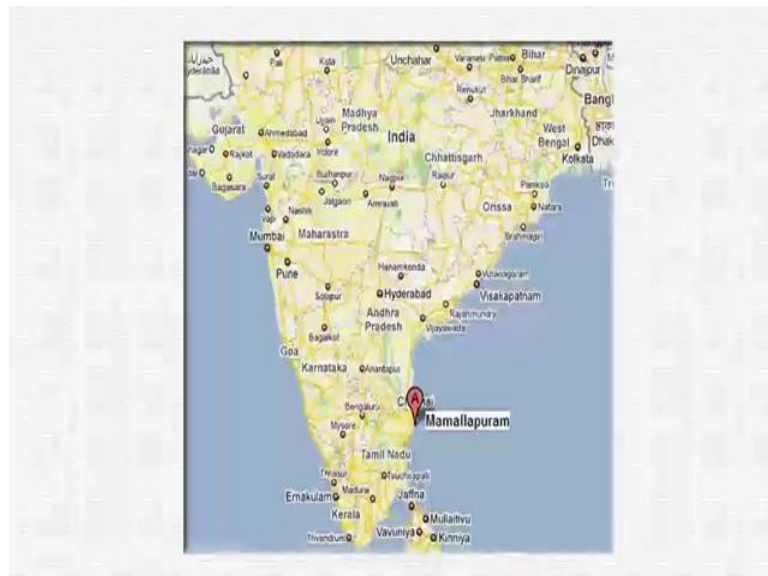


**Introduction to Indian Art – An Appreciation**  
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**Module – 02**  
**Narrative Art in Sculpture: Mamallapuram and Ellora**  
**Lecture: W3 – L2**

Hello viewers welcome to MOOCs online course on Introducing Indian Art and Appreciation today is the second module of the third week and as you already know we have dedicated the third week to the understanding of stylistic variations in Indian art taking up very specific examples, in the first module of this week we picked up Ajantha as one of the major examples to study the stylistic variations of Indian art. Today we have selected two very important sculptural sites from Indian art one Mamallapuram or what is more commonly known as Mahabalipuram near Chennai, and the other one is very well known sculptural as well as architectural site known as Ellora in Maharashtra near Aurangabad.

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Now, these 2 sites also have a two very different locations as you might have already noticed that whereas, Mamallapuram is located down south right on the sea near Chennai and today it is a very important a touristic location in Tamilnadu and interestingly at one point of time may be in 6th century 5th century AD Mamallapuram was also a very well

known port a very well know historical port which gave entry to lot of traders and merchants and visitors from different parts of the world and particularly South East Asia.

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In contrast Ellora is located in the heart of Maharashtra near Aurangabad also close to Ajantha which we studied in the previous class and not very far from Mumbai. Now despite the location differences these two places have two very different, but in a way similar approaches to art both of these places have very interesting sculptural carvings dealing with the narrative aspect in a very innovative way.

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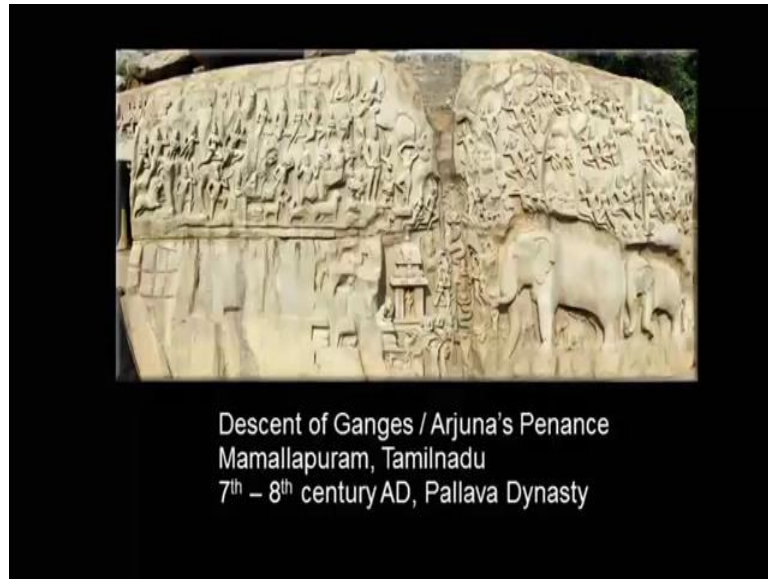
Let us start with Mamallapuram at Mamallapuram you find different kinds of architectural structures you find something like this which is technically known as structural temple and in Mamallapuram they are known as the very famous shore temples where in you may not find very significant narrative sculptures, but you do find lot of sculpted figures on the body of the temple on the surrounding walls and also inside the temples mostly in an iconic foundation.

