



A TOUR REPORT OF PARTICIPATION IN 25TH VALCAMONICA SYMPOSIUM

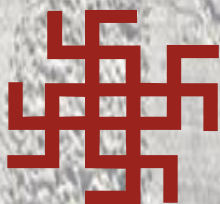
at

Capo di Ponte, Italy

(20-26 September, 2013)



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**Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts
New Delhi**

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PREFACE

The largest archive humankind has on its own remote past and is embodied in the visual imagery left over in about last 50,000 years by the people who spread over the planet reaching all the inhabitable areas of the globe. It stands as an important record of the period before the invention of writing. Visual art remains, without any doubt, the most important testimony to the intellectual and spiritual life of humans in the remote past. This is why the Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici (Camunian Centre for Prehistory Studies), Capo Di Ponte, Italy has encouraged since its foundation the meeting and debate among scholars and specialists of different disciplines, contributing to the knowledge and understanding of the rock art phenomenon, particularly through the organization of International Symposia which take place once every two years and 25th edition this year (2013)*.

The 25th Valcamonica Symposium “Art as a source of history” took place at Capo di Ponte from the 20th to the 26th September 2013 and was guided by professor Emmanuel Anati, and it confirms the constant role of leadership played by Valcamonica over more than half a century in representing a world meeting point for the studies and research in rock art. The Valley houses the largest rock art concentration in Europe, and derives from this heritage its own identity, pride and its future prospects.

“The search of his own past – professor Anati explains – has engaged man at least since he was considered ‘sapiens’. Man wondered “who am I?” and “where do I come from?”. Such questions defined the Homo sapiens; they turned into sapiens an animal which has in its own way of thinking three time categories: present, past and future. As far as we know, all of the other animals just know two times: the contingent one and the immediate future. Past is recorded in instinct. The third dimension of human thought, the historicization of the antecedent, is shown by art which displays events and pictures cognitive processes.”

* (The present event was sponsored by the most important world institutions engaged in this field: UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), UISPP (Union Internationale des Sciences Préhistoriques et Protohistoriques - International Union of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences) and CIPSH (Conseil International de la Philosophie et des Sciences Humaines - International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies). These sponsorships indicate the prestige of the event and its high international profile. The presence of eminent experts from the five continents confirms the world leading role Valcamonica has in rock art research).





The dimension of the history unveiled by art is variable; it may be the history of myth or an event, the history of a personal individual experiences, the story of a minute or of a feeling and may be history of the tribe, of a nation, of a cultural moment or of an event of world resonance. Beyond single cases, art, every art, is a source of history. The picture-writing, is pre-literate writing, it is the testimony of our hidden memory and research will make this memory emerge again.

The problems relating to conservation, preservation and management of the rock art were also discussed in the symposium. There was a serious concern among the scholars that each day, this important patrimony is deteriorating, because of deforestation, pollution and modern development. Natural phenomena along with other human actions are major cause of degradation. Losing images is losing a part of human history. Each trace is precious and what is not documented now can be lost forever. Prehistoric and tribal art is a source of inspiration as it revives our submerged memories and awakens primordial records from the past. The patrimony has to be preserved for future generations. If the past were forgotten we would miss the background to conceive the future.

A few side events like a visit to the rock art parks of Valcamonica, a concert and a round table discussion held on the question of “What Caused the Creation of Art” also enriched the present Symposium.

The tour report has been compiled in different chapters giving a summary of academic contents discussed in the symposium, visit and documentation of rock art sites and an overview of the Valcamonica rock art; and giving an account of my participation in the Valcamonica Symposium and its outcome.

I would like to thank Mrs. Dipali Khanna, Member Secretary, IGNCA, for her encouragements and also for deputing me to participate in the Valcamonica Symposium. I appreciate the work of Dr. Ranbeer Singh, Project Associate, for formatting the report.



CHAPTER - I

PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL VALCAMONICA SYMPOSIUM

The 25th International Valcamonica symposium took place at Capo Di Ponte, Valcamonica, Italy, from 20th to 26th September, 2013.

The seven daylong Symposium was entitled “*Art as a Source of History.*” A total of 105 people from different disciplines and about two dozen countries registered to attend the symposium, which comprised a total of seven sessions and one roundtable discussion

based on texts previously presented and published in a booklet form. An average of 60-80 people attended each session. The academic sessions addressed the following themes: (1) Decoding religion, myths, and beliefs through rock art; (2) Art as world heritage; (3) Regional identities and common themes in rock art; (4) Making history of prehistory; (5) Psychic stories revealed by the arts; (6) Decoding rock art: a worldwide survey on methods and theories; (7) Ancient graffiti and modern graffiti. The Round Table held on September 21st examined the question of “What Caused the Creation of Art”.

The theme of the present Valcamonica Symposium was very important because its main focus was on seeing the art as a source of history, especially in the field of prehistoric and tribal art. The main concern of all the participants was to explore the ‘future of the past’ and to look beyond the duty of discovering, protecting, and educating about archaeological treasures. Everybody was very curious to know that in which direction the discipline of archaeology is going, because the philosophy of



research and technology/science is fast changing. The conference also highlighted on the new scope for the collaboration of archaeology with anthropology, art history, philosophy, semiotics, psychology, psychiatry, history of religion and cultural history. The new multidisciplinary approach aims at a global view of culture and of the very essence of the spirit of our species (*Homo sapiens*). The need is to look beyond the context and read the messages. Rock art reveals changes in people's way of thinking, feeling, and sentiments.

Almost all the above academic sessions of the symposium were interrelated. These were mainly devoted to explore the minds of the prehistoric people by archaeologists, art historians, psychiatrists, ethnographers and philosophers. While starting from the concept of sublimation in relation to creativeness and artistic production, the scholars followed a psychiatrist, micropsychoanalyst point of view and fork into consideration some common elements between art and psychosis, psychosis and infantile thought, infantile thought and art. Some scholars believed that inside the human mind (conscious, preconscious and unconscious) we can find (metaphorically speaking) traces similar to those of the prehistoric incisions engraved on rocks. It is not the formal similarity among the traces but the fact, they try to represent independently from epochs, the inner affect which animates them. It has been observed that the affect linked to at least four variables – nourishment, sex, territory and death does not change. It is the pattern of representations, which changes into stages of psycho sexual development and the passing of centuries and millenniums. The development, as we intend, happens only on the level of representations; the affect does not change. It is the form of the traces, which changes together with the way to use the defenses.

Besides, the images, which appear in myths as well as in the rock art pictures, may contain the echo of the process that generated them and it may give us a sign about their construction. Cosmos representation seems to be constructed through several condensations and displacements, which form similar but not identical images: the course of the sun, the journey of dead spirits and the trip of dreams.



Another important aspect of ethnographical approach for studying rock art was also discussed thoroughly in the symposium. It was suggested to find out the temporal spectrum of both rock art and tribal art. By this exercise, the upper and lower limits of both the sets of art may be identified. Both the specific points on the respective sets of art are to be compared in detail. The processes are to be carried out (carefully/logically/scientifically) for understanding the genesis of rock art and the development of tribal art and to determine the spectrum of continuum.



A few scholars have made some considerations upon analogies between tribal rituals and obsessional ceremonies. They assume that during ontogenesis the human being passes through philogenetic development stages and in particular that the child in evaluative age uses the design and gestures to express his psychic life, since he is still unable to use a linguistic code. Similarly to what happened to our ancestors in prehistoric era in rituals and in graphic representation of them.



At the same time, an archaeology claiming to be cognitive, aiming at how a culture is understood need tautegoric ethnography to plan its interfaces. The true understanding cannot come by imposing the pre-concerned, uni-dimensional models of the cognitive development of the human language or through artificial order or data. We would have to understand the circular movement of our past and present, regional and global, part and the whole, self and the other, surface and the context in the rock art



traditions of the world. It could help in making clear the meaning of the rock art depictions; why some and not others are ruled by the fixed laws, why is not possible to generalize when dealing with different people. The native of today, as that of yesterday, is a free being, who select the motives that his cosmology dictated or by imperative shamanism or by the effect of drugs. The other factors, which could be investigated by ethno-archaeology, include – abrogation, superimposed drawings, destruction, and changing of site.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER

- ✓ Rock art is the first chapter of human history.
- ✓ Rock art images should be treated as a source for cultural communication with the past, present and the future. The past to celebrate remembrance, memory and legacy. The present to confirm and legitimize the culture and the future as an expression for the cultural and human fear of death.
- ✓ There is an immediate need to study further psychology of iconicity; and to make distinction between ‘mental and artistic representations’. It is believed that the ‘abstract art’



comes from the mind but 'representational art' comes from the natural forms.

- ✓ (b) In ethnographical study two main aspects emerge. One is direct relationship between tribal native groups and the rock art in their habitat. And another is the interference, which can be extracted from the cognition of the natives about this art. It does not matter if they did not do it or if it belongs to another age and precedence. The first addresses/undertakes ethnic and ethnological studies of the techniques of conservation (facing tourism and the cultural changes). This is an urgent task. But the approximation to the problem must be synchronic and phenomenological.
- ✓ Cognitive mapping is central to research on human spatial orientation. Maps are the primary mechanism in human for storing information about spatial locations, for determining one's location at a particular time for planning routes, for monitoring the process of way finding, and for realizing the successful attainment of one's goal. The acquisition by environmental knowledge through explorations and the solution of spatial problem are the two fundamental functions of the cognitive mapping process.
- ✓ The model of rock art documentation varies and mostly depends on the feasibility of any, or combination of the following specific image recording techniques: photographing, videotaping, sketching, tracing, or more technical approaches such as stereophotogrammetry, holography, etc.
- ✓ The present stress is in the development of new digital recording techniques and in the modernization and refinement of existing ones. The laser scanning is currently a fast-growing and a powerful copying technique in application. The aim is to develop a high-quality, cost-effective and non-tactile documentation method with the aid of CD-ROM technology that would result in accurate copies. The help of a digital scanner and a CD-writer using original rubbings and tracings produced has produced the records of this kind.



- ✓ While dating rock art it has been related to stratigraphy. The style also has been used as a formal, denominator. As the comparable contexts too have a rather imprecise dating precise age is very difficult to identify. But the relative age is often easier to reach. Besides, a detailed chronology seems impossible to construct.
- ✓ It is clear from the above discourse that the need of an hour is to study palaeoart in a holistic perspective while applying multi-disciplinary approach. It is to be investigated as one of the greatest bio-cultural experiments of humanity. Even we would have to develop a formal grammar and unified theory for palaeoart studies.



CHAPTER - II

RECOMMENDATIONS/ DELIBERATIONS OF VALCAMONICA SYMPOSIUM *(Concluding Session of Symposium)*

The final session held on Thursday, September 26th unanimously expressed thanks to the organizing team, to the supporting institutions and to the active participants.

An appeal is addressed to the IUPPS/UISPP (International Union of Prehistoric and Proto-historic Sciences), to stimulate and develop coordinated research programs for the advancement of research in the field of prehistoric and proto-historic intellectual and spiritual expressions, for international funding, which will involve joint projects of at least three institutions, each from a different country. The research goals have to conform to the aims of the respective institutions.

An on-line newsletter to be published every two months by the UISPP-CISENP Scientific Committee will communicate the goals and content of projects. A major aim will be the development of cooperation in research projects and the promotion of electronic publications.

The next UISPP conference is scheduled in Burgos, Spain, for September of 2014. Colleagues are invited to propose papers for the session on “Intellectual and Spiritual Expressions of Non-literate People” by sending title and short summary (10 lines) to the President of CISENP, Prof. Emmanuel Anati, <cispe.research@gmail.com>.

Bansi Lal Malla from India suggested replacing the mention of “illiterate” with “non-literate” as it has been applied in this Symposium. He also proposed the compilation of a manual of rock art studies. It was suggested that Anati’s book “World



Rock Art” (Oxford, 2010) should be made available on internet. Other basic papers and books should be made available the same way. Free access of books on internet should not conflict with copyright agreements and regulations.

Debate developed on research topics concerning rock art. Emmanuel Anati suggested three sectors requiring specific professional knowledge: (1) Management, conservation, promotion, information and public enjoyment of rock art. (2) Methods of recording and data storing (including explorations, surveys, mapping, tracing and photography). (3) Decoding and understanding rock art.

Anati emphasized the need for more informed conservation and management, recording, and interpretation. Johannes Loubser from the United States and Fernando Coimbra from Portugal emphasized the need for archaeologists to be included in the conservation and management of rock art and so be able to provide essential orientation to conservation technicians.

Anati mentioned that conservation procedures must not be used as excuse to stop or delay research. He also recommended that rock art sites be open to the public as far as possible to favour their cultural and educational function and for the promotion of research.

George Nash from the United Kingdom called for the updating of a world heritage list/directory for global circulation. Anati suggested that Ariela Fradkin-Anati (Editor of the previous edition) and George Nash update the existing “Who’s Who” schedule of rock art scholars.

Fernando Coimbra proposed the creation of an International School of Rock Art, with theoretical and practical sessions, involving at least three different countries. Anati considered the idea as positive, practical and feasible. The term “school” should be used in a generic way. It could be called “Educational Project” and may use, continue, unify and coordinate existing local educational projects. Colleagues could probably involve their institutions in countries such as India, China, Italy and Portugal, to conduct seminars or two-week long classes to train people including also participants from other countries.



Fernando Coimbra recommended that seminars should be given to both archaeologists and non-archaeologists concerning the conservation and management of rock art.

Anati called for ways to create a greater awareness and appreciation of rock art among the public. He added that rock art scholars should aim at writing broadly cultural articles to attract wider public attention. George Nash suggested that reporting rock art news on Face book will be an effective way to promote awareness among the public. Primadi Tabrani from Indonesia pointed at the need to create awareness at the local level too. Arsen Fardzhev from Russia proposed ways to link rock art animal imagery with visit to nearby parks of actual live animals. Erwin Neumayer from Austria mentioned the problem of disseminating information pertaining to conservation and management to the general population in India with the goal of avoiding further damages.

The topic of the 26th Valcamonica Symposium was the last issue on the agenda. Lisbeth Bredholt from Denmark suggested that the next Symposium be shortened by one day. Anati suggested a structure consisting of three days of general sessions, with additional days of more specific sessions. Primadi Tabrani requested that Italian presentations should be accompanied by English translations.

In the course of the Symposium the following titles were proposed for the forthcoming 26th Valcamonica Symposium to be held in 2015:

- Multi-disciplinary approaches to prehistoric and tribal art;
- Prehistoric art and its context;
- The relationship between prehistoric art and material culture;
- Prehistoric people and cultures that have produced rock art;
- Differences in art between non-literate and literate cultures;
- Prehistoric art as memory for the future;
- Rock art research: past, present, and future;
- Rock art conservation for future generations;
- Defining dating and motivations of rock art;
- Palaeo-art;



- Contemporary art;
- Experiencing art;
- The production and re-adaptation of rock art in later periods;
- Rock art as performance;
- Relationship between zoomorphic and anthropomorphic imagery;
- Rock art between archaeology and spirituality;
- Art as experience and experiencing art;
- Meaningful experiences and experiencing rock art.

After debate it was decided that several of the proposed titles could be themes for specific sessions. Considering their variety and range, the forthcoming Symposium should have a broad title. The title of “*Prehistoric and tribal art: spiritual and intellectual aspects*” was unanimously accepted. Participants were invited to submit titles and abstracts of their proposed papers for the forthcoming Symposium. Colleagues intended to organize and coordinate specific sessions should present their proposal as soon as possible.

ITEMS FOR ACTION

- ❖ Ariela Fradkin-Anati and George Nash: update the existing “Who is Who in Rock Art” directory and prepare a new edition for publication; possible diffusion of electronic edition.
- ❖ UISPP: approach potential funding sources for multi-national cooperation projects in rock art studies;
- ❖ Various members: verify feasibility of “Educational Project”: seminars and courses in conservation and management of rock art.
- ❖ UISPP-CISNEP: Develop and promote bi-monthly Newsletter;
- ❖ UISPP-CISNEP: Verify and promote diffusion of educational publications by internet.
- ❖ CCSP: Organize the 26th Symposium in 2015.



CHAPTER - III

A VISIT TO ROCK ART SITES AT VALCAMONICA

Valcamonica valley is located on the northern part of Brescia province of Italy. It is 60 km long Alpine valley extending from lake Iseo, north of Brescia, to the Swiss border. In this part of Brescia province three rivers flow through three valleys: Camonica valley along the Oglio river, Trompia valley along the Mella river and Sabbia valley along the Chiese river. The significance of the Camonica valley is its exceptional concentration of rock art counting over 30,000 rock engravings known on over 2400 rock surfaces. They represent a time range of nearly 10,000 years. The rock art of the valley is in the “World Heritage” list of UNESCO.



