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## CULTURAL EXPRESSION OF AJANTA CAVES IN MODERN INTERIOR

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### ABSTRACT:

The artwork of the Ajanta cave had a major impact on architectural identity & These caves are listed by UNESCO World Heritage Centre as well. The study of this paper describes the art and architecture of caves and shows the construction, utilization & rediscovery of materials, cultural elements & features of the caves in the modern era. It also explains the cultural expressions, construction & stylistic ideology in modern design. This paper aims to look for new thoughts & design processes in modern architecture. A sanctuary for architecture lovers Ajanta caves is the right destination for understanding art & culture.

*Keywords: Ajanta caves, cultural expression, modern interior*

### INTRODUCTION :

Modern Interior Design is characterized by a monochromatic color theme, clean lines, minimalism, natural materials & natural light. The focus in the modern interior is given to elements, materials & utilization of space rather than ornamentation. Earlier building or monuments depends on thick external stone walls & columns for strength & support whereas, modern buildings depends on RCC columns for strength & aesthetic look.

Modern Interior is an adaption of the good things from previous Interior forms & culture. Old Designs were more decorative & included domes, carved arches, columns, pillars that reflect the material, culture & tradition of the place. The ancient Architecture or Designs are existing which is the base of today's Architecture. Being in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century modernism has changed the form & culture of places into simplicity & minimalism.

To prove that old architectural form, culture & elements can give a modern touch & new trends to modern architecture. I have tried to adapt some elements and forms in my designs.

## HISTORY:

The Ajanta caves in the Aurangabad district of Maharashtra State in India are about 30 rock-cut Buddhist cave monuments that date from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE to about 480 or 650 C.E. The caves include paintings and rock-cut sculptures described as among the finest surviving examples of ancient Indian art. Ellora is one of the largest rock-cut monastery temple caves complexes in the world. The sites present monuments & artwork of Buddhism, Hinduism & Jainism from the 600-1000 C.E period.

The Ajanta caves are in the rocky northern wall of the U-shaped gorge on river Waghur. The Ajanta caves are carved with Buddhist traditions into a 246ft. wall of rock. The caves present paintings, tales & sculptures of past lives of Buddhist deities. The caves have been known far & wide for 'dry frescos'. The paintings are created within a limited color palette of red, green & highlights of lapis lazuli, black, lime & gypsum. The monks, who lived in caves, used simple tools like hammers & chisels to carve out images of Buddha & Jataka stories in the wall of these caves. Some other tools used were chinni & hatod by monks. Ajanta is best known for its paintings. The intricate carving techniques are considered rare for the period. Paintings & sculptures find reflections & depictions of Buddha. The painted ceiling in Ajanta is derived from nature such as fruits, leaves, flowers, plants & animals.

The Ellora caves lie about 100km away from Ajanta & were by the Rashtrakuta dynasty in Sahyadri Hills are rock-cut architecture. There are 34 caves i.e. Buddhist, Hindu & Jain caves. The Buddhist caves were constructed between the 6<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> centuries. The structure consists of viharas or monasteries. These include living quarters, sleeping quarters, kitchens & other rooms. The famous Buddhist cave is Vishwakarma cave also known as Carpenters cave. The Hindu caves were constructed between the 6<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> centuries. The famous Hindu cave is the Kailash Temple, designed as Mount Kailash which is known as Lord Shiva. It is a freestanding, multistoried temple complex. It is carved out of one single rock & was built from upward to downward. It took 100 years to complete. The caves contain detailed artwork. The carved pillars, lotus on the ceiling, or sculptures of Yakshini & Durga add a peaceful pleasure to the eyes of a viewer. There are 5 Jain caves & that was excavated in the early 9<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> century. These caves are smaller than the Buddhist & Hindu caves. These caves share architectural & devotional ideas such as a pillared veranda, symmetric mandapa & puja. The works at the Jain temple include carvings of Gods & Goddesses Yaksha & Yakshi. The rock was covered with lime plaster which was painted.

