

**An Exhibition**  
**on**  
**“Glorious Bhimbetka:**

**IGNCA's Dr. Yashodhar Mathpal Collections”**

**Organized by**  
**Adi Drishya Division, IGNCA**



**On the occasion of**

**19<sup>th</sup> IUAES-WAU**

**World Anthropology Congress 2023**

**at**

**UNIVERSITY OF DELHI**

**DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY**



इन्दिरा गाँधी राष्ट्रीय कला केन्द्र  
INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE ARTS

The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts has conceived a major academic programme of which the Adi Drishya Division actively engages in providing a fundamental approach to the field of rock art studies. The Division aims to document, study, and conserve this ancient form of visual expression by fostering research, and creating awareness about rock art among the general masses. In pursuit of this objective, the Division collaborates with various reputed institutions across country and conducts temporary, mobile exhibitions. However, a temporary mobile exhibition on “Glorious Bhimbetka: IGNC’s Dr. Yashodhar Mathpal Collections” for the first time was successfully showcased at Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Rohilkhand University, Bareilly from 15th May - 5th, Sep 2023.

Following the success of the first exhibition on this theme, the Division similarly organized an International exhibition on “Glorious Bhimbetka: IGNC’s Dr. Yashodhar Mathpal Collections” on the occasion of the 19<sup>th</sup> IUAES-WAU, World Anthropology Congress 2023 at the Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi from 14<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> October 2023. This event was an important forum for diverse multi-disciplinary fields such as anthropology, ethnology, archaeology, sociology, and cultural studies. International delegates from various countries had participated in the event.



### **ABOUT THE EXHIBITION**

IGNCA has 375 original painting collections projecting rock art of Bhimbetka done by *Padmashree* Dr. Yashodhar Mathpal who represents the comprehensive study of the rock art of Bhimbetka, situated in the Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh (UNESCO World Heritage site). His paintings are a skillful reproduction of rock art projected at



Bhimbetka, capturing its intricate details with precision. Among 375 painting collections, 33 original paintings were selected for the International exhibition at University of Delhi. The paintings exhibited life activities and the evolution of early human art.

The paintings were curated sequentially, presenting themes and following a chronological order as follows:

1. **Prehistoric fauna:** the prehistoric fauna art is a representation of Giant Buffalo, Herd of Cattle, and the Mythical Boar etc. In these paintings the animals are often projected in exaggerated size compared to humans. This prehistoric artistic choice could indeed signify an era when early humans had limited control over the animals and the challenges of hunting them.



2. **Hunting and Food Gathering:** this scene is depicted in the prehistoric period when early humans began to live in groups inside caves. Over time, early humans began refining tools such as bow and arrow, spearheads, which facilitated the hunting process as a means of subsistence. Subsequently, hunting became a crucial activity of their lifestyle. The use of tools like bow and arrow is commonly depicted in the rock art representing the hunting techniques and skills of prehistoric humans. Eventually, hunting leads to food gathering which became a vital aspect of their subsistence strategy.





3. **Domestication:** the prehistoric Neolithic period is marked by a transformative shift as the sign of domestication and cultivation began to emerge. The rock art scene generally portrays humped bulls and cattle ranching. In this period the significance of the hump on bulls is evident, as humans began to tame and use them for various agricultural purposes.



4. **Daily life scene:** over time, people gradually transitioned from hunter-gatherer to a more settled lifestyle. The scene represents a major shift from living in a cave to huts, and a personal living space started to form. Simultaneously, there was a shift from groups to communities. The rock art



scene depicts people living in a hut, honey collection scene, dancing scene, playing with children, rat trapping, fishing were all part of daily life activity represented through rock art.





5. **Mother goddesses (Fertility Cult):** the rock art scene portrays a pregnant woman depicted with an enlarged body, and the protruding part of the body is decorated with a series of chevron marks. This possibly symbolizes fertility and childbirth. In addition to female fertility depictions, the rock art scene also features animal fertile scenes.



6. **Historical period scene:** in the transition to historical period, rock art began to portray war scenes with individuals riding horses and equipped with weapons, use of more advanced weapons like swords, bow and arrows. Along with this, there is a noticeable refinement in the artistic vision of portraying figures, reflecting an evolving artistic expression over time.



The rock art scene of Bhimbetka are observed in various hues such as brown, ochre color, burnt umber, etc, derived from locally available natural pigments such as limestone, hematite, wood charcoal etc.



In addition to the paintings, a video documentary of rock art sites (Chandauli and Gwalior) was screened on an LCD display during the exhibition. Also, a replica of

Bhimbetka site was showcased during the exhibition which provided the visitors with a clear vision of the site and its landscape.



The exhibition was successfully held for a duration of one week. The event gathered participation of international delegates and prominent academicians from diverse countries. They expressed great appreciation for the rock art exhibition and showed keen interest in understanding the rock art depicted in the paintings. Delegates from Italy expressed interest in collaborating with the Adi Drishya Division on a rock art project. Consequently, students from University of Delhi expressed their desire to organize a lecture series focusing on rock art. The exhibition was overall deemed a success.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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Baishnavi Thapa  
Project Assistant  
Adi Drishya