



IGNCA, New Delhi



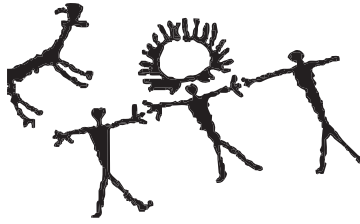
Ministry of Culture  
Govt. of India

# SECOND DR. V. S. WAKANKAR MEMORIAL LECTURE









## **2<sup>nd</sup> Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar Memorial Lecture 2018**

**Memorial lecture published on the occasion of  
The Second Dr. V. S. Wakankar Memorial Lecture 2018**

*By*

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## FOREWORD



The Adi Drishya Department of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) is mandated to study and experience the ancient worldview through its different art forms and associated subjects. It partakes of the holistic worldview, so forcefully articulated throughout the Indian tradition(s) and emphasised by modern research.



Humans have expressed enormous creativity in the form of rock art. Rock art, the first creative act of the human being has been traced back to the Prehistoric era. Man's natural imagination perhaps first manifested itself through rock art, a creative and pro-active process that influenced the minds of the people of the time. It involves the deliberate construction of representations reveal its nature in one way or the other. The uniqueness of IGNCA's approach to the arts lies in the fact that it does not segregate the folk and the classical, the oral and the written, the aural and the spoken, and the ancient and the modern. Here, the emphasis is on the connectivity and continuity between the various fields that ultimately relate humans-to-humans and humans-to-nature.

Realising the importance of Adi Drishya studies, the IGNCA created a separate department for it. The department manifests it's academic, research work in the form of publications, international and national seminars, conferences, exhibitions, lecture series and digital and physical databases.

Under the aegis of the Adi Drishya department, the IGNCA has initiated a Memorial Lecture in honour of the eminent archaeologist, art historian and great humanist, Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar, popularly known as Haribhau, the pioneer of rock art studies in India, and recognised as the *Pitahma* of rock art studies in the country. Dr. Wakankar has made enormous contributions, which include extensive field work in India and abroad - Europe, North America and the Middle East. He was involved in numerous archaeological surveys and explorations including in the ravines of the Chambal and Narmada rivers, and he also traced the basin of the now dry Saraswati riverbed, said to hold the secrets to much of Indian civilization. Dr. Wakankar was awarded the Padmashree Award, one of India's highest civilian honours in 1975.

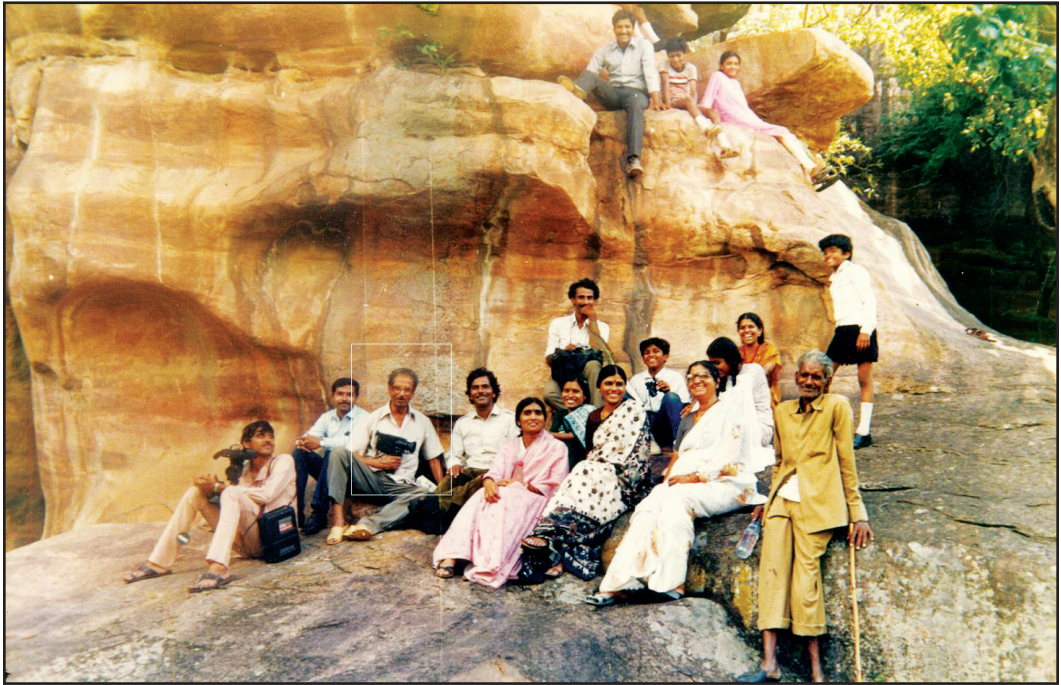
This is an annual memorial lecture for which we intend to invite eminent scholars to give lectures on any aspect of the emerging discipline of rock art and its allied disciplines. The first lecture was delivered by Dr G. B. Deglurkar, renowned archaeologist and art historian on 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2017. The present lecture is the second in the series and will be delivered by Dr. Yashodhar Mathpal, a multifaceted scholar and renowned artist.

IGNCA is in the process of creating a permanent rock art gallery which will showcase our rock art heritage and other related information.



**Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi**  
Member Secretary  
IGNCA





**Dr. V. S. Wakankar with his sister Mrs. Sudha Joshi and her family at Bhimbetka, accompanied by Shri Sachida Nagdev's family and friends** (Photo courtesy: Shri Sachida Nagdev Collection, Bhopal)





## Adi Drishya Department

### Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts

The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) has designed a major academic programme, focusing on the exploration of the artistic manifestations emanating from man's primary sense perceptions. Amongst the senses that lead to an aesthetic experience are vision (*Drishya*) and hearing (*Shravya*). Rock art forms the crucial component of the Adi Drishya Department. IGNCA is perhaps the only organization in India that has a separate department working solely on primeval man's vision. This new initiative was introduced to broaden the vision and scope of various art forms and traditions that have been in practice over the ages.


The new department was conceived to pay special attention to a new kind of interdisciplinary research involving allied disciplines like anthropology, geology, art history etc., which can open up new horizons for the study of prehistoric art. The IGNCA's concern with prehistoric rock art is restricted neither to the archaeologists, and the pre-historians' concern with establishing a linear chronological order of prehistoric rock art, nor is it limited to the identification of a style and a school as criteria for establishing chronology. Instead, it is concerned with man's creativity across time and space and civilisations and cultures through visual perception.

The study of rock art is an emerging discipline in India. It is an integral part of our culture as a reflection of man's existence from time immemorial. It is a historical record that helps us understand the development of artistic and cultural traditions and belief systems in various ecological niches, and various chronological contexts. It cannot be studied in isolation; it needs to be related to cultural, ecological and chronological contexts to understand its meaning and significance.

The aim is to: i) Document rock art sites, their environment and the communities living around these sites; ii) Discuss the extant theories of rock art and the intrinsic value of palaeo-art as humanity's cultural heritage and not merely the cultural property of a particular nation where it is found; iii) Examine concrete cases for the conservation, preservation and management of rock art caves and shelters; iv) Identify the common conservation hazards and interventionist practices; v) Evolve strategies of rock art site management, conservation and computerized documentation; vi) Enrich children, common people and serious scholars.

IGNCA has initiated many projects and programmes for the study of rock art, and research and outreach in this field. A number of survey and pilot study programmes are being organised as a part of IGNCA's National Project on Rock Art of India to encourage the scholars and students to work in this emerging discipline. We also want to keep them updated on the status of rock art research in a global perspective and to encourage the Indian scholars to dedicate themselves seriously to this new discipline as it is directly related to the primeval vision of man and perhaps represents the first creative act of early human beings. A proper exploration and study of this art form can reveal the features of the civilizations that existed thousands of years ago.