## FEATURES OF AJANTA

The caves are surrounded by thick forests which enhance beauty, calm & pleasant. The monks chose the site for their spiritual purpose. The caves are built in basalt stone. The Waghora River streamed directly to caves so this could be the reason for choosing the site as there were ample water & forest resources available. Robert Gill was an army officer, painter & photographer. He is best known for paintings copying the frescoes of Ajanta caves. He was the first painter after their rediscovery. John Smith, the Madras presidency Officer discovered cave No.10 which led to the discovery of the Ajanta caves. Ajanta caves are a series of viharas & chaitya halls divided into rectangles:

- a) **VIHARAS:** It is also known as 'monasteries'. It is a square or rectangular plan form with a hall & cells for a monk. They contain pillared aisles along all four sides. The maximum height is 15.8m. The design of some viharas is simple & others are ornamented with carvings & paintings on walls, ceilings including the façade.
- b) **CHAITYAS:** It is also known as Worship Hall. It was also the main hall with a rectangular plan with high arched ceiling type chaityas-'The house of Stupa'. The Stupa is surrounded by pillars & concentric

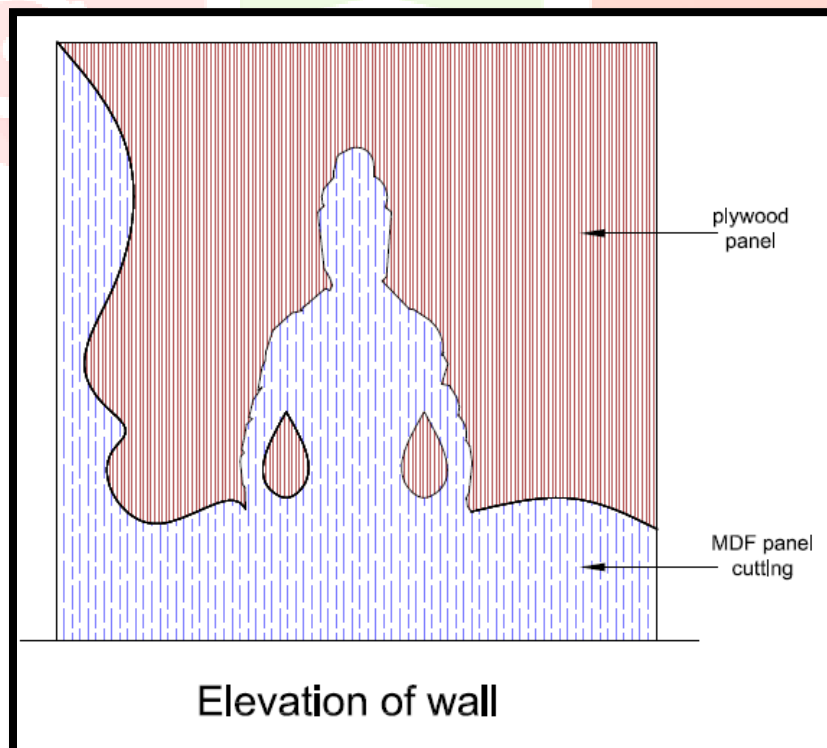
walking space. The chaitya-griha is called a worship or prayer hall. Many columns are carved over all their surface with floral motifs. The façade of the chaitya has an entrance with an arched window to light the interior.

The rock out of which sculpture or structure has been divided into rectangles. Ajanta caves are a series of viharas & chaitya halls. The viharas were private cells for monks to reside & meditate inside & so didn't require a lot of light & also have low height flat ceiling. Chaityas were prayer halls used by several people. To add calmness & peaceful atmosphere to halls, lights were used as aesthetic elements. So, the ceiling height was more & beams & rafters are carved on a rock.

