



Introduction

India and China, the two giants of Asia are unique examples of unbroken 21st century civilizations. They are naturally a pair of sister countries with a hoary past. Both have vibrant cultures and people with significant mutual influence in areas like art, philosophy, etc. They have stood up strong and tall from the very beginning to the present day, for thousands of years. The prehistoric periods of both the countries has been long and full of events. We do not know exactly when and how they started exchanging their cultural elements; however, we do know that they grew in parallel and shared their cultural traits since the beginning of human history and this tradition has been continuing ever since.

The early facts regarding the cultural relationship between the two countries are found in various Chinese written sources like *Lieh-tsu*, *Thou-shu-dui-yi* (*the Book on Wonders of Chou*), *Lie-sien-chuan* (*Biography of Fairies*), *Shih-laoh-chih* (*Sketches of Buddha*), etc. For historical references about India, we still greatly depend on the travelogues of the Chinese travellers Hiuen Tsang, Fa Xian (Fa Hien), I-Tsing, etc.

The beginnings of Indian and Chinese civilizations seem somewhat similar. Although the records of ancient times in India are rather deficient, but according to references in Chinese sources on Buddhism, the condition of ancient India was quite similar to that of ancient China. Even before the transmission of Buddhism, the Shang-Zhou civilization and the ancient Vedic civilization showed some evidence of conceptual and linguistic exchanges. In the sixth century B.C., the birth of Confucius and Sakyamuni opened a new period of exchanges between these two civilizations.





While looking into the underlying spirit of the national character of both the countries i.e. "Benevolent love" and "Polite deference" of China (which may be represented by the word "*Jet*" or perfect virtue) and "Mercy" and "Peace" of India (which may be represented by the word "*Ahimsa*"), while these four terms may be different in form, yet they are fundamentally the same in sense. The Chinese attitude towards Nature is a process of harmonization. Indians lay stress upon moderation so their attitude towards Nature is a process of assimilation. Both the Indians and Chinese believe in ancestor worship and have love for kinship.

There is much more to learn from Indian and Chinese contributions through mutual cultural relationships. By interchanging our cultural resources we shall achieve a cultural renaissance. The collaborative venture between India and China in the field of rock art studies will open new horizons for cultural cooperation between the two nations. Comprehensive studies in this field will help in opening up and revealing the antiquity of both the countries in time and space. Prehistoric rock art is believed to be the first creative act of humankind, when there was no organised life and no political boundaries. It is primarily a tangible reflection of intangible culture. Rock art reflects the human mind. In order to contemplate on these concepts in depth, it is necessary to identify the earliest reflections of the human mind within its cultural and behavioural context.

Rock art is one of the greatest surviving art treasures of these two countries, both of which possess a large body of evidence for human artistic, cognitive and cultural beginnings. The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) has conceived a major academic programme that relates to exploring the artistic manifestations emanating from man's primary sense perceptions. Man's first awareness of the world came through his primeval sense of sight and ability to hear. Rock art forms a crucial component of the *Adi Drishya* (Primeval Vision) programme. Its conceptual plan aims to open the doors to the realisation that rock art is pure and absolute and hence capable of dispensing great experience beyond its original culture and time. Rock art is a vital archaeological source to study and analyze the cognitive evolution of the human intellect across the world. The intrinsic efficacy of rock art lies in its universality of appeal and to endure and sustain in a manner in which all can discern it.