IGNCA has initiated field documentation at the national level to preserve rock art sites and data, which are otherwise prone to human vandalism and natural factors beyond one's control. Recognizing the importance of rock art for the present generation and for posterity, phase-wise field documentation is carried out in different states of India. The main objective of the project is to create textual, contextual, video-photo documentation and communicate with people in the hinterland for archaeological research purposes. The aim is to develop a bio-cultural map, a mental and ecological atlas of the rock art landscape based on a documentation of the related folklore and natural and manmade features. The results of this research and documentation etc., are published both in print and electronic media. A digital and physical database is in the making for further research and analysis.

As a part of its outreach programme, IGNCA organises different programmes for capacity building such as special lectures and orientation workshops for researchers and university students. In order to create general awareness among school and college students and the public at large; temporary and mobile exhibitions and, children's workshops are organised at the national, state and international levels. General awareness workshops are also conducted around rock art sites at the tehsil and block levels, for the local administration and for the community. The second Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar Memorial Lecture will be held this year on 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2018 at IGNCA, New Delhi.



Further, we are planning to sensitize the younger generation to the importance of the first creative art of man, rock art, through various programmes and campaigns. The programmes include rock art appreciation courses (online & offline) and a diploma course as well as booklets for school children presenting an introduction to rock art and an Awareness and Interactive programme, 'Speaking Stones' on rock art for school and college students. We are also creating a permanent Rock Art Gallery at IGNCA and preparing a list of FAQs on rock art to provide basic information for children and the general public.

The impact of the projects and programmes launched and undertaken by IGNCA is immense and overwhelming. It can be assessed by the responses of the children, scholars and general public who participate in these programmes and events throughout India. The reviews in professional journals and the wide coverage in both the print and electronic media (national and vernacular) are quite encouraging. Some of the universities have started taking up the subject very seriously.

Briefly, the goal is not merely the development of a database and a multimedia gallery or displays, but also to establish Adi Drishya as a school of thought and research on alternate means of understanding prehistoric art. In order to achieve all these goals, the outreach and general awareness programmes, inventorisation, research and interpretation of rock art are progressing simultaneously.

**Dr. B. L. Malla**  
Project Director  
Adi Drishya Department, IGNCA





## Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar

(4<sup>th</sup> May, 1919 – 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 1988)

Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar was born on 4<sup>th</sup> May, 1919 at Neemuch, a town in the Malwa region of the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. His distinguished academic career earned him the title of 'Pitamaha' of rock art studies in India. From 1954 onwards, he carried out extensive field-work on rock art in India and abroad - Europe, North America and the Middle East. It is estimated that he discovered and documented some 4,000 decorated shelters in India alone. In 1957, he discovered the Bhimbetka rock art site which was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2003.



Dr. Wakankar, an active freedom fighter, was awarded a number of prestigious awards including the Padmashree, one of India's highest civilian honours, in 1975. He held important positions in various academic institutions and was involved in numerous archaeological surveys; he explored the ravines of the Chambal and Narmada rivers, and also traced the basin of the now dry Saraswati riverbed, said to hold the secrets of Indian civilization. He carried out archaeological excavations at various sites in India and abroad.

Dr. Wakankar was also an expert and had numismatics and epigraphy collections, which are now part of the Wakankar Shodh Sansthan. Moreover, he studied numerous inscriptions dating from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC in Sanskrit, Prakrit and Brahmi. Dr. Wakankar published 6 books and over 400 research papers. He established the Wakankar Indological Cultural Research Trust in Ujjain, India. Today, Wakankar Shodh Sansthan hosts a collection of over 7500 sketches of rock art paintings made by Dr. Wakankar himself.

### Main Contributions

**Research:** Discovered and studied more than 4000 rock caves in India; also discovered rock shelters and paintings in Europe and America.

**Excavation:** He explored the ravines of Chambal and Narmada rivers and carried out excavations at Maheshwar (1954); Navada Toli (1955); Manoti (1960); Awara (1960); Indragadh (1959); Kayatha (1966); Mandsaur (1974 and 1976); Azadnagar (1974); Dangawada (1974 and 1982); Verconium Roman site in England (1961) and Incoliev in France (1962); Runija (1980).

**Collaborations:** H.D. Sankalia, Mortimer Wheeler, Kashinath Krishna Lele, Anant Vaman Wakankar, S.K. Dikshit, Robert Brooks, Jerry Jacobson, N.R. Banerjee, S.B. Deo, M.K. Dhavalikar, Tilner.



**Discovered and Deciphered:** Rock edicts and copper plates belonging to the Gupta, Maukhari, Auliker, Parmar and Bhulund periods; discovered pre-historic paintings in America.

**Exhibitions:** One man shows in Jaipur, Ujjain, Indore, Khairagarh, Austria, Rome, Paris, Frankfurt and America; Founder and Director of All India Kalidas Paintings and Sculpture Exhibitions.

**Positions held:** Director, Bharat Kala Bhawan, Lalit Kala Sansthan, Rock Art Institute, Ujjain; Director, Excavation Dept. Archaeological Museum, Vikram University, Ujjain; Prantiya Boudhik Pramukh of R.S.S. Madhya Bharat Founder and former President Sarasvati Shishu Mandir, Ujjain; General Secretary, Sanskar Bharati, India; President, Theosophical Society, Ujjain; Patron, Kala Patrika Akar, Ujjain; Chief, Babasaheb Apte Itihas Sankalan Samiti, (M. P. & Gujarat); President, Vidyarthi Parishad, Madhya Pradesh; Member of the All India Kalidas Samaroh Committee.

**Foreign Travel & Fellowships:** In 1963 he travelled to Europe on a Dorbaji Tata Trust travel grant, from 1961 - 63 he carried out research on a French Government scholarship; in 1966 he was offered an invitation by the American Department of State for American Rock Shelters; in 1981 he participated in a seminar on rock shelters in Capo di Ponte, Italy.



**Dr. Wakankar at Bharati Kala Bhawan, Ujjain**

*(Photo courtesy: Dr. Yashodhar Mathpal Collection, Bhimtal, Uttarakhand)*



**Dr. Wakankar with Smt. Indira Gandhi in year 1975**  
*(Photo courtesy: Yashodhar Mathpal Collection, Bhimtal, Uttarakhand)*



**Dr. V. S. Wakankar with Sanskar Bharti members**



**Dr. Wakankar with an Italian scholar at New Delhi in year 1974**





## स्व. श्री सचिदा नागदेव (शिष्य) द्वारा डॉ. विष्णु श्रीधर वाकणकर को श्रद्धांजलि "मेरी कला में गुरु का वास"

सन् 1953 में 'सर' (विष्णु श्रीधर वाकणकर) ने "भारती कला भवन" का प्रारम्भ किया। श्री अम्बेडकर सर, जो मुझे स्कूल में ड्रॉइंग सिखाते थे, एक दिन सर (वाकणकरजी) को हमारे यहाँ लाये। उस समय वो सफ़ेद कुर्ता और धोती पहनते थे, उनका व्यक्तित्व भव्य था, मैं एकदम प्रभावित हो गया। उनको भी मेरे पेंटिंग अच्छे लगे। मैं "भारती कला भवन" का पहला विद्यार्थी बन गया। यह बात सन् 1953 की है, तब से आज तक मैं उनका विद्यार्थी हूँ। जो भी कला के क्षेत्र में मैंने पाया, वह सब उनकी देन है।



गुरु-शिष्य: पदमश्री विष्णु श्रीधर वाकणकर और सचिदा नागदेव  
"ललित कला क्या है?" और "मौलिक कलाकृतियाँ क्या है?" ये सब सर ने ही मुझे सिखाया। भारती कला भवन हम लोगों का घर हो गया था। अपने घर तो हम सिर्फ सोने जाते, सारा दिन वहीं बैठकर काम करते थे। सर के माता-पिता (दादा-वहिणी) का भी हम लोगों पर असीम प्रेम था सर हमारे लिए एक प्रेरक थे। उनमें फुर्ती, चुस्ती और उत्साह था। उज्जैन की पुरानी गलियों में क्षिप्रा नदी की धारा के किनारे, प्राचीन मंदिरों में वे हमें दृश्यचित्र तथा रेखांकन के लिए ले जाते थे।