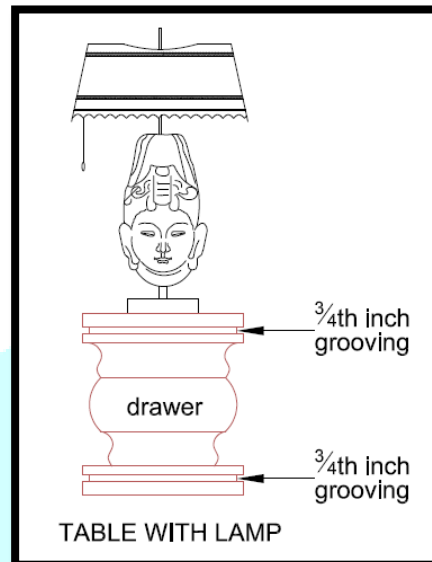
The columns are of 2 types Persepolitan & Greco-Roman. Persepolitan is an octagonal column with supporting animal sculpture & Greco-Roman is rectangular, octagonal, or circular with shallow fluted. Ajanta has both the combination of Persepolitan & Greco-Roman columns.

The paintings in Ajanta caves narrate the Jataka tales. Paintings are all over the cave except for the floors. Bodhisattva Padmapani is the most famous painting. The artists applied mud plaster in 2 coats: the first coat was rough to fill the pores of the rocks then the final coat of lime plaster over it. The main colors used were red, yellow, brown ochre, lamp black & lapis. All the walls & pilasters are covered by overlapping figures with bright & contrasting colors by the artist. The painting methods are similar to the European fresco techniques. Most paintings were done in light of torches, as caves were dark from inside. The colors used in paintings were made of plants & minerals. The wall paintings, murals & reliefs provided a perfect platform. The paintings also reflect the contemporary life of all times, dresses, ornaments, culture, weapons, beliefs, Gods & human beings.

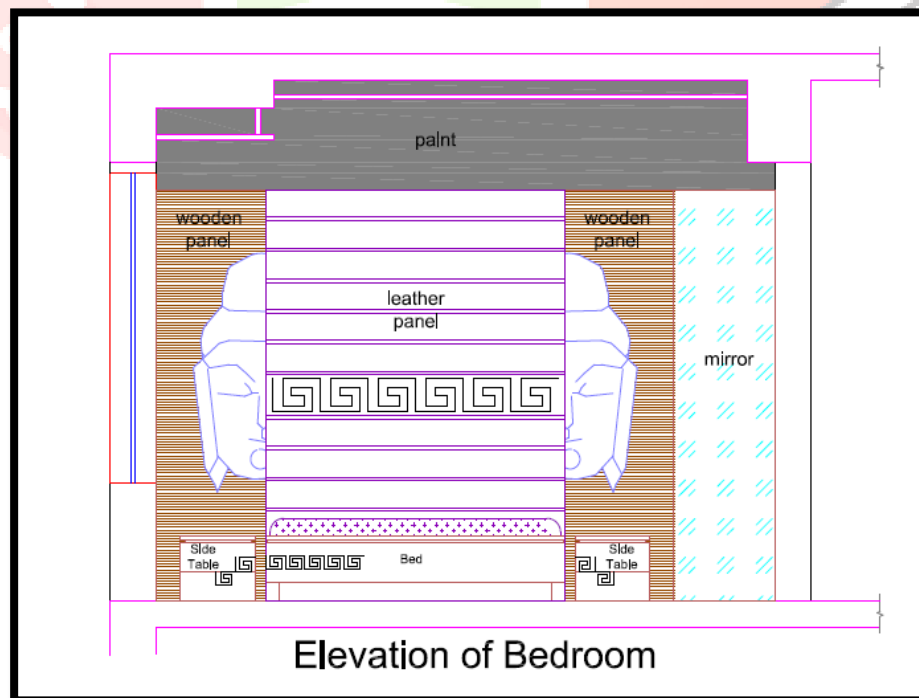
#### FEATURES OF AJANTA CAVES USED IN MY DESIGN



