

The background of the cover is a photograph of ancient rock art on a textured, orange-brown rock surface. The art includes several large, dark, stylized animal figures, possibly deer or antelope, and some smaller, less distinct figures. The lighting is warm, highlighting the textures of the rock and the pigments of the art.

# ROCK ART *of* ANDHRA PRADESH

A New Synthesis

N. Chandramouli



IGNCA Rock Art Series – 7

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New Delhi



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## PROLOGUE

The vast corpus of rock art that occurs in almost all parts of the world provides the most comprehensive database for understanding the universal forms of expression and communication of human societies right from the Pleistocene epoch. It is one of our greatest surviving art treasures. The intrinsic value of rock art lies in its universal appeal and in its ability to endure and survive in a manner in which all can experience it. Until the recent past, the content of rock art was archaeologically studied, as an indicator of the evolution of the cognitive capabilities of the authors of the rock art. Of late, attempts are being made by many scholars to explore the possibility of the proximity of rock art with the art of the simple societies of the world, such as aborigines, tribals, agro-pastoral communities as well as nomads. Rock art possesses the largest body of evidence of human artistic, cognitive and cultural beginnings. India is fortunate in possessing one of the three largest concentrations of this world heritage, the other two being in Australia and South Africa, where rock art is still a living pursuit. To decipher rock art, three main methods/approaches are followed—archaeological, psycho-analytical and ethnographical. Exploring new ways and means for documentation, classification and analysis of rock art through collaborative research designs between archaeology, anthropology, art history, philosophy, semiotics, psychology, psychiatry, religion, etc., has been felt to be the prime concern in current research strategies.

The significance of prehistoric rock art forms, designs, colours and concepts reinforce and emphasise the vitality of the traditional ways of human visual communicative expressions. These elements are most probably basic to all arts, and they allow the artists to visualise their concepts and traditions. Drawing analogies from the tribal art forms, we can derive some logical conclusions about the possible





meaning of the prehistoric art representations. The ethnographic information comes very handy in this exercise. Thus, the magico-religious significance, fertility motive, and art for art's sake motive behind the prehistoric rock art need to be analysed for a holistic understanding of the evolution of the cognitive capabilities of the prehistoric human groups.

The traditional Indian classification of arts is based on different aesthetic senses. Amongst the senses that lead to aesthetic experience are vision (*drishya*) and hearing (*shravya*). Architecture, sculpture and painting originate from vision; music and poetry originate from hearing; and theatre originates from the two put together. Hence, Indian aesthetics is a well-experimented psychoanalytical process of judgement. Most probably, man's first awareness of the world around him came through his primeval sense of sight and his ability to hear. Rock art thus occupies the crucial component of the National Project of IGNCA: the *Adi Drishya* programme.

IGNCA has conceived a major academic programme which relates to exploring artistic manifestations emanating from man's primary sense perceptions. IGNCA's fundamental approach in all its academic ventures is multidisciplinary, multidimensional, multidirectional and multilayered within the systemic cultural whole. IGNCA's concern with prehistoric rock art is not restricted to the space-time systematics of the archaeological research focusing on establishing a linear chronological order of prehistoric rock art, nor is it restricted to the identification of style and school as a criterion for establishing chronology. Instead, it is a concern for man's creativity across time and space and across civilisations and cultures through the perception of sight. Briefly, the goal is not merely the development of a multimedia gallery or a databank but establishing *Adi Drishya* into a school of thought and research on alternate means of understanding prehistoric art.

The main objectives of the present project are:

- to have textual, contextual video and photo documentation;
- to communicate with people in the hinterland for archaeological research, and to build a bio-cultural map, a mental and ecological atlas of the rock art landscape on the basis of documentation of related folklore and natural and manmade features;
- to make suggestions for structural, ecological, and, in rare cases, direct conservation preferably using local materials and techniques;
- to develop a digital photo and video archive;
- to make documentaries on the basis of video recordings in the field;
- to organise displays (permanent, temporary and mobile); and
- to bring out publications, both in print and electronic media.

A multidisciplinary approach is being adopted for this project. The field documentation is being done in collaboration with local experts and institutions in the areas/zones concerned. The data is being collected in a uniform format at the national level. A huge database has been compiled in this process. An international conference (1993) and three national seminars (1991, 1996 and 2004) have been





conducted on the subject. An exhibition on the 'Deer in Rock Art of India and Europe' was held in 1993.

