhism, is the mudra or a gesture representing the discussion and transmission of the teachings by the Buddha. Here we will discuss the various aspects of Vitarka Mudra, which will be helpful in preparing Art and Culture for the UPSC IAS Examination.

4.1 Vitarka Mudra

- The **Vitarka mudra**, or "**mudra of discussion**," is a Buddhist teaching discussion and transmission gesture.
- That is, it is used to symbolize the **transmission of the dharma or the truth**, teachings of the Buddha.
- It is performed by linking the tips of the thumb and index fingers together while maintaining the rest of the fingers straight, similar to the Abhaya and Varada mudras, but with the thumbs touching the index fingers.
- In **Mahayana Buddhism**, there are several variations of this mudra.

4.2 Conclusion

Mudra is a Sanskrit term that refers to a symbolic hand motion that can provide joy and contentment. Mudras aid in the connection of the brain and body, the relief of pain, the stimulation of endorphins, the alteration of mood, and the increase of energy. Mudras are used in a variety of Buddhist rituals.

5. Jnana Mudra

Mudras are a non-verbal mode of communication and self-expression in Buddhism, consisting of hand gestures and finger- postures. The Jnana Mudra, one of the most important mudras used in Buddhism, symbolizes spiritual enlightenment. Here we will discuss the various aspects of Jnana Mudra, which will be helpful in preparing Art and Culture for the UPSC IAS Examination.

5.1 Jnana Mudra

- One of the most prominent mudras employed by yogis in meditation is the jnana mudra, which is a psychic **gesture of knowledge**.
- The name is derived from the Sanskrit terms jnana, which means "**knowledge**," and mudra, which means "gesture."
- **Spiritual enlightenment** is symbolized by the Jnana Mudra.
- The **index finger folds and touches the base of the thumb** in this mudra.
- In Jnana mudra, the joining of the thumb and index finger denotes the **merging of the supreme and interior truths**.
- The three remaining fingers symbolize nature's three characteristics, or gunas: sattva, raja, and tamas (balance, action, and inaction).
- This mudra may also be called **chin mudra**.

5.2 Conclusion

The term jnana means "wisdom" or "knowledge." Hence jnana mudra is an intuitive knowing gesture. Chin, on the other hand, comes from the term Chitta, which signifies 'awareness.'

6. Karana Mudra

Mudras are a non-verbal mode of communication and self-expression in Buddhism, consisting of hand gestures and finger- postures. The Karana mudra, one of the most important mudras used in Buddhism, is the mudra that expels demons and removes obstacles such as sickness or negative thoughts. Here we will discuss the various aspects of Karana Mudra, which will be helpful in preparing Art and Culture for the UPSC IAS Examination.

6.1 Karana Mudra

- The Karana mudra is a mudra that exorcises demons and eliminates impediments like disease and negative thoughts.
- **Tarjan mudra** is another name for this mudra.
- The Karana mudra is an hasta mudra, meaning it is done with the hands.
- The left hand is raised up to the heart, palm facing forward, to conduct this mudra. The tip of the thumb softly holds the ring and middle fingers in place as they fold in toward the centre of the palm. The index and little fingers have a straight upward-pointing motion.
- The Karana mudra aids in the **removal of negativity, anxiety, fear, and sadness** while also increasing emotions of happiness and satisfaction.
- It promotes the body's **Fire and Ether elements**, which are symbolized by the thumb and middle finger.

6.2 Conclusion

Mudra is a Sanskrit term that refers to a symbolic hand motion that can provide joy and contentment. Mudras aid in the connection of the brain and body, the relief of pain, the stimulation of endorphins, the alteration of mood, and the increase of energy. Mudras are used in a variety of Buddhist rituals.

7. Uttarabodhi Mudra and Anjali Mudra

Mudras are a non-verbal mode of communication and self-expression in Buddhism, consisting of hand gestures and finger- postures. The Uttarabodhi mudra, one of the most important mudras in Buddhism, denotes supreme enlightenment. And the Anjali mudra, one of the most important mudras in Buddhism, denotes welcome, prayer, and devotion motion. Here we will discuss the various aspects of Uttarabodhi Mudra, which will be helpful in preparing Art and Culture for the UPSC IAS Examination.

7.1 Uttarabodhi Mudra

- This refers to achieving **supreme enlightenment** by connecting with divine universal energy.
- It's done with both hands, which are put at the heart with the index fingers touching and pointed upwards, and the rest of the fingers entwined.