Ancient Rhaetian tribes from the Alpine and Ligurian valleys, on the plain and the pre-Alps, originally inhabited the territory of Brescia. The Celts, and in particular the Cenomani tribe, settled here during 5th century B.C. Due to their cordial relationship with Rome they were able to conserve their political identity till the end of 2nd century B.C. But this does not last long and in 16 B.C. Rome with its army's subjugated Alpine population, who for millennia inscribed their everyday life, wars, and religion/belief system into the rocks of the Camonica valley. The numerous rock engravings scattered throughout the valley



relate its prehistory. Although the credit of discovering these engravings is given to Professor Laeng in the year 1908, yet people of the area were aware about them and called them “*pitoti*” (puppets).

The place Capo Di Ponte is the Centre of the Camonica valley and has the concentration of rock art (engravings). According to a legend, the evangelization in the valley started from this place. Cemmo was the first inhabited nucleus, which in the 13th Century, was the main administrative office of the valley. The historical Romanesque churches of St. Siro and St. Salvatore in Capo Di Ponte highly speak of its past glory.

A. National Park of Naquane

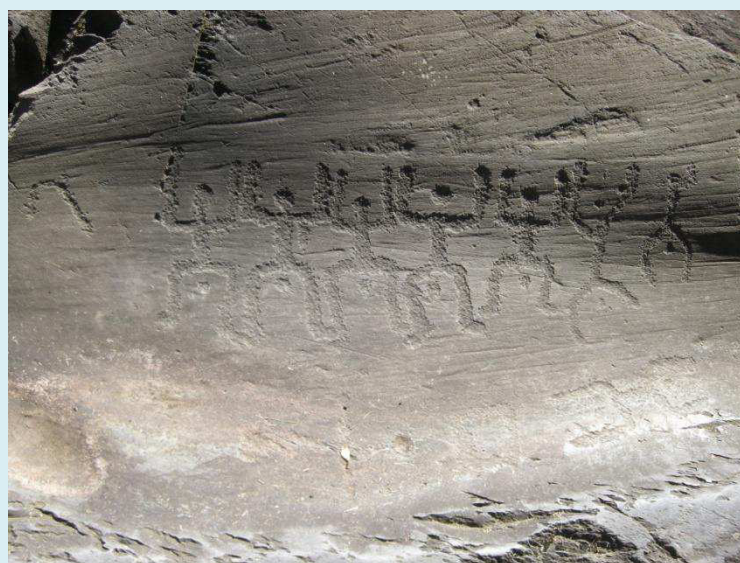
At Capo Di Ponte, to the left of Oglio river, in the Naquane area, is the National Park of rock engravings. It was established in 1955 and is managed by the Camonica centre for prehistoric studies. Naquane is the most recognized area of rock art in the Camonica valley. It became a National Park in 1958 under the supervision of the Archaeological Superintendent of Lombardy. I was told that about a collection of the 170 thousand rock engravings in the Camonica valley is concentrated in the Naquane Park.



The National Park of Naquane presents visitors with one of the world's most remarkable rock art exhibits in terms of the richness, variety and quantity of the imagery. The number of engravings in the area has not yet been completely assessed, but is roughly rated in tens of thousands. Their importance is considerable for the knowledge of humanity's early history. The depictions on Valcamonica's rock surfaces span a great length of time, from the Epi-Palaeolithic period, some ten thousand years ago, through to the arrival of the Roman legions at the end of the first century B.C. The Romanisation of the valley did not entirely end the custom of engraving the rocks, as Latin inscriptions bear out; however petroglyphs from Mediaeval and more recent times are rarer and more sporadic. Some of the important subjects/figures depicted at the site are as follows:

In front of the farmstead of Naquane is found "The great Rock", the most richly decorated surface found in the zone. It has the depiction of more than 1000 figures representing 5 phases of decoration.

CAMUNNIAN INSCRIPTIONS here are often placed in figurative contexts on which, at least in some cases, they certainly have some bearing.



CAMUNNIAN

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The alphabet used, as in other areas of northern Italy during the same period, was the Etruscan one. It was adapted to the particular, but as yet undetermined, phonetic requirements of the language spoken in the zone – thus the term "North Etruscan Alphabet". At least ten inscriptions appear on ROCK 50 of which eight are apparently connected with depictions of foot-prints, a ladder, a house, anthropomorphs and zoomorphs. The armed man engraved on ROCK 50 was quite probably an important character of the Iron-Age as in those times weapons were objects of prestige and reserved for a rather select circle. The horse is another distinctive element. Tomb findings that brought to light



horses' bits and terracotta statuettes of horsemen confirm that this animal first appeared in Italy at the end of the eighth century B.C. Initially not so widespread, only a privileged few, probably chiefs and warriors, would have owned or used one. The fact that the rider stands rather than sits on the mount lends weight to the idea that this portrays some ceremony, perhaps an initiation rite where the subject had to prove his skill and courage prior to being accepted into the warrior fraternity.

The two halberd-axes with crescent-shaped blades depicted in these scratched engravings were the sort of weapons in the armoury of the Alpine population that, as Orazio wrote in an ode dedicated to Druso, fought the Rhaetians in the Valle dell' Adige in 15 B.C. using the axe in battle in a tradition that permeated throughout the Iron-Age. These depictions on ROCK 44 compare well with finds from tombs of the middle and late La Tene, indicating that they date to a period between the third and second century B.C. through to the times of Emperor Augustus at the end of the first century B.C. when the Romans finally conquered the Alpine valleys.

THE LABYRINTH is one of the most evocative and mysterious depictions, not only in Val Camonica, but generally in the portraiture of the ancient world. Image similar to this one on the Great Rock are also found in the Etruscan world, such as that on a pitcher of Cerveteri on which a group of horsemen and the inscription "Truia" clarify that this painting deals with the famous "Ludus Troiae" described by Virgilio. The labyrinth would have been the route taken by the horsemen in an equestrian game of attack and pursuit that followed a predetermined plan. The fact there is two duelists tied by the legs next to the labyrinth on this rock gives weight to an analogous analysis for this tableau.

The great number of deer in the imagery of Valcamonica seems to confirm that this animal was an important factor in the ancient economy of the area. Deer first appeared in the rock engravings of Valcamonica in the Epi-Palaeolithic period over 10,000 years ago, but had a major proliferation in the Copper-age (third millennium B.C.) and Iron - Age (first millennium B.C). figures were engraved by themselves or in groups, shown grazing or fleeing from hunters and dogs. The importance of the deer,



apart from hunt scenes, is portrayed by the depiction of Cernunnas, deer-god and king of the beasts, on ROCK 70. On ROCK 57 there are four figures of mounted deer. The riders, as on horseback are seated on standing on the deer. Are these strange scenes mythical representations or true to life – is it really possible to ride a deer? According to some researchers, these scenes are based on fact, testifying to the semi-domestication of deer in Valcamonica, as in other areas, during the Iron-Age.

PREHISTORIC WEAPONS like spears in array halberds, axes, daggers, shield-shapes) dating from the Copper Age (first millennium B.C.) are frequently found in Valcamonica's engravings, more often executed on stelae (boulders or stone slabs) than on rock-faces and may have been made to serve



ritual or symbolic, functions. What is the significance of these depictions? Scholars do not agree that these compositions can be exclusively assigned a sacred role comparable to the ritual deposit of arms near lakes, rivers or springs, funeral pyres and in tombs. It is also possible to interpret them as symbolic representations of the power of metal and, consequently, of the weapon and the man that owned it. Some consider it an unmistakable weapon cult; others dwell upon the engravings apotrophic intent that wards off evil. As with other figures it is difficult to say definitely whether or not they were engraved for a symbolic end.

At the beginning of the Iron-Age the human figure, within the ambit of the figurative repertory, took on a new importance and is shown in descriptive scenes such as armed combat and other well portrayed activities (ROCK 99). There are hardly any pictures of bloodshed, with wounding or killing; in fact the contestants rarely touch each other with their weapons and they almost seem “frozen” in action. Do these tableaux show real



combat or ritual or competitive duels? Are they perhaps representations of dance? In these sketches, the presence of one or more figures in armour apparently accompanying and watching the contenders lends to the belief that these are ritual duels. Moreover, this sporting contest, as in Classical Greece, was always associated with festivals and religious events.

The ‘hut’ on ROCK 73 is one of the best engravings of its kind in Valcamonica. A long ladder resting on one of the dwelling’s side’s shows that the edifice is raised, as can be seen by five supporting posts; the central one is load-bearing and passes through the different



levels. Two hook shaped pieces, perhaps ox horns or some zoomorph motif like a bird or horse head, mirror each other on the roof ridge. These pieces, extending out of each pitched roof surface, are quite a moot point; are they decorative or are they a perspective of the roof’s supporting beams? A panel on ROCK 35 illustrates a series of constructions – dwellings, granaries, temples – superimposed over a hunting scene; thus a number of these figures – dogs, deer – appear within the structures, even if they were made years before by another person.

Among the subjects of major interest are weaving looms, processions or religious or social character, armed horseman (wearing helmet), hunting scenes, symbols, etc. THE FOUR – WHEELED WAGON on ROCK 24 is not so different from those still in use in Val Camonica today. The elongated rectangular chassis and small wheels make this vehicle well suited to narrow mountain tracks. The absence of flooring infers that loads rested on or were directly fixed to the chassis of the wagon, shown here with a bird’s eye perspective, whereas its wheels and the horses are in profile. In the repertory of draught –animals, not all are



yoked, but where so portrayed, oxen are depicted in the earlier engravings and horses in those of a later epoch.

A PRAYING CONGREGATION on ROCK 32 embodies the engravings from the Neolithic period and Bronze – Age which show the human figure in a schematic rigid praying stance with a linear bust, flexed arms upraised and legs symmetrically reflected. The head is often a simple cup-mark and the sex is equally plain- a small hollow between the legs for the female organ and a short line for the male one. As yet, there are no in-depth chronological studies on these schematic figures. In determining sequences, superimposition analysis reveal that for relevant cases, schematic engravings always appear beneath Iron-Age ones; thus they precede them.



The use of the plough or ard in the prehistoric epoch is ascertained for the end of the Neolithic Period and the Copper age by evidence from archaeological excavations of settlements and ceremonial places (ROCK 57). Numerous engravings on rock surfaces, boulders and stelae allow us to follow the ard's evolution from the first depictions, made during the Copper-Age in the third millennium B.C., through to the last ones, made during Middle Iron-Age in the sixth to fifth centuries B.C. The earliest were simple ards followed by ones of the Bronze-Age which were more robust due to a reinforcing brace that formed a triangle with the beam and plough-share. Iron-Age ploughs show



a varied typology ranging from the straight beam ard to the one with a perforated curved beam and the hook type engraved here on ROCK 57 whose typology and style places it between the end of the sixth and the first half of the fifth century B.C. The draught animals are apparently horses as is the case in other scenes of the same period; on the other hand, oxen were used during the Copper and Bronze-Ages.

The area leads into Foppe Di Nadro, which is known for the reconstruction of the cultural cycle of the Camunians. All of the periods from the Neolithic onwards are represented here.

B. Regional Rock Art Reserve (CETO CIMBERGO PAsPARDO)

The site is situated in the middle of the Valcamonica. It was founded by the Regione – Lombardia in 1983 on the initiative of the administration of Ceto, Cimbergo, Paspardo and the Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici. To declare the area as Regional Reserve was to protect rocks with prehistoric engravings, and other ethnographical and farmal elements, which attest to the evolution of the Alpine environment. The main characteristics of the site are its archaeological (engraved rocks, megaliths, prehistoric shelters), environment, and ethnographical (farmhouse, terraces, medieval cobbled paths) elements. Mostly chestnut and birch trees forest the Reserve. For visiting rock art locations the area could be approached at Nadro (for the Foppe di Nadro), Cimbergo (for the Campanine and Coren di Valento) and at Paspardo (for the Capitello dei Due Pini.....).

B.1. Foppe di Nadro

The site can be reached from Nadro village (Ceto)—where there are also the ticket office and the museum. A high rock cliff forms the natural border of the site with figna area on the east, while the petroglyphs are spread in the north with no interruption till the



Naquane Rock Art National Park. It is worth mention here that Nadro and Naquane are separated only by means of administrative reasons and not by natural elements. The area then goes on westward down to the bottom of the valley.

At Nadro around 80 medium to large sized engraved rocks are seen, which represents all the periods between Neolithic (5000-4000 B.C.) and the Medieval. Some of the compositions of arms and symbols datable to the Bronze Age are of particular interest, to which parallels have been found in objects recovered in context of excavations. The area is marked by a very high concentration of engraved rocks, often of large dimensions and densely carved. The iconography of the whole area, particularly rich in quality and theme variety, has not been completely analysed yet, though over the years several studies have been published concerning single rock or main subjects. Among the significant depictions, mention may be made of some rites and ceremonies, sun worship (with figures in praying position), fighting scenes, huts, symbols like foot prints and five-pointed stars, composition of arms (daggers, axes, halberds), animals birds, and ploughing. Interestingly, all these engraving are made in natural setting. In addition to the extraordinary Iron Age engravings it is worth to mention the frequency of the “praying figures” at the site. Engravings were made both by stone and iron tools.



C. National Archaeological Park Massi Di Cemmo

The area of the two Cemmo boulders ('massi' in Italian) is located near the Centre for Prehistoric and Ethnological Studies in the Capo Di Ponte. As early as 1909 the young Gualtiero Laeng indicated for the first time of the two boulders to one of the association formed in that period to protect the monuments and the environment. However, it was only in 1914 that a short note was published in the Italian Touring Club guidebook of Piedmont, Lombardy and Canton Ticino.



There is a rich depiction of figures of geometrical designs, concentric circles, shovel-shaped figures, daggers, human and animal figures on both the rocks. The shovel-shaped figures are present on many Valcamonica's rocks and are also found in the rock engravings of Sweden, France and the Iberian Peninsula. Morphologically these images are divided in two parts; the rectangular or circular head and the shaft which in turn can be sub-divided into handle and pommel. The interpretive problem, despite numerous hypotheses and years of study, is still unresolved. The first researchers interpreted them as the oars or paddles of the 'camunian lake-dwellers'. Others saw the shovel-



shapes as sleighs or sledges, wagons, weapons, razors, hammers, glasses, bells, oxen, mirrors and spades; they were also considered, on the basis of associations, symbols of fertility and power. The most popular explanation, and perhaps closest to the truth, is the similarity of the shovel-shaped with bronze counterparts, used to gather incinerated remains, that were found in tombs dating from the end of Bronze-Age to the Iron-Age (twelfth to fifth centuries B. C.).

In the year 2000 new excavations were started as a result of the discovery of new worked stones during the re-organisation and valorization of the Plan delle Greppe area, during the creation of the 'Massi di Cemmo national Archaeological park'. An extensive megalithic sanctuary is coming to light, distinguished by numerous decorated stones, erected next to a semi-circular wall running in front of the stones and forming a sort of enclosure, founded in prehistoric times, but rebuilt several times and used up until the historic period, at least from the Copper Age up to the Roman period and beyond.

AN OVERVIEW OF VALCAMONICA ROCK ART

Prehistoric Rock art being the first chapter of human history serves us with a preliminary data for tracing the origins of the human civilizations. In the case of the rock art of Valcamonica the engravings carved into the rock surfaces by the Camunians, assembled by phases and by periods, may catch a glimpse into the birth of European civilization. The pre-requisites for the new method of writing human history are oral tradition and archaeological testimony. But in the case of Camonica valley only archaeological evidence has survived. It narrates the process of technical and conceptual evolution, by means of images which vary from period to period. All these images of daily life, animals and humans constitute a precious testimony of early man at Valcamonica. These images show that how the interests and emphases of Camonica society changed from time to time.

Valcamonica rock art has a variety of different figures. Some are schematic, others realistic, and still others approach



naturalism. In the initial phase of its rock art the human figures are absent and the depiction of the animal figures of large size is usually found. But in the Neolithic period anthropomorphic figures were the theme of major interest. During this period some of the feminine figures were depicted, while in the succeeding periods mainly masculine figures were engraved. In the Chalcolithic or Copper age the authors of the rock art mainly depicted metal tools, in particular weapons. Even during the Roman period, rock engravings accompanied by Latin script show that, despite the change in regime and creed, the Camunians had not entirely lost their habit for carving on the rocks. The same practice continued during the Medieval period. The engravings of this period often imitate the prehistoric petroglyphs. The ideograms and symbols like cross, keys of St. Peter and the knot of Solomon are usually carved next to prehistoric petroglyphs.

