

PREFACE

THE PRESENT thesis is the result of nearly eight years of rigorous research and nearly twenty years of profound involvement with the caves of Ajantā, although the registration for the Ph.D. programme took place much later in 2008. Ajantā and related Buddhist *saṅghārāmas* have now become a lifelong quest for the present researcher with wide-ranging plans in the future, including the establishment of one Ajantā Research Centre near the cave site. The contents of the present thesis, therefore, is not the end of a journey, but the beginning of a new path toward a prolonged quest in the future.

The present researcher is fortunate to have had scholarly interactions with many learned scholars, e.g. Late Sh. M. N. Deshpande, Late Sh. M. C. Joshi, Dr Kapila Vatsyayan, Prof. Emeritus Walter M. Spink, Hon. Prof. Dr Dieter Schlingloff, Prof. Monika Zin, Prof. Shayne Clarke, Prof. Ellen M. Raven, Prof. R. D. Choudhury, Prof. A. P. Jamkhedkar, Prof. Brahmanand Deshpande, Prof. M. K. Dhavalikar, Prof. Meena Talim, Prof. S. Ritti, Prof. B. N. Saraswati, and Prof. Ratan Parimooo. From them the present researcher was able to learn how to do fresh research involving current processes, methods, and principles of superior quality of research in epigraphy, Indology, archaeology, Buddhist studies, art

history, history, sociology, and critical theory. I learned from them how analyse, interpret, and correlate the historical material.

Thus, dictated by the nature of the historical material and the objectives and issues of exploration, the different topics and problematic were approached. Notably, no trendy theory or conventional methodology is used in this thesis. The researcher took a stance to reject the conventional and popular theories and methods because they were not found suitable to handle the issues of fresh exploration of the Ajantā caves. If there is one approach that was found most suitable to the present researcher, it is the interdisciplinary approach; and this approach can be found in every chapter of the present thesis.

A word is necessary about the relationship of the present research with the researches by Spink. Like in physics, a new research can hardly be possible without references to Einstein, Neils Bore, and Eisenberg; similarly, no research can do away with Spink in the matters of historical study of the Ajantā caves. This is not to imply that Spink's researches are the final word, or his recently published series of six volumes contain the biblical truth on Ajantā. On the contrary, a closer reading of my published researches and the present thesis would show that there is much to Ajantā that is still untouched by Spink; and there is much

that is problematic in Spink's work; and that there can be other versions of the stories of Ajantā's developments. Even the story narrated here does not and cannot pretend to be a complete story (it is not possible within the limits of a Ph.D.). It must take a lifetime to know everything possible.

May I also may mention at the outset that I have been compelled, after due scrutiny, to accept Spink's timeframe for the fifth-century phase of Ajantā, i.e. circa 462-480 CE, albeit with the only variation that I begin it from circa 461 CE rather than circa 462 CE. There have been some scholarly criticism of Spink's timeframe. However, after scholarly rebuttal by Spink his critics fell silent. My provisional position, therefore, is Spink is 'not guilty until proven otherwise'. Until an alternative timeframe is successfully proposed and established by somebody, the present researcher has no option but to accept Spink's broad timeframe (Figure 225).

That, however, ends the common feature between the researches by Spink and the present candidate. This is because the story of the site's developments within the 'c. 461-480 CE' time bracket is substantially different in my accounts based on additional set of evidence and on-site data, many of which have escaped the attention of Spink, and whose deductive analysis give rise to a new chain of events, a new chronological sequence, a part of which is published in

my book (Singh 2012) and a part of which is found in the chapters here.

In addition to Spink, my research is also based on and critiques the scholarly contributions by Burgess, Yazdani, Mirashi, Schlingloff, Shastri, Zin, and Schopen. In my general approach; I remain focussed on the monument, my primary source, and do not shift the focus to the secondary sources. However, if there is anything noteworthy that has benefitted the advancement of knowledge I make citation of those sources.

The typescript is prepared based largely on the guidelines of *Oxford Style Manual* (Ritter 2003). The author date system of Turabian (Sixth Edition) style is used for citations and references, that is, a prevalent international standard for dissertations and theses. Footnotes are reserved only for notes, and not for citation. Diacritical marks are based on *Oxford Style*.

To fulfil the UGC guidelines three of my published articles are included here with minor revisions; they are found in chapters 8, 12, and 13. The remaining content is new because of their being wholly unpublished or substantive revisions of my earlier published researches.

--R. K. Singh
Puśya Kṛṣṇa Trayodaśī, Sālivāhana Śāka 1935
 (30 January 2013)