7.2 Anjali Mudra

- It is also known as **Namaskara Mudra or Hridayanjali Mudra**, and it's a **welcome, prayer, and devotion motion**.
- It is done by pressing the palms of the hands together, with the thumbs resting softly against the sternum, and the hands kept at the heart chakra.
- Anjali is a Sanskrit word that means "**salutation**" or "**to offer**," and mudra means "seal" or "gesture." Therefore, Anjali mudra translates as "salutation seal" in English.

7.3 Conclusion

Uttarabodhi mudra is the gesture of perfection. It is called the best-perfection among the types of mudras. Moreover, the Uttarabodhi mudra is frequently seen in images of **Vairochana**.

Mudra is a Sanskrit term that refers to a symbolic hand motion that can provide joy and contentment. Mudras aid in the connection of the brain and body, the relief of pain, the stimulation of endorphins, the alteration of mood, and the increase of energy. Mudras are used in a variety of Buddhist rituals.

8. Cave Architecture

India's **cave architecture** is thought to have started in prehistoric times. Buddhist and Jain monks used these caverns as places of worship and residence. The caverns were discovered in western India at first. Indian **rock-cut architecture** is more diverse and abundant than any other type of rock building seen around the world (more than 1,500 rock-cut structures in India). **The Mauryans** were masters of cave architecture and are credited as being the forefathers of **rock-cut cave architecture**. This article will explain to you the concepts related to **Cave Architecture** which will be helpful in Indian Art and Culture preparation for the UPSC Civil service exam.

8.1 Buddhist Influence

- In the third to second centuries B.C, **Buddhism** became the dominant religion.
- Around this time, three distinct types of Buddhist architecture emerged: the colossal **funeral mound** or **Stupa**, **the hall of worship** or **Chaitya**, and **the monastery** or **Vihara**.
- Chaityas and Viharas were built along the hillside since Buddhist and Jain monks tended to stay away from cities and towns.
- **Chaityas** - Buddhist and Jain monks used Chaitya as sites of prayer. It contained a rectangular prayer hall with a stupa in the centre.
- The **entire Chaitya** was divided into three sections: a central section and two aisles. A row of pillars separated the central Chaitya from the two aisles. Chaityas' inside walls were polished, and the Chaitya's end was apsidal in shape.
- **Vihara** - Viharas, or monasteries, were built near Chaityas to house monks during the rainy season.
- Sculptors here depict numerous scenes from the Buddha's life. It's worth noting that, unlike Chaityas, Viharas lacked a stupa.

8.2 Ajanta Caves

- Ajanta is a group of rock-cut caves near **Aurangabad, Maharashtra**, amid the Sahyadri ranges on the **Waghora River**.
- There are 29 caverns in all, 25 of which were utilised as Viharas (residence caves) and 4 of which were used as Chaitya (prayer halls).
- Between **200 B.C. and 650 A.D** the caves were constructed.
- The **Buddhist monks** inscribed the Ajanta caves under the patronage of the Vakataka rulers, one of them was **Harishena**.
- The figures in these caves were painted with frescoes and exhibit a high level of naturalism. The colours were created from local plants and minerals.
- The paintings' outlines were painted in red, and then the insides were painted. The **absence of blue** in the paintings is one of the most remarkable elements.
- The paintings are mostly on **Buddhism**, including Buddha's life and Jataka stories.
- Five of the caves were built during the Hinayana period of Buddhism, while the other 24 were built during the Mahayana period.
- The **Ajanta caves** are mentioned in the travel journals of Chinese Buddhist pilgrims **Fa Hien and Hieun Tsang**.

8.3 Ellora Caves

- Another famous cave architecture site is **Ellora Caves**.
- It is almost 100 kilometres from the Ajanta caves in Maharashtra's **Sahyadri hills**.
- It consists of **34 caves**, 17 of which are Brahmanical, 12 Buddhist, and 5 Jain.
- These caves were built by numerous guilds from Vidarbha, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu between the **5th and 11th centuries A.D.** (they are newer than the Ajanta Caves).
- As a result, in terms of topic and architectural styles, the caverns represent a natural diversity.
- It is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** with cave temples dedicated to Hinduism, Buddhism, and **Jainism**.
- The 17 Hindu caves (caves 13, 29, 14 and 15 are famous and are known as **Ravan Ki Khai** and **Dashavatar caves**, respectively), 12 Buddhist caves (caves 1-12), and 5 Jain caves (caves 30-34, Jaina caves include Indra Sabha and Jagannath Sabha) built in close proximity demonstrate the religious harmony prevalent during this period of Indian history.
- Cave 16 in Ellora's **Kailasa Temple** is the world's largest single monolithic excavation.