Many of the rock art depictions of the valley are scenes from the daily life. Some of the depictions may well be commemorations of epics, myths or even describing dreams or dream like tales. But in others, however, the religious connotation seems obvious because they portray worship scenes or images which are believed to be idols. Religious inspiration for rock art and menhir status has been widely accepted and recognized. But no sufficient attempt has been made to go beyond this notion and explain their profound meaning or why they existed. At present, we only know that some communities in different continents of the world still use rock art (also on different medium) as medium of expression. The images depicted there are a means of communication with the ancestral spirits and the forces of nature. These depictions canonize the rocks and thereby increase the power and sacredness of the place.

In Valcamonica rock art there is a repeated phenomenon of half-human, half-animal imagery on the rocks of Valcamonica. The creature most frequently selected for such iconography is the stag, and it is clear from the frequency of this animal as a motif in the rock-art that deer, particularly alpha-males, possessed a particularly important symbolic role for the Camunians of the Bronze and Iron ages. The exaggerated antlers on many of these creatures indicate that meaning was concentrated within this motif. The transitional, monstrous images of stag-humans take two main forms: one comprises a centaur-like blend of human



and animal; the other – more frequent – motif is the depiction of people with antlers. It is possible to relate the latter imagery to cognate iconography within the contemporary repertoire of image-makers in other parts of Western Europe, particularly in the later Iron Age, and to suggest that such shape-shifting beings might represent something other than the representation of monstrous hybrids but, instead, may have depicted ceremonial, even shamanic, behaviour.

Interestingly, the artists never depicted their animal or human figure in their natural surroundings. There is no sky, no sun, no moon, no water or vegetation, not even the ground. This



could be an expression of some convention. A mere outline or some prominent feature of their anatomy depicts many of the animals. Despite the realism of certain anatomical details, everything suggests that the aim was not to depict the animals with any sense of realism. Perhaps the animal was nothing but a support for some form of symbolism?



Camunian Rock Art

Camunian Periods	Phases	B.C. Dating Absolute (Tentative)	C. 14 Dating Not calibrated	Archaeological Periods	
PROTO-CAMUNIAN	Sub-Naturalistic	8000		Epi-Paleolithic Proto-Neolithic	
	I	-- 5500 .....	..... 4500	Early
		5000 .....	..... 4150	-----
		-- 4500 .....	..... 3750	Middle
		-----		-----	
		Evolved	-- 4000 3200	Neolithic
	II	A	----- 3800		
		B	----- 3600		
		C	3500 2700	Late
		-----	----- 3300		
		Trans. II-III			
			-- 3200		
	III	A Early	3000 2400	Early
		-----	----- 2800		----- Chaleolithic
		Middle	-----		
	-----	----- 2600			
	Late	-----		Late	
	-----	-- 2500 .....	..... 2000	
	B	2000 .....	..... 1500	Early
	-----	----- 1650		-----	
	C	1500 .....	..... 1250	Middle
	-----	----- 1400		-----	
	D	-----		Bronze Age	
	-----	----- 1200		Late	
	Trans. III-IV				
		-- 1000 .....	..... 830	-----
IV	A-B	-----		Final	
	-----	----- 850		-----	
	C	-----		Early	
	-----	----- 700		-----	
	D	-----			
	-----	----- 550			
	E	500 .....	..... 420	Middle Iron Age
	-----	----- 450		-----	
	F	-----			
	-----	----- 400			
	-----	----- 200		Late	
	Final	B.C.			
	-----	-- 0 .....	..... + 60	-----
POST-CAMUNIAN	A	A.D.		ROMAN	
	-----	500		-----	
	B-C			MEDIEVAL	

While analysing rock art of the Valcamonica it seems that in each period artists/authors of rock art portrayed specific themes and had a limited repertory of symbols and images. The images depicted are either static, fixed, idealized figures or those in full movement or action. In some images either contour line in depicted or entire surface pecked or traced in a thin filiform line. A special attention has been paid to the minor details of some images. Some figures have an accurate and precise layouts and outlines, while others have much vaguer definitions. There is also a variation in the work technique.



CHAPTER - IV

OUTCOME OF IGNCA PARTICIPATION IN VALCAMONICA SYMPOSIUM

During my stay in Italy many fruitful academic discussions were held with the scholars of different countries regarding rock art studies and problems associated with it. The views on 'ART AS A SOURCE OF HISTORY' were shared with the scholars from different parts of the globe. It was encouraging to see that many scholars in the symposium presented their papers on different aspects of this subject. My presentations both in the academic session and round table meeting on the subjects "Art Heritage: A Mirror of Nature-Human Relationship" and "Origin of Art", respectively were well received. In both my presentations main focus/ highlight was on the uniqueness of Indian culture which lies in the fact that the people at different periods of history have contributed to its renewal and revival. There is both deep-rootedness in tradition and innovative zeal at work. Art has essentially been an inherent human technology for expressing consciousness in matter. Artists/communities have created objects, rituals and environment not only for a subjective expression, but also as homage to the creator, to ensure harmony with nature, and to promote the well-being of nature itself. (See annexure for detailed paper).

Besides participation in the symposium and working out the areas of common interest collaborations with the different institutions of the world with IGNCA, my next important goal was to enrich our digital collection on rock art. In this connection I did photo-documentation of three rock art sites the National Park of Naquane, Regional Rock Art Reserve (CETO CIMBERGO PASPARDO) and National Archaeological Part Massi Di Cemmo.

I had a detailed discussion with many scholars about the IGNCA's programmes in general and about rock art programme in particular. I was pleased to note that most of the scholars who attended our 2012 conference and also those who were not able to attend it (but were aware about it through our web site and printed materials) were talking highly about it. They duly acknowledge the contribution of IGNCA and its recent initiatives



taken in the field of rock art studies in India. Many scholars showed their interest to be associated with it and are ready to have collaboration with the IGNCA in this field. The acknowledgement of the importance of IGNCA can be measured from the following recommendations of the symposium and the interest shown by the scholars to have joint ventures with IGNCA:

(a) International School of Rock Art: Recommendation was made for the creation of an International School of Rock Art, with theoretical and practical sessions, involving at least three to four different countries. The term “school” should be used in a generic way. It could be called “Educational Project” and may use, continue, unify and coordinate existing local educational projects. Colleagues could probably involve their institutions in countries such as India, China, Italy and Portugal, to conduct seminars or two-week long classes to train people including also participants from other countries.

(b) Indo- China Collaboration: (1) The Cultural Department of the Guangxi Province would be organizing ‘2014 International Peak Forum on Guangxi Huashan’ from **30th July to 4th August, 2014** in Nanning city. They may invite Dr. B. L. Malla from IGNCA as an expert from South Asia. The organizers would take care of the all his expenses for this visit to China.

(2) The Helanshan Rock Art Management Bureau of Ningxia Province and Rock Art Research Association of China (RARAC) have proposed to hold a Rock Art Exhibition in collaboration with the IGNCA from 6th August to 30 September, 2014 in Yinchuan city, the capital of Ningxia province. During the period of the exhibition they have proposed to organize a Cultural Week, including the survey of Helanshan rock art, an academic conference, and an exhibition on China-India rock art from 6th to 12th August, 2014. The organizers would take care of the local hospitality of the Indian scholars (up to 4 or 5 scholars) for the Cultural Week, but Indian side would have to take care of the International travelling expenses. We are in touch with the organizers to work out financial implications to the



IGNCA for the proposed event and other modalities **of the collaboration.**

(3) 2014 IFRAO Congress: RARAC has also invited us for the participation in the International Federation of Rock Art Organisations Congress (IFRAO) to be held in Guiyang city, the capital of Guizhou province, in southwest of China from 22-28 July, 2013. But as per federation norms the expenditure on travel and hospitality of scholar(s) is to be borne by the participating countries.

(c)Indo-Australia Collaboration: Prof. Jane Balme, Professor of archaeology and Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Arts, University of Western Australia, Crawley has shown her keen interest for joint collaboration in the field projects and seminar. She is working on the proposal and its financial implications and also sources of probable funding agencies.

(d)Indo-Protugal Collaboration: Dr. Luiz Oosterbeek, Secretary-General of Union Internationale des Sciences Prehistoriques et Protohistoriques and Pro-presidente do Instituto Politecnico de Tomar, Protugal has shown his great interest in our project. He was very much impressed by the IGNCA's approach for rock art documentation and studies. He has invited IGNCA to participate in the XVI Macao International Rock Art Seminar (MIRAS) to be held in Protugal in April 2014. It would be preceded by a 5 days intensive multidisciplinary programme on landscape management, which can be of help for planning the landscape management in Indian context also.

(e)Indo-French Collaboration: Dr. Patricia Creveaux (Head of Education Dept., Museum of Modern Art, Sint Etienne) and Dr. Margalit Berriet has proposed that the IGNCA may like to bring out the English version of their book (French) *Designs to Symbols*.

(f) Indo-Italy Collaboration: Prof. Ennamuel Anati, President, Centro Camuno Di Studi Preistorici, 25044 Capo Di Ponte, Italy showed his interest and willingness to continue meaningful collaboration with IGNCA in future also. He



suggested having joint field projects, conferences and training of scholars.

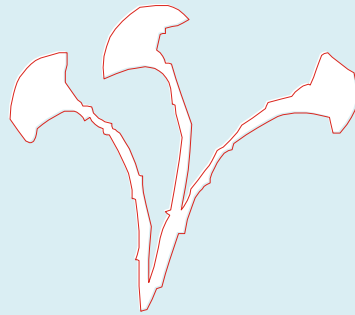
(g) Other scholars who showed interest to collaborate with IGNCA include:

1. Dr. Cristiane de Andrade Buco, Rua Emiliana Miranda 167, Sao Felix OSao Raimundo Nonato, 64770-000 Piaui Brasil, Brazil.
2. Dr. Andre Prous, Arqueologo, Setor de Arqueologia-MHN, Universidade Federal De Minas Gerais Rua Gustavo da Silveira, 1.035 –Santa Ines Belo Horizonte –MG-CEP-31080-010, Brazil
3. Prof. Jalaledin Rafifar, Dept of Anthropology, University of Tehran, Faculty of Social Sciences, Ale-Ahmad Ave., Tehran, Iran, P.O. Box 14395-734.
4. Dr. Jannie Loubser, 10011 carrington Lane, Alpharetta GA 30022, U.S.A.
5. Dr. Fernando Augusto Coimbra, Quaternary and Prehistory Unit, Centre for Geosciences FCT, Calçada de S. Francisco, 4, 2140-065 Chamusca, Portugal.
6. Prof. Umberto Sansoni, Via Sommavilla 12/a, 25050 Niardo (BS), Italy.
7. Prof. Pieter Jolly, Department of Archaeology, University of Cape Town, Private Bag, Rondebosch 7701, Cape Town, South Africa.
8. Prof. Abdullah A. Al-Abduljabbar, Professor of Ancient History, King Saud University, P.O. Box 20129, Riyadh 11455, Kindgom of Saudi Arabia.
9. Dr. George Nash, Rock Art Historian, Brook Cottage, Tilley, Wem, Shropshire SY 4 5HE, U.K.



10. Dr. Lisbeth Bredholt Christensen, Vorderasitisole Archeologie, Platz de Universitat 3, D-79083 Freiburg in Breisgau, Germany.
11. Prof. Angelo Fossati, Università Cattolica del S. Cuore, Istituto di Archeologia – Milano, Cooperativa Archeologica Le Orme dell'Uomo, Piazzale Donatori di Sangue, 1-25040CERVENO(BS), Italy.

We may hear from all these above scholars for the joint ventures with the IGNCA in near future. They can serve as fruitful resource persons for the IGNCA in future programmes/projects.



(I)

Art Heritage: A Mirror of Nature -Human Relationship

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(A) Backdrop

The artistic tradition of India is one of the oldest and richest in the world. Beginning with the prehistoric rock art, and finding expression in a vigorous school of modern art, the tradition spans over thousands of years. It has two parallel streams of expressions from the earliest historical period i.e. classical and the vernacular. Many great schools of hereditary craftsmen flourished under the patronage of the royal courts within the classical or monumental tradition. But the arts and skills of village societies operated through the vernacular form of artisan guilds. Mainly, the ceremonies and festivals are associated with this tradition, which re-evokes the perennial interrelationship of the five primal elements water, earth, air, fire and ether. In each festival, there is a rhythm of creation, consecration, worship and finally either throwing away, or burning, or immersion. Indian art contains masterpieces in major art forms such as pictographs, petroglyphs, architecture, sculpture, terracotta, metal work, textiles and ceramics.

Prehistoric Rock Art?

The prehistoric rock art has been interpreted with different theoretical orientations - generally based on vague and misguided notions of "primitive mentality". Primitive man is denied of having "deeper aesthetic feelings" and "highest moral and intellectual speculations". Following the evolutionary approach - addressing the propositions about human cognitive development and the process of evolving emergence of language - "scientific" claims are made for the "origin of art". But we should not ignore the fact that in the old world the cosmocentric view dominated the



lifestyle. Even the authors of rock art and sages of the *Upanishadic* philosophy reveal the same experience of the cosmos and man's place in it. Both look at the universes sacred artifacts. Interestingly, the text of the classical Indian theory of art is consistent with the context of what is known today as aboriginal art. The fundamental intuition, motifs and styles of rock art persist in their art.

The significance of prehistoric rock art forms, designs, colours and concepts perhaps reinforces and continues to emphasise the vitality of the traditional way. These elements, most probably, basic to all arts, allow the artists to visualise their concepts and traditions. Traditional philosophy expresses the vitality of the emerging contemporary art. Drawing analogy from the theme of tribal art, we can safely state that people in the prehistoric period might have conceptualised the nature into art form and worshipped the presiding deities and spirits for better living. The basic urge, which had compelled and prompted the people to manifest art, was utilitarian purpose, invoking sympathetic magic to ensure a constant food supply. The principal food of the shelter dwellers was game animals hunted so regularly. By portraying animals the shelter - dwellers perhaps believed, it would give them success in hunting, and there would be a plentiful supply of wild animals that made them fall prey to their weapons, when they went on hunting. Thus, the prehistoric rock art acquires status of magico - religious nature. Some scholars suggest that rock shelter paintings of antelopes pierced with spears may also have served as magic invocations of success, because several tribal groups still make images personifying evil and ceremonially decapitate them.

Meaning of word 'Art'?

Many traditional societies have no formal term for art, no separate word for artist. Majority of them can paint and carve. It is an integral part of their lifestyle. The priest may have the privilege for producing paintings and songs in ceremonies. Or members of a clan may hold such a status. The Saora icon is the drawing on the walls and is locally called *ITTALAN* (*ID* = to write; *KITALAN* = a wall). The term varies from one area to the other. The Saoras living around Chandragiri refer to it as *ANITAL* (*KINTAL* = wall, the drawings on the walls are called *ANITAL*).



Similarly, the Pithora painters of western India call painting *LIKHANA* "writing" and painter *LAKHERA* "writer".

Indian aesthetics or the science of art appreciation uses the word 'art' in a wide and all-inclusive sense in classical (textual) tradition. Bharata's *Natyasastra* deals with the performing arts i.e. dance and drama which has a pronounced visual aspect also. The *Shilpasastras* include generally architecture, painting and sculpture. But in the *Puranas* such as *Agni Purana* and *Vishnudharmottara Purana*, the continuity of these art forms with the performing and literary arts is recognised. In ancient tradition the word *kala* (Art) has been used in an even more inclusive sense so as to include minor arts and crafts also. The essential hallmark of art is to make, create or fashion a form or *rupa*, sensible or intelligible. Thus, art would include not only the visual arts but also the performing literary also. In *Natyasastra* dramatic forms are *rupa*. The authenticating form impressed in the coin is also *rupa*. The diverse forms, which the same word acquires in different grammatical formations, are also *rupa*. *Rupa* has a sense of form, which manifests something more than itself. It is a significant form though the significance may be implicit and contextual.

Indian aesthetics has three main streams: (i) literature and poetics (ii) drama and dramaturgy (iii) fine arts and sculpture. But its scope circumscribe almost all the branches and sub-branches of Indian - Arts, Crafts, Sciences, Literature, etc., which entertain our sense organs, satisfy our mind and convey Happiness to our soul. All sorts of literature - Prose, Poetry, Criticism, Drama, Dramaturgy, Dance, Music, both vocal & instrumental, Painting and also allied faculties of arts, convey joy to an aesthete. It can also be anything, which is sweet, bright, beautiful and true in the phenomenal world, even in dream and imagination, because in ecstasy paramount of good and absolute Happiness 'Supreme' reigns.

Indian logic postulates the perception of (i) the mundane (*laukika*), or perceptible by sense organs, and (ii) super sensuous (*yaugika*) or realisable introspectively. It assures super sensuous taste in relishing aesthetic Beauty and bliss. It is not only concerned with the problem of Beauty but also with the question of art and the enjoyment in art. The classification of arts in



Indian tradition 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, and music and poetry originate from hearing and theatre from the two together. Hence, Indian aesthetics is a well-experimented psychoanalytical process of judgment. It is understood today as a science and theory of Beauty and fine arts.

