



**A Public Dialogue cum Awareness Workshop**  
At  
**Robertsganj, Uttar Pradesh**  
(16 April, 2015)



**INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE ARTS**  
**NEW DELHI**



A meeting was conducted at the District Magistrate office, Sonbhadra for awareness of the common people regarding rock art. The meeting was inaugurated with lighting of the lamp and attended by the local member of the legislative assembly Ghoraval, Sh. Ramesh Chandra Dubey as well as the Chief Development Officer Mr. Mahendra Singh (the DM was away due to some exigency). Among the interdisciplinary team the following were present: Dr. BL Malla and Mr. Jigmet Namgyal from IGNCA, New Delhi; Prof. Sunil Bajpai and Dr. CM Nautiyal, BSIP, Lucknow; Prof. DP Tewari & Prof. KK Agarwal, University of Lucknow; Dr. Prabhakar Upadhyay, BHU, Varanasi; Dr. A Misra, Fisheries Dept. (Sonbhadra); Dr. JK Singh, Sonbhadra; Mr. Angad Singh, Research scholar, University of Lucknow. In addition to the expert members of the team, the meeting was attended by local influential citizens and rock art enthusiasts like Raja Badahar, Dr. Arjun Das Kesari, Dr. JK Singh, and Panchayat officials, village *pradhans*, government staffs, common people and the media persons.



**Members and participants at the Rock Art awareness campaign at Robertsganj**

Dr. BL Malla, Director of the project from IGNCA explained the significance of the project to the audience and emphasized on the systematic documentation and preservation of the rock art sites of the region. He urged academicians, general public and local administration at large to contribute for its conservation and preservation. The Chief Guest at the awareness campaign, Mr. Dubey assured of all the support from the administration and also mentioned some efforts towards development of the sites. Prof. S Bajpai, Director, BSIP-Lucknow, said that such sites archives our history and should be conserved, mandating their documentation and multi-

disciplinary study. Prof. KK Agarwal from the Centre of Excellence, Geology Dept., University of Lucknow and Dr. Prabhakar Upadhyay, Banaras Hindu University, also stressed on the documentation of rock art sites in the region. A PPT presentation of some of the rock art sites of the region by Prof. DP Tewari, Dept. History & Archaeology, University of Lucknow was well appreciated by the people. Dr. CM Nautiyal, coordinator, also shed light on the objective of the programme and proposed the vote of thanks.

Following the meeting, the team visited the rock art site at Lodhi village in front of the DM's office.



**A view of the Rock shelter near DM's office.**

The Field documentation of Rock Art sites in the region and Awareness Campaign were widely covered by national and local dailies:

SUNDAY TIMES OF INDIA, LUCKNOW  
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SUNDAY SPECIAL 5



# Hands that rock

## Isha Jain finds hand prints on prehistoric rocks in UP

**I**f hand prints of pre-historic times excite you, you need not think of visiting the caves in Spain or France. You can now have a look at the hand prints of pre-historic times in Uttar Pradesh's Sonbhadra, 800 kilometres away from Lucknow, where they have been discovered, in large numbers (15,000) in a group on ceilings and those of Neanderthal rock shelter.

Over 10,000 years ago, they put their hands on cave walls and left imprints in them, forever.

Now, the discovery of pre-historic hand prints in rock shelters in UP's Sonbhadra district - a rare finding in this region - has left archaeologists excited and took into the Mesolithic age in a new light.

They have been found in large numbers, about 15 to 20 in a group, on ceilings and those of the Neanderthal rock shelter, about 400 km from Lucknow.

Though hand prints have been found earlier in some places in India, archaeologists claim that the stamp-sized ochre-colored hand prints in Sonbhadra, which show an earlier date of origin in history, is peculiar.

"The discovery of hand prints in large numbers, which is rare in the country is exciting," said Prof JIP Dwivedi of the Department of Ancient Indian History (AIH), Lucknow University.

