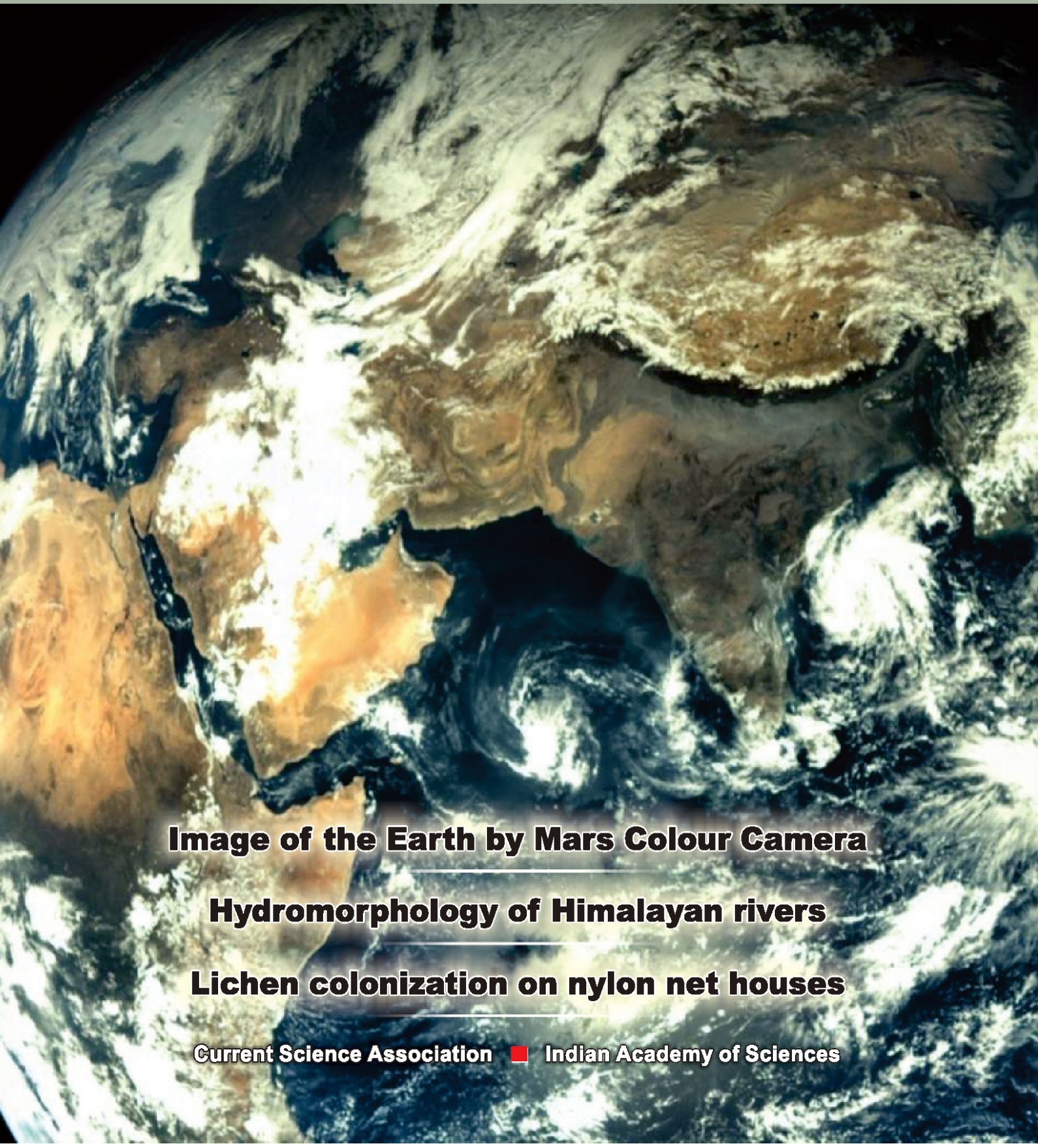


# CURRENT SCIENCE

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**Image of the Earth by Mars Colour Camera**

**Hydromorphology of Himalayan rivers**

**Lichen colonization on nylon net houses**

**Current Science Association ■ Indian Academy of Sciences**



## The world of rock art

An exhibition on 'The World of Rock Art' was held at the National Gallery of Modern Art, Bengaluru, in association with the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi and Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Bangalore Circle from 3 December 2013 to 3 January 2014. The objective was to spread awareness among school children, college and university students and general public about prehistoric art. The exhibition was the result of an international conference held in New Delhi and later organized in different parts of the country owing to overwhelming response from the artists, intellectuals and the general public.

