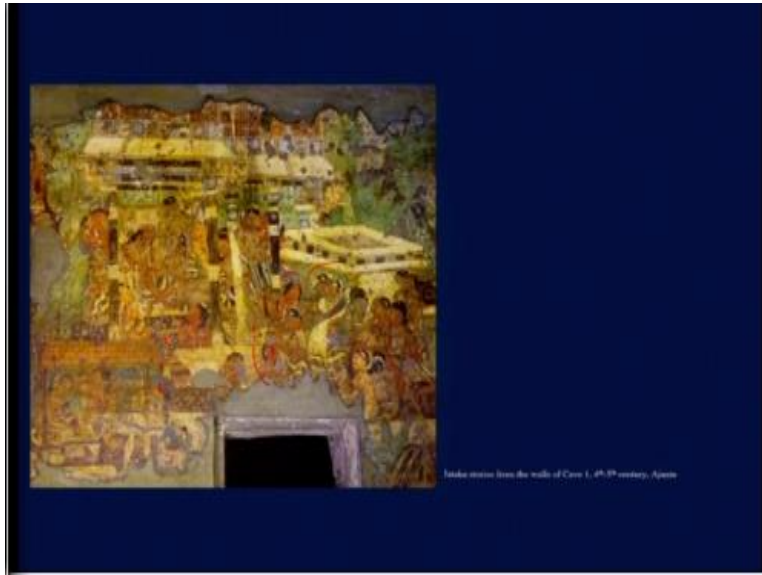


Indian Art: Materials, Techniques and Artistic Practices
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Lecture-13

Hello everyone, we will continue on our module on pigment and we have already started talking about the importance of the images in Ajanta, the mural paintings. So, with they are both like the figurative as well as the symbolic value we will also look into the ways in which the compositions are constructed.

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And there is this one image what we have here on screen and that comes from Mahajanaka Jataka and this also comes from the cave 1. And which was made perhaps between 4th and 5th centuries in Ajanta. And in this one as we have already seen that how there are those narrative murals which are there on the walls of Ajanta and this is also not an exception. And in this one what we have here that there is a trace of the doorway that we have in the lower part of the image and on the upper part we have the entire narrative which is running.

So, there is this story of Mahajanaka we find that in the left part of the image there is this royal pavilion and in which a Mahajanaka is seated and then there are the figures who are attending to him. And then there is also that how there are more traces of the architectural structures around

them. So, the use of the pillars, the use of the bars and so on and then how the build structures were there, it gives us a sense of that in the 4th and 5th century.

And then apart from this shaded pavilion what we have in the other part of the images that there is this musical performance and the dance performance that is taking place. And here we have there are a group of musicians and dancers they are involved in performing for Mahajanaka. And the story goes as like when Mahajanaka had been there and then of course that there had been attempts in distracting him or making him more and more interested in the material life.

And that is the reason the beautiful women were employed for performing for him. So, that the beautiful dancers and musicians would be there and so that he can also be engaged in music, dance and the beauty around him. However as we know that in this Jataka story that he had also renounced everything and embraced the path of asceticism. So, this is something that we find those are part of these continuous narrations.

And something in this one we find that this had already been established in the Ajanta, the murals of Ajanta. So, something similar we have already seen in Sachi where there are those continuous narrative panels and in which one character appears multiple times. And in this one what we see that there are many different parts of the entire palace complex or parts of the narrative which come into this one particular frame.

So, for example here if we see towards the left corner there is a toilet scene in which we see there are 2 women they are getting prepared perhaps for being in front of Mahajanaka. It can also be possible that they are the ones who are the performers and after preparing themselves in the toilet and then they appear here at the center stage for the performance. So, it can be a way in which there are multiple temporalities which are added to these images.

So, it is not just 1 particular scene does not really talk about 1 particular temporality or a time but there can be multiple temporalities in this kind of compositions. And at the same time there are also overlapping of different kind of structures and narratives. So, for example we do not really see of the foreshortening or the kind of western perspective that we have in images. But here we

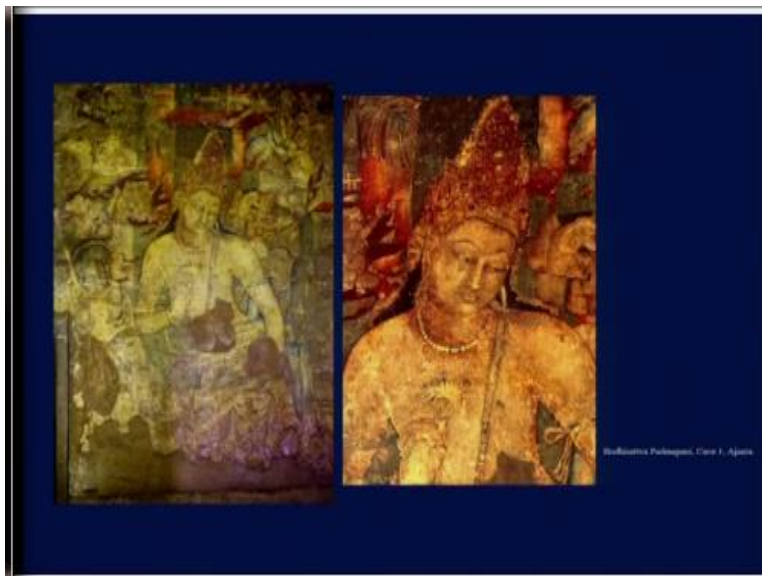
see a kind of perspective which can be a mix of bird's eye view as well as something that is there on our eye level.