8.4 Barabar Caves

- The **Lomas Rishi and Sudama Caves**, which were excavated around 250 BC in Barabar Hills in Bihar (Jehanabad district) during the **Mauryan Period** and are regarded India's oldest example of **rock-cut architecture**, impacted Western Indian rock-cut cave architecture.
- There are four caves in the **Barabar Hills**, which were built during the Mauryan Period, mainly under the reign of **Asoka** (273-232 BC) and his grandson Dasaratha.
- Originally built for the **Ajivika sect**, hundreds of rock-cut caves were eventually built for Buddhist, Jaina, and Brahmanical traditions.
- In this way, the Barabar caves were linked to all of the major theological philosophies of the time, including the **Ajivika sect, Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism**.
- This also exemplifies the religious tolerance policies of the two emperors (Ashoka and Dasaratha), both of whom were Buddhists.

8.5 Elephanta Caves

- Elephanta cave temples (on a small island off the coast of Bombay) date from the **eighth century A.D.** and are similar to those at Ellora.
- The Elephanta Caves were initially intended to be a **Buddhist site**, but the **Shaivite faith** eventually took over.
- They are known for their sculpture (showing slenderness in the body, with stark light and dark effects), particularly the great **Trimurti figure of Shiva** (Shiva is akin to the Trimurti figure of Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh), as well as **Ravana shaking the Kailash, Tandav dance of Shiva, Ardh-narishwara**, and other notable sculptures.
- It was also designated as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987**.

8.6 Bagh Caves

- A set of nine Buddhist caves formed about the **6th century A.D.** on the bank of the **Bagh river** in Madhya Pradesh.
- It has a similar architectural style to the **Ajanta caves**.

8.7 Junagadh Caves

- These are Buddhist caves located in Gujarat's Junagadh region. Although there are no caves here, three separate places can be located.
- **Khapra Kodiya, Baba Pyare, and Uparkot** are the three sites found.
- The presence of a 30-50 ft high fortress known as "**Uparkot**" in front of the prayer hall is a distinctive feature of the Junagadh caves.

8.8 Nasik Caves

- "**Pandav Leni**" refers to a series of 24 Buddhist caves in Nasik. They were created in the first century A.D. during the Hinayana period.
- Later, though, the **Mahayana sect's** impact may be seen in these caves.
- His presence is expressed in the hinayana sect through the usage of motifs and symbols such as the throne and footprints.
- Later on, Buddha idols were sculpted inside these caves, indicating **Mahayana Buddhism's impact**.
- The site also shows a superb water management system, as evidenced by the presence of water tanks carved out of solid rock.

8.9 Mandapeshwar Caves

- It is also known as **Montperir Caves**, located in Borivali, near Mumbai, and was built as a Brahmanical cave during the late Gupta dynasty.
- It was later transformed into a **Christian cave**, however. Sculptures of Natraja, Sada Shiva, and Ardhanarishwara can be seen among the site's ruins.
- Above the cave precincts are the church and its graveyard.

8.10 Udayagiri caves

- **Caves of Udayagiri** (not to be confused with Odisha's Udayagiri-Khandagiri Caves) It's in Madhya Pradesh's Vidisha district.
- It was built under the patronage of **Chandragupta II** in the early fifth century AD and is known for its numerous sculptures on the hill walls.
- Varaha, or **Vishnu's Boar incarnation**, is a renowned sculpture.
- One of the earliest Hindu sculptures may be found in the caverns.

8.11 Karle Caves

- The Karle caves were built around the beginning of the **Christian era**, and their pattern is similar to that of the **Bhaja caves**, although they are larger and more spectacular.
- The Chaitya at Karle is carved 124 feet deep into the rock and is located two miles north of the Bombay-Poona highway.
- **Great Chaitya** is the most well-known cave (Cave no. 8). It is India's largest **rock-cut chaitya**.

8.12 Kanheri Caves

- The Kanheri caverns are located near Bombay, and the Kanheri Chaityas follow the **Karle Chaitya design**.
- There are 109 caverns cut out of basalt rock in this area. The biggest caverns were Chaityas, but the majority were viharas.
- The **Mahayana influence** is also visible in the caves' outside walls, which depict Buddha images.