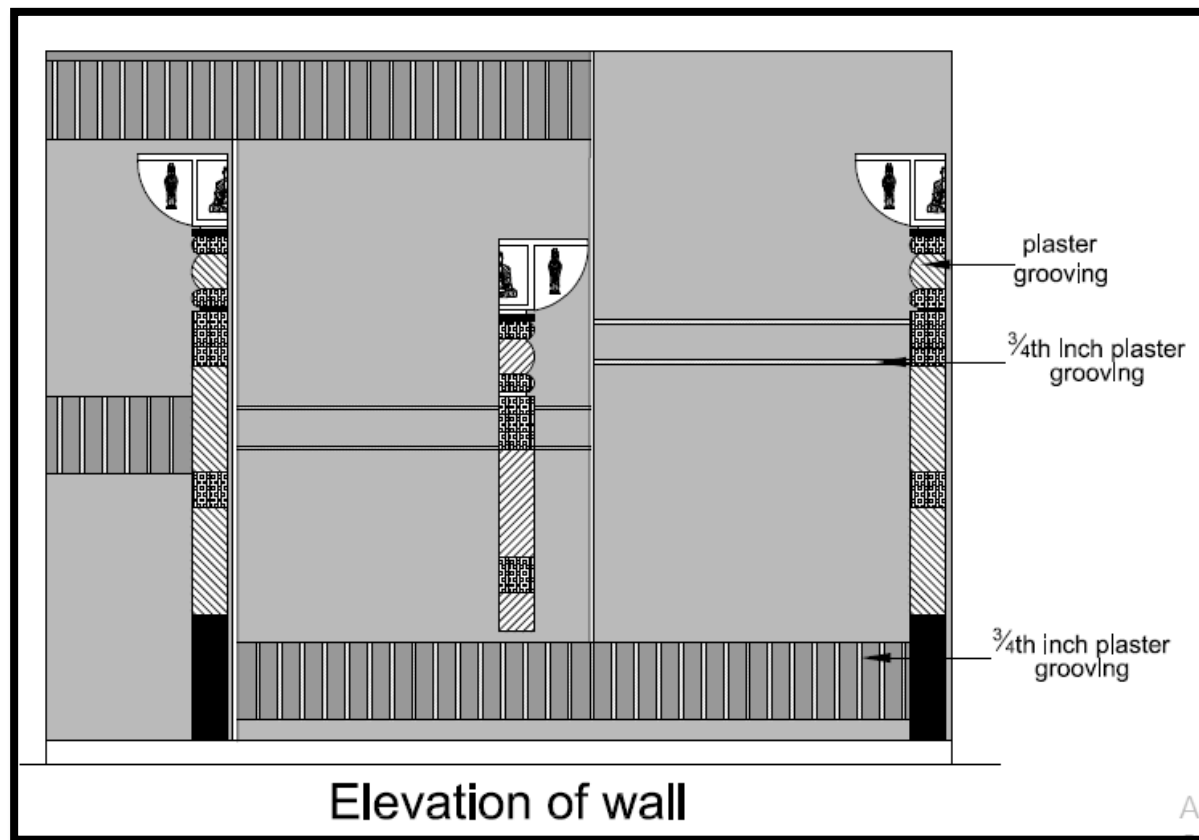
In this drawing, the feature of Buddha will act as a decorative part on the wall which will be cut-out of MDF panel with led lights, and the base will be of ply panel. This wall can be a feature wall in the living room or formal area sitting.



The lamp is an ornamental feature with a Buddha face and a side table having a drawer that is influenced by the pillar of Ajanta cave.



Here, the feature of the buddha face is used as a decorative part for the back panel of the bed and bedroom wall.



In this drawing, the column of Ajanta cave act as a decorative element for the wall. This is influenced by the carving and column features which are intricately carved. This wall can be a highlighter wall among 3 walls where the column is designed with the help of grooving done in plaster.

## CONCLUSION

Nowadays, Modern Design is focused on elements, materials & utilization of space rather than ornamentation. Whereas, the old architecture is focused on carvings and ornamentation. Being in the 21<sup>st</sup> century I think we should adopt some of the elements of old architecture in modern design and try to give it a new look that will stick to the old design and modernism too. To prove that old architectural form, culture & elements can give a modern touch & new trends to modern architecture. I have tried to adapt some elements and forms in my designs.