So, there are multiple stages in which the narrations go on and the perspective is not the defining factor for making the images but the narrative or the criteria for making a narrative is more important than having those scientific precisions. So, that is the reason what we find that the kind of perspectival view that is employed here is also multiple and it is not really one or the other but many things at the same time very similar to what we have also spoke about temporalities.

Now here we also see there are a range of pigments which are used but the thing is that if we see them closely then we understand that there are some of those basic pigments which are used. For example for red, for umber brown and for white and yellow and a green, those are the ones which are also mixed and matched and they are also applied very carefully, so that an illusion of the Palestine or an illusion of the natural world can be created by the means of these paints.

Also as we can see here there is a very limited use of blue which brings us back to what we have already discussed about the economic and social value of lapis lazuli.

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From there we see that there is this one of the most celebrated images in the caves of Ajanta and that is Bodhisattva Padmapani. So, we have already discussed the idea of Bodhisattva and the

compassionate ones. And in this case what we find that there is this one particular figure that is named as Bodhisattva Padmapani and Padma is the lotus and pani means hand.

So, the bodhisattva who has a lotus in his hand is called Bodhisattva Padmapani and this figure appears in one of the ceilings in cave 1. And we can also see that how this figure is situated by this doorway which appears at the left corner of the slide of the image in left. Now what we have here this mighty figure of Bodhisattva Padmapani, here we find that there is this compassionate being Bodhisattva, he is depicted here with utmost care and details.

And here we find that he is made almost into this Tribhanga pose or the tri body vent in which we find the first vent is there in his shoulder and then there is this vent that goes until his waist and then it bends again here. So, there are three bends which are introduced in this body and that is the reason it is called Tribhanga. Now apart from this particular thing we also see that there is this implementation of Indian artistic anatomy that is here very much prevalent.

Now what are those Indian artistic anatomy? As I have already started talking about the Indian standards the standards of beauty during this time in the Indian subcontinent in the 4th and 5th century A.D. We see that how the faces are constructed, so for example it is somewhere between naturalism and idealism as we can see that there is this unibrow which we have already spoken about which looks like a bow, right, and then we also have the eyes which almost look like lotus petals.

So, these are the kind of like the characteristic features that we find there and of course we also see there are those long ear lobes which are also been there as part of the iconography of not both in the all major religions in the Indian subcontinent during this time. As for example we find it in Buddhism, in Jainism as well as in Hinduism and the long eye earlobes are marker of intelligence as well as the ones who would listen to the devotees.

And that is the reason the long ear lobes have been there as part of the iconography. So, in this image we find that the iconography, these different beauty standards as well as the study from the nature they are all combined together to form this magnificent image of bodhisattva

Padmapani. And what all we find there is that he is shown as a royal figure as I have already mentioned it earlier.

And for that reason we see this jeweled crown that is there on the top of his head and then he is also be jeweled and there are those pearl necklaces around his neck as well as there are other ornaments that we see in his upper arm and his lower arm and so on. And in the lower part of the body we find that there are decorated textiles which also adorn his body. So, this features that we do not see in the body of Buddha but those will be there in the figure of Bodhisattva.

Now what all we see in Bodhisattva Padmapani's figure is that it is not just about the details of the facial features and the beauty standards and so on but his emotion has been depicted here very carefully. Also that how it can it is careful but at the same time it is not rigid, it sort of impacts upon the viewers mind when we look at it. So, what we see here his slightly drooping head and then his half-closed eyes and this the stillness in his face all these things are matched by his light gesture with his hand.

That how he holds the lotus very carefully at the same time the softness in his gesture and in his facial expression and in his body all these things are there which are marker of the compassion. So, since the Bodhisattva is compassionate towards all the living beings in the world and that is the reason this kind of emotion had been depicted and successfully implemented in this image. We also see some of the other traits.

So, for example that how his shoulders are broad like the Vrishaskanda can the term that I have already used. And then his waist is really narrow which is also compared to the waist of the lion which is called Simhakati and the Vrishaskanda and Simhakati these are the other 2 the standards of beauty that we find. And also we find that the arms are long, so they almost touch the knees, so that is also something that we find to be part of this Indian artistic anatomy.