8.13 Conclusion

Rock-cut architecture is the process of constructing a structure by carving it out of natural rock. This involves removing rock that isn't part of the building until the desired structure is achieved. **Indian rock-cut architecture** is more diverse and abundant than any other type of rock building seen around the world (more than 1,500 rock-cut structures in India). Furthermore, the sacred nature of Indian rock-cut building is worth mentioning. The Mauryans were masters of cave architecture and are credited as being the forefathers of **rock-cut cave architecture**.

9. Ajanta and Ellora Caves

The **Ajanta and Ellora caves** are located near Aurangabad in Maharashtra, India, and are considered one of the best examples of ancient rock-cut caves. The **Ajanta and Ellora caves** complex contains Buddhist monasteries, **Hindu and Jain temples**, as well as exquisite sculptures, paintings, and murals. The caves of Ajanta and Ellora are **UNESCO World Heritage Sites** and are visited by tourists from all over the world. This article will explain to you the concepts related to **Ajanta and Ellora caves** which will be helpful in Indian Art and Culture preparation for the UPSC Civil service exam.

9.1 Ajanta Caves

- **Location** - Ajanta is a group of rock-cut caves near Aurangabad, Maharashtra, amid the **Sahyadri ranges** on the **Waghora River**.
- There are 29 caverns in all, 25 of which were utilized as Viharas (residence caves) and 4 of which were used as Chaitya (prayer halls).
- **Time of development** - Between 200 B.C. and 650 A.D the caves were constructed.

9.2 Features of Ajanta Caves

- The Buddhist monks inscribed the Ajanta caves under the patronage of the **Vakataka rulers, one of them was Harishena**.
- The figures in these caves were painted with frescoes and exhibit a high level of naturalism. The colors were created from local plants and minerals.
- The paintings' outlines were **painted in red**, and then the insides were painted. The **absence of blue** in the paintings is one of the most remarkable elements.
- The paintings are mostly on Buddhism, including Buddha's life and Jataka stories.
- Five of the caves were built during the **Hinayana period of Buddhism**, while the other 24 were built during the **Mahayana period**.
- The Ajanta caves are mentioned in the travel journals of Chinese Buddhist pilgrims **Fa Hien and Hieun Tsang**.
- The **Mahaparinirvana of Buddha** in **Cave No. 26** and **Naga King and his consort in Cave.no 19** are some of the most famous sculptures in the Ajanta Caves.

9.3 Ellora Caves

- Another famous cave architecture site is Ellora Caves.
- **Location** - It is almost 100 kilometers from the Ajanta caves in Maharashtra's Sahyadri hills. It consists of 34 caverns, 17 of which are Brahmanical, 12 Buddhist, and 5 Jain.
- **Time of development** - These caves were built by numerous guilds from Vidarbha, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu between the **5th and 11th centuries A.D.** (they are newer than the Ajanta Caves).
- It is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** with cave temples dedicated to Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism.

9.4 Features of Ellora Caves

- In terms of topic and architectural styles, the caverns represent a natural diversity.
- The **17 Hindu caves** (caves 13, 29, 14, and 15 are famous and are known as **Ravan Ki Khai** and **Dashavatar caves**, respectively), **12 Buddhist caves** (caves 1-12), and **5 Jain caves** (caves 30-34, Jain caves include Indra Sabha and Jagannath Sabha) built in close proximity demonstrate the religious harmony prevalent during this period of Indian history.
- Ellora has a number of well-known caverns, including:
 - **Vishwakarma Cave**, also known as a **carpenter's cave**, is a Buddhist Chaitya cave. Here, Buddha is seated in **Vyakhyana Mudra**, with a Bodhi tree etched behind him.
 - **Ravan ki Khai** is the theme of **Cave No. 14**.
 - **Dashavatar Temple** is located in **Cave No. 15**.
 - **Kailash temple** dedicated to Lord Shiva is located in **Cave No. 16**.
 - It was carved out of a monolith and even contains a courtyard; it was built under the patronage of **Rashtrakuta monarch Krishna I**.
 - A sculpture representing **Ravana shaking Mount Kailash** may also be found on the wall of Cave No. 16 in the Kailash temple.
 - It is regarded as one of India's greatest sculptures.
 - **Dhumal Lena** is found in **Cave 29**.
 - **Rameshwar temple** is found in **Cave No. 21**
 - **Indra Sabha (Cave 32)** and **Jagannath Sabha (Cave 33)** are two well-known Jain caves.