**The discovery of rare pre-historic hand prints in large numbers in rock shelters of Sonbhadra district has left archaeologists excited and took into the Mesolithic age in a new light**

Prof Dwivedi was part of the team that went on a field trip to Sonbhadra and Bahadurganj to document the rock art, under a project of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, New Delhi. The project was headed by J.P. Malhotra, director of rock art unit at IICAR that was co-ordinated by scientist CM Nautilyal of Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeobotany, Lucknow.

While carrying out the documentation work, the team also discovered as many as 14 new sites having rock paintings in Sonbhadra, which has been a centre of pre-historic activities. While four new rock shelters have been found in Dhaura hills, two have been found in Bahalwa hills and Bahadurganj hills. These rock shelters have been discovered in Chhannawa hills while new rock shelter is found near in Mirzapur near Masuli hills.

In many of the rock shelters, stone tools like intertidal and parallel sided blades of Mesolithic period used for cutting animal skin and chert-like pottery fragments and ware, black and red ware and like kiligipet were found. A rare red hand was a hand with a stone pasted on. "This kind of red was used before the Mesolithic period," said Tapan Lalit, member head of Mesolithic period found was used to mark of primitive people while cutting in these shelters created various drawings on the walls of these caves, shelters. Experts said drawings were dominated by animal figures with few hand paintings in an animal art.

Handprints and wild leaves were other major objects. According to the team members of IICAR, Lucknow, Prof Dwivedi, from Bahadurganj part of the team, in some other places hunting was depicted in groups but in Sonbhadra, single hands were depicted.

The official dated the pre-historic hand prints in the rock shelter per block as half lakh (50,000) years old.

**SIMILAR IMPRESSIONS WORLDWIDE**

Known records of oldest cave paintings date back 40,000 years in Asia and Europe. The paintings are remarkably similar around the world, with animals being common subjects that give the most impressive images. Humans mainly appear as images of hands, mostly hand stencils made by blowing pigment on a hand held to the wall. The earliest non-figurative rock art dates back to approximately 40,000 years ago, the date given both to a disk in the El Castillo cave in Cantabria, Spain and a hand stencil in Sulawesi.

**El Castillo Cave (100 BC) Spain**  
The so-called hand stencils. Comes from the Aurignacian view survives of El Castillo. Speculation has arisen that these hand paintings were made by Neanderthals.

**Indonesia Cave (100 BC) Indonesia**  
The world's oldest hand stencil comes from the Leang Timpuseng Cave in the Marau-Pongkieh area on the island of Sulawesi. The site also includes some of the most ancient animal paintings, all made by Aboriginal migrants who were probably heading for Australia.

**Cave de la Vache (Spain for Cave of Hands)**  
Cave de la Vache (Spanish for Cave of Hands) in the province of Santa Cruz, Argentina is famous for the paintings of hands. The art in the cave dates from 12,000 to 10,000 years ago.

**Paralleled-sided blades of the Mesolithic period, used to cut animal skin or bones**

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# Sunday Pioneer

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## BSIP finds rock sites in Sonbhadra

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW**

Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeobotany (BSIP), as part of a multidisciplinary team, has been able to find little known rock sites in Sonbhadra.

The eight-member team reached Harna Harni in Sonbhadra, which is two kilometres away from the Vijaynagar Fort on Saturday. Uttar Pradesh CM Nautilyal from BSIP told The Pioneer that they had found the little known site of Mughal Marat in Sonbhadra. The team is trying to document the rock art of Uttar Pradesh to form a baseline data. The study has been initiated under Indira Gandhi National Centre for Art, New Delhi. The team which comprises members from the Archaeology department of Lucknow University, Geology department (LU), BHU and Indira Gandhi Centre of Art, New Delhi. Nautilyal said that they would be covering eight to nine sites in Sonbhadra.

"We discovered the little known site of Mughal Marat where the area is infested with bees. The site has little mention in the literature and it was difficult accessing it because it was in the wilderness and over 15 kilometres trek. The area is called Mughal Marat because Mughals were killed here but I do not know how much of this is correct," he said.

Nautilyal said at Harna Harna, they had discovered a rock shelter which has various kinds of designs. "This rock shelter has designs which are human and geometrical figures. We are trying to find out connection between the rituals that are shown in the pictures and whether the villagers fol-

low them or not. There is one interesting site that we found at the Basawan Ghatta site, wherein there is a picture of a dead body and people surrounding it. We are trying to see the connection of local villagers who belong to the Kol tribe with this kind of pictures," he said.