मैं, रहीम और कुरेशी, हम लोगों का गुप था। हम लोग सर के प्रारंभिक विद्यार्थी थे। अक्सर सर थोड़ा बहुत कमर्शियल काम जुटाते, हम सब मिलकर पूरा करते, कुछ पैसा मिलता और उसी के सहारे हम लोग प्रागैतिहासिक चित्रों की खोज में जाते थे। ऐसी ही एक यात्रा भानपुरा के जंगलों में शैलाश्रय खोजने की थी। सात दिन हम भयानक जंगलों में भटकते रहे। हम छोटे थे, जंगली जानवरों से डर लगता था। हम सर से कहते कि हमें गुफाओं में जानवरों की गंध आ रही है। सर हिम्मत बाँधते। एक पुरानी साइकिल थी, उस पर कागज़, रंग, ब्रश सामग्री तथा हेंडिल पर चने, सेव, परमलों का झोला रखते थे। उसके सहारे हम जंगलो में रहे। रात किसी मंदिर में रहते। सुबह उठकर अभियान पर निकल जाते। आगे-आगे सर, हाथ में लाठी लिये, जोर-जोर से गीत गाते हुए— "जय जय भारत देश पीछे-पीछे हम दोहराते। इस प्रकार हमने जो चित्रों की अनुकृतियाँ कीं, वो अब दुर्लभ हैं, क्योंकि वे शैलाश्रय अब "गाँधी सागर" बाँध में समा गये हैं। सर अपने विद्यार्थियों को अक्सर भ्रमण पर ले जाते। हम विद्यार्थी उनके साथ साँची, माण्डू, उदयपुरा, नाथद्वारा, चित्तौड़, अजन्ता, एलोरा इत्यादि स्थानों पर गये थे। वहाँ सर हमें दृश्यचित्र बनाने और स्केचिंग बनाने के लिए प्रेरित करते साथ ही प्रत्यक्ष उदाहरण भी देते रहते। कला भवन के प्रारंभिक दिनों में शिवकुमारी रावत तथा ताहिर अली भी थे। बंगाली बहनें भी थीं। विनोद आरेकर थे, जिन्होंने पेंटिंग तो एक ही बनाया पर सदैव हमारे गुप में रहे। मेरे बड़े भाई रमाकान्तजी कला भवन में सक्रिय रूप में संस्कृत विभाग का कार्य देखते थे।

गुरुजी के सानिध्य में भारतीय कला पुरातत्व और संस्कृति के प्रति प्रेम बढ़ा। गुरु से जो सबक मैंने अपने जीवन में सीखे, उनसे कभी उन्निष्ठ नहीं हो सकता। वे चलता-फिरता ज्ञान का कोष थे। एक जीवंत कार्यशाला थे। मेरी कला में मेरे गुरु का वास है।

(स्रोत— रंग स्मृति: चित्रकार सचिदा नागदेव के जीवन सृजन का आत्मीय रेखांकन, भोपाल, 2017)




**Dr. Wakankar at Kalidas Kala exhibition with the then Prime Minister Sh. Morarji Desai, Chief Minister Sh. Virendra Kumar Sakhlecha, Education Minister Sh. Haribhau Joshi and Vice Chancellor Dr. Shivmangal Singh Suman**



**Dr. Wakankar with his students at Bhanpura Rock art site**  
*(Photo courtesy: Shri Sachida Nagdev Collection, Bhopal)*

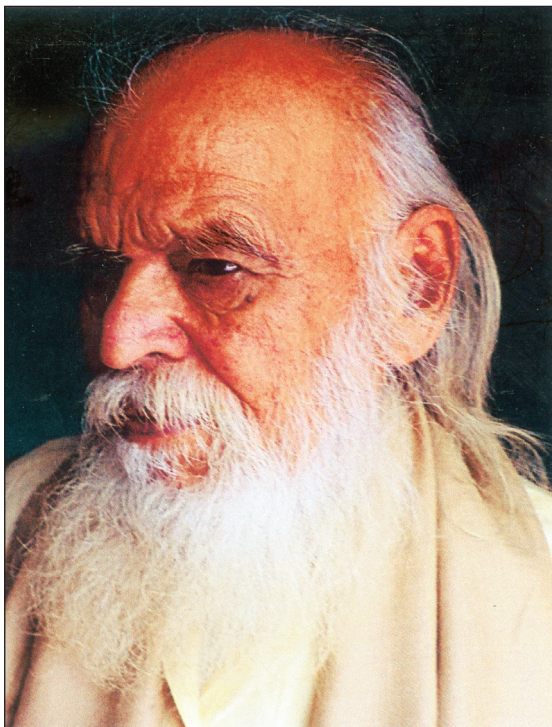






## Second Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar Memorial Lecture by Dr. Yashodhar Mathpal

One of the top most recorders of rock art in the world, Dr. Yashodhar Mathpal (78) is an artist by nature and an archaeologist by vocation. He has spent over 30 years documenting prehistoric art motifs from 400 caves in the Himalayas, the Vindhya and Kaimur ranges and the Western Ghats. Dr. Mathpal has developed a unique style of painting to scale, using original colours, backgrounds and water-colours (his preferred medium). This style has been, universally acclaimed as the most authentic, scientific and aesthetic. Infact, his contributions to the field of Indian rock art are acknowledged internationally.



Born in the family of a freedom fighter in Uttarakhand, he started painting from an early age. He did a five year Diploma in Fine Arts from Lucknow and holds a Master's Degree in Drawing and Painting from Agra University. He did his Ph.D in Prehistoric Rock Art and Archaeology. Prof. H. D. Sankalia, the doyen of Indian archaeology assigned him the task of recording the rock paintings of Bhimbetka, now a World Heritage Site.

Under the guidance of Prof. V. N. Misra, Dr. Mathpals' thesis took seven long years to complete. This is the only in-depth study of any Indian rock art site. He has participated in two dozen international seminars in America and Australia. He has also organised 40 exhibitions in the USA, UK, France, Italy, Portugal, Australia and different parts of India. He also enriched the museum collections of the D. N. Majumdar Memorial Museum for Ethnographic & Folk Culture, Lucknow; the Anthropological Museums of Lucknow, Delhi, Guwahati, Canberra University and the Hunterian Museum of Scotland, besides establishing a rock art museum at Katani. He spent nearly five years recording wood-carvings from the old houses of Uttarakhand. Dr. Mathpal has also translated seven Upanishads, the Bhagwat Geeta, the Durga Shaptashati and several important chapters from ancient Indian Classics. He has more than 20,000 paintings on nature, culture and cave art (mainly in water colour), 48 books and 200 research papers to his credit.

Dr. Mathpal is deeply committed to the land of his birth where he created his *Lok Sanskriti Sangrahalaya* (Folk Culture Museum) at Bhimtal (Nainital). He dedicates all his time,

energy and resources to this institution. The museum houses a fine collection of priceless reproductions of prehistoric paintings, stone implements and other artefacts from the traditional local communities. Dr. Mathpal along with his family members has transformed the bleak and barren museum site into a forest and biodiversity park by planting over 2000 species of plants.