(B) Nature as Culture

The chief difference between the man of the archaic and Traditional societies and the man in modern societies lies in the fact that former feels himself indissolubly connected to the cosmos and cosmic rhythms; whereas the latter insists he is connected only with history.

Mircea Eliade

Most of the world religions have found expression in some way or the other in visual imagery, and view the universe as God's artefact. God is the 'Supreme Artist' for them. The God's work is the natural world, visible to the human eye. The reverence of nature was not confined to Eastern thought only, but the ancient Greeks too deified the forces of nature. The Greeks also worshiped Mitra, the *Vedic* god. The pre-Islamic Persian religious text *Avesta* mentions about the same god and is named - 'Mithr', later changing into 'Mehr'. As per Islamic tradition, the nature is the creation of *Allah* and the Holy *Quran* devotes chapters pledging on oath to nature. Even some of its chapters are named after natural forces like the Sun (*Al-Shams*), the Moon (*Al-Qamar*), the Thunder (*Al—Ra'd*), etc. Interestingly, one of the names of *Allah* almighty is '*Al- Musawwer*' or 'The Artist'. God's epithet as the 'Supreme Artist' found the greatest emotional stimulus among the saint poets of India. One of the Great poets of India, Kabir used conventional similes to describe God as the Weaver, the Potter, the Painter, the Originator of music, etc. In Hinduism, God is the originator of every kind of art. Lord Vishnu and Shiva have thousands of names, which refer to the works of art. Vishnu



is regarded as a 'Divine Architect' and 'Bestower of Forms'. He is the giver of Happiness.

Interestingly, Indian theory of aesthetics is deeply rooted in the triple - principle of *satyam* (Truth), *shivam* (Goodness/auspiciousness) and *sundaram* (Beauty). *Satyam* (Truth) is paired with *rtam* (Cosmic Order) in the famous passage of *Rgveda* (X.90.1), which says that both of these were born of kindled *tapas*. *Tapas* is the basic effort and form of the manifestation of existence, creation and bliss from the basic cause. This relates to primary analysis of creation where Reality is seen in two forms viz. *rtam*, the kinetic aspect of order and *satyam*, the potential aspect of Truth. *Rtam* for Hindus in the blue print for Cosmic harmony (*Dharma*); for the Buddhists the law of righteousness (*Dhamma*); for the Muslims the inflexible yet all the merciful decrees of divine (*Haqq*). And for the Chinese *rtam* is the mystical path (*Tao*). Thus *rtam* is the framework in which the process of creation, sustenance and dissolution operates. Its most important meanings include Cosmic Order, Truth, Nature (*Dharma*), Beauty and Continuous Flow. It regulates the cosmos into a systematic whole.

For the ancient sages none was more important, or full of power, than *Vanaspati*, the Lord of the Forest (*Rgveda* 10, 146). In Indian culture forests (*Vana*) constitute a very important part, and are considered the abode of gods. The manifestations of nature have been interpreted either through symbolic or anthropomorphic or theomorphic forms, or sometimes using metaphors, myths, etc. to define it. The part played by the different primary elements, planets, etc. of the nature in the world order and the necessity to keep this order in total harmony with the nature has been a key concern of all the ancient sages and philosophers. They tried to identify the utility of different elements of the universe and tried to preserve them for the humanity. An attempt was made either to divinify or explain the scientific import of such elements. As different plants are believed to control the destiny of a man, were associated with different planets.

All the traditional Indian and world societies, also believe in the concept of *axis mundi*. For example, the tree represents, metamorphically, a power in the eyes of



primordial man. It evokes verticality. It achieves communication, between the three levels of the cosmos: subterranean space, earth and sky. It provides one with an access to the invisible. In many cultures the universe is portrayed as multilayered, the layers kept distinct and in place by a world tree running through the exact centre (*axis mundi*) of the cosmos. The *axis mundi* symbolises the communication between cosmic regions; and the extension of an organised and habitable world existed around it. The meaning and the function of the *axis mundi* rests not in abstract and geometrical concepts alone but in every day gesture that can affect the transcendence. The symbolism of the centre of the world may also be expressed through a sacred mountain, a sacred place, a ladder, a vine, a rope, a pillar and a bridge - all of which serve as an *axis mundi* connecting heaven and earth on various cosmic realms of being. There is a tendency to replicate the image of the *axis mundi* in multiple forms. Such is the case with the cross - the cosmic tree of Christianity.

(C) Cosmology and Cultures

Man as a part of nature imitates god's primordial works of art. What he does, as an artist, is "cosmography", a *kairological* art on which all the arts are hung. Ontologically speaking, there are five *Kairological* moments in human consciousness, namely revelation, expression, reflection, identification, and tradition. They are mutually interdependent and interrelated and yet each is self-organising and self sustaining.

All the cultures are formed on a cosmic understanding. The *Agamic* and the Kashmir Shaiva traditions speak of the five-headed Shiva, each representing one of the five elements. In South India, all the five elements are represented in the *linga* form, in the following sacred places: Kanchipuram—*Prithvilingam* (Earth); Jambukeshwaram—*Apulingam* (Water); Arunachalam—*Tejolingam* (Fire); Kalahasti—*Vayulingam* (Air); Chidambaram—*Akashalingam* (Sky). The traditional cosmology has three crucial dimensions: the sacred universe, the divine order and the terrestrial existence. Modern cosmology is a special discipline and an empirical one aimed at understanding all that exists. Since the creationists and evolutionists today are in the midst of an



ideological struggle, and evolution is merely a model and not testable experimentations, one might have faith that is true. If an alternative model for nature correlates faith better than the evolution model, then it would be the one to believe. Both, the evolution and creation are really competing scientific models. There is also a third point of view whose primary impetus is 'ontological'. Every culture has a world-view that contains some 'ontology', some conception of man—what it regards the fundamental level. All primordial cultures refer to a cosmological state of existence which is neither god-centric neither anthropocentric. While drawing inspiration from these cultures, the sages had grasped the stupendous idea of 'Expanding Universe' where God, Animal and Man originate, disappear and reoriginate endlessly. There is a natural symbiosis between all the three. God comes down to the world of animal and man, and both animal and man return to the world of Gods. The ancient sages had realised the man and nature relationship. They did not merely chant the majesty of the cosmos and the glory of God, but they also lived in positive symbiosis with the animal world. Animals have influenced the Hindu thought process to a great degree and they form the core of human consciousness—sensual, intellectual and mystical, all in one.

The Vedic hymns of the Golden Germ (*Hiranyagarbha*) and the Cosmic Person (*Purusha*) define the living body of the universe in geometrical terms. The *Upanishadic* sages introduced the conception of Brahman, which transcends geometry of surfaces. They conceived a world of matter, arising out of space and disappearing back into space. They infused the image of *Purusha* into the conception of Brahman, and traced the course of evolution from the primal *Atman*, through the elements. It speaks of the interrelationship between the soul and the elements. The individual soul (*atman*) is identified with the infinite Great Soul (*paramatma*), and the apparent paradox has been resolved by introducing the term Brahman, the expanding one. According to the *Chandogya Upanishada* (III, 12, 79):

What is called Brahman—that is the same as what the space outside of a person is. What the space outside of a person is—that is the same as what the space within a person is. What the space within a person is—that is the same as what the space here within the heart is. That is Full and unchanging.



The mysterious presence of bodiless space has been explained by the *Brihadaranyaka Upanisad* (III, 7.12) as follows:

He who dwells in the space, yet is other than the space, whom the space does not know, whose body is the space, who controls the space within—he is the Atman within you, the inner controller, the immortal.

The different Indian philosophies always believe that there are many ways of perceiving truth and in determining the relationship between God, nature and human being. While we may pursue different faiths and regulate our affairs in various ways, the motive remains the same of human happiness and bond of goodwill. The *Svetasvatara Upanishad* (IV, I) records it as follows:

He who is one, and who dispenses the inherent needs of all peoples and is in the beginning and end of all things, may He unite us with the bond of goodwill.

This philosophy goes beyond moral realm and is a cornerstone of plural and secular society. Hindu view of the cosmos emphasises that the world is a family (*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakum*). Being an integral part of the great Indian philosophy(ies), the Kashmir Shaiva thought-currents too propagate the message of universal harmony, and also believes in the harmony between man and nature. It has its roots in the sacred science of the nature (cosmology). It looks the nature as culture, in both its manifested and unmanifested forms. In Shaiva tradition, the cosmos comprises of eight components, namely, the five-elements (Space, Air, Water, Fire and Earth) and also the sun and the moon, which are the measures of time. The eighth is the Brahman, that is, man in his consciousness. Interestingly, the Great God Shiva has eight forms (*Ashtamurti*) both in his cosmic manifestations and on the individual level. Shiva *Ashtamurti* dwells everywhere and over and above it dwells in the human body (in his consciousness also). In addition to *Nataraja* form the other forms depicted in iconography are: Tripurantaka, *Ardhanarishvara*, *Kalasimurti*, *Gajasursamharamurti*, *Bhikshatana*, *Virabhadra*, *Bhairava* and *Vinadhara*. Images of *Nataraja* represent the most exalted aspect of Shiva - a metaphor for the cosmic cycle of creation and



destruction and the individual cycle of birth and re-birth. His *tandava* form of dance marks the metaphysical level of dissolution of the world.

(D) *Metaphysics in Indian Thought & Art*

We know now that non-equilibrium, the flow of matter and energy, may be source of order. We have a feeling of great intellectual's excitement: we begin to have a glimpse of the road that leads from being to becoming.

Ilya prigogine and Isabelle Stengers

In Indian thought and art, both vernacular and classical traditions, one finds variously images of an apparently metaphysical world. Indian art is struck by an extraordinary feat of traditional thought - currents which are both simple and complex. At one level, simple words are used so that everybody can understand the nature of art and art of nature. But at higher level it becomes 'cosmology' instead of simple explanation.

(a) Vernacular Tradition

In all ancient cultures belief and ritual occupy an important place. Often they are unable to discern the proximate or remote cause of natural calamities by reasoning and therefore, attributed to the wrath of the malevolent spirits who are supposed to be annoyed or angered for one reason or another. An attempt is then made to appease the malevolent spirits or god. It is not only for the negative purpose of warding off diseases and disaster but also to invoke their blessings for peace, prosperity, abundant crops, health, cattle and numerous happy children. Different cultures have different patterns for this. For instance, in the Saora (tribe) invocation, the chanting words are less important as compared to the Santal (tribe) invocation. It is the production of icons, which are in focus. For the Saoras the icon becomes the 'symbol of will and realisation of dream or goal, both negatively and positively'.



The worship of gods and spirits takes many forms and a vast complex of ritual - religious ceremonies may be associated with it. It is worth mention here that the tradition of invocation (*avahani*) and bidding farewell (*visarjan*) to the paintings are intrinsic to the ritual art. The worship is usually combination of:

- ❖ Ritual chanting, invocations or incantations;
- ❖ Certain purificatory rites involving the person or persons offering the worship and the physical space where it is being sanctified;
- ❖ Physical objects such as food or drinks, flowers, incense, etc.;
- ❖ Accompanying plastic or performing arts such as specially designed paintings, icons, or murals and songs and dance numbers.

All these forms have a ritualistic significance. The performer could either be a priest or the head of the household.

Most tribal communities (including the Saoras and Santals) believe that health and continuity of life are natural; whereas disease, sickness and death are unnatural. Further, that these natural phenomena are the handwork of malevolent spirits who need to be won over by offerings and worships. The icons thus follow the first act of ritual divination. Before drawing the icon the priest (*kudan*) worships the village gods and other important deities including the ancestors installed within the village boundary. The major icon is drawn on the wall close to the entrance of the house or on the wall facing front door of the house. For drawing these icons there is a prescribed season, but no specific dates. The icons are generally drawn in September/October (*Ashvina*).

The making of *Osakothi* (*osa* = penance *kothi* = sacred space) ritual paintings in Orissa is a continuous living tradition. The *Osakothi* ritual complex is one of India's finest living traditions centering on annually - produced folk - murals of goddesses and gods. Its close parallel is seen in the ritual relating to the Rathwa mural paintings in Gujarat. There is transformation and re-enlivenment of the visual image in both the cases. The pictorial act is associated with possession by divine spirits, singing, dancing and invocation. The Pithora painters of western India execute the creation story, said to be



originally "written" by the God Pithora. The priest identifies the painted figures. He goes into trance and, taking up the sword moves from one end of the painting to the other. He accounts for each form, and identify them one by one. Animal sacrifice follows the painting ceremony. Once the ritual is completed, it is believed, god Pithora stays on the walls of the house where he has been installed, and its inhabitants live with him forever.

The drawings on the mud walls of the Saora, Warli and the Rathwa houses are a part of the worldwide phenomenon in traditional cultures finding its expression in mural paintings of mud walls.

Power of Traditional Art

The power of India's traditional art could be observed by the remarks of some western scholars also. One of such scholars, Mr. E. V. Havell had even advised the modern Indian artists that 'they must use traditional themes, express traditional sentiments, and employ traditional styles. They must in other words, understand Indian art and more especially its spiritual and ethical purpose'. Abindranath Tagore, alongwith his pupils, was able to take a dispassionate view of art. They drew inspiration from village scenes, besides from classical themes, characters from history and mythology. Another noted artist Jamini Roy, inspired by folk and tribal art, started a new movement, inspired by the village artists. He created in his own style a 'Santal Girl', 'Drummers', 'Mother and Child', etc. Roy rediscovered the village style of Indian paintings and gave it the status of fine art. It is worth mention here that one of the greatest artists of the world, Pablo Picasso, has his roots in tribal tradition also.

(b) Classical Tradition

Manifested World

The word "Parameshvara", in the textual tradition (Like *Sharada-tilaka*), is the indicator of the Supreme Divine, the originator of



the 'manifested world'. In Him, the infinite power – Shakti (Energy) or Kala (Time) lies in eternal union. The emergence of Shakti in the beginning of 'Creation' is like the appearance of oil out of oil-seeds. It is a spontaneous act, initiated by the divine will [*Shiva Purana (Vayaviya samhita)*]. It is through the divine will that the supreme power which is synonymous with it and remains concealed in the divine essence reveals itself. The textual tradition of *Agamas* (especially the *Vatulasuddhagama*) records Shiva as formless (*nishkala*), the all-pervading and the incomprehensible entity who on self will releases a microfraction of His Self which activates into five successive Shaktis (i.e. parashakti, adishakti, icchashakti, jnanashakti and kriyashakti). From these Shaktis emerges five Sadashiva – *tattvas* (Elements). These are known as Sadyojata (represents *prithvi*, i.e. Earth), Vamadeva (represent *jala*, i.e. Water), Aghora (represents *agni*, i.e. Fire), Tatpuruasha (represents *vayu*, i.e. Air), and Ishana (represents *akasha*, i.e. Sky). Since Isana is supposed to possess in itself all the Sadashiva - *tattvas* preceding him, he is represented in iconography as a five - headed deity each of which represents different Sadashiva - *tattvas*. These faces are individually called as *Nandivaktra* (western face), *Umavaktra* (northern face), *Bhairava* (southern face), *Mahadeva* (eastern face) and *Sadashiva* (face upwards). Infact, the five faces of Sadashiva represent five elements, which gets further divided into five parts each. Hence, in his Maha-Sadashiva aspect he is depicted as twenty-five headed. It is from the microfractional part of Sadashiva that Mahesha (Shiva) is formalised who initiates the process of creation (*srsthi*), preservation (*sthiti*) and reabsorption (*laya*). He should be depicted having ten arms and four heads, each with three eyes. The fifth head is invisible and is not shown in iconography.

Shaiva thought-currents are not just limited to the understanding of cosmic evolution but for understanding the inner human essence which links it to the cosmic force through *yoga* and spiritual *sadhana* also.



Manifestation in Art

The mason coordinates materials that were scattered and makes of them the habitation of God: from an indeterminate Chaos, which it was, his soul becomes the temple of the divine presence, the temple of which the universe is the model.