So, all those things are brought here together. So, having this Vrishaskanda and Simhakati which show the broad shoulder and the heroic figure. And then a mix of this heroism with his compassionate expression these 2 are a blend between 2 almost opposing emotions or like

opposing bhavas. So, that is something that we find that the Ajanta the artisans in Ajanta were successful to bring them together.

His broad shoulders do not disturb his emotion however his emotion does not make him look frail. So, these 2 things were balanced in this way in this particular figure of Bodhisattva Padmapani. And that is perhaps one of the reasons why we find that this kind of assimilation is rare in the visual depictions in India as well as across the world. Now his figure the way this monumental figure of Bodhisattva Padmapani is made here, then this monumental figure is then complemented by all the different kind of details around him.

So, the focus that stays on to the figure but then we also see that who all are situated around him. So, there are 2 important attendant figures that we find; there are other figures and part of the other narrations that starts from here. And then these 2 figures we find that their attention is upon Bodhisattva, so that is also a visual marker for the audience to look at the Bodhisattva through the eyes of these devotees.

Then we see that there are some of the architectural parts which are shown here which also gives us a sense of the space and the depth of it. Now what we find here also interesting is that even though this some of the figures they look like the earthly beings as well as the architecture that we find that also comes similar to the ones that perhaps the people during 4th and 5th century they had around them.

But then that is also matched by figures which are not seen around us and that is the images of the Kinnaras, the Gandharvas as well as the other celestial beings who are considered to be the flying ones. The ones who shower their blessings or like they greet the deities from the heaven or from the sky. So, that is the reason we find that this particular Kinnara figure is there in the upper side of this image.

And but it is not really that very clearly distinguished from the ones that we see around us, for example the architecture, the depiction of the trees and so on. So, it is almost like a mix of the material world and the spiritual world. So, all the different details that we see around this image

that is not really from one particular kind of society but it is a amalgamation of different narrations or different communities.

And of course like the how the humans they come together with the celestial beings to greet this compassionate being. So, there are different, as I have already said that there are multiple conceptions of space and multiple temporalities which are there in these images and that come alive in the image of Bodhisattva Padmapani.

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Now this other image I wanted to show here and this is an image from one of the ceiling murals in cave 17. And this is also the cave which was which was painted perhaps between like 6th and 7th century and so on. And in this one what we have here? There is part of the ceiling decoration. So, in the ceiling decoration unlike the one that we have on the walls, we have more of decorative and the ornamental motifs.

So, for example there are vegetation, there are flowers, there are creepers, there are different kind of animals but mostly we do not really see any kind of narration being depicted on the ceilings. And that is for the reason that we do not really raise our heads all the time to read a narration. If we have the narration on the eye level or like if there vertically then that becomes easy for the viewers to see them to read them and spend time with them.

So, that is the reason there are 2 different kinds of strategies which were employed for making the paintings on the wall and then a different strategy is there for painting on the ceiling. Now as part of making this Buddhist paradise what we have here on the ceilings that there is a priority of this different kind of creepers, different kind of flora and fauna and some of the central medallions that we find here.

And this one I find particularly interesting is because that it is a circular medallion like structure that we have on the center of the ceiling. And in this one there is a blend of figurative motifs with the ones which are ornamental. So, there are these figures that we have here and they fit into these petals which are there which sort of frame them. But they appear as the celestial beings but also they seamlessly merge into the decorative programmatic of the entire image.

So, these are some of the characteristic features that we find there and how it is not only just the depiction of emotion or bringing temporalities and spaces together, that were the priorities of the Ajanta painters. But it was also this kind of experimentation in which we find how the decorative motifs were brought together with perhaps the figurative motives. So, these are the other forms of experimentation and I would say the successful experimentations those were carried out by the artisans and painters in Ajanta.

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Now from Ajanta if we move further there had also been other cave sites where we find these images. Now why do we find images only in this caves that can also be a question? It is not only caves but mostly in this caves, in this excavated caves and that is because those are the places which have been safe and those are the places which were not destroyed or those are the ones which were not disturbed by people.

And that is how we find that some of those cave sites they are the ones which show the richness of some of the earliest surviving images from the Indian subcontinent. Now the other place from where we find some of the earliest surviving murals is in the Sittanavasal or Chittanavasal in the Pudukottai district of Tamilnadu. Now here we find some of the images they perhaps did back to second century A.D.

And here this is the Sittanavasal or Chittanavasal caves are the Jain caves and in which we find that there have also been similar kind of strategies of making images who are important in the Jaina belief. So, for example here we have images of the Tirthankaras seated in this meditative posture and on a high pedestal or a platform and then we have the images which are painted around them.