Recognizing Dr. Mathpal's contributions to art and its preservation, he was awarded the 'Padmashree' in 2006. The Department of Archaeology, University of Kerala has recently published a Festschrift Volume in his honour, titled "Rock Art: Recent Research and New Perspectives". He was awarded a Gold Medal (1959), the "Kalashri" (1984), an Honorary Diploma by the International Federation of Rock Art (IFRAO) in Turin, Italy (1995), the "Hindu Ratna" (2012), the "Kumaon Gaurav" (2009), the "Uttarakhand Gaurav" (2012), the "Kedar Samman" (2005), the "Wakankar Shodh Samman" (2006), the "Govt. Arts and Crafts College, Lucknow, Centenary Samman" (2011) and the "Senior most Rock Art Recorder Samman" at the Global Conference on Rock art at IGNCA, by the Hon. Vice President of India in 2012. Dr. Mathpal was also nominated as state representative to the Central Lalit Kala Academy, New Delhi (2004) and nominated as Vice President of the Uttarakhand Sanskriti, Sahitya and Kala Parishad in 2006 by the Govt. of Uttarakhand. He was also a District Convener of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) between 1993-95.

Dr. Mathpal is a multifaceted personality, an archaeologist, a Gandhian scholar, a philosopher, a museologist and above all a renowned painter.



**Dr. Wakankar and Dr. Mathpal during at a World Conference in Pune (1978)**

*(Photo courtesy: Dr. Yashodhar Mathpal Collection, Bhimtal, Uttarakhand)*



## VISHNU SHRIDHAR WAKANKAR

### The Legendary Encyclopaedia of Indian Rock Art

Yashodhar Mathpal



#### Abstract

*Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar was the first Indian scholar who literally spent his entire life bringing Stone Age rock art sites to light. He was a nationalist and a man of character. He paid little attention to his personal life, and carried out archaeological explorations and excavations with minimal resources. He had a deep regard for Indian culture and the world's -rock art heritage and did his best to develop awareness and preserve this legacy. In this lecture Dr. Yashodhar Mathpal, a co-worker and rock art expert gave a vivid description of Dr. Wakankar's personal life and revealed some unknown aspects of this great explorer. In the latter part of his lecture Dr. Mathpal tried to explore rock art vis-à-vis Indian culture, an untouched aspect of rock art research, so far.*



I feel fortunate to have been invited by the *Adi Drishya Department* of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) to deliver the “Second Dr. V. S. Wakankar Memorial Lecture” before this august gathering. I divide my lecture into two parts- (i) “V. S. Wakankar: as I saw him” and (ii) “Rock Art in juxtaposition to Indian culture”.

Let us start with a few words on rock art. The term ‘Rock Art’ is used for all types of artistic expressions found on the natural rock surfaces of caves, shelters and boulders. The authors of rock art were mainly hunters and foragers living during the prehistoric and later times. Technically, we may view rock art motifs into several groups; a very simple classification is made by dividing them into two categories- pictographs (or painted images) and petroglyphs (incised images). The painted images were drawn with mineral colours collected from local geological formations, while the incised images were either gashed on rocks with the help of a sharp cutting instrument or pecked by hammers. Among the colours, it was hematite red that was used lavishly. Rock art has been recorded in nearly all the countries of the world. However there are only half a dozen regions where the majority of rock art is located.

## I

### “V. S. Wakankar: As I saw him”

India has perhaps the biggest concentration of pictographs in Asia. Some twenty million pre-historic images are estimated to be located at a hundred thousand sites in 120 countries. The number may far exceed this estimate, as there are countries like Australia where rock art remained a living tradition until, a few decades ago. The oldest rock art dates back





about thirty thousand years before the present. In India, rock paintings were discovered for the first time in 1867. Over the last 150 years a number of scholars and amateur enthusiasts have contributed to the discovery and study of rock art. As a result of their labour, over 700 rock art sites are now known in the country. V. S. Wakankar probably made the most important contribution to the study of Indian rock art. The most notable of his discoveries is Bhimbetka, which has the largest concentration of rock paintings in India. I bow my head in respect before this legendary encyclopaedia of Indian rock art (Fig.1).

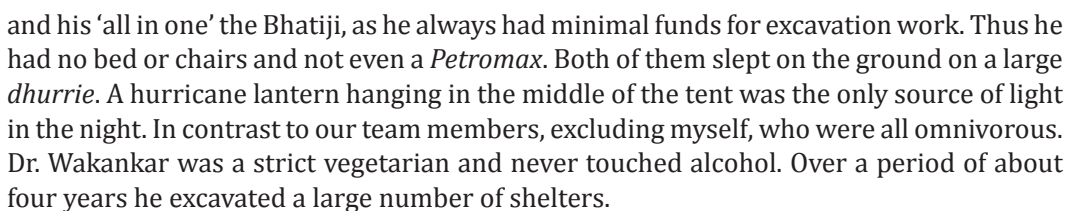


**Fig.1 Dr. V.S. Wakankar-Line drawing by Dr. Yashodhar Mathpal**

Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar, also known as Haribhau Wakankar or simply Dada Wakankar was an embodiment of scholarship and patriotism. He was an extremely enthusiastic and a warm person influencing new people with his unassuming behaviour. I first saw him at Deccan College, Pune in 1973, where he stayed for a while to put the finishing touches to his Ph. D dissertation- "The Painted Rock Shelters of India". At the time I had just joined the college as a Ph. D. student to work on the Bhimbetka rock paintings. Prof. H. D. Sankalia, Asia's greatest archaeologist, then Director of the college, had suggested awarding a Ph.D degree to Wakankar even without a formal dissertation, but as per the university regulations, it was not possible. Wakankar neither applied for funds for boarding and lodging nor did he request anyone to help him during his short stay. Instead, he simply occupied a table in the Archaeology Department lab during the nights. He needed nothing more, as the table served as his bed, the towel his bed sheet and rucksack, the pillow. He used to go for a morning walk singing "*Jago he Mohan Pyare Jago*" and would return to the lab with a *Pao-Roti* and a packet of milk. He would pour the cold milk into a beaker and finish his brunch at 8 am. I was also a newcomer with no guarantee of obtaining a scholarship. For accommodation, the college allotted me a deserted 2<sup>nd</sup> World War barracks in a remote corner of the college campus. During those early days, I used to spend my entire day in the library and Dr Wakankar used my room to complete his work, as it was calm. He never showed a single sign of dissatisfaction for this negligence on the part of his colleagues. Infact, he did not expect any kind of hospitality from his friends, those who had been carrying out archaeological excavations at several sites initially discovered by Dr. Wakankar.

That year, I visited Bhimbetka for the first time with the Deccan College archaeological team and this was my second meeting with Dr. Wakankar. He was kind enough to show me the first rock painting in a huge cave numbered III F-24. Dr. Wakankar had named it as the 'Auditorium Rock'. Later on he showed me many more compositions in different rock shelters located in the dense forest.

The Deccan College camp with several tents was on the left side of Jamunjhiri creek, while Dr. Wakankar's single tent was on the right side. He had a round tent and all its sides were one foot above the ground, thus open to all directions. For safety purpose, he spread DDT powder all along the periphery. His team consisted of two people, Dr. Wakankar himself



In 1983, an international seminar was organized in Bhopal to mark the centenary of the rock art research in India. A professor of geography from the local Hamidia College challenged Wakankar on his theory of Stone Age Culture at Bhimbetka. He discarded the entire tool assemblage as fake. The professor seemed to be right in saying that the rock shelters located on the top of the hill, that created a watershed on both sides could not have preserved four metres of undisturbed cultural deposits over the last hundred thousand years as claimed by Wakankar and Prof. V. N. Misra, the two main excavators of Bhimbetka. While Prof. Misra, a world renowned pre-historian refrained from any discussion with someone lacking a primary knowledge of Pre-historic culture, Wakankar took the Professor to Bhimbetka and convinced him of the validity of his theory.

During the Emergency, research scholars at Deccan College did not participate directly in the freedom movement as this would have endangered their careers, but they helped indirectly by raising funds for the families of the political victims. I was constantly in touch with Dr. Wakankar who used to encourage me in his letters. In one of them, he wrote that the dark nights of Emergency would soon be over; the golden rays of morning sun would emerge. Be hopeful, believe in God after all it was God's will that we were fighting against this dictatorship (Fig.2).