(Frithjof Schuon)

Corresponding to this, a man developed temples, which are symbols of the world-mountain, or, analogically, of the universal man (*Purusha*) whose body comprehends the universe. It is believed that from the limbs of the cosmic man everything originated. The names of the various limbs of the human body from the feet to the crown of the head are applied in Indian architectural texts to the different parts of the temple structure. But the *Vastu Purusha* (architecture as symbol for Cosmic Man) is lifeless unless the soul resides in it. His real soul being the central image installed on its sanctum being the *garbha griha* (sanctum sanctorum) or the house of the womb, built in the universe-form of womb. This experience is traditionally justified by the analogy between the dark cave of the heart and the dark space of the shrine where the image appears. Above it raises the high tower, a microcosm of Mount Meru with its vertical thrust leading eye and heart to union with the divine. In the classical Hindu architecture, two kinds of movements are invariably present. One is from the exterior to the inner centre of *garbha griha* (Sanctum Sanctorum). The second is the upward movement of aspiration, assent, and exultation. This is usually suggested by the 'shikhara' (finale). In spatial order, the architecture is fundamental to us as nature and language. The ornamental forms and sculptures on the temple surfaces and columns on the walls represent the cosmos as a mythical design. The Cosmos, the Cosmic person and the *vastu purusha*, are all projections and emanations of the *purusha* in the heart, the light and the heart. The *vastu* (architecture) is something with which the spectator identifies himself. It represents his abode and location. The mind is the abode of the spirit, the body of the mind, the house of the body. Where the spirit is universal, the house is the cosmos. The temple is a representation of the essential form linking the



individual to the cosmic person. Indian cosmology holds that the universe is infinite and expanding beyond the arena of geometrical space where the drama of Nature is acted out.⁵

The elements of nature have a building ability; and each have a form, a location and an inter-dependent relationship. A form is predetermined; it is filled by perishable matter. Life is formless, self-existent and, essentially, indestructible. As form and life come together, the process of origination begins. Life activates matter that constitutes form, but in itself is not a material substance. The elements constitute human and other forms, both individually and collectively. The head and ears are associated with Sky; neck and chest with Air; stomach with Fire; and body with Earth.

In the traditional Hindu cosmology, the gods are related to the earth by dwelling in the upper reaches of Mount Meru (*Sumeru*), the central peak and axis of the world. They live in one cosmos with mankind and descend to the foothills when needed. In some parts of India the temple courts and precincts were vastly expanded to constitute temple cities, replicas of the heavenly that included all the activities of religion and daily life. All the temples were laid in accordance with the well-defined plan. All the geometrical forms introduced in the temple or house architecture —the most primary and most recommended form is a square. In the *Shilpashastra*, the whole cosmos is conceived within the square and the space of circle. In the *Agamic* characterisation of elements the Earth is represented by square, Water by crescent, Fire by triangle, Air by hexagon and Sky by circle. In the *Vedic* tradition, the concern for giving equal importance to Sky and Earth suggests that square and the circle are the basic geometrical forms. The geometrical forms like rectangular, octagon and circle have their emanation from the square. Building, a temple was a ritual in itself. The temple and the temple worship were thus intended to help take beyond the world of illusion, ‘to the still point of the turning the wheel’.

Some religions like Hinduism, Christianity and Buddhism have an abundance of symbolism, where as Islam has little. For the Mahayana Buddhism the elusive 'void' or 'emptiness' serves a master symbol. For Islam it is the God-given gift of the Holy *Quran*. In the sense of overt representations of something, images



are more definite than symbols. The images share the basic character of symbols and often have subordinate symbols associated with them. In the case of a Hindu image with many hands each holding an attribute with symbolic meaning. These are given a human interpretation through another symbol system, that of language.

Hindu gods are involved in the living world of man, though they stand for cosmic laws at a higher level of that world. The deities who are the basic energies of the universe can be approached through the perception of created forms. This necessity has led to the representation of the deity in a thousand variety of thought - forms, magic designs, and *mantras* (Hymns), symbols and images. Human ability to construct the images represents the things, which may be regarded as an aspect of his ability to symbolise both at higher (master symbols) and lower (natural symbols) levels. In Kashmir Shaiva analysis of *mantric* compositions, the phonetic elements or letters of the Sanskrit alphabet are condensed forms of creative energy. In Shaiva rituals, the symbolic postures (*mudras*), sacred diagrams (*mandala*), or mental assignment of various parts of the body to different deities (*nyasa*), and initiation (*diksha*) are very important features. The mystic diagram (*mandala*) is of great importance in the Shaiva-*tantric* system of ritualistic worship. It is a mystic circular design representing cosmos, and also a visual aid for concentration and introvertive meditation. It is said that “the square is the fundamental form of Indian architecture but it must not be forgotten that the square presupposes the circle and results from it. Life, growth and movement are visualised in a circle, while the square is perceived as a mark of order, finality, and of perfection beyond life and death.” The *mandala* universally symbolises the evolution and involution of the cosmos contained within the orbit of cyclic time. As an image of evolution the concentric circles around the still centre (timelessness) embody the diverse world of manifestation, transformation and mutation in time. Besides, *Nyasa* is a means of ‘seating of power’ in one’s own body by touching limbs with the hand accompanied by appropriate *mantras*. “As a temple is consecrated before it becomes a sacred place of worship, so before God is invoked, this body (the true temple of God) should be dedicated to him”.



In the empirical world visual imagery symbolises - what is ultimate, and lead human beings into a relationship with what is beyond. These forms and symbols are the inevitable intermediaries in a process in which the mental mechanism is discarded and supernatural states of being are realised. Hence, we approach unmanifested through manifested. According to the Holy text (of Hindus) *Bhagavata Gita*, "Those who feel attracted to the contemplation of the unmanifest are faced with a problem, because a being imprisoned in a body cannot grasp the ways of the unmanifest." Thus the spiritual guide, "the *guru* (Enlightened One) understanding the nature and qualifications of the seeker tells him the particular form of divinity he should worship." All human beings infact, have not all the same capacities, nor are they all at the same stage of development. They worship the god suitable for them at their particular level. Hinduism accepts polytheism as a reality of human experience.

Each god of the pantheon has an affinity with some particular form, colour, body or energy in the visible universe. The deities represent three levels of abstraction - the level of the spiritual body; the subtle body (where emotions and the senses holds sway); and the gross or physical body in the phenomenal world. These include the thought - forms, symbolic sounds of the *mantras*, and the diagrammatic *yantras*. They are held to be more accurate than an image being abstract. If the *mantra* can be described as the sonic form of the deity, then *yantra* or *chakra* is the very deity in visual form. Both *mantra* and *yantra* are central to the worship of *Shakti* or the Mother Goddess—a cult that is predominantly popular among Kashmiri Hindus. A mystical construction of the *tantric yantras* of the cosmos, the *Shri Yantra* is formed by the interpretation of two set of triangles: four, apex upward, representing the male principle, and five apexes downwards, representing the female principle. The *yantra* is devised to give a vision of the totality of existence, so that the adept may internalise its symbols for the ultimate realisation of his unity with the cosmos.

Conclusion

The nature represents the life and sacred continuity of the spiritual, cosmic and physical worlds. The physical properties of



nature are combined with supernatural or sacred ideas, the beliefs that surround the basic elements, flora and fauna (etc.) connection with what constitutes religion in different cultures. These are not deemed only sacred in the major religions of East and West, but also in other traditions where beliefs in the sacred are combined with the beliefs in the power of ancestors, in the creation of life in birth, after death and the afterworld and about health and illness. The different components of the nature may symbolise a deity either by serving as a vehicle embodiment of the sacred presence or by making a sacred spot that a deity frequents.

The uniqueness of Indian culture lies in the fact that the people at different periods of history have contributed to its renewal and revival. There is both deep-rootedness in tradition and innovative zeal at work. Art has essentially been an inherent human technology for expressing consciousness in matter. Artists have created objects, rituals and environment not only for a subjective expression, but also as homage to the creator, to ensure harmony with nature, and to promote the well-being of nature itself.

In Indian thought and art, both vernacular and classical traditions, one finds various images of an apparent metaphysical world. The images share the basic character of symbols and often have subordinate symbols associated with them. In the empirical world it symbolises - what is ultimate, and lead human beings into a relationship with what is beyond. These forms and symbols are the inevitable intermediaries in a process in which the mental mechanism is discarded and supernatural states of being are realised.

It is perhaps due to close relationship between man and nature that the authors of the rock art probably conceptualised nature into art form and worshipped the presiding deities and spirits for better living. Rock art acquired the status of magico – religious nature. Community dance and the hunting indicate perhaps some sort of magico – religious significance.

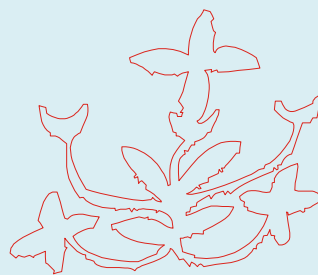


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Illustrated Power Point Presentation of Session Paper

XXV Valcamonica Symposium 2013

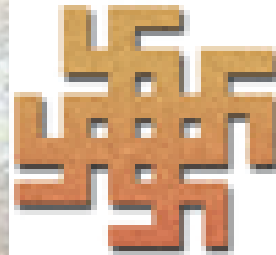
Capo di Ponte, Valcamonica

September 20th to 26th, 2013

Art Heritage:

A Mirror of Nature -Human Relationship

Dr. B.L. Malla



Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts

New Delhi-110001

India

Organised by

Centro Camuno Studi Preistorici

Città della Cultura, Via Marconi, 7

Backdrop

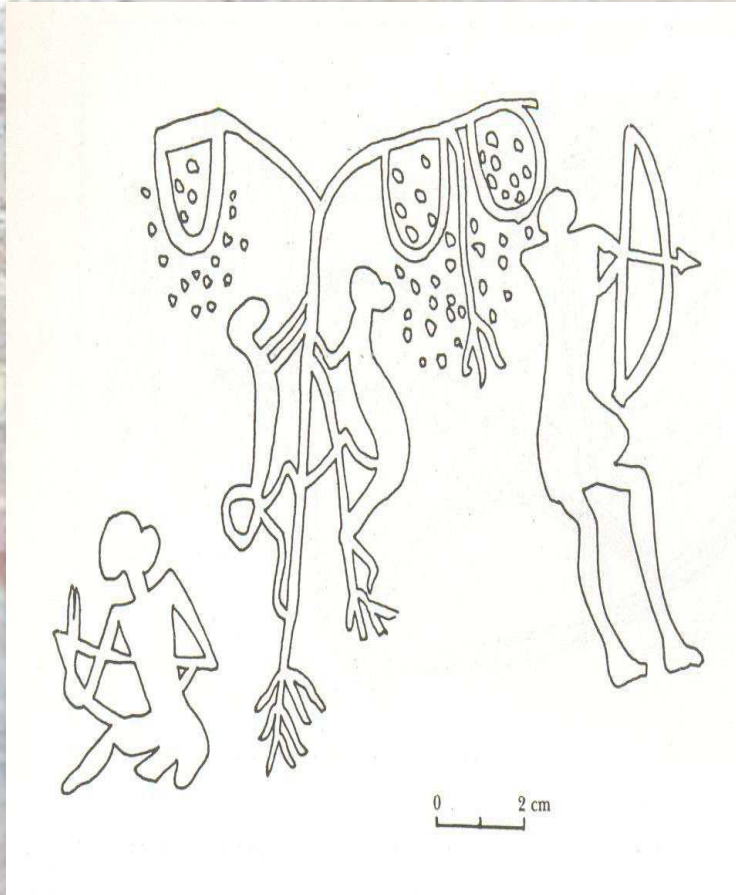
- ❖ Artistic tradition of India is one of the oldest and richest in the world.
- ❖ Beginning with the prehistoric rock paintings, and finding expression in a vigorous school of modern art, the tradition spans in thousands of years.
- ❖ Many great schools of hereditary craftsmen flourished under the patronage of the royal courts within the classical or monumental tradition. But the arts and skills of village societies operated through the vernacular form of artisan guilds.

Meaning of Art ?

- ❖ Many traditional societies have no formal term for art, no separate word for artist. Majority of them can paint and carve. It is an integral part of their lifestyle. The priest may have the privilege for producing paintings and songs in ceremonies.
- ❖ Indian aesthetics or the science of art appreciation uses the word 'art' in a wide and all-inclusive sense in classical (textual) tradition. Bharata's *Natyashastra* deals with the performing arts and of these dance and drama have a pronounced visual aspect also. The *Shilpashastras* include generally architecture, painting and sculpture.

Art Heritage : A Mirror of Nature - Human Relationship

- ❖ Suggests, close relationship between man and nature.



Honey Gathering, Panchmarhi, M.P.



**Man Nature Relationship
Bharut Stupa, M.P.**

❖ Rock art authors probably conceptualised nature into art form and worshipped the presiding deities and spirits for better living.

❖ Rock art acquired the status of magico - religious nature. Community dance and the hunting indicate perhaps some sort of magico - religious significance.



Kathotia, Madhya Pradesh

- ❖ Deer hunt is frequently depicted in Indian rock art.
- ❖ Several of the rock art forms like mating couple, dancing scenes, medicine men, ritual performers, riding horses and elephants, hand prints, mostly of the mesolithic and chalcolithic phases are also found in the tribal art. So is the case with wild fauna.



Kathotia, Madhya Pradesh

- ❖ Paintings of antelopes pierced with spears may also have served as magic invocations of success, because several tribal groups still make images personifying evil and ceremonically decapitate them. The priests and artists who could perform the rituals and create the paintings would have earned prestige and other rewards from the group.



Jaora, Raisen, Madhya Pradesh

In this connection, a reference may also be made of a contemporary semi-hunting tribe of Karnataka where the tradition still persists among the local tribals such as Boyas. They are supposed to go on a ceremonial hunt at least twice a year and after the hunt they have a community dance before partaking the community meal by feasting on hunted animal, and paint either side of the main entrance of their huts with stylised human figures in red ochre colour having some magical significance.



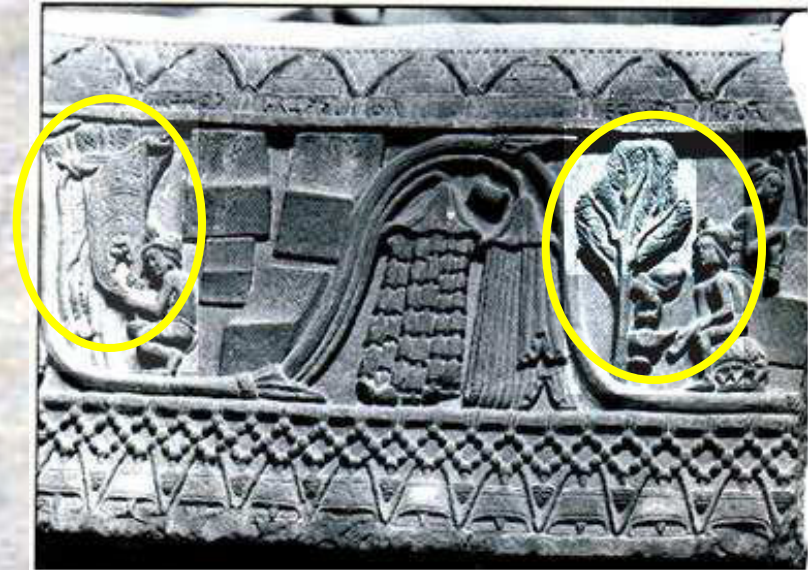
Jaora, Raisen, Madhya Pradesh



Bema , Leh, Jammu and Kashmir

❖ To conserve the nature and to be in harmony with it, and also, looking into its utilitarian aspects, many things in nature were declared sacred and connected with divinity.

❖ Traditions of animal, tree and other forms of worship and their depiction in arts were result of above factors.



Concept of wishfulfilling
Trees and Creepers
(Bharut Stupa, M.P.)



Bodhi tree, (Bharut Stupa, M.P.)

Tree and Cross Worship

- ❖ Trees and plants are adorned and are believed to be abodes of certain deities.
- ❖ Symbols (like cross) most probably were worshipped for their own value or represented deities



Ushakothi, Raigarh, Chhattisgarh



Marodeo Shelter, Pachmarhi hills, Madhya Pradesh. 56

Domestication of Animals



Jhiri shelters, Raisen,
Madhya Pradesh

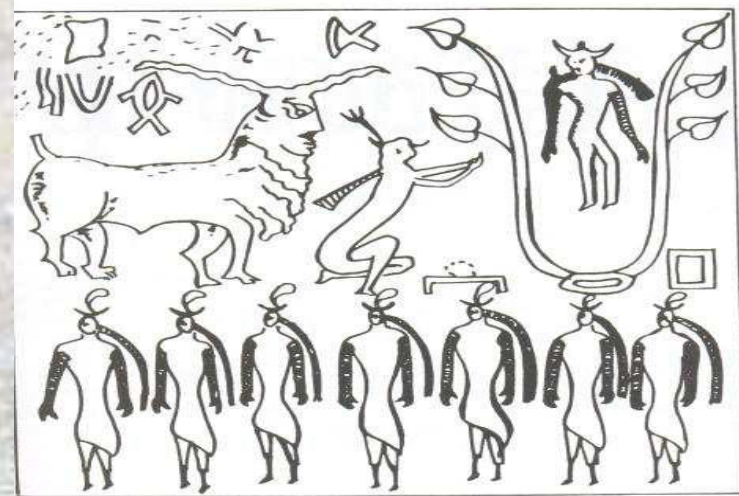


Golpur, Bundi, Rajasthan

Cow and bull was one of the earliest domesticated and adorned animals.



