

Three-Day Workshop
On
Field Exploration, Study and Documentation
on
Different Rock Art Sites in Northeast India



Organised jointly by
Ādi Dr̥śya Division
Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts
New Delhi
&
Department of History and Archaeology
Tura Campus, Northeastern Hill University
Meghalaya

Three-Day Workshop on Field Exploration, Study and Documentation on Different Rock Art Sites in Northeast India

The Ādi Dr̥śya Division, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), in collaboration with the Department of History and Archaeology, North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Tura Campus, successfully organized a three-day workshop titled *“Field Exploration, Study and Documentation on Different Rock Art Sites in Northeast India”* held from 28th to 30th April, 2025.

The inaugural ceremony commenced with a welcome address by **Dr. Tilok Thakuria**, Head of the Department of History and Archaeology, NEHU, Tura Campus. **Dr. Richa Negi**, Head of the Ādi Dr̥śya Division, IGNCA, delivered an introductory address, highlighting the thematic scope of the workshop and outlining future initiatives on rock art in the northeastern

states, while emphasizing the cultural uniqueness and significance of the region. The keynote address was delivered by **Prof. C.A. Mawlong**, Dean, School of Social Sciences, NEHU, Shillong. The **Chief Guest, Prof. F.A. Marak**, Pro-Vice Chancellor, NEHU, Tura Campus, offered an insightful speech, congratulating the organizers and participants, and extending his best wishes for the success of the programme.



Lamp lighting ceremony by Dr. Richa Negi, Head of the Ādi Dr̥śya Division, IGNCA and Dr. Tilok Thakuria (Head of the Department of History and Archaeology, NEHU, Tura Campus)



Member's on the Dias



Dr. Richa Negi delivering an introductory address

Following the inaugural session, the workshop continued with a series of academic sessions. These lectures significantly enriched the participants understanding of rock art studies, emphasizing practical applications and interdisciplinary approaches that integrated ethnography, archaeology, and art history. The participants comprised undergraduate and postgraduate students from the Department of History and Archaeology, NEHU Tura Campus, research scholars from Assam University, and assistant professors from Gauhati University.

The academic session held on the 28th commenced with a lecture by Dr. Dwipen Bezbaruah (Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University), titled '**Understanding Rock Art**'. The presentation provided a comprehensive introduction to rock art, while discussing its two primary forms: petroglyphs (rock engravings) and pictographs (rock paintings).



Dr. Dwipen Bezbaruah delivering his lecture



Prof. Jeevan S. Kharakwal delivering his lecture

This was followed by another lecture delivered by Prof. Jeevan S. Kharakwal (JRN Rajasthan Vidyapeeth, Udaipur), titled '**Documentation of Rock Art**' which provided an insightful introduction to prehistory, the history of rock art research in India, and an exploration of what constitutes Indian rock art.



Dr. Mohana R. delivering his lecture

Dr. Mohana R (Assistant Professor at Allahabad University), delivered a presentation on the topic '**Rock Art of Southern India: Recent Studies-Exploration Methods, Discoveries and Interpretation**'. The presentation highlighted recent advancements and discoveries of rock art sites in the southern regions, while also discussing interpretive frameworks used in rock art analysis.

The day concluded with a cultural programme organized by the Department of History and Archaeology, where students performed an ethnic dance, showcasing the richness of local traditions and attire. The event effectively blended academic discourse with cultural expression.



Cultural Programme

The second day continued with scholarly presentations. Dr. Dwipen Bezbaruah presented a paper titled '**Decoding the Engraved Motifs and Figures of Assam and Adjoining Areas**'. The presentation discussed the key characteristics of rock art and its depictions found in Assam, drawing comparisons with those in other rock art sites within Northeast India. It also highlighted the different classifications of rock art, including geometric figures, zoomorphic motifs, labyrinths, human figures, and footprints, and explored the local beliefs and practices associated with these motifs.

Following this, Dr. Jeevan Kharakwal presented a paper on the '**Indus Valley Civilization**', offering an in-depth discussion that encompassed all key aspects necessary to understand the civilization, including settlement patterns, pottery styles, and cultural variations across different phases.