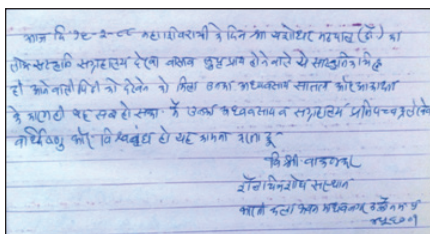


Between 1973 and 1976, every evening at Bhimbetka we used to sit around the fire to listen to Dr. Wakankar speak. His only topic was rock art. He was very fond of sharing his experiences in different parts of our country. Now and then I followed him into the deep forest to see the unseen compositions of figures. Once we found a cloud of wild bees hovering above us. Wakankar immediately told me to lie down on the ground, motionless. We both did so and the danger passed leaving us unhurt.



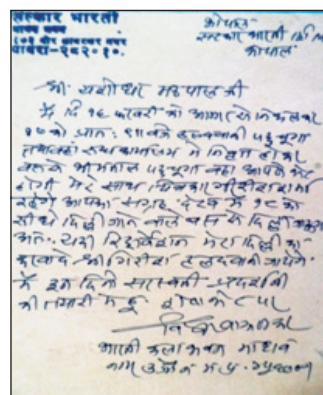
**Fig.3 One of the water colour copies of the Bhimbetka Rock Art prepared by Mathpal**

Two years later, in 1988, we both were invited to attend the first AURA (Australian Rock Art Research Association) Congress in Darwin. Wakankar had already realized that the scholars at the Southampton exhibition had highly commended the water-colour copies of Bhimbetka paintings prepared by me (Fig.3), so he came to Bhimtal to personally request me to take similar reproductions of rock art paintings to the Darwin Congress (Fig.4). He was equally impressed by the rock art gallery of my museum and recorded his feelings in the visitor's book there (Fig.5).



**Fig.5 Wakankar's letter to Mathpal before his visit to Bhimtal**

In 1986, a large number of Indian archaeologists attended the first World Archaeological Congress at Southampton in Great Britain. While I took with me 36 water colour reproductions of Bhimbetka paintings for the exhibition there, Dr. Wakankar brought with him a bundle of plain drawing sheets and a black sketching pen. Very quickly, he prepared 50 exhibits representing nearly all the important figures found at different sites in India. His rapid sketching was mesmerising, and his memory very acute. Everything was in his mind. So far as I know, he never made a coloured reproduction, to scale. The sketched figures were so elegant that nobody ever questioned him about their accuracy.



**Fig.4 Wakankar's letter to Mathpal**

The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) that recommended my application for a travel grant from the Ford Foundation assigned me some work in Australia. It included a visit to all the leading museums, to record their collections, explore the availability of aboriginal cultural



material, and primarily to locate an aboriginal artist, who could be brought to New Delhi to paint at the Centre. So, I landed in Australia about three weeks before the AURA Congress. In Darwin, I had been awaiting Dr. Wakankar's arrival, but he left us, mundane creatures, in Singapore where he was found dead in a hotel room. One day, long before his departure, he had expressed his last wishes to be buried in a painted shelter at Bhimbetka along with some Stone Age tools.

## II

### **"Rock Art in Juxtaposition to Indian Culture"**

It would be a befitting tribute to this first Indian rock art expert who devoted his entire life to bringing the oldest hidden treasures to light, to identify some links between rock art and the Indian culture, an aspect unexplored to date. To prepare a research monograph on rock art, I had been working in Kerala between 1995 and 1997, under a project sponsored by the IGNCA. While at Edakkal cave in the Wayanad district, I asked my local guide Mr. K. V. George, an ex-army man, the meaning of Edakkal, Wayanad and Ampukuthymala hill. "Edakkal means- a stone in between (two rocks)" he explained to me. This peculiar name had been given to the cave because a heavy boulder was balanced precariously between two rocks on the ceiling of the cave. The literal meaning of Wayanad (an anglicized form of the expression Wayalanaadu) is "land of paddy fields". Ampukuthymala means "the hill struck by the arrows of Lava and Kusha- the brave sons of Shri Rama and Sita Devi". In front of Edakkal cave is a huge rock with two vertical fissures, believed to be created by the impact of those arrow. Even the other cave just below Edakkal is believed to have been formed as a result of similar arrow impacts. My guide George also associated the cave with Lord Rama who killed Soorpanakha, the demon king Ravana's sister, in the narrow fissure at the southern end of the cave. The taluk headquarters Sultan's Battery was earlier known as Ganapathivattam named after a very old temple for Maha Ganapathi. The vestiges of ancient stone statues of gods and goddesses along with temples for Bhagwathy and Sita Devi still attract Adivasis from all over the district.



**Fig.6 Pandava Heroes at Ezhuthu Guha**

In the Idukki district, a huge painted shelter known as Ezhuthu Guha is situated in the sandalwood forest of Marayoor. Besides other drawings of men and animals, there are three human figures of abnormal sizes painted in white and red pigment (Fig.6). I asked the labourers working in the forest to help me identify the figures. They unanimously



told me that the large figures were those of Pandava heroes living in exile. About four kilometres to the east at Kovilkadavu (literally meaning the river side temple as there is an old Shiva temple on the left bank of the Pambar river) there are dozens of dolmens made from local flat rocks. Locally known as *muniaras*, these megalithic monuments are also associated with the Pandavas. On the southern slope, there are many rocks and boulders with ancient paintings on them.

Panchmari in Madhya Pradesh is a rich rock art site known since the 1930s. The literal meaning of Panchmari is the five huts belonging to the five Pandava brothers. Similarly, the name Bhimbetka is a corrupted form of the word *Bhimbaithka* meaning the place of Bhima, - one of the Pandava brothers of the Mahabharata. Bhima is also present in the mythology of the *Baigas*, *Bondos*, *Gonds*, *Konds*, *Korkus*, *Murias* and *Saoras*. Several other place names around Bhimbetka suggest the association of the place with Bhima and the Pandavas. The village nearest to the hill is known as Bhiyanpur, a corrupted form of Bhimpura- Bhima's



**Fig.7 Lord Shiva at Bhimbetka**

Banganga spring (the spring created by an arrow) at the south -western end of the village is believed to be the spring created by Arjuna, Bhima's brother to quench the thirst of the ailing Bhishma. South-east of the village is a spring and some ruins known as Pandapur (the village of the Pandavas). There are considerable archaeological remains belonging to the historic period at Bhimbetka. On the north-western slope of Bhonrawali hill, there are several circular structures made of large slabs- which are probably Buddhist stupas. A few hundred metres north-east of the stupas is a pile of large slabs of the type used in stupas. There are a few inscriptions in Ashokan Brahmi script on both Bhimbetka and Bhonrawali hills. Probably, the Buddhist monks lived here in Mauryan and later times. In a niche facing south-east below the roof of shelter IIIF-39, there are eleven shallow depressions each two metres long, chiselled on the floor. A Gupta Brahmi inscription also exists there. Another dressed rock floor was noticed in another north facing niche in the same rock. An Ashokan Brahmi inscription is incised on the steep face of the rock. The inscription reads *Sihakas Lene* (cave of *Sihaka*). The same inscription is repeated in white pigment to the right of the incised one. It recalls the description by W. Kincaid, published in 1888, where he mentions that King Bhoja used to visit the Buddhist cave on Bhimbetka hill and return to the capital for his mid day meal.

