

Dussehra 2018 learning expedition

As part of our annual learning expedition from ALC, this time, we had an exciting opportunity to visit Madhya Pradesh. Our team of learning of amateurs were accompanied by our beloved Sir and historians who could guide us throughout the tour.

On 11th of October we travelled from Bangalore to Pune by Palace Humsafar express (a new train 😊). It was 12th October by the time we reached Pune. We travelled by bus to Aurangabad from Pune. In Aurangabad we stayed at a hotel called “7apple”.

Day 1: 12th Oct

We visited 2 ‘dargahs’ attached to a mosque. The mosques are located in Khuldabad. Here Aurangzeb’s wife and brothers are buried. Right opposite to it, there is another dargah where Aurangzeb is buried. Here Prophet Mohammad’s coat is preserved.



Day 2: 13th Oct

We visited the Ajanta caves. The caves are cut in a solid rock. The Buddhist built stairs to the river - that is how the caves were linked. The caves were constructed in 2 phases. The first phase was built by Hinayanans where as the second phase was built by Mahayanans. The difference in architecture can be seen. In the first phase there were only 5 caves but in the second phase more than 20 caves have been carved out, out of which more than 10 caves are unfinished. The caves were divided into 2

- the viharis - where monks use to stay and
- chistis - where they used to pray.



They first made the walls of the cave smooth, then applied a mud coating over it and then painted on it. So it was time consuming work. We also learnt that the caves were cut from top to bottom and from front to back. At about

500BC they stopped using the caves and moved out because Buddhism declined. Later a British called John Smith found the caves accidentally while hunting a tiger. There is a view point in the place where he first saw the caves from. He has written his name on a painting in the cave.

After seeing the caves we went to Bibi Ka Maqbara or mother's tomb. This is a tomb which was first built by Aurangzeb, however finished by Azam Shah (Aurangzeb's son). Aurangzeb wanted it to be exactly like Taj Mahal, but he did not have enough money. Hence, the main parts are made of marble while others are made of plaster. The place where Aurangzeb's wife is buried is also called 'open tomb'. There are stairs to go down to where she is buried but this place can also be seen from top. So it is called open tomb. The top of the structure is covered by a dome made out of marble.



Day 3: 14th Oct

We visited the Ellora caves. These caves were cut in a solid rock and are land-linked. As you enter the caves, to the left the caves focus on Jainism, the caves straight ahead focus on Hinduism and the caves to the right focus on Buddhism. The Buddhist caves here are different from Ajanta caves. The caves are multi-storied and the viharas and chistis were put together. Every floor had a chisti in it. The Jain caves were also multi-storied but they didn't worship in a chisti. They worshipped in room where Mahavir's statue is situated. The rest of the caves were same as the Buddhist caves. The Hindu caves were more elaborate than the others. They have cut out an entire temple out of a single solid rock. The temple carved out is called Kailasanatha temple. The temple is not fully finished. The temple was re-painted so the original paint cannot be seen. Like in Ajanta caves, here too



- **they first made the walls of the cave smooth, applied a mud coating over it and then painted on it**
- **the caves were cut from top to bottom and from front to back**
- **We see many unfinished caves.**

- *Due to decline of all 3 religions and loss of king's patronage, people stopped work and moved out.*

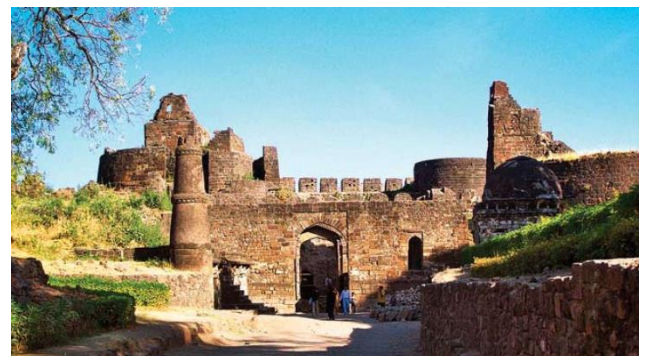
After seeing Ellora caves we went to see the oldest caves in Maharashtra – the Kuda caves. Since these were the first caves we can say that they were still testing what kind of mountain they needed. It was due to this reason that the roof collapsed. Many structures have been destroyed when the roof collapsed. These caves were also Buddhist. They also had viharas and chistis. Even here caves are unfinished but we don't know exactly if it was not finished or it was destroyed.