Human adorned nature in proto historic period also.



Tree sprit in association with worshippers and animals; Seal; Harappa, National Museum, New Delhi

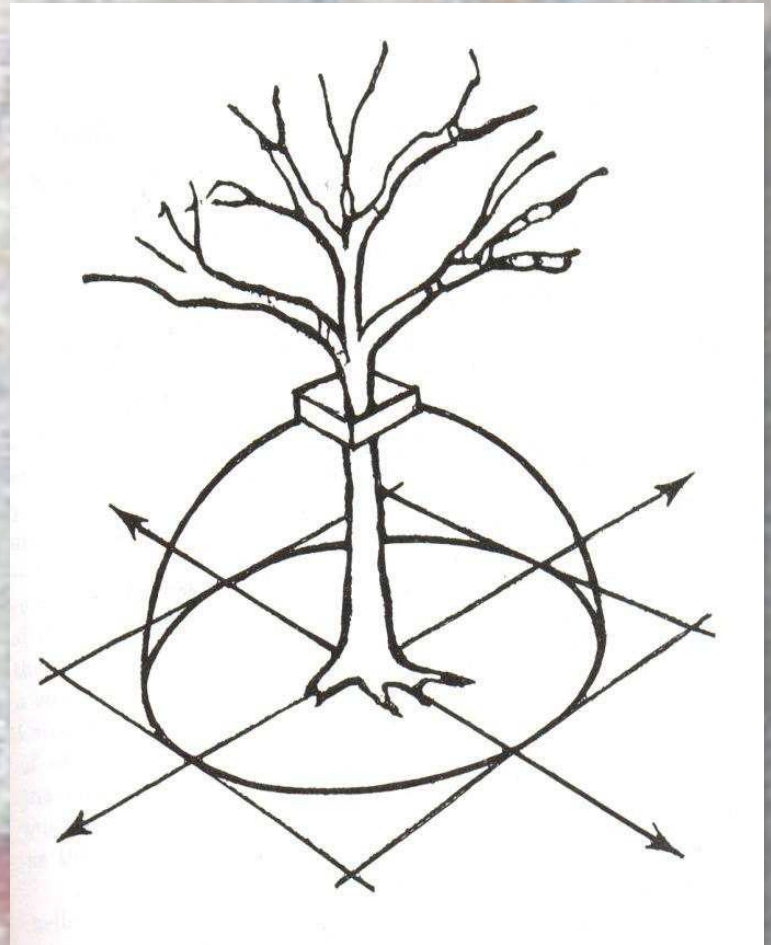


Goddess giving birth to the vegetation, Harappa, National Museum, New Delhi

God -The Supreme Artist

- ❖ Most of the world religions have found expression in some way or the other in visual imagery, and view the universe as God's arte fact. God is the 'Supreme Artist' for them. The God's work is the natural world, visible to the human eye. The Upanisadic sages described it as the Cosmic tree.
- ❖ As per Islamic tradition the nature is the creation of *Allah* and the Holy *Quran* devotes chapters pledging on oath to nature.
- ❖ The reverence of nature was not confined to Eastern thought only, but the ancient Greeks too deified the forces of nature. The Greeks also worshiped *Mitra*, the Vedic god.

- All the traditional Indian and world societies, also believe in the concept of *axis mundi*. For example, the tree represents, metamorphically, a power in the eyes of primordial man. It evokes verticality.
- It achieves communication, between the three levels of the cosmos: subterranean space, earth and sky. It provides one with an access to the invisible. In many cultures the universe is portrayed as multilayered, the layers kept distinct and in place by a world tree running through the exact centre (*axis mundi*) of the cosmos.



**Tree As Centre of Universe
(Axis Mundi)**

- The *axis mundi* symbolises the communication between cosmic regions; and the extension of an organised and habitable world existed around it. The meaning and the function of the *axis mundi* rests not in abstract and geometrical concepts alone but in every day gesture that can affect the transcendence.
- There is a tendency to replicate the image of the *axis mundi* in multiple forms. Such is the case with the cross -the cosmic tree of Christianity.



Indian Aesthetics

- ❖ Two streams of expressions in Indian historical art - (1) Classical or monumental tradition; (2) Vernacular or arts and skills of village societies.
- ❖ Indian Theory of aesthetics is deeply rooted in the triple principle of *satyam* (Truth), *shivam* (Goodness/Auspiciousness) and *sundram* (Beauty). *Satyam* (Truth) is paired with *rtam* (Cosmic Order).
- ❖ *Rtam* (Cosmic Order) is the framework in which the process of creation, sustenance and dissolution operates. It regulates cosmos into a systematic whole.

Vernacular Traditions

Village Paintings

- ❖ In all ancient cultures belief and ritual occupy an important place.
- ❖ Different cultures have different patterns for this. But generally they are a combination of:
 1. ritual chanting, invocations or incantations
 2. certain purificatory rites involving the person or persons offering the worship and the physical space where it is being sanctified
 3. physical objects such as food or drinks, flowers, incense, etc.
 4. accompanying plastic or performing arts such as specially designed paintings, icons, or murals and songs and dance numbers. For drawing the icons there is a prescribed season but no specific dates.

Invocation and bidding farewell to ritual art

Tradition of invocation (avahani) and bidding farewell (visarjan) are intrinsic to the ritual art.



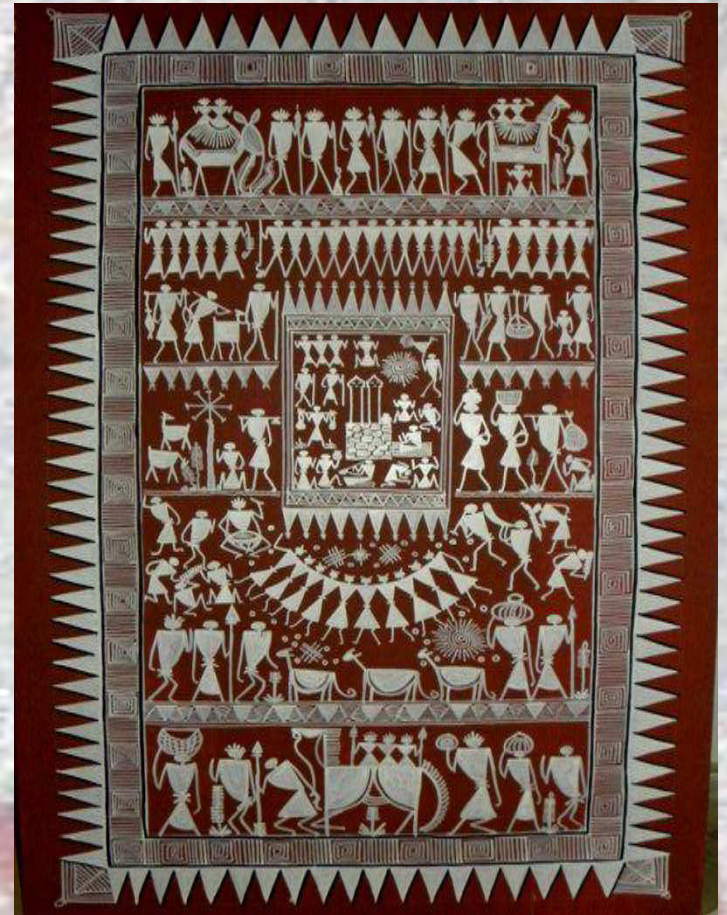
Durga Puja, West Bengal



Ganpati Puja, Maharashtra

➤ Osakothi ritual paintings in Odisha is one of the Indias finest living traditions centering around annually - produced folk - murals of goddesses and gods.

➤ The Sauras believe that whatever is given at the Guar goes straight down to the otherworld. The belongings of the dead are offered at Gaur. Again the ritual culminates with the sacrifice of one or more buffaloes. To honour the head, a special type of dance is performed and a brand often mingles with the dancers blowing trumpets and beating drums.



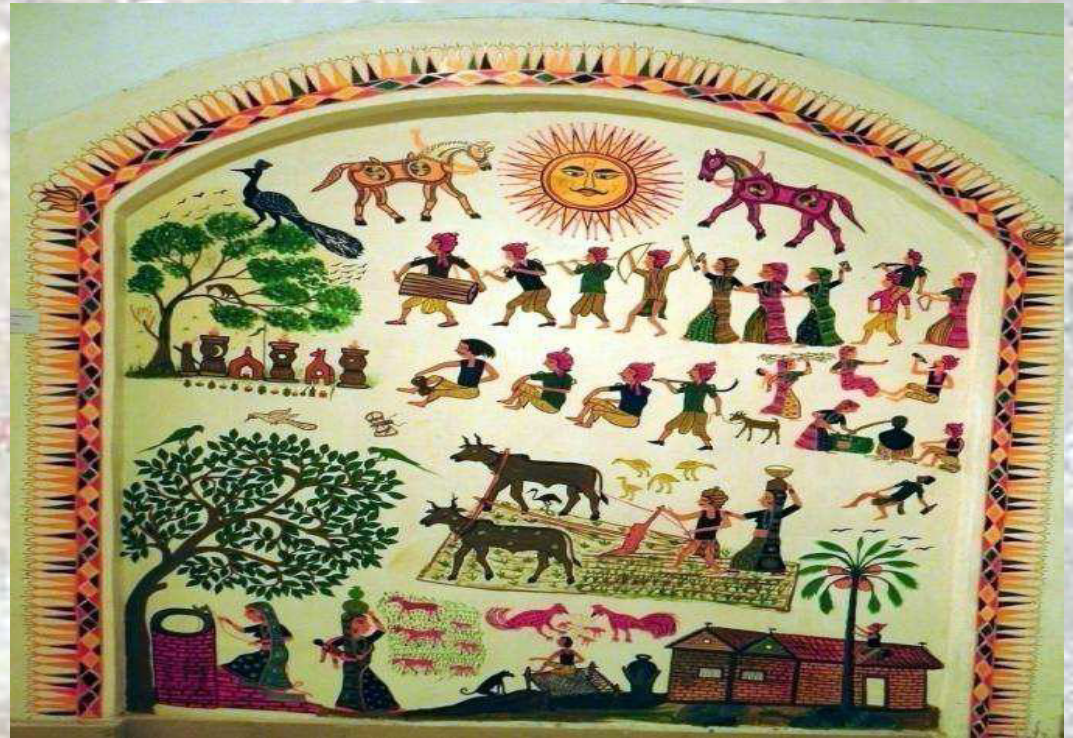
Guar ceremony , Saura, Odisha

Gaur means “planting the stones”. It is the means by which the dead is admitted to the company of the Underworld.

Pithora Painting

➤ Its close parallel is seen in the ritual relating to Rathwa mural paintings in Gujarat. (i.e. Pithora paintings - the painted myth of creation).

➤ Pithora ritual is performed on the fulfillment of a wish or alternately for wish fulfillment, plentiful harvests, material prosperity and propagation of lineage.



Pithora, Rathwa ,Gujarat

The main groups of tribes who practice this art of Pithora paintings are the Rathwas. These people are extremely simple and highly religious. Only males from the tribe are allowed to learn the art. Women are not allowed to practice this art form. Pithora paintings are more of a ritual than an art form. These rituals are performed either to thank God or for a wish or a boon to be granted.

❖ Sacred enclosure of pithora paintings symbolises the ritual reduction of the entire worldview of the earth as such.

❖ There is no formal division of earthly or mythological spaces.



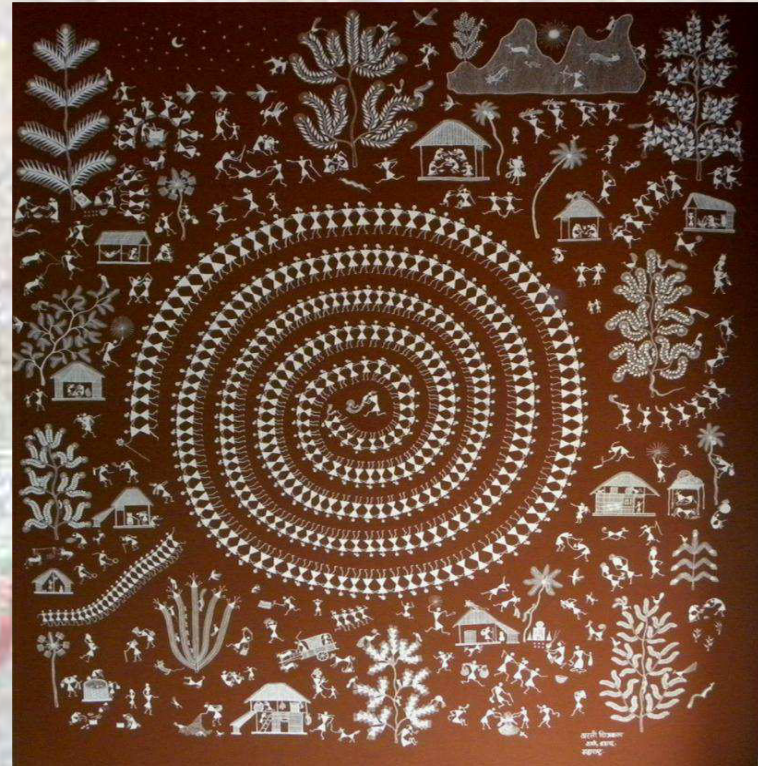
Baba Pithora, Rathwa ,Gujarat

This painting is mainly done to invoke Baba Pithora, who is revered as most important God. The ritualistic painting is believed to bring peace, prosperity and happiness to the family. For them the presence of their God- Pithora Baba, is extremely important. Anybody who has the Pithora painting in their home is highly respected in the society. The one who performs the ritual is called the Badwa or the head priest.

Warli house with paintings

Maharashtra

- ❖ Warlis depicting their own cosmos.
- ❖ Warlis paint to satisfy a deity or an ancestor, especially those who are making trouble.



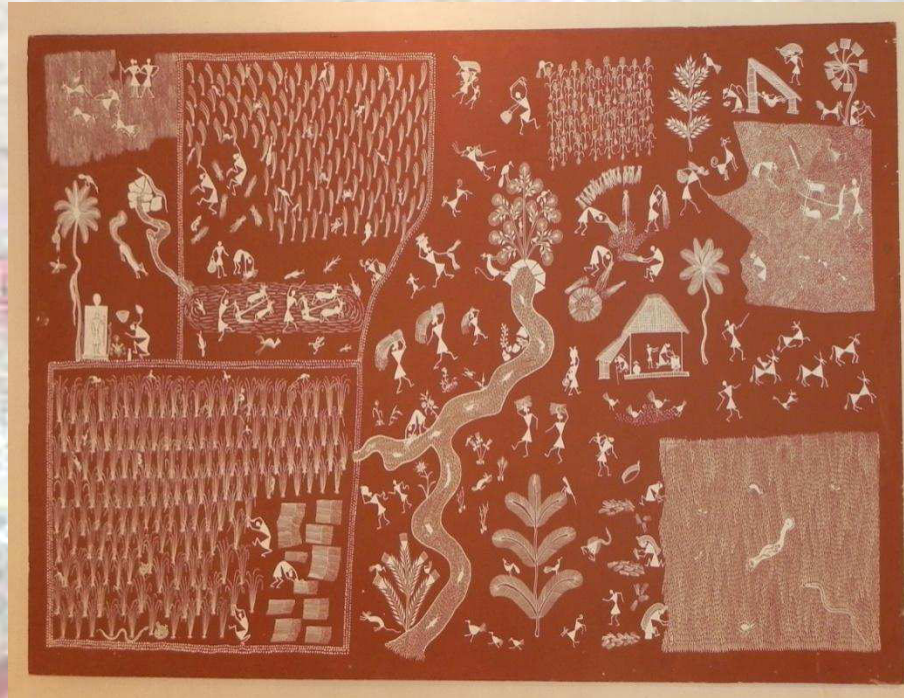
Tarpa Dance, Warli, Maharashtra

Tarpa is basically a kind of wind musical instrument which is played during the time of Diwali. All the participants join hands and swing in circles while singing themselves on the tunes of Tarpa after performing *puja* to their **kuldevata** (village Deity) in their respective homes. After that all family members eat rice together.

Traditional occupations

In Warli paintings multiplicity of events take place simultaneously.

Events from ploughing to harvesting and storing to grinding.