The next archaeological remains at Bhimbetka belong to the Paramara period. There are ruins of at least two



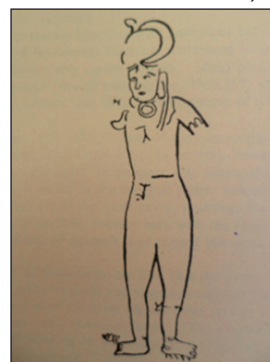
**Fig. 8 Lord Ganesha at Bhimbetka**

temples near the Banganga comprising high plinths, images of Shiva, Nandi, Yonipeetha and Aamlakas and decorated pillars. Twenty-one icons of Nandi and many broken images of gods and goddesses with their attendants, are arranged for worship on a stone platform in the village of Aankalpur. In shelter IIIC-29 at Bhimbetka, a king is shown worshipping a Shiva *lingam* (Fig.7), and there is a Nandi and a two-armed Ganesha all executed in light red pigment. Near the floor, a two metre long composition of figures shows a Ganesha wearing a *kurta*, holding a dagger, an axe and a *trishula* in three of his four hands. The fourth hand is shown raised. Below him is his *vahana*, a rat (Fig.8). The God is surrounded by royal personages, umbrella holders, drummers, attendants and horse riders. The picture may be dated to the Kushana period (1<sup>st</sup> century BC-1<sup>st</sup> century AD).



**Fig.9 Baldeva and Vasudeva**

disc (a *Sudarshan Chakra*) and a decorated staff or ear of corn. He probably has a peacock feather as a head decoration and he has a beard and moustache (Fig.9). Similar dual figures are found at Chilas (North Pakistan) and on silver coins of King Agathocles of Taxila (2<sup>nd</sup> century BC). In both cases, the gods depicted bear the names of Baldeva and Vasudeva. Vasudeva is Lord Krishna and Baldeva his elder brother. In shelter IIIF-35, again at Bhimbetka, a 2.1 metre tall human figure with typical head-gear and body ornaments was identified by the late Wakankar as a Yaksha, one of the demi-gods (Fig.10). The drawing resembles the figures found in early Ajanta art (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century BC).



**Fig.10 The Yaksha figure at Bhimbetka**



**Fig.11 Bali and Sugriva fighting at Panchmari**

Two monkeys in human attire are shown facing each other in a painting on Mahadev hill in the Panchmari region of Madhya Pradesh. The monkeys facing each other also wear conical head-gears and ear rings. This scene can be identified as a fight between Bali and Sugriva, the monkey brothers of the Kishkindha kingdom (Fig.11). At Kauwakhoh shelter in Mirzapur district in Uttar Pradesh State, one finds a superman throwing two

elephants with his two hands raised up in the air and he tramples two elephants with his feet (Fig.12). He wears a *kurta* like shirt reaching to his knees and has a sword at his waist. In front of him are a row of camels, two six-legged and six-armed warriors facing two elephant riders and two pedestrian soldiers. Three more soldiers and a dog-like animal are also present there. One of the six-legged man has two heads. In the *Mahabharata*, we read about Bhimsena, one of the five Pandava brothers who has the strength of 10,000 elephants. In the Great War, he not only



**Fig.12 Throwing Elephants**

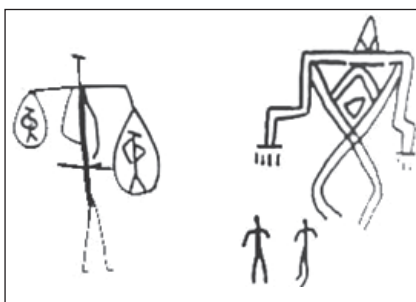


**Fig.13 Superman**

trampled elephants but also threw them several hundred kilometers. In popular folklore known as a *Lorikayan*, the hero (Lorika) is said to have possessed supernatural powers and could throw elephants up into the air. Goddess Sharda along with her Yoginis helps him on the battle field. If the multi limbed human beings are Goddess Sharda and her Yoginis, then the superman can be identified as the folk hero Lorika. This folklore is still common in the region where the painting exists.

In the rock art of Panchmari, there are several scenes of supermen. One of the supermen in Jambu Dweep shelter holds two tigers

by their tails. The poor creatures are shown trying to escape (Fig.13). In the Monte Rosa shelter, a similar superman overpowers a tiger and a wild ox to protect his cattle, which are shown passing by peacefully. In the Dori shelter, a third superman is shown carrying a tiger like a pet dog. Like Gilgamesh of the Sumerian and Babylonian epics, these supermen are also found on the Indus seals. The first mighty King Bharata from whom India got her ancient name Bharata, was a warrior from childhood. He used to play with tiger cubs, count their teeth and tie the wild animals to tree trunks for fun. Bharata may also be seen depicted on the few coins, clay tablets and door jambs of ancient temples. The great Sanskrit poet, Kalidasa immortalised him in his play the *Abhigyan Shakuntalam*. The *Mahabharata* also sheds light on his life. It is useful to mention here that the heroes and the heroines of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, who had to spend part of their lives in seclusion, or in exile in the forest were accepted and esteemed



**Fig. 14 Shravan Kumar Motif**



by the tribal populations. Even today, many tribal groups associate themselves with the forest dwellers of the past, who helped these royal people of our immortal classics during their exile. The Bhuiyas call themselves Pawan ka Poot (literally the children of the wind god), the descendents of Hanuman. The Ramosi caste of Bhils associates itself with Lord Rama and Ramosi is a corrupted form of Ramvanshi, thus the descendants of Rama. The Korkus worship the demon king Ravana and Bhimsena, the mighty Pandava. The women of the Bondo tribe, still do not wear any garments mainly because of their belief in the curse put on them by Sita Devi, Lord Rama's consort. During her fourteen-year exile, the poorly dressed queen was once mocked by the Bondo women as she bathed in a river. She cursed them to remain naked forever.

The motif of Shravan Kumar, the ideal son of blind parents, who travelled thousands of kilometres, carrying them in a *kanwar* (portage yoke) with a big basket on each end is found in the folk art of Madhya Pradesh. The same motif can also be found in the rock art of Chibarnala and Chaturbhujnath Nala in Rajasthan (Fig.14). At Jhiri (in Madhya Pradesh), a man wearing heavy head-gear, equipped with a big knife and a sword is shown carrying two boys upside down on a portage yoke. A second man holds a boy by his legs and a stick like weapon. Another boy moves alongside the first man. An archer aiming at these people from the behind. In the *Mahasutasom jatak* the cannibal king of Kashi is described as stealing people for his food. In a stone lintel from the first century BC, found near Mathura, the king Brahmadatta is shown carrying two people hanging on his *kanwar*. The depiction is very similar to the above-mentioned picture.



**Fig.15 The Mother Goddess at Bhimbetka**

A very curious motif showing a lady squatting, exposing her genitals with both hands on her thighs is found in the rock paintings of Chintakunta in Andhra Pradesh. The same motif is found on stone chattel objects and in sculptures. She is known as Lajja Gauri or Nagna Kabandha, and is worshipped by barren women. The motif of Lajja Gauri seems to have travelled a long way from the Middle Paleolithic through the Upper Paleolithic, Mesolithic and Chalcolithic stages. A spider-shaped image of a mother goddess with a small baby below her genitals is found in shelter III C-12 at Bhimbetka (Fig.15). Another similar figure is noticed in Shelter III C-7 at the same site. One peculiar aspect of Indian rock art motifs is its mythical creatures, which are found in all the three periods. The mythical creatures show the composite features of several animals. Sometimes animal heads are planted on human bodies, at other times human heads are found on animal bodies. Limbs of different animal species are associated to compose an imaginary creature. Such artificial animals are called the *Ihamrigas*, they are also found in early classical Indian plastic art (Fig.16-20).



