

A Report



1st Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar Memorial Lecture

(3rd April, 2017)



INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE ARTS
New Delhi





The Adi Drishya Department of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) organized the 1st Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar Memorial Lecture on 3rd April, 2017 at Auditorium, C.V. Mess, Janpath, IGNCA, New Delhi. Shri Ram Bahadur Rai, Hon'ble President, IGNCA Trust was the Chief Guest on the occasion and the inaugural session was chaired by Dr. B. R. Mani, Director General, National Museum, New Delhi and Dr. G. B. Deglurkar, Former President, Deccan College, Pune was the Speaker on the occasion.

Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar was born on 4th May, 1919 at Neemuch, a town in the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh. His distinguished academic career earned him the title of 'Pitamaha' of Rock Art studies in India. The discovery of Bhimbetka rock shelters in 1957, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and his contribution in tracing the basin of the now-dried-up Saraswati river, said to hold secrets of the Indian civilization were some of the major milestones achieved by Dr. Wakankar in his lifetime. He also carried out several archaeological excavations at various sites in India and abroad. Dr. Wakankar was awarded with several prestigious awards including *Padmashree* in the year 1975, which is one of India's highest civilian honor.

The event was inaugurated by Shri Ram Bahadur Rai, Hon'ble President, IGNCA Trust. All the other dignitaries sitting on the dais also paid tribute to Dr. Wakankar by lightning of the lamp and offering flowers.



Shri Ram Bahadur Rai inaugurating the event.