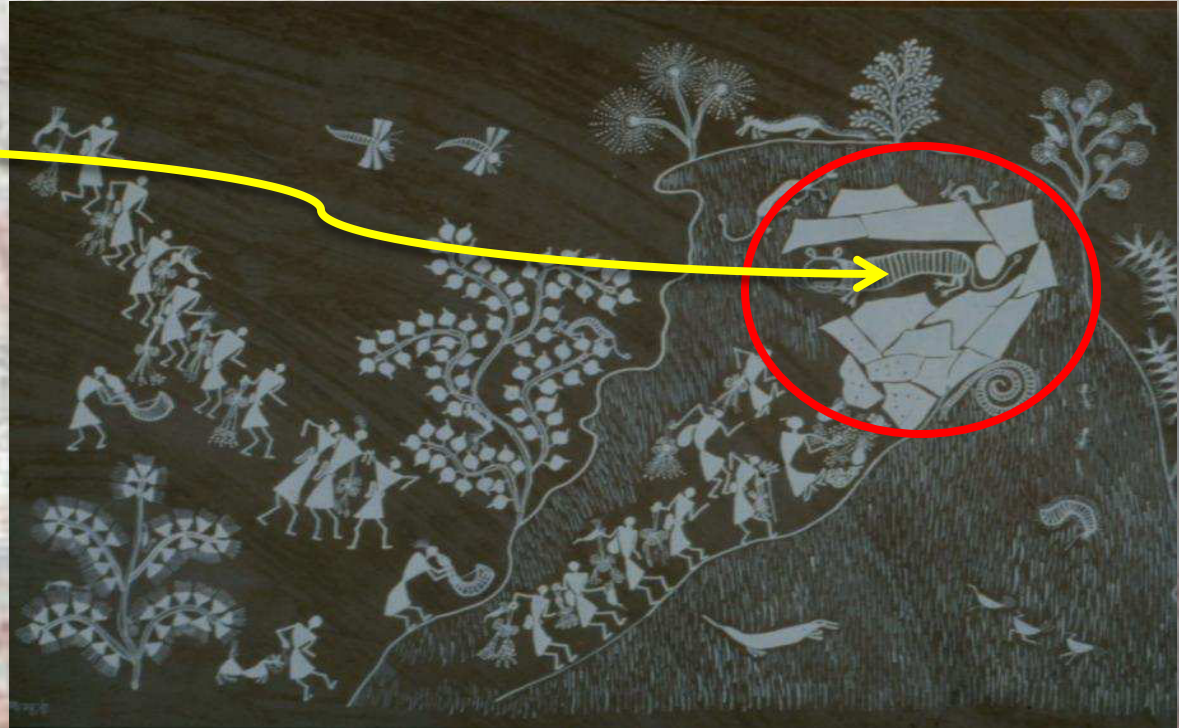


Agricultural Activities ,Warli painting, Maharashtra

Mainly rice farming were done in this region, under which first direct seeding were done after the preparation of land which involves use of plough. After that transplanting of pre-germinated seedling were made in wet field. At the end harvesting were done of mature rice crops.

People honoring Tiger

- ❖ Warli tribe pay respect to Tiger.
- ❖ Korku tribe also worships a tiger deity (Bagan Deo).



Graam Devta , Warli painting, Maharashtra

Once in a year a puja of *gramdevata* (**village deity**) used to take place, in which whole village participated. During the time of ritual three person played *dholak* (double sided drum) and other musical instruments. After that goat sacrifice was made which is distributed among the people, who ate them along with *tadi* and *daru* (local liquor).

Saora Paintings, Odisha

In Odisha the art of icon making is found among the Saoras. It is confined to the hill section of the Saora tribe, which lives in the Pottasinghi area of Gunupur sub-division of Koraput district and in Parlakamedi and Chandragiri area of Ganjam district. Saora icon making is primarily related to matters of health and death, epidemic and disease and child birth.



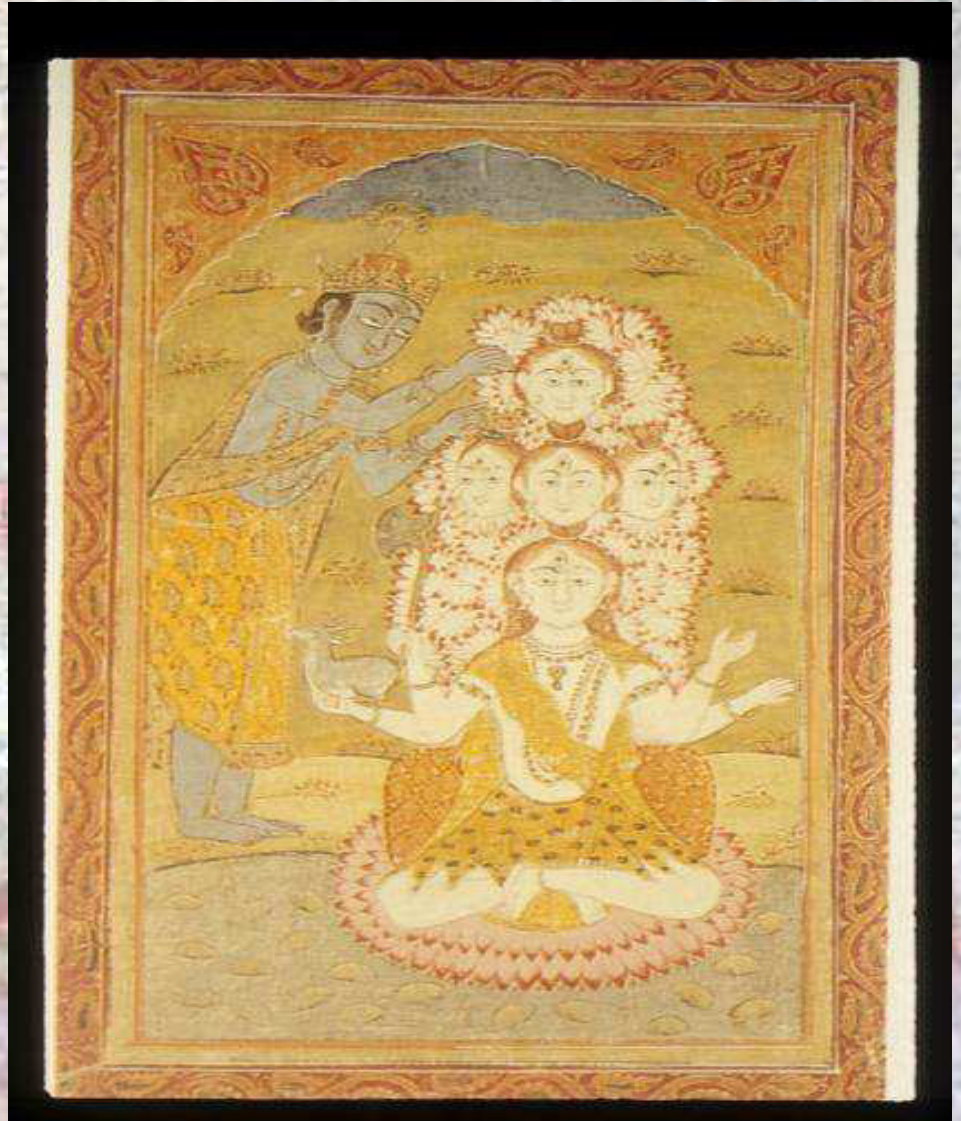
Jodisum , Lanjia-Saora, Odisha

The idol is generally drawn to worship Jodisum, during first eating ceremony of red-gram, in the house of *Kudammar (boi)*. In each new food eating ceremony (*navanna*) the god and ancestors are honored and flattered by offering of the first crop and fruit of their land. Once the festival is over, the restriction on the use of the crop or fruit concerned is lifted.

Classical Tradition

- The supreme Hindu deity Shiva is considered to be personification of elements/ cosmos.
- Textual tradition (*Agamas*) records Shiva as formless (*nishkala*), the all-pervading and the incomprehensible entity who on self will releases a microfraction of His Self activates into five successive Shaktis (Energy-femal aspect of Shiva). From these Shaktis emerges five Sadashiva - *tattvas* (Elements). These are known as Sadyojata (represents *prithvi*, i.e. Earth), Vamadeva (represent *jala*, i.e. Water), Aghora (represents *agni*, i.e. Fire), Tatpurusha (represents *vayu*, i.e. Air), and Ishana (represents *akasha*, i.e. Sky). Since Isana is supposed to possess in itself all the Sadashiva - *tattvas* preceding him, he is represented in iconography as a five - headed deity each of which represents different Sadashiva - *tattvas*. These faces are individually called as *Nandivaktra* (western face), *Umavaktra* (northern face), *Bhairava* (southern face), *Mahadeva* (eastern face) and *Sadashiva* (face upwards).

In fact, the five faces of Sadashiva represent five elements, which gets further divided into five parts each. Hence, in his Maha-Sadashiva aspect he is depicted as twenty-five headed. It is from the microfractional part of Sadashiva that Mahesha (Shiva) is formalised who initiates the process of creation (*srsthi*), preservation (*sthiti*) and reabsorption (*laya*). He should be depicted having ten arms and four heads, each with three eyes. The fifth head is invisible and is not shown in iconography.



Adoration of Sadashiva, Alice Boner collection, Museum Rietberg, Zurich.

❖ Interestingly, the Great God Shiva has eight forms (*Astamurti*) both in his cosmic manifestations and on the individual level. In Shaiva tradition, the cosmos too comprises of eight components namely the five-elements (space, air, water, fire and earth) and also the sun and the moon, which are the measures of time. The eighth is the Brahmin, that is, man in his consciousness.



Shiva, Pandrethan (Srinagar), Limestone, S. P. S. Museum, Srinagar.

Shiva *Astamurti* dwells everywhere and over and above it dwells in the human body (in his consciousness also). In addition to Nataraja (Dancing Shiva) form the other forms depicted in iconography are:

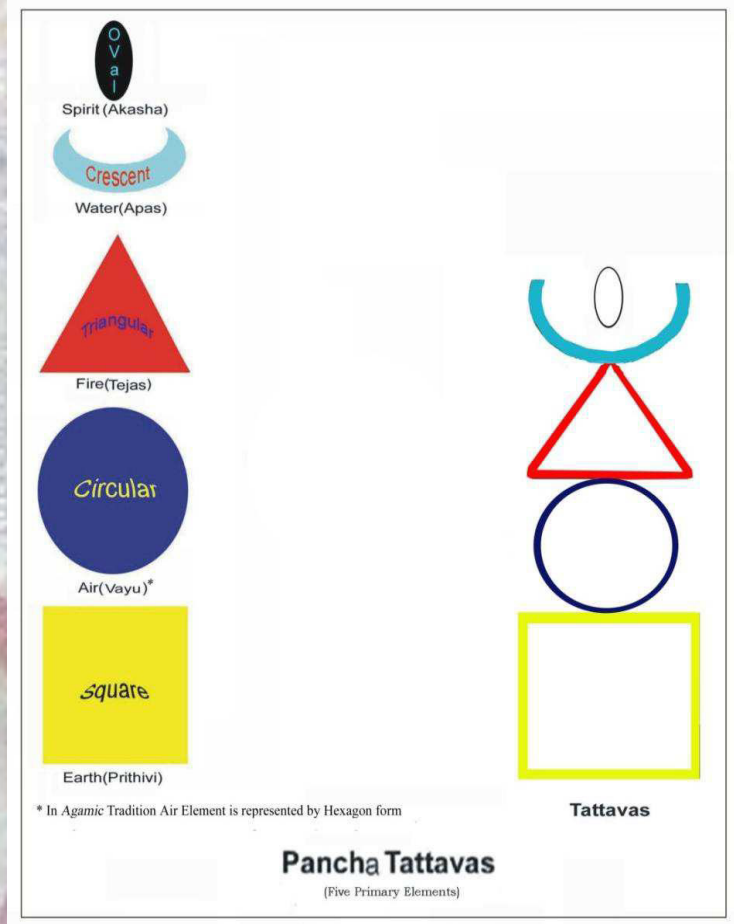
Tripurantaka,
Ardhanarishvara,
Kalasimurti,
Gajasursamharamurti,
Bhikshatana, Virabhadra,
Bhairava and Vinadhara.
Images of Nataraja represent the most exalted aspect of Shiva - a metaphor for the cosmic cycle of creation and destruction and the individual cycle of birth and re-birth.

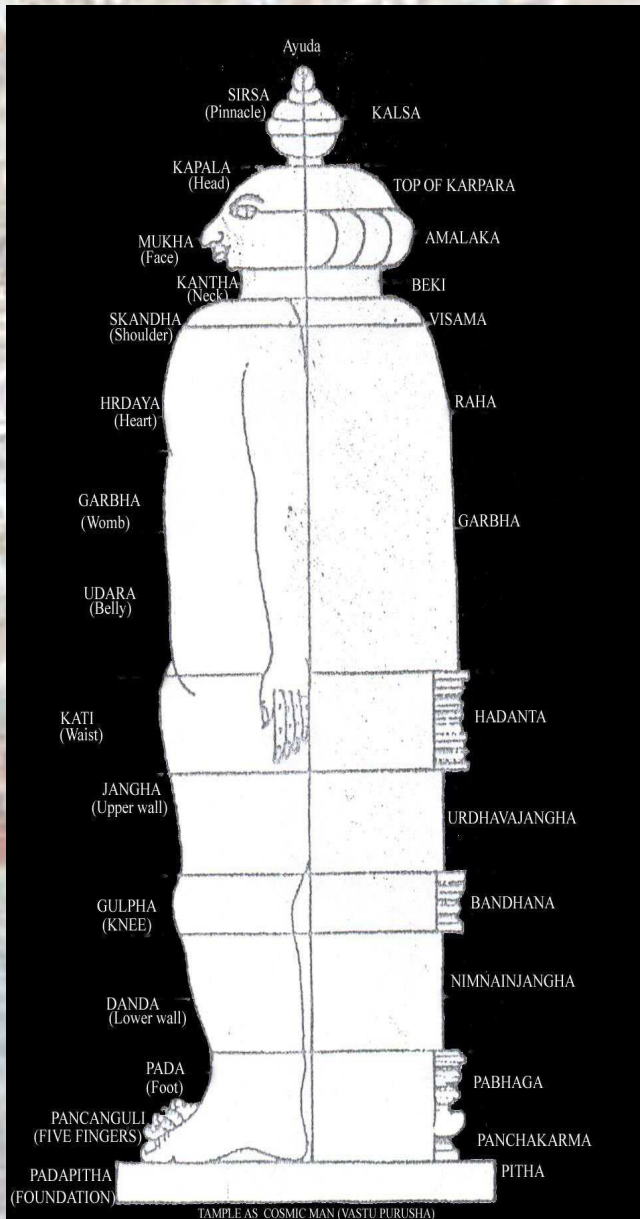


**Nataraja , Mausoleum of Zain-ul- abidin's mother,
Zainakadal (Srinagar).**

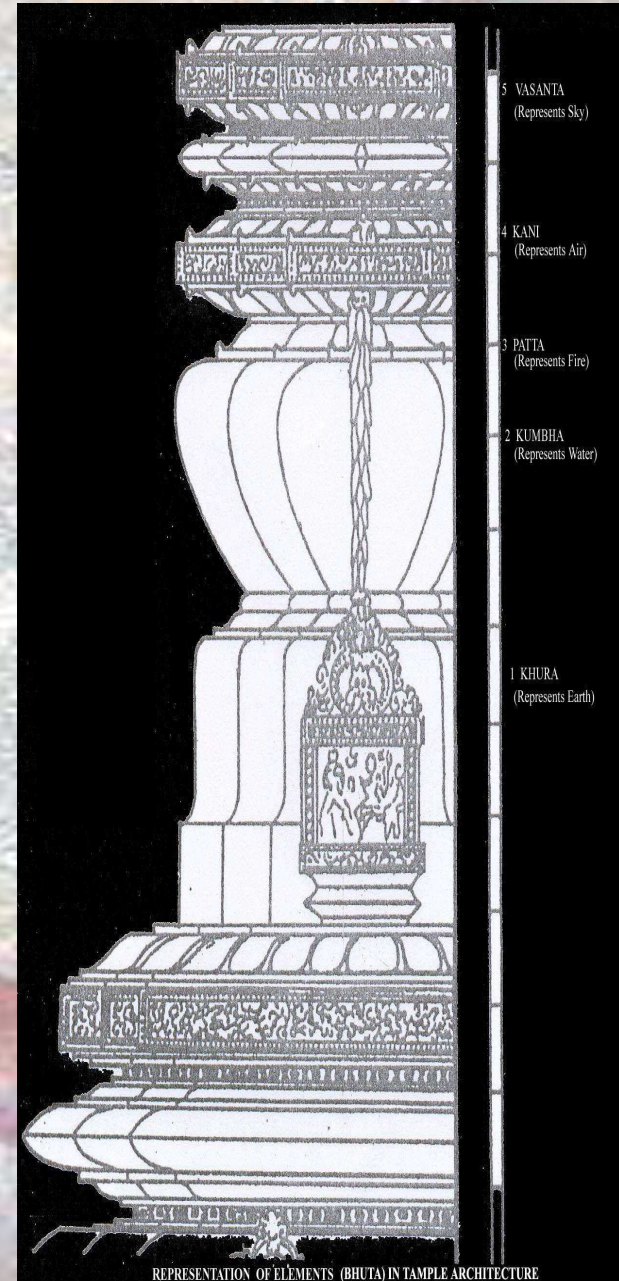
Physical Manifestations

- ❖ The temple is a representation of the essential form linking the elements and individual to the cosmic order/person.
- ❖ Man developed temples, which are symbols of the world-mountain, or, analogically, of the universal man (*Purusha*) whose body comprehends the universe. The names of the various limbs of the human body from the feet to the crown of the head are applied in Indian architectural texts to the different parts of the temple structure.