Nautilyal said they had a multidisciplinary team because they wanted all aspects of the rock to be studied in a holistic manner. "We have a team which has archaeologists, geologists and people from the art centre because we could get a holistic picture of the rocks. As BSIP scientists, we would like to date the rocks," he said.

Nautilyal said it was unfortunate that some of the rocks were being defaced. "It is unfortunate that some of these rocks are being defaced and the last site that we visited, we saw that an entire chunk of the rock was broken, making the study more important," he said.

Nautilyal said those places could be turned into potential tourism points. "These places could be developed as potential tourism points because these sites are only eighty kilometres away from Varanasi, which is on the international map. There can also be a museum wherein one can protect the replica of various paintings on the walls of these rock shelters so that people can get an overview of the kind of paintings which are found on these rocks," he said. The team is accompanied by Birendra Singh, a rock enthusiast from the area.

Nautilyal also said that they had an awareness session at the start of the trip so that local villagers could be apprised of the importance of the art and the need for conservation and protection.

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### Scientists to study, document rock art of Sonebhadra

**Lucknow (PNS):** The valleys of Belari river in Sonebhadra and of Son in Sonebhadra and some parts of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh are rich archives of the creativity of early men including tribals like Kol and Gonds. This is reflected in the art pieces in many shelters and on rocks. However, while through proper management and appropriate marketing skills, the Bhimbetaka rock art in Madhya Pradesh has made it to the hallowed gallery of UNESCO heritage, the art in Uttar Pradesh had been craving for attention of the connoisseurs, scientists and conservationists. But things have changed of late. With CM Nautiyal, scientist-in-charge of the Radiocarbon Dating Lab of Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeobotany (BSIP), as coordinator, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi, has constituted a multi-disciplinary committee which will coordinate and conduct the study of rock art in Uttar Pradesh too.

Nautiyal, who has just returned from the visit to Sonebhadra, told *The Pioneer* that BSIP scientists would be a part of the team that would study and document the rock art of Sonebhadra.

"We will, in the first phase, be documenting the rock art because it is vanishing and being vandalised, and there are thousands of these rocks which are present in the area. By documenting them, we will at least have a baseline data. After we document them, we will start the process of analysing them," he said.

Nautiyal said considering the emerging potential of numerically dating those sites and analysing the materials used in the art work, far more elaborate and penetrative look was desired for firmer conclusion regarding time, geographical extent, spread and characteristics of the culture.

It is also essential to apprise the residents of the areas of the academic and cultural importance of these sites to motivate them towards conservation.

Nautiyal said that presence of the green authigenic mineral glauconite and occurrence of marine fossils in the area indicated shallow marine conditions in the past in that region.

The mineral-availability in the region may have been responsible for the practice of smelting techniques in Vindhyan region as evinced by findings of iron and copper artifacts. Efforts have been made by BHU in collaboration with BSIP to date such sites. By dating charcoal associated with cave art, charcoal and vegetal materials used for artwork and uranium - containing calcite on rocks or engraving, one may set limits on rock art age," he said.

The isotope-based K-Ar and uranium-lead series-based dating methods have clearly established that Vindhyan series like Sonri formed over a billion year ago. He stated that Ganga plain and Vindhyan regions were likely to be early homes to early civilization as indicated by evidences of paddy farming in Ganga plain and iron smelting evidences discovered by BHU researchers in the area such as Raipura but we need more numbers for firm conclusions. The studies can help in understanding the spread of civilization in the region.

The rock art in Sonebhadra is dominated by figures of animals especially deer family though elephants, wild boars, also featured. Hunting and dancing were commonly depicted. Unlike most other places, single hunters are depicted. There were also some unusual drawings seen in the local rock art such as half bird-half animal and wondered if it was sign of some extinct animal.

To assess the status and discuss the involvement of community, a discussion was also organised at Deogarh in Sonebhadra on March 14 under the aegis of IGNCA. Several members in the audience took active part in the discussion and clarified doubts by asking questions.