Fig.16 Composite figures of Gods/Goddesses



Fig.17 Composite figures in Early Historic art



Fig.18 Composite figures in early Historic art



Fig.19 Composite figures in rock art



**Fig.20 Composite figures in rock art**

At Bharhut, there is a bull faced *Makara* (crocodile), one-winged horse with a tiger's hind portion, one bull-faced human with the four legs of a horse, and a tiger like animal with a horse's face, mane and four legs. The winged lion with a serpent's tail, which now adorns the Victoria and Albert Museum, dates back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD and hails from Mathura in Uttar Pradesh. In the Buddhist Art of Sanchi, one sees elephants with antlers, horse's legs and tails, ladies with horse's heads and dragons with elephant's heads. At Amaravati, a tiger is shown with antlers and a deer with wings. Deer with fish-like bodies can be seen in the art of Mathura. At Nagarjunakonda, a unicorn deer is found engraved on a stone slab. The Ajanta painters depicted celestial races of *Kinnars* (with a human body and bird's legs), *Gandharvas* (with a human body and the lower half of a cock), *Nagas* (human beings with cobra hoods as crowns) and *Bidyadharas* (flying human beings). The fabulous animals like chimaeras, sphinx, lamias, minotaurs, sirens, tritons, hydras, unicorns, griffins, harpies, hippogryphs, dragons and winged horses are all psychological creatures of the ancient world.

In the rock pictures of the Mahadeo hills, a man and a woman are shown riding dragon-like animals. In the Gandhi Sagar area dugong-like creatures (sometimes with ox heads) are found surrounded by archers. At Kathotia and Jaora, anthropomorphic figures are shown with large beak-like jaws, filled with sharp teeth. In several pre-historic paintings at Bhimbetka and Patni ki pahadi, boar-like animals are depicted with large horns. According to a Korku myth, the God Mahabhissum (also known as Buddhu) sacrificed his life for the ancestors of the Korku tribe by taking the form of a large pig and eating up all the dirt. In Hindu mythology too, Lord Vishnu had to come as Varahavtaar (a boar incarnation) to bring the earth back from hell where it had been taken by the demon. In another of his incarnations (Nrisimhavtaar) the Lord appeared as a dreadful creature with a half lion and a half human body.

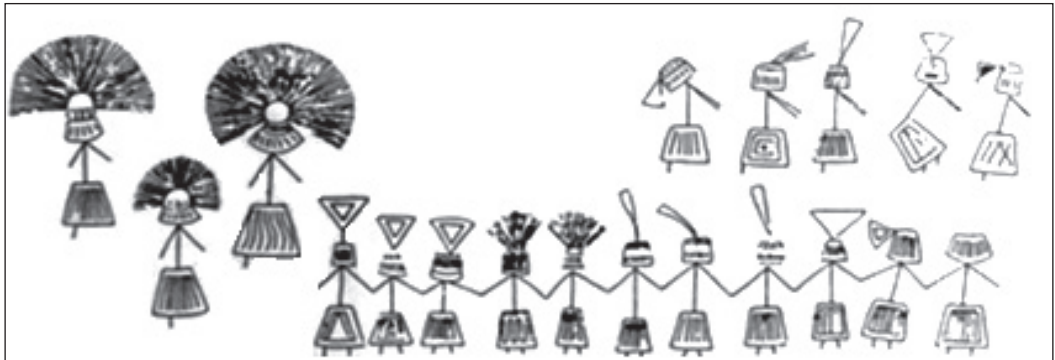


The copulation scenes are other motifs found in rock art as well as in the temple architecture of the Early Medieval period. At Jaora, Chaturbhujnath, Kathotia and Urdan, different hetero-sexual intercourse postures are found in the Chalcolithic rock paintings, while in the Neolithic rock bruising at Koppagallu (in Karnataka state), ithyphallic males

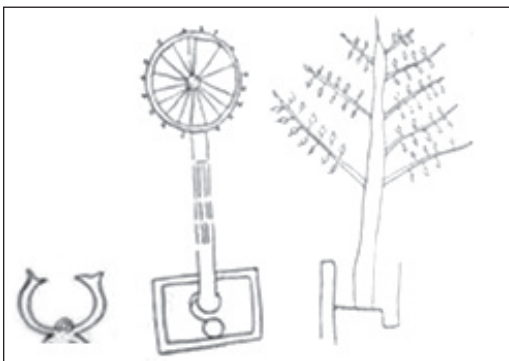


**Fig.21 Head Hunting**

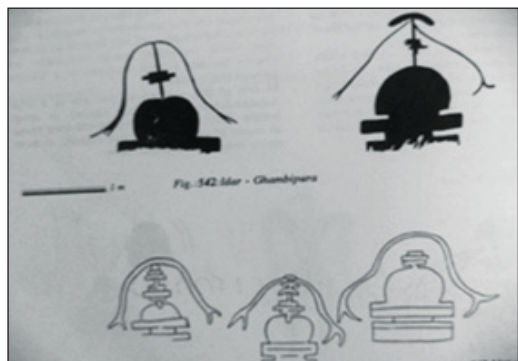
are shown copulating. The scenes may be identified as depictions of some kind of fertility magic or rituals. In the Panchmarhi region, there are several headhunting scenes (Fig.21). Warriors with conical crowns, large ear rings, ornaments, hair buns, decorated waist coverings, and equipped with swords, are shown carrying the chopped-off heads of similar heroes. In every case, the head-hunters are shown in running postures with their faces turned backward. Head hunting had been common among the Nagas of north-east India. Even today, whenever there are inter-tribal conflicts, they behead their victims and carry away their heads to hang them at the gateway of the settlement. Besides head hunting, some pictures, especially those at Kathotia, showing dancers in heavy outfits, also recall the Naga dancers (Fig.22).



**Fig.22 Group dancers with heavy costumes**



**Fig.23 Baudha motifs**



**Fig.24 Baudha Stupas**

There are several types of motifs found in the late phases of rock art, which are entirely of Indian origin and can be easily identified. These include the swastika, trident, tri-ratna, Bodhi tree, stupa and pillar with a Dharma-chakra (a wheel on the top)(Fig.23 and Fig.24). The swastika or fylfot (opposite to the Nazi symbol) is a very auspicious symbol denoting the eternal movement of life energy. Swastika literally means the “well- doer”. The trident or *Trishula* is a divine weapon held by many gods and goddesses. It kills the three pains of life viz. *Adi-bhautik* (physical illness), *Adi-daivik* (illness caused by natural agencies) and *Adhyatmic* (psychological pains). Swastikas and Trishulas are also found on Chalcolithic pottery. The Tri-ratna *Bodhi* tree or the pillar with a wheel and stupa are Buddhist emblems. The Buddhist signs are found concentrated in the rock art of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Ladakh (Figs.25 and 26).



**Fig.25 Engraved stupas in Ladakh**



**Fig.26 Engraved stupas in Ladakh**

In Proto-historic rock art, the *Bos indicus* or the Brahmani bull (Fig.27) was a favourite animal for painting, engraving and clay modelling. Engraved images of bulls abound at the Neolithic sites of peninsular India. At Maski alone, the author noticed several thousand bull images, incised on loose boulders. We also see for the first time, yoked animals for ploughing and transportation purposes. A large number of images of chariots and bullock carts are found in Central Indian rock art. The humped bull with his gentle nature and masculine grandeur, splayed horns and hanging multi folded dewlap attracted the attention of artists.



**Fig.27 The Brahmani Bull at Ganesh Ghati**

The hand prints, fist prints and finger tip dots are other common motifs found in rock art as well as in contemporary folk art (Fig.28). From a global perspective, the antiquity of handprints can be assigned to about thirty thousand years before the present. There are several ways of making such prints. The easiest way to make a positive print is to stamp a palm dipped in colour on a wall. The negative prints are made by spray technique and the line drawings by simply outlining the hand. In rock art, elaborately decorated symbolic hand prints are also found. Of all these, the stamping of a palm dipped in colour is a living tradition.



**Fig.28 Hand print (Father & Son?) at Katni**

In rock art, several types of inscriptions are found in the upper most layer, or in the last phase of rock art activity. So far, not a single drawing has been reported as overlapping any rock inscriptions. In some cases, inscriptions are found in association with the drawings.





