



Ajanta Caves: Artistic Wonder of Ancient Buddhist India

Benoy K. Behl

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In 1819, a group of British soldiers chanced upon the Ajanta caves, lying in a ravine of the Waghora river some 200 miles north-east of Bombay. Ranging in date from the 2nd century BC to the 6th century AD, the exquisite Buddhist paintings and sculptures that they found there now rank among the world's most important cultural treasures. Here, Benoy K. Behl captures some of the finest works of Buddhist art in all their glory and luminosity. The exquisite murals depict the Jatakas (tales of previous incarnations) of Lord Buddha, scenes of princely processions, ladies with their handmaidens, bejewelled animals, ascetics in monasteries and fantastical birds and beasts, all with a startling degree of sophistication. What is unique about the paintings is their humanity: the men and women of this world have the capacity to adore - they look upon each other with expressions of infinite caring. Ajanta provides virtually the only evidence remaining of painting styles that first developed in India and then travelled with the spread of Buddhism as far as Japan and Korea. potent symbol of the great beauty of India's rich artistic past.

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