IGNCA under its *Adi Drishya* programme has launched many research, documentation and outreach programmes on rock art to encourage the scholars to work in this emerging discipline and keep them updated of the status of rock art research in a global perspective and also to encourage Indian scholars to take up this new discipline very seriously. The Centre has, so far, produced thirteen well received





publications under the IGNCA *Rock Art Series*, viz., *Rock Art in the Old World* (ed. Michael Lorblanchet), *Deer in Rock Art of India and Europe* (ed. Giacomo Camuri, Angelo Fossati and Yashodhar Mathpal), *Rock Art in Kumaon Himalaya* (Yashodhar Mathpal), *Rock Art in Kerala* (Yashodhar Mathpal), *Conservation of Rock Art* (ed. B. L. Malla); *Global Rock Art* (ed. B. L. Malla and V. H. Sonawane), *Rock Art of Andhra Pradesh: A New Synthesis* (N. Chandramouli; ed. B. L. Malla), *The World of Rock Art: An Overview of Five Continents* (ed. B. L. Malla), *Rock Art: A Catalogue* (ed. S. S. Biswas), *Rock Art Studies: Concept, Methodology, Context, Documentation and Conservation*, Volume I (ed. B. L. Malla), *Rock Art Studies: Interpretation through Multidisciplinary Approaches*, Volume II (ed. B. L. Malla), *Suitable Dating Techniques for Indian Rock Art* (ed. B. L. Malla) and the forthcoming *Silent Rock's An Eloquent Testimony: Rock Art Heritage of Odisha* (S. Pradhan; ed. B.L. Malla). In the electronic media, a CD on *Rock Art of India*, three DVDs on *Rock Art of PAN India*, *Rock Art of Ladakh (J&K)* and *Rock Art of Jharkhand*, and a comprehensive cross-cultural, bibliographic database have been brought out. We have great pleasure now in bringing out the fourteenth publication in this series.

In its series of national and international events, the IGNCA has organized an exhibition on 'Indian Rock Art' in the World Rock Art Museum at Yinchuan, China in 2014. An Indian delegation comprising of Dr. B. L. Malla, Professor V. H. Sonawane, Professor S. Pradhan, and Dr. R. C. Agarwal also participated in the Chinese Helan Mountain International Rock Art Summit Forum held on 26th - 28th August, 2014. The exhibition was inaugurated on 27th August, 2014 and remained open for the public till 30th September, 2015. The summit/exhibition was jointly co-hosted by People's Government of Yinchuan, Department of Culture of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Tourist Administration of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Rock Art Research Association of China (RARAC), Minzu University of China and IGNCA.

In order to further strengthen the communication and cooperation between China and India, IGNCA has reciprocated by way of inviting Chinese scholars/institutions to participate in an 'India-China Rock Art Workshop-cum-Exhibition' in India from 24th February - 27th March, 2016. On this occasion IGNCA organized a series of special lectures from 24th - 26th February, 2016. Another important objective of this India-China collaboration was to work out the area of mutual interest in the field of rock art studies and conservation between the two countries including training of young Indian scholars, exchange of technical expertise/experts in the field of documentation and display etc.





Both India and China are indeed fortunate in possessing one of the largest concentrations of this precious and earliest world heritage. Therefore, it was a privilege for IGNCA to host such an important India-China Rock art event with the aim of analysing where we stand in the global context, because, the concern for exploring new ways and means for rock art research and for deciphering it has opened a new chapter in the history of research in pre-historic and tribal art.

The India-China Rock Art Workshop 2016 mainly focused on the recent developments in rock art research, documentation and management. About 38 Chinese and 12 Indian scholars/researchers of various disciplines of both the countries working on rock art participated and shared their valuable and latest experiences in the field of documentation techniques, management and conservation of rock art sites and research methodologies adopted for the interpretation of rock art. The importance of rock art for archaeology, ethnology and lifestyle was the main focus of the workshop. The present volume covers the rock art of India and China in two sections. The first section on Indian rock art gives a detailed account of rock art research and documentation in India; and a bird's eye view of IGNCA's exhibition on Indian rock art in China (2014-15). The second section on Chinese rock art gives a brief account of the discovery, record and research of rock art of China; and a bird's eye view of the exhibition on Chinese rock art in India (2016).

The present illustrated volume aims to boost and promote rock art research both in India and China. It will not only interest scholars and students but also the people at large. It is also an important step in the journey of exploring together, the source of creative energies and modes of expression of our ancestors. It will certainly contribute to rectify and enhance our vision of rock art.