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Apart from shore temples in Mamallapuram you also have Pancharatha temples where the temple structures are built following the idea of a Ratha here two you do have (Refer Time: 04:22) lot of interesting sculptural figures within the temple structure on the body of the temples as well as outside the temples within the temple complex, but what we understand as a narrative panel where a particular story is being told in terms of unfolding the sequence of events is yet to happen and for that we need to go to a very interesting.

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And a very intriguing narrative panel at Mamallapuram and that particular narrative panel are known as descent of Ganges and at times it is also identified by some scholars as a narrative which is unfolding the story of Arjuna's penance. Now whatever it is what we see here is a whole a composition crowded with innumerable figures both human and animals arranged in a certain way which does not look very organized. In fact, right at the outset

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When you look at this particular narrative panel a relief panel from a distance, the composition does not look even very orderly it looks chaotic and perhaps this chaotic feeling evoked. By this particular narrative structure is the life is the content of this panel.

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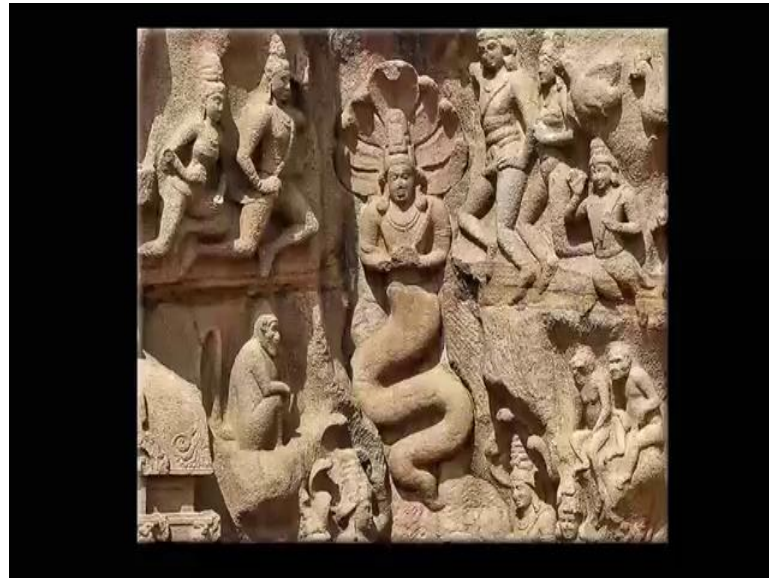
Now, what I would I am trying to convey is the fact that though the narrative panel usually is expected to have a story with a beginning and middle and an end, and every story behind any narrative panel would have that certainly.

But that does not necessarily guarantee that the visual depiction will also follow the same kind of sequence and this is what exactly is happening in this particular narrative panel called the descent of Ganges at Mamallapuram it is the story is drawn out of the Indian mythology which describes how Ganges is born out of Shivas mat or very Shivas hair for that matter now a matted hair.

But the point is the story instead of being told in a very orderly sequential manner is being told in a rather haphazard where the entire crowd participates and this crowd includes human beings this crowd includes animals, birds everything under the earth in that sense a mythology in terms of it is visual depiction turns out to be an epic it assumes an epic proportion where various kinds of elements living beings non living objects trees plants and definitely these very tenderly very warm very well sculpted elephants are there.

And all together they make the composition very touching yes and at the same time I would say the visual depiction does not look like a prescription or a very obedient kind of translation of the mythology. Here, the artist takes opportunity the freedom to imagine the mythology visually in haze or in their own way.

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And that is why in this particular narrative panel called descent of Ganges it is not surprising that we are able to notice very interesting details like I saw a little monkey somewhere where a huge elephant somewhere else or may be a very self absorbed sadhu or a mendicant sitting somewhere on the world city is a narrative panel that needs to be read in details. It is a narrative panel that needs to be seen not only for the sake of its story, but it needs to be seen also for the sake of the world the visual world the natural world it offers as a result.