IGNCA's rock art project was initiated in 1989-90. But field-based documentation work on large scale was started in 2005. In north India, documentation work has been initiated in the states of Uttarakhand and Jammu and Kashmir. In eastern India, work has been initiated in Jharkhand and Odisha. In western India, work has been initiated in Rajasthan. In central India, work has been initiated in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh; and in southern India, work has been initiated in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

The documentation of rock art in Andhra Pradesh, like in other parts of the country, was well planned in a phased manner as the area to be covered was vast and access to rock art sites was difficult. A multidisciplinary team consisting of experts in archaeology, botany, folklore, geology and rock art took part in the study and documentation of the rock art and other aspects of different rock art sites. The local team comprised Dr. N. Chandramouli, Pondicherry University (IGNCA State Coordinator and author of the present volume), Dr. S. Muralimohan, Acharya Nagarjuna University (Archaeologist), Dr. M. Raghu Ram, Acharya Nagarjuna University (Botanist), Dr. P.V. Nageswara Rao, Acharya Nagarjuna University (Geologist), Dr. M. Satyanarayana, University of Hyderabad (Folklorist), Dr. K.S.B. Kesava and Dr. S. Srirangacharyulu, Deputy Directors, Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Andhra Pradesh (Archaeologists) and Mr. B. Sudhakar, P.S. Telugu University, Srisailam (Field Associate/Archaeologist). All these team members have contributed in their respective fields to give the final shape to this monograph.

IGNCA has, so far, produced six well-received publications under the IGNCA Rock Art Series—*Rock Art in the Old World* (edited by Michel Lorblanchet), *Deer in Rock Art of India and Europe* (edited by G. Camuri, A. Fossati and Y. Mathpal), *Rock Art in Kumaon Himalaya* (Yashodhar Mathpal), *Rock Art in Kerala* (Yashodhar Mathpal), *Conservation of Rock Art* (edited by B.L. Malla), *Global Rock Art* (edited by B.L. Malla and V.H. Sonawane), and a CD-ROM.

We are extremely happy in bringing out the 7th publication on the *Rock Art of Andhra Pradesh* under this series. This is a well-researched multidisciplinary effort. It gives an insight into exploring artistic manifestations emanating from man's primary sense perceptions. It not only gives a detailed analysis of rock art and allied data from the sites surveyed, but also provides a detailed account of the geology, flora and fauna of the rock art sites in Andhra Pradesh. It also gives a brief and general survey of the state of rock art research in south India as a whole.

The data and the interpretations put forward in this volume are comprehensive and analytical. Most of his views are appropriate and hold good promise in terms of recent trends in rock art research. The scholar tries to approach rock art with a view to reconstructing the lifestyle and environment of the people who created this art. The illustrated volume will not only interest scholars but also the public at large.

**Bansi Lal Malla**



The present volume embodies comprehensive documentation, classification and analysis of the rock art of Andhra Pradesh, which is one of the important regional rock art zones of peninsular India. The rock art data is analysed from the thematic and stylistic perspective taking note of the features such as colour schemes, superimpositions and state of preservation of the pictographs and petroglyphs. The entire corpus of rock art is classified, both at the intra-site and inter-site levels and tentatively dated to Mesolithic, Neolithic, Megalithic and Historical periods. This is done on the basis of the internal analysis of the rock art representations, corroborated by circumstantial archaeological data either from excavations or surface context.

This work is the outcome of a multi-disciplinary research carried out in collaboration with the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi, as part of its National Project, *Adi Drishya*. A multi-disciplinary team comprising of specialists from Archaeology, Folklore, Geology and Botany conducted a thorough field-based study of all the known rock art sites in Andhra Pradesh. The archaeological context of each of the rock art site is thoroughly investigated and surface evidences are recorded. In each site, the geological features are meticulously studied to understand the structure of the rock shelters, causes and processes of natural decay. The botanical investigation is focused on the documentation of the natural flora, rare and endangered trees and plants of medicinal and commercial value in each site. The folk perspective of the rock art sites is analysed by a study of their cultic and religious significance in the native/local folklore, mythology and ritual practices. The book is richly illustrated with colour photographs of rock paintings, digital maps, line drawings and locational maps of the rock art sites.

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Dr. Chandramouli has published more than 30 research papers in various national and regional research journals, and edited many volumes. He also has to his credit a book on the rock art of South India and is presently writing on Bhairava iconography and votive terracottas of Andhra Pradesh. During the two decades of his research and teaching career, 10 M.Phil. and one Ph.D. degrees were awarded under his guidance. Acting as the coordinator, he has organised three National Seminars in Pondicherry University.

As the regional coordinator of the National Project (*Adi Drishya*) on the documentation of the Rock Art initiated by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi, he has conducted extensive and intensive studies of the rock art sites in Andhra Pradesh.

#### **Jacket Illustration:**

Deer and associated figures at Pandavula gutta.