Dr. Mohana R. delivered lecture titled '**Documentation and Classification of Rock Art: Methods, Techniques, and Scientific Tools**,' providing a comprehensive overview of the methodological frame-work used in rock art research. The presentation also discussed the importance of adopting systematic approaches such as typology, stylistic analysis, use of GIS mapping, and scientific tools in order to enhance the accuracy and conservation of rock art documentation. These methods are essential not only to enhance the accuracy of documentation but also to address the growing need for conservation, which is becoming increasingly urgent due to various threats—including vandalism, theft by treasure hunters, and natural deterioration. Dr. Mohana also stressed the necessity of creating awareness among the general public, initiating training programs in schools and colleges, conducting capacity-building workshops for teachers, and the establishment of local museums to safeguard and promote rock art heritage more effectively.

The academic session continued with a series of thought-provoking and enriching lectures that emphasized the significance of rock art as a vital source for reconstructing ancient Indian history. One such lecture on the topic '**Rock Art as a Source of Ancient Indian History**' was delivered by Dr. Virag G. Sontakke, (Assistant Professor in the Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology at Banaras Hindu University). Dr. Sontakke highlighted the value of rock art as a source in bridging the gap in prehistoric studies, particularly by focusing on the renowned Bhimbetka cave paintings.



Dr. Virag G. Sontakke delivering his lecture

Dr. Shantanu A. Vaidhya, (Research Assistant, Deccan College Post Graduate and Research institute, Pune), presented an engaging paper on ***Pottery in Archaeology***, where he



Dr. Shantanu A. Vaidhya delivering his lecture

elaborated on the role of ceramic typology, technology, and stylistic changes in understanding chronological frameworks, trade networks, and cultural interactions in ancient times. Another compelling presentation focused on ***Rock-Cut Cave Architecture***, which explored the development, symbolism, and regional variations of rock-cut monuments across India, shedding light on their religious, cultural, and historical contexts.

The final day began with an interactive session by members of the Ādi Dṛśya Division, IGNCA. Ms. Baishnavi Thapa delivered a talk titled ***'Rock Art Documentation: A General Approach'***, which offered a holistic perspective on

documenting rock art sites. She demonstrated the use of inventory sheets and elaborated on various documentation techniques, emphasizing their relevance not only for research but also for aiding conservation efforts.



Ms. Baishnavi Thapa delivering her lecture

Mr. Praveen presented a paper on ***'Rock Art of India: A Review'***, in which he provided a comprehensive overview of region-wise distribution of sites across the country. He highlighted the unique characteristics of each site by showcasing the diversity in rock art depictions, thus offering a well-rounded understanding of the stylistic and cultural variations present throughout India's rock art heritage.



Mr. Praveen delivering his lecture

The workshop concluded with a thought-provoking lecture by Dr. Richa Negi, Head of the Ādi Dr̥śya Division, IGNCA, titled '*Interpretation of Engravings, Motifs, and Symbols in Rock Art*'. The presentation provided a vivid picture of how prehistoric rock art connects with contemporary traditional practices—such as body tattoos, ornamentation, bridal rituals, and dress patterns—thereby illustrating cultural continuity. Dr. Richa Negi ensured the session remained interactive, keeping in view the primary objective of the workshop: to provide academic exposure to students and scholars regarding the methodologies and significance of rock art documentation and interpretation within the broader framework of archaeological research. She encouraged active participation and dialogue, making the most of the three-day workshop while also outlining future initiatives focused on the rock art of Northeast India.



Dr. Richa Negi delivering her lecture

Dr. Richa Negi, further emphasized the immense potential of Northeast India in the field of rock art studies. She highlighted the importance of the region not only for its recent discoveries—such as the emerging rock art sites in Manipur and Mizoram—but also for its deep-rooted ethnic diversity that offers invaluable insights into prehistoric symbolism and artistic traditions. Dr. Negi noted that such discoveries call for more systematic and interdisciplinary research, incorporating detailed documentation procedures, pigment analysis, motif classification, and engagement with local communities.

The three-day workshop concluded with a valedictory session, where participation certificates were distributed to all attendees, acknowledging their active involvement and enthusiasm. The session resonated with a shared sense of purpose and commitment among scholars, researchers, and students to further the study of rock art in Northeast India. As discussions unfolded and knowledge was exchanged, it became increasingly clear that the region holds vast untapped potential for uncovering ancient human expressions through rock art.

Baishnhavi Thapa
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