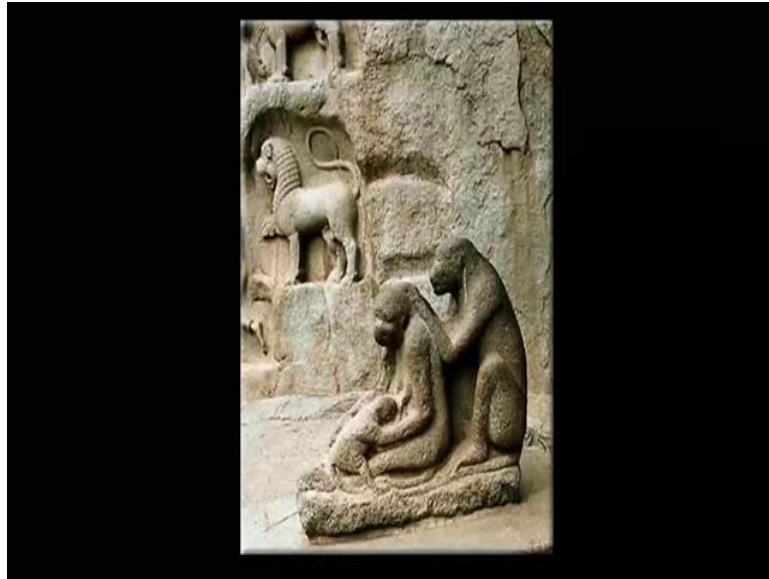
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When you look at this narrative panel very closely and carefully and in detailed you tend to not miss out on the fantastic details. So, it is the detailing of various figures various elements human figures animal figures where the walled from the nature which includes trees and other kinds of stuffs.

Now, so I am talking about the way we are supposed to look at this narrative panel it is not just to read the story, but also to read how the story is being told and interestingly from the point of we have composition the story does not necessarily remain confined within the given wall only.

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As you look elsewhere within the same complex, but when you take your eyes out from the wall it would not be surprised if you are able to notice something like this 2 monkeys perhaps a parent and the child they are kind of involved in a very humanly very touching in a very intimate moment. Now this particular image of 2 monkeys may not necessarily be a part of the larger narrative, but they become the part of the visual world the artists creates out of that narrative. And this is where these beautiful stone relief works they go beyond the narrative they rather surpass the limitations of a narrative and become very enchanting visual configuration.

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The not only outside on the outer wall of the caves or on the mountains, but also inside many of these Mamallapuram caves you find wonderful relief panels and some of them which we are going to look at today have very well known stories. So, the stories are not really an issue the stories might be very well known to us; in fact, very popular to us.

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For example in this particular insight this particular cave and this case is also once again (Refer Time: 11:59) not natural cave like Ajantha and Ellora these cases have been hued out carved out excavated by the sculptures and the architects man made caves.

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And inside the man made caves you may find something like this Mahishasura Mardini for example. Now again this particular relief panel depicting the famous story called the Mahishasura Mardini is not simply a depiction of the story where the God is Durga is trying to subjugate the demon Mahishasur.

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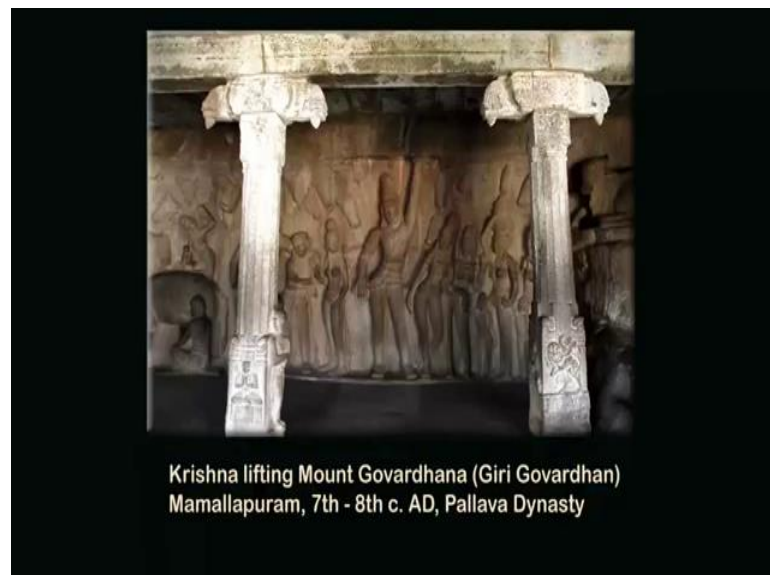
Because taking the opportunity or we can also put it the other way in the pay text of telling this story. The sculpture takes the freedom of including radius figures aligning with both sides either on Durgas side or on Mahishashur side and with a kind of gesture and posture and expressions which you may not be finding literally in the stories, but we are assure that these expressions these postures are imaginations of the artists.