9.5 Conclusion

The caves of **Ajanta and Ellora** are among the earliest Buddhist structures. Between the 2nd century BC and the 6th century AD, the Ajanta – Ellora caves developed. Since 1983, the paintings and sculptures of the Ajanta and Ellora caves have been designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. They are considered masterpieces of Buddhist religious art and have had a significant impact on the development of art in India.

10. Elephanta Caves

The **Elephanta Caves** are located on **Elephanta Island** (also known as the Island of Gharapuri), which consists of two hillocks separated by a thin valley in Western India. Numerous old archaeological relics dot the little island, serving as the only witnesses to its complex cultural past. These archaeological relics show that the area was occupied as early as the **2nd century BC**. This article will explain to you the concepts related to **Elephanta caves** which will be helpful in Indian Art and Culture preparation for the UPSC Civil service exam.

10.1 Elephanta Caves

- **Location** - The **Elephanta Caves** are on **Elephanta Island** (also known as Gharapuri Island), which is made up of two hillocks separated by a narrow valley in Western India.
- **Time of development** - **Elephanta cave temples** (on a small island off the coast of Bombay) date from the **eighth century A.D.** and are similar to those at Ellora.
- The Elephanta Caves were initially intended to be a Buddhist site, but the Shaivite faith eventually took over.
- The caves on the island are divided into two groups:
 - A collection of **five Hindu caves** with rock-cut stone sculptures. They are primarily associated with the Shaivite sect of Hinduism, and are primarily dedicated to Lord Shiva.
 - **A pair of Buddhist caves** with cisterns that run along the island's banks. Near the hill, there is a mound that resembles a Buddhist stupa.
- Between the 14th and 17th centuries, when Portuguese ships began to ply the Arabian Sea and used these caves as a base, the caves suffered extensive damage.
- They caused significant damage to the statues, which was exacerbated by water logging and dripping rainwater.

10.2 Features of Elephanta Caves

- The caves are constructed of **solid basalt rock**.
- The older sculptures have paint splatters.
- The **primary cave (Cave 1)** has a rock-cut temple complex that includes a main chamber **dedicated to Lord Shiva**, two lateral chambers, subsidiary shrines, and carvings depicting his life and several episodes associated with his life, such as his marriage with Parvati and the river Ganga descending in his hair.
- They are known for their sculpture (showing slenderness in the body, with stark light and dark effects), particularly the great **Trimurti figure of Shiva** (Shiva is akin to the **Trimurti figure of Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh**).
- **Ravana shaking the Kailash, Tandav dance of Shiva, Ardh-narishwara**, are other notable sculptures.
- It was also designated as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987**.
- The dating of the famed Elephanta Caves is still a point of contention, with estimates ranging from the **6th to the 8th centuries**.

- The **Rashtrakuta monarchs** excavated the cave temple, which is dedicated to Lord Shiva, sometime in the **8th century**.
- The most important cave is the **Mahesa-murti cave**.
- The cave's main body is 27 metres square and is supported by six columns in each row (excluding the porticos on the three open sides and the back aisle).
- This cave has sculpted compartments with amazing depictions of Ardhanarishvara, **Nataraja Shiva**, **Ravana hoisting Kailasa**, **Kalyana-Sundara Shiva**, Andhakari-Murti, and others (slaying of Andhaka demon).
- There are also massive figures of '**dwarapalakas**,' or doorkeepers, which are rather stunning.
- The main cave is well-known for its carvings honouring Shiva, who is worshipped in a variety of shapes and acts.
- The **Sitabai Temple**, a vast prayer hall with walls covered with beautiful and detailed sculptures located near the enormous cave, is another structure that has remained quite intact in comparison to the other decaying caves.
- The overall layout of the caverns makes extensive use of Hindu spiritualistic concepts and iconography.
- One of the most notable collections for the **Shiva religion** is the fifteen massive reliefs surrounding the lingam chapel in the **main Elephanta Cave**.
- Important innovations in **rock-cut architecture** include the layout of the caves, including the pillar components, the location and partition of the caverns into separate segments, and the provision of a sanctuary or Garbhagriha of the **sarvatobhadra plan**.

10.3 Conclusion

The Elephanta Caves are situated on a small island off the coast of Western India, and are home to various old archaeological ruins that bear witness to the country's rich cultural history. Elephanta Caves' architecture and woodland region have been designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites since 1987.