The exhibition was inaugurated by A. Sundara (formerly at Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, Karnatak University, Dharwad) and presided over by Parvin Srivastava (Director, ASI, New Delhi). Both the speakers emphasized on the need to educate people about prehistoric rock arts so that they are preserved for posterity and also about protecting the art from vandalism. Two special lectures were arranged – one on 'Rock art of southern India' by Sundara and the other on 'Rock art of southern India: Upper Paleolithic to Mesolithic' by Ravi Korisetar (Karnatak University,

Dharwad). An open-house workshop on 'Impression' for school students was also part of the exhibition.

The exhibits were chosen from six continents of the world – Africa, Europe, Asia, Australia, North America and South America. A representative collection of the significant art traditions was displayed continent-wise. The exhibition unveiled the fascinating saga of human endeavour of aesthetic sensitivity during prehistoric times with vivid and panoramic details. Various rock paintings (pictographs) and rock engravings, carvings and brushings (petroglyphs) confined to open rocks and boulders were displayed.

Photographs of engravings of giraffes at Dabous in Africa's Niger, representation of the ancestral heritage of Australia, native American petroglyphs of California, etc. were displayed. Rock arts from Karnataka included those from Halkundi, Hampi and Kapgal areas of Bellary district.

Rock art sites have been documented from all parts of the world, except Antarctica. The largest continent, Asia, has diverse rock art heritage. Rock-art sites have been identified in different parts of India from Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand,

Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh (Bhimbedka was declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 2004), Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Manipur. A comprehensive study was also made on Indian rock arts in the global context.

In Karnataka, rock art sites have been identified in the districts of Bagalkot (Badami cave rock art, Badami-Hosahale Mahakuta-Pattadakal-Aihole-Kutakaneri), Belgaum (Ramdurga), Gadag (Dumbala), Koppal (Hire Benkal, Aneundi, Chikrampur, Mallapur, Venkatapur, Anjanahalli and Oneke kindi), Gulbarga (Gavimath, Palkigundi), Bellary (Hampi, Narayanapur, Halkundi, Kupgal, Sangankallu, Sirwar, Chowdamma Hill, Bellary Fort, Tikkalakoti and Korgudu), Raichur (Pikhal and Maski), Haveri (Hire-Madapura), Chitradurga (Brahmagiri), Kolar (Tekal and Ghattamadamangala), Uttara Kannada (Sonda), Udupi (Gavali near Kundapura, Neralakatte and Buddhanajeddu) and Shimoga (Byse-Nilaskal Byana, Gudde-maradi and Nagara).

The techniques employed to execute the art work, like shallow carvings, deep carvings, paintings and stenciling with varied subject matter from simple geometric lines to complex geometric designs were presented. The most favoured subjects of the early man were animals as they were sources of sustenance. Wild animals and hunting scenes showing brutal power were depicted in rock art. Bison, tigers, rhinoceros, wild bear, monkeys, fishes, flying birds, peacocks and turtles have been abundantly shown (representing different periods from Upper Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Chalcolithic to early historic and Medieval period). Horses, elephants, animal fights, dancing, disguises and masks, details of social life, etc. provide rare glimpses into the activities of prehistoric man. Other facts of the then day-to-day life, representing live documentation of the development of style in artwork from gradual to more advanced techniques and various adaptations in lifestyle have been expressed in the rock art.

The exhibition also showcased the 'living art traditions' of three communities in India – the Lanjia-Sauras of Odisha, the Rathwa-Bhils of Gujarat and the Warlis of Maharashtra, to show the



A collage of rock arts – engravings and paintings (photos taken at the exhibition).

continuity of the traditions in the Indian context.

Several rock arts are probably hidden in remote places in dense woods, or in inaccessible mountain terrain. They are a rare source of knowledge about antiquity and tell us how the most primitive cultures kept aesthetic talent intact as a part of their living tradition.

Rock art heritage of India is still in its infancy as far as identifying new sites, and preservation and maintenance are concerned. There is ample scope to include rock art heritage sites in the tourist map of India. If these sites are preserved and maintained properly, future genera-

tions would be able to enjoy the open and aesthetically created vibrant rock arts created by early man. Damage due to human interference (graffiti, defacing, quarrying, etc.) and natural deterioration (heat, humidity, temperature) are the challenges to preserve these non-renewable cultural resources.

An exhibition of this kind is a rare treat and a golden opportunity for art lovers, students and general public to witness the world of rock art in one place. Surely, this would be a stimulating experience with prehistoric art and changing aspects of science and technology both in ancient times as well as in

the contemporary cultures pertaining to this creative discipline of art.

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1. Young INTACH –The Heritage Club Newsletter, 2007, 4(3), 1–12.
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