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So, in these narrative relief panels instead of simply going by what the mythology at the Purana tells you the sculpture also takes the freedom enjoys the freedom of adding his own vision and imagination and this is what we need to look at when we are looking at this relief panels.

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Another very important relief panel that we find at Mamallapuram is Krishna lifting mount Govardhana which is popularly known as Girigovardhana and you may see if you are looking at this relief panel carefully that while the Krishna's iconic figure is alright I mean with his left hand he is lifting the entire hill up to save the mankind, but one must look at the adjacent figures one must look at the secondary figures, and many of them are there in this huge panel and look at the identity of each of the figures you should look at the expressions of each of this figures you should look at the relationships created between the figures.

Whereas, Krishna stands upright with his left hand holding the mountain straight up rest of the figures are really speaking restless because initially they were very afraid they were scared of an eminent kind of natural disaster from which Krishna saved their lives. So, they are still having carrying that restless in their postures and gestures whereas, the Krishna the hero is unmoved.

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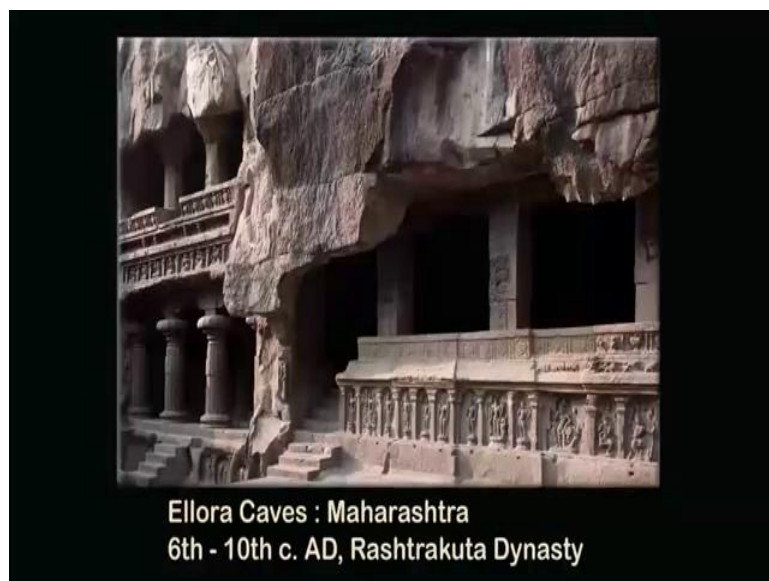
So, once again we need to look at the details and while we are looking at the details our eye will be drawn to very touching details like this where you can see a cow here is milking the cow and the cow is licking his calf and you can also see rest of the village men and women. So, what Krishna really is saving from the wrought of the nature is not simply the life of human beings, but also the entire village life.

So, this sculpture is trying to show everything that Krishna is trying to save not just symbolically, but by recording as it were the daily life of the people who pleaded to Krishna to save their life. So, narrative does or been particularly when a narrative is drawn from the Puranic sources it does not necessarily mean that the sculpture or the painter is simply going to illustrate that Purana in Indian art in traditional Indian art whether it is a sculpture relief sculpture or painting. In most of the cases more often than not sculptures and painters artists, in general have always felt the freedom they were always left with a huge scope to visualize imagine and build up their own ideas in order to translate a given mythology into an enchanting visual configuration.