So, there were images here and here and perhaps these images the images of the Jaina Tirthankaras were also perhaps been coated with lime plaster and then they were painted. In the ceiling as well we also have that there are images and both in here we have images those are of figurative capacity as well as the ornamental and decorative ones. And one of the images that we find from the ceiling is here where we find there are some of the Jaina monks who are collecting lotuses from a lotus lake.

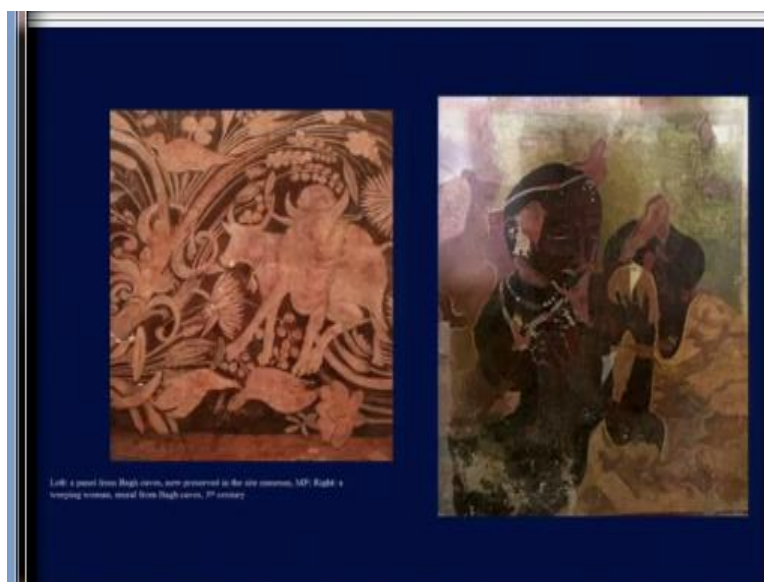
And in this one what we find there is also this tremendous amount of the blend between naturalism as well as something that goes beyond naturalism. So, for example here we have this highly naturalistic depiction of the lotuses and with all the details of their petals, the leaves and then the slight modulation on the petals that gives us a sense of these three dimensionality. And then there are the Jaina monks here we see them they are collecting the lotuses perhaps for paying homage to the Jaina Tirthankaras.

And what we find here very interesting is that even though they are collecting the lotuses, the lotuses look almost oversized and the lotuses are bigger than the monks. Here we also have another there is this animal figure that we have here it is perhaps a buffalo or a bull that we have here. And this figure is also something that is done with all the possible details and modulation that makes it distinguishable from the other forms that we have here.

So, there are more buffalos here and as we know that how the water buffaloes and the buffaloes, they love to stay in this water and in the pond. And of course if we are talking about the southern India, those areas are also in which like the summer is pretty hot. And so this is something that talks about the regional specificity and something that had been perhaps the artisans they have observed from their surrounding and how the observation of the surrounding is brought together with a degree of idealism.

And that is the reason how there the lotuses have been blown out of proportion and then they sort of dwarf the images of the monks who and the images of the monks and the animals they almost look like miniature ones in this lack of lotuses. So, these are some of the ways in which we find that how the different kind of visual strategies are employed. And this blends of naturalism, idealism and the iconographical details they come forward all these images.

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Another example we find is from the site of the Bagh caves and again in Madhya Pradesh. And this is something that we find that this is a place which developed perhaps in the 5th, 6th century and so on. So, unlike the Sittanavasal caves these Bagh caves were predominantly Buddhist caves. And here what we have that the murals, some of the traces of the murals were there but they are much in a dilapidated condition.

So, some of the panels are actually now collected in the site museum in Bagh and then some of the details that we have here is also very interesting. That how certain this degree of the naturalism and then the dynamism and then of course that the ornamental details how those are brought together in the image that we see in the left side. In which there is also economy of colour that is we find.

That the colours those are used here are mostly of almost like in the monochromic scale in which there are earthen red and umber or like umber brown colour those are used. And we have already discussed that how these kinds of pigments are found in abundance in these areas. So, we do not really have much of the use of blue similar to something that we have already seen in Ajanta.

That gives us a sense of how these places they have almost developed simultaneously and they have also followed similar kind of strategy for employing the pigments which are available in their vicinity as well as the pigments which were imported from outside. In the Bagh murals we also find that the images are made with this high motion as well as this lyrical rhythm that we have there.

So, for that reason there that the balance, the rhythm and the form all those things they come together in the depiction of the figurative narratives in this site. So, all together one can say that there have been some of the overarching ideas about iconography and then the Indian artistic anatomy those were perhaps been present in many of the sites where these paintings were created.

But then we also see that each of these sites have also added to some of the individual details which not only just add to the diversity of the material. But also they tell us that how the artisans

and the artists even though they were following some of the similar kind of conventions, they were also able to employ some of their individualistic approaches in this images. Thank you.