After seeing these caves we went to see the Nahr water system which had an underground water system established by Malik Ambar. There are tall towers to remove any airlocks so that the water moves swiftly. The path of the underground system can be found by tracing the towers. However it must be kept in mind that the entire system worked because of gravity. Here there was a mosque which served free to people who came there. As a result, they needed lots of people to grind the flour. Here, Malik Ambar built a grinding machine which runs with the help of his underground water system. Even today if we pour flour it will grind it.



Day 4 – 15th Oct

We went to Daulatabad fort. Muhammad bin Tughluq, the Sultan of Delhi, decided to shift the Sultanate's capital from Delhi to Daulatabad. He asked the entire population of Delhi to move to Daulatabad. There is a famous quote which highlights this verdict-- "not a single lamp should be lit in Delhi". Daulatabad's actual name was Devagiri. While shifting his capital he also changed the name of the town. Muhammad bin Tughluq decided to shift his capital because there was already a



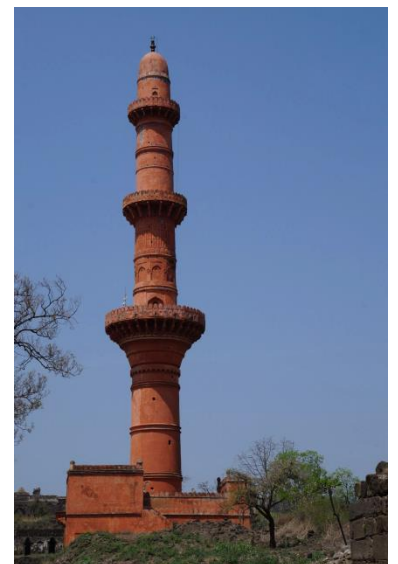
fort in Devagiri. This was the capital of the Yadava kingdom. Simhana II was the last Yadava king who was defeated by Muhammad. The Yadava king and Muhammad bin Tughluq became great friends after this.

The Devagiri fort was modified and better defence systems were added. Talking about the fort—at the entrance there is a huge door with sharp stone-like structures to prevent elephants from ramming into the door and opening it. Since there were no other lock systems at that time the only way to lock the door was to place a huge log behind the door. There were 2 more doors to cross to reach a 700 metre long straight walk. The doors were not in a straight line and adding to it there were many other doors which just led to a dead end. This would slow down the army of the enemies, while bullets kept raining on them.



On both sides of the walkway there are rooms where soldiers would keep firing bullets on the invaders. Crossing the walkway they would reach a moat or a lake around the palace. There is a wooden bridge to cross the moat, which could be burnt in case of an attack. There were no other ways visible for the invaders, but the kings and court men had secret passages to go in and come out. On crossing the moat there is a small winding walk of 300 meters.

Immediately after the walk they would reach a cave. According to how the fort was planned the cave was the only way to reach on top, but now there are stairs. The cave was extremely dark and it is winding. There were many false ways which lead to the moat. However there is only one way to reach to the top of the fort. In the caves now we can see pockets of sunlight but these openings were used to pour hot oil on the soldiers marching up. On climbing through half of the cave there is a huge opening.



The soldiers used to think that was the way to go to the top of the fort, but it directly led to the moat. It was thought to be true - that you have conquered the fort if you have crossed the cave which is 1/3rd of the way to the top. On fully climbing the cave you would reach the bottom of the stairs. On climbing the hundreds of stairs ahead we can reach the place where the royal family lived. On climbing more stairs we can reach the top most point of the fort. Here there is a canon of more than 3 Km range. Since it

is the highest point in the fort, one can have a 360 degree view of anybody coming to the fort.

Currently, there is a display of canons on the sides of the walkway (700 metres long walk). In the left of the walkway there was a temple built by the Yadava king, but when Muhammad bin Tughluq conquered the kingdom he changed the temple into a mosque. Even now the Hindu inscriptions on the pillars can be seen. After independence we changed the mosque into a temple by keeping Bharat Mata devi's picture in front of the prayer hall. Towards the right of the walkway is a victory tower (having blue tiles) built by Muhammad bin Tughluq for celebrating his victory over the Yadava kingdom.



I cherished the entire trip not only because of the fun but mainly for the knowledge we were free to acquire. We never get to see and learn about such astonishing things in school. This was a step ahead of our usual routine. I have tried to put all my learnings into this blog so that I can refer to it later.

I am extremely thankful to my sir and the team for making this journey possible and truly memorable. 😊



-Varun