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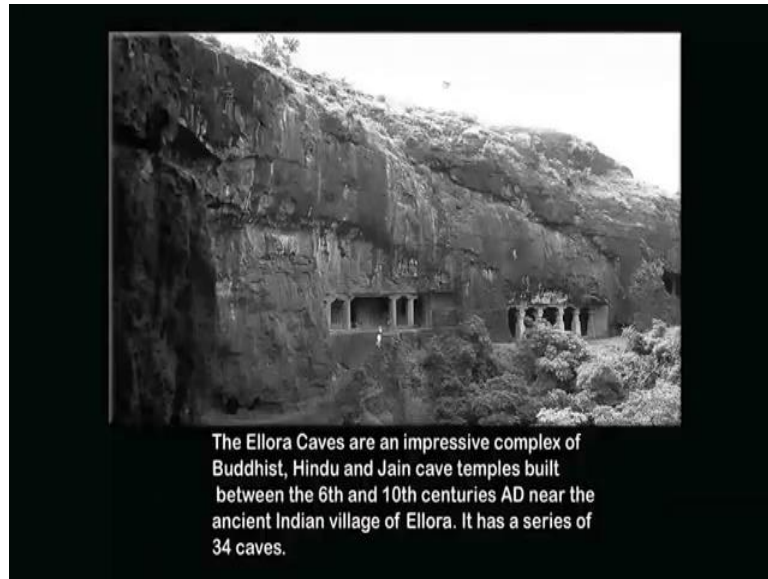


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So, in Mamallapuram you should be looking at all these tender details Ellora. Ellora should be considered as another very important site and as I have already mentioned this particular site which is a series of almost 34 caves.

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And the religious context of these caves are also very interesting because all the caves are not dedicated to one religion you have caves dedicated to Buddhism then you have Hindu caves as well as Jain caves. So, it is a wonderful combination and very impressive complex of all these 3 religions sponsoring and patronizing caves pertaining to their respective religions.

So, as a result we find very interesting architectural constructions hewn out once again by the carvers and at the same time we get to see some most beautiful sculptures both iconic sculptures as well as relief panels.

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Today we are going to focus mostly on the relief panels now this also true most of the very fascinating narrative relief panels at Ellora will be found at cave number 16 which is a Hindu cave or a Brahmanical cave because most of the Buddhist caves will have Buddhas statues or the huge figure of Buddha seated or standing, but they may not have necessarily narrative panels. Whereas, at Ellora most of the narrative panels are found at the Hindu caves and cave number 16 which is also known as the great Kailasa temple or Kailasnath. It is famous for that the narrative panels.

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So, once you enter the Kailasnatha complex which is cave number 16 along with the narrative Panels you will also come across various figures single figures. So, may be a singular figure may not carry a great detail of narration or story components, but when you look at all the single figures in a given complex all together they may evoke a story a narration with a kind of links in between them.

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But we will be looking at some specific examples of narrative panels now it is true. Before we move on to that just let me show you this photograph and let me just drawn your attention to the fact that we need to imagine if you have not been there a so far, but I suggest strongly recommend that you should go and visit Ellora very soon. And because it is a ambiance architectural and this sculptural ambiance that leaves a great impact and impression on the viewers and which is very important.

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So, this is a photograph of that ambiance this is another photograph of that ambiance where in you will find lot of narrative panels.

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So, now when you begin to focus on some specific narrative panels you cannot also avoid these free standing singular sculptures of huge elephants they may not have a very independent narrative of its own, but they definitely add to the narrative ambiance of the whole complex. And that is why even when you are focusing on the narrative panel you simply cannot avoid or ignore in your mind the presence of these huge elephants or the presence of the independently carved figures of the wall.

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Now, we have this very interesting panels re relief sculptures in relief sculptures at Ellora where in you can see the narrative has been visualized and depicted not on a kind of unidentified background or a space like the way the first descent of Ganges relief sculpture at Mamallapuram we show saw today thus, but here you can see that the narrative panel has been divided into several horizontal panels smaller horizontal almost like comic strip. I mean this particular narrative structure reminds us of the comic strip format, but without the vertical frame divisions.

So, it is very interesting that in order to accommodate on the finer details all the smaller details of the narrative and in this case it is Mahabharata sometimes it might be also Ramayana and you know that these epics whether it is Mahabharata or Ramayana they are full of details now how would you show all these details you cannot show them always in a large scale because you need to show everything and if you need to show everything bring them into small scale divide the larger space into smaller horizontal banks and this is what exactly they have done over here.