Paintings and Ashokan Brahmi letters are seen side by side in Baba ki Dari shelter near Bhaldaria in the Mirzapur region and at Gwalior. At Bhimbetka, fifty-six inscriptions have been found. Most of them are in the Shankha script. A seven-line inscription in Post-Gupta Brahmi is also recorded there. All these inscriptions are executed in red haematite. Thirty-four inscriptions are recorded from Bijaygarh. These are supposed to have been written between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century AD from Panchmari region. In the Panchmari region, Gordon has mentioned two inscriptions written in Early Nagari script (Gordon N.D.:24) believed to have been written between 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. One Kharoshti inscription engraved on a boulder near Attock Bridge on the Indus in Pakistan, shows incised drawings of an elephant rider and other human figures. A Gupta Brahmi inscription engraved on the inner wall of a shelter is found on Kassar Devi hill near Almora, in Uttarakhand. The inscription tells us about Rudrak, the son of Vetila, who installed the Rudreshwar Mahadev there (Mathpal, 1995, Pl. 64-B) The Maan shelter in the Mirzapur region was visited by a saint, who wrote his name (Ghotishi Muni) and date of arrival at the shelter, in the month of *Baisakh* in *Samvat* 1403 (1357 AD). The other shelters in the area preserve the names of Indra Datta, Guhi Datta and Giri Prakash, who came there sometime between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD as can be guessed by the script they used (Tiwari, 1990:33). The oldest inscription thought to be from 1500 BC is found at Vikramkhoh (in Orissa). Its pictographic script is supposed to be a proto form of Brahmi. Thus all the inscriptions written in proto-Brahmi, Ashokan Brahmi, Gupta Brahmi, Kharosthi, Sankha and early Devanagari script are not the creations of primitive cave dwellers, but of those the hermits, monks and other spiritual aspirants who occupied these caves intermittently for meditation purposes, after they had been abandoned by the hunter forager people.

Indian rock paintings are found in sixteen superimposed layers. The later artists did not erase the older works but painted over them. On the basis of subject matter and style, all the art activity can be grouped into three broad periods and nine phases. The three periods are Prehistoric, Proto-historic and Historic. Of the nine phases, the first five belong to Pre-historic period, one to Proto-historic and the last three to the Historic period. The painting activity probably started during the Upper Palaeolithic period, some fifteen thousand years ago, and the majority of the shelters were painted during the Mesolithic period. The earliest paintings belonging to the Proto-historic period are about eight thousand years old, and the first phase of the Historic period started some twenty-five hundred years ago.

So far as the subject matter of the paintings is concerned, there are a number of paintings that appear to be pictorial narratives of different events. Those of the Pre-historic period relate to events within society, while the paintings of the Proto-historic and Historic periods depict events, which the artists probably saw but did not participate in. However, the most common subject of the Pre-historic paintings is wild animals and their hunt, those of the Proto-historic, early settled life, domesticated animals and chariots. The Historic paintings mainly show marching bands of foot soldiers, cavaliers and elephant riders.

All the above-mentioned scenes related to great classics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, or to Hindu mythology, can be dated to the Proto-historic period, while the Buddhist emblems, holy signs and symbols, and also all types of written rock inscriptions



can easily be dated to the Historic period. Even the present day names of sites like Ampukuthimala, Panchmarhi, Bhimbetka, Chhota Mahadeo, Kedareshwar, Ramchhaja, Rampura, Mahadeo Sitakund, Sitakharadi, Sitaji ki Kohbar, Sita Pathari, Takshkeshwar and Vishwanath cannot be older than the Chalcolithic period. Most probably the old rock art centres were christened with these new names during the Early Historic periods. The authors of rock art during all the periods can be seen as hunter-foragers. While there is no doubt that the Pre-historic art was made by hunter-forager, nomads, the Proto-historic artists living in the same economy, might have been in touch with the more advanced people in the nearby Chalcolithic villages. The artists who painted the marching bands of soldiers, cavaliers and elephant riders were also hunter-foragers and the direct ancestors of the present day tribal populations. The Proto-historic rock art may contain some religious beliefs and myths of the fore-runners of the Historic artists, and those of the more advanced Chalcolithic and Bronze Age people. The Pre-historic art, which seems completely unassociated with any known cultural context, may also be seen as inspired by the roots of the faiths and beliefs that flourished during the succeeding periods. Except for a dynamic figure identified as the proto form of Nataraja, Shiva, there is nothing in the pre-historic paintings that could be directly associated with present-day religious beliefs, written documents, mythology, classical art and living traditions. The so-called Nataraja (Fig.29) figure has heavy head gear, ornaments on the arms, a twisted body and a *trishula* held upside down in his left hand. There is no doubt that Mahadeva Shiva is the most popular, omni-present and oldest God in India. He is worshipped mainly in the form of a cylindrical idol known as a Shivalinga. In many temples, including the holy shrine of Kedarnath, a triangular tip of ground rock represents the God. For the devotees, the Shivalinga is not primarily associated with a sex symbol. The natural cylindrical Shivalinga made of pure snow emerges at a particular period every year in Amarnath cave (Fig.30), and Kailash is the best example of a triangular shaped Shivalinga (Fig.31). It is therefore not surprising that Shiva's animation in a human form has its roots in the dim pre-historic past.



**Fig.29 The Nataraja at Bhimbetka**



**Fig30. The Amarnath Shivlinga**



**Fig.31 Mount Kailash: A Natural Jyotirlinga  
(Painting by Dr. Mathpal)**

Similarly, the celestial word “Om” is also found in its natural shape in the Kumaon Himalayas (Figs.32-33).



**Fig.32 Mount Om (Painting by Dr. Mathpal)**



**Fig.33 Mount Om in winter**





Finally, I wish to thank all the dignitaries who listened to me so patiently. Last but not the least, I think it is my duty to acknowledge IGNCA's efforts in promoting rock art studies in a universal perspective, encompassing cultural, ecological and chronological contexts. My association with the Centre is some forty years old. I was able to document the rock art of Uttarakhand and Kerala and work on the Artificial Intelligence Programmes to analyse the meaning of Pre-historic rock art. Under the aegis of the Centre, I had the opportunity to work with French and Italian experts. Dr. Kapila Vatsyayana recommended my application for a grant from the Ford Foundation to participate in the first AURA (Australian Rock Art Research Association) World Conference and I could see all the large collections of Australian Aboriginal material culture in Australia. The Centre also published my three monographs on rock art. In 2012, the Centre felicitated me via the Honourable Chief Guest, the Vice President of India, during a World Congress on Rock Art organized by the IGNCA. For my part, I donated my entire collection of "on the spot" reproductions of rock art to the IGNCA. Several sets of pictures were selected from this collection and published as postcards to popularize Indian Rock Art. Dr. B. L. Malla, the Adi-Drishya Project Director has always been instrumental in my association with the Centre. I thank him from the core of my heart. Thanks Again.



**Goddess at Kauwalekh**



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*The opinions expressed in the Memorial Lecture are those of the author and the IGNCA does not necessarily subscribe to them.*



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**Dr. Wakankar teaching drawing to students**





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Date 19-3-81

Ref. No. \_\_\_\_\_

श्री महापात्रजी  
सादा बगदाए

मैं इन दिनों सम्पूर्ण भारत के शैल चित्रों की  
स्थान सूची बना रहा हूँ आपको हिमालय में रोज़े के  
चित्रित शैलाक्षियों की भाँति होगी अतः वहाँ की सूची  
भेजने का कष्ट न करें यह सूची आकाश के अगले ऊँचे  
में प्रकाशित करेंगे साथ ही समीक्षक तथा प्रकाशन  
का काम दे सकेंगे तो अच्छा होगा।

आप इन दिनों क्या लिख रहे हैं सूचित करें।  
श्री मिश्राजी आदि को व. सौ. भागी व. लच्छो का  
आशीर्वाद।

आपने अथवा डेढ़ न बाले के सहयोगियों ने यह  
कहो चित्रित शैलाक्षय रोज़े हो लें उनकी सूची भी  
भेजें।

भवदीय  
वि. वाकणकर

Dr. Wakankar's letter to Dr. Mathpal for Rock Art sites







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