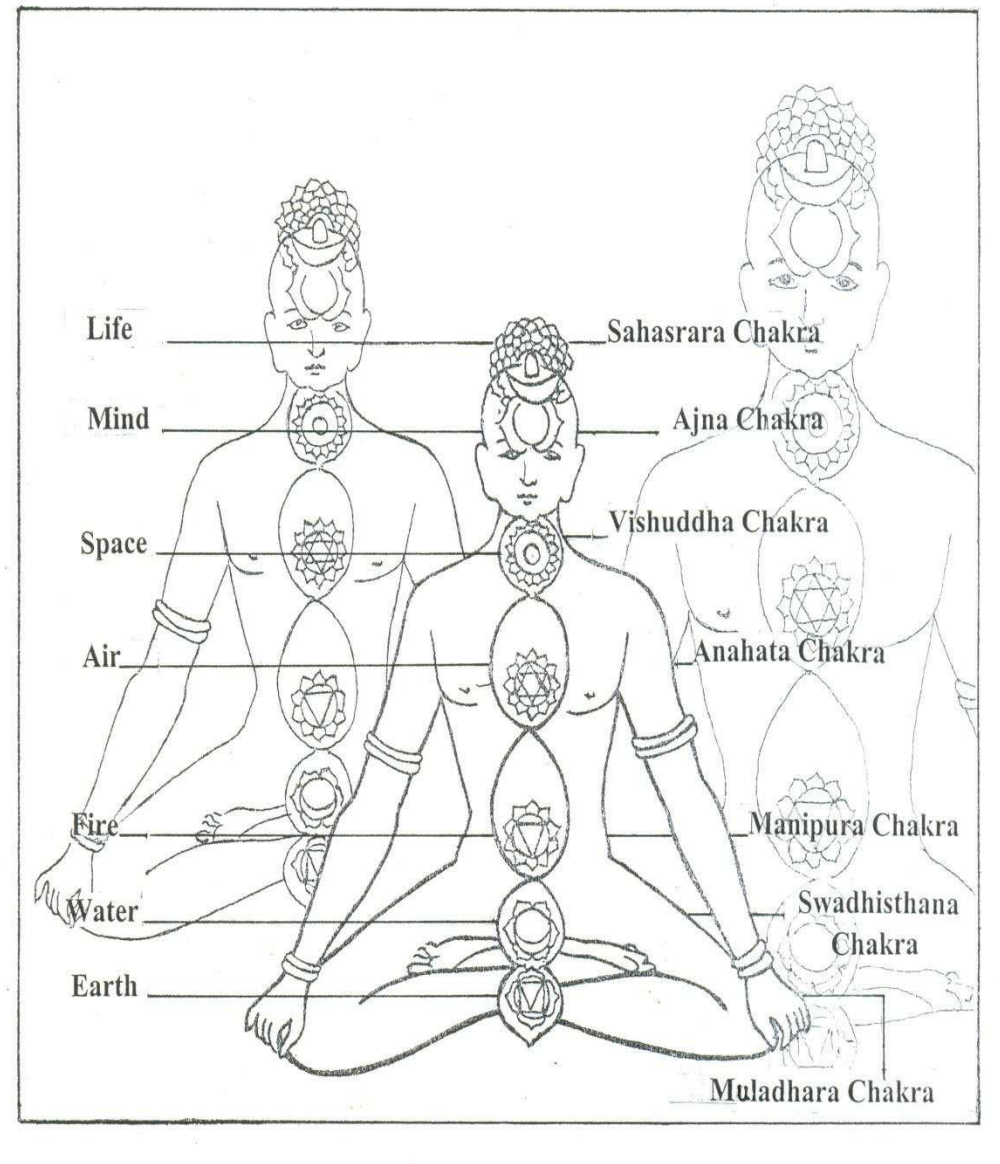


Hindu gods are involved in the living world of man, though they stand for cosmic laws at a higher level of that world. The deities who are the basic energies of the universe can be approached through the perception of created forms. This necessity has led to the representation of the deity in a thousand variety of thought - forms, magic designs, and *mantras* (Hymns), symbols and images. Human ability to construct the images represents the things, which may be regarded as an aspect of his ability to symbolize both at higher (master symbols) and lower (natural symbols) levels.



In the empirical world visual imagery symbolizes - what is ultimate, and lead human beings into a relationship with what is beyond. These forms and symbols are the inevitable intermediaries in a process in which the mental mechanism is discarded and supernatural states of being are realised. Hence, we approach unmanifested through manifested.

- ❖ Each god of the pantheon has an affinity with some particular form, colour, body or energy in the visible universe. The deities represent three levels of abstraction - the level of the spiritual body; the subtle body (where emotions and the senses holds sway); and the gross or physical body in the phenomenal world. These include the thought - forms, symbolic sounds of the *mantras* (Hymns), and the diagrammatic *yantras*. They are held to be more accurate than an image being abstract.



- ❖ Another Hindu deity Vishnu when represented in *sheshasyayi* Vishnu form (Vishnu in sleeping posture on a snake) form rests on the serpent coils, sheltered by his hood of nine (or even a thousand) heads symbolising the endless revolutions of nature. When Vishnu sleeps creation is withdrawn in the 'night of Brahma'; but the serpent is a remainder (*shesha*) of creation ready to begin again and he provides a couch on the ocean of the universe.
- ❖ This is regarded as a fundamental cosmic image among the Vaishnavites and equivalent of the *linga* (Phallic emblem) of Shiva, which is an expression of cosmic creative power in its potential form, and the iconographic equivalent of the creative sound syllable *Om*.

The divine sound *Om* has the power to create, sustain and destroy, giving life and movement to all that exist.



Sheshasyayi Vishnu, Kashmir



Sacred Syllable Om, from an unknown manuscript in the S. P. S. Museum, Srinagar.

❖ The composite forms of deities were fundamentally created to emphasize the conjugal unity or inseparability of the divine couple. At a higher level it is asserted that Shiva and Shakti, or *Purusha* and *Prakrti*, are simply two halves of the same absolute principle. In order to stress this concept the Shaivas and Vaishnavas respectively created the Ardhanarishvara (composite image of Shiva and Parvati, his consort) and Vasudeva-Lakshmi (composite image of Vishnu and Lakshmi) images conjointly.



Vasudeva-Lakshmi, S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar



Shiva, Pandrethan (Srinagar), S. P. S. Museum, Srinagar.

Conclusion

Whether God really created man "in His form" or not, is still a mystery. One thing is sure that man creates the God in his own form and has been doing so from times immemorial. Because, with the intellectual development of human race, man essayed to control the nature to his wishes by changing prayers before an evolved of some mental image of some divine person or deity. This process was named by the philosophers as 'Natural Religion'.

Indian thought- currents, values and ethics have always had reverence for all that existed in nature, so much so that it evolved a concept that all that is alive, from plants to animal and human species, belong to the single family (*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*). They have originated from a common source and are interdependent. The same worldview has found its reflection in Indian art, both in vernacular and classical traditions.

The Indian philosophy, irrespective of ethnic considerations, view man and nature in a holistic perspective. The experience of the culture is codified in its thought-currents, astrology, and *ayurvedic* system of medicines, etc.



THANK YOU

(III)

Origin of Art? (Round Table Presentation Summary)

What caused the creation of art?

A round table at the 25th Valcamonica Symposium

EDITED BY
Emmanuel Anati



ATELIER

Dr. B. L. Malla

Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi

The Origin of Art?

Most of the world's religions have found expression in some way or the other in visual imagery, and view the universe as God's artefact. God is the supreme artist for them. God's work is the natural world, visible to the human eye. The Upanisadic sages described it as the cosmic tree. On the symbolic level, 'This tree is the great world mother, the Godde

ss of Nature who nourishes all life with the milk of her breast.' The metaphor of the cosmic tree shows that the sacred is the proper context of both art and nature. Indian philosophy, irrespective of ethnic considerations, views man and nature in a holistic perspective. The reverence of nature was not confined to Eastern thought only; the ancient Greeks too deified the forces of nature.

Indian aesthetics has three main streams: first, literature and poetics; second, drama and dramaturgy; and third, fine arts and sculpture. But its scope circumscribes almost all the branches and sub-branches of Indian aesthetics, arts, crafts, sciences, literature, etc, which entertain our sense organs, satisfy our minds and gives contentment to our souls. This includes all sorts of literature - prose, poetry, criticism, drama, dramaturgy - dance, music, both vocal and instrumental, painting and also the allied faculties of arts, which also convey joy to an aesthete. It can also be anything which is sweet, bright, beautiful and true in the phenomenal world, even in dream and imagination, because in the ecstasy of paramount of good and absolute happiness the supreme reigns.

Indian logic postulates the perception of the mundane (*laukika*), or what is perceptible by sense organs, and the super-sensuous (*yaugika*), or what is realizable introspectively. It assures super-sensuous taste in relishing aesthetic beauty and bliss. It is not only concerned with the problem of beauty but also with the question of art and the enjoyment

of art. The classification of arts in Indian tradition is based on different aesthetic senses. Among the senses that lead to aesthetic experience are vision (*drshya*) and hearing (*shravya*). Architecture, sculpture and painting originate from vision, and music and poetry originate from hearing, and theatre from the two together. Hence, Indian aesthetics is a well conceived psychoanalytical process of judgement. It is understood today as the science and theory of beauty and fine arts.

Indian art is imbued with an extraordinary feat of traditional thought, currents which are both simple and complex. At one level, simple words are used so that everybody can understand the nature of art and the art of nature. But at higher level it becomes cosmology instead of simple explanation. The true aim of the artist is not to extract beauty from nature, but to reveal life within life, the noumenon within phenomenon, the reality within unreality and the soul within matter. When that is revealed, beauty reveals itself. So all nature is beautiful for us if only we can realize the divine ideas within it. To express the truth is the virtue of the artist. In it he is not bound either by subjective inclinations or by objects or facts in themselves; he is free, what is true is beautiful. What is beautiful is delighting. The freedom of man lies in thus delight. To live this life of truth is, as Tagore said, the way of man's being. Works of art enable a man to move from quantity to quality, from fact to truth and from utility to beauty.

Dr B. L. Malla is presently Project Director with the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts. Dr Malla, an art historian with specialisation in Indian art and cultural studies is currently engaged in study of Indian Rock Art and Himalyan Studies. He has been associated with the IGNC-UNESCO-UNDP project on Village India. Numerous well received books including *The Sculptures of Kashmir, Vaisnava Art and Iconography of Kashmir, Trees in Indian Art, Mythology and Folklore, Conservation of Rock Art* (ed.), *Global Rock Art* (ed.), *The World of Rock Art: An Overview of five continents* (ed.) *Cosmology and Cosmic Manifestations: A Study in Shiava Art and Thought of Kashmir* (in press) along with many research articles are to his credit. He is a member of editorial boards of some prestigious publications. He is also editor of the forthcoming Proceedings of International Conference on Rock Art 2012 (two volumes).



CHAPTER - I

PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL VALCAMONICA SYMPOSIUM

An aerial photograph of a rugged, mountainous landscape. The terrain is characterized by steep, rocky slopes and a network of roads and fields. The colors are muted, with shades of brown, tan, and grey. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

CHAPTER - II

RECOMMENDATIONS/ DELIBERATIONS OF VALCAMONICA SYMPOSIUM



CHAPTER - III

A VISIT TO ROCK ART SITES AT VALCAMONICA



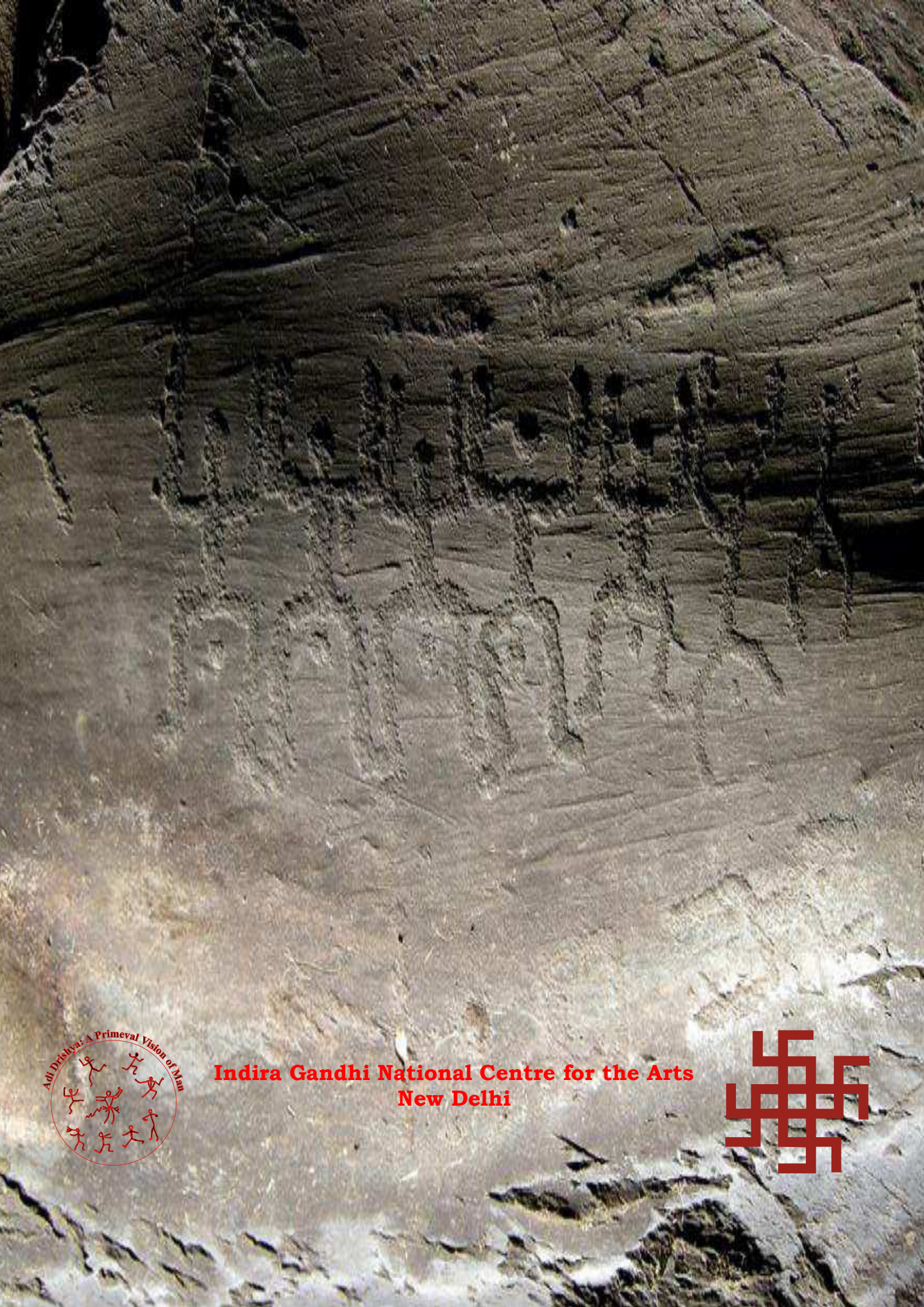
CHAPTER - IV

**OUTCOME OF IGNCA PARTICIPATION
IN VALCAMONICA SYMPOSIUM**

CHAPTER - V

ANNEXURES

- (I) Art Heritage: A Mirror of Nature-Human Relationship
(Session Paper of Dr. B. L. Malla)**
- (II) Illustrated Power Point Presentation of above Session Paper**
- (III) Origin of Art? (Round Table Presentation Summary)**

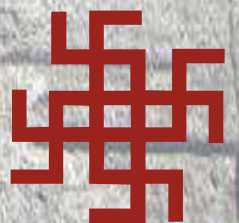


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