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A few more slides from the same panel just to give you an idea what exactly is being depicted and now I can live it up to you also to identify the episodes of the story now that I have told you that these are epics and particularly this one is Mahabharata and as you can see lot of people with bows and arrows I am sure you can make out already this was made episodes from the war of Kurukshetra.

But what differ for the details for example, this entire wall is full of episodes from Mahabharata study this wall carefully and try to identify the episodes from the most well known epic called Mahabharata.

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So, once again the story is not very unknown to us what is unknown to us is to identify the episodes we may not be able to identify the episodes straight away because we are not habituated to looking at a visual story without any you know vertical frames without any pause we are more habituated to watching a film or a television serial where things come and go you may once again come across this individual figures on the walls. And these figures though may not though they may not have any direct tradition pertaining to any particular narrative, but we should not forget to count on them when we are trying to understand the entire narrative structure of that place or the composition of that place.

For example, this is a flying Gandharva which is not so specific in terms of any particular narrative, but the very presence of this kind of figures like flying Gandharva will make the ambiance a very sacred one hence, giving certain kind of dimension to the larger narrative.

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Now, almost following this particular posture of the flying Gandharva you have something like this now can you identify this particular episode from the story of Ramayana of course, you can see how Jatayu is trying to intervene Ravana while Ravana was trying to abduct Sita and take her away.

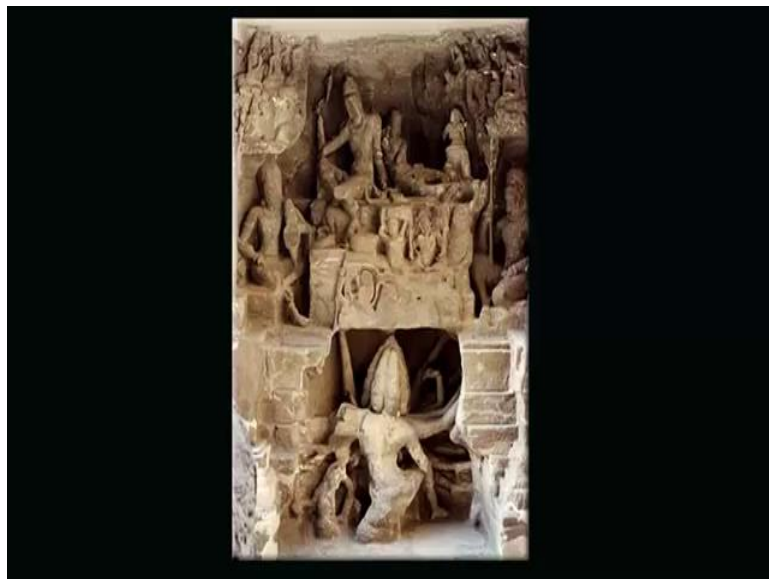
Now, the tremendous a kind of dimension I mean the physical dimension with which this particular episode from Ramayana has been told here is very telling and enough powerful enough to evoke the emotion of that moment, and also to create that dramatic tension of that episode. Now just identify the moment is not enough for us we also lead to learn and understand how to relate with the emotional content and also the expressive content of this narratives. For that you simply need to remember the story and then study the particular sculpture from every possible angle.

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Similarly, Ram on chariot look up his gesture look at the gesture of the horses look at the space where this particular narrative has been located now this may not be a part of larger narrative, but Rama himself with his bow and arrow on a horsed on chariot is an independent and self sufficient narrative. So, the word narrative itself has undergone certain very significant changes in Ellora or within the history of Ellora.

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So, similarly you also have a very well known example of a very rarely seen narrative where you can see Ravana shaking mount Kailasa you can see a very restless Ravana

below and you can see a very calm Shiva with his consort Parvathi right beside him almost unmoved because they do not simply care and Ravana is very restless he wants to destroy Shiva's abode and of course, he cannot.

Hence, you can see a contrast of the dramatic elements whereas, below because of the restless posture of Ravana you can see the composition is very restless extremely dynamic. Whereas, up there on mount Kailasa you can see Shiva and Parvathi and their people their entire group seated with a kind of calm with a kind of a care free attitude which is in absolute contrast with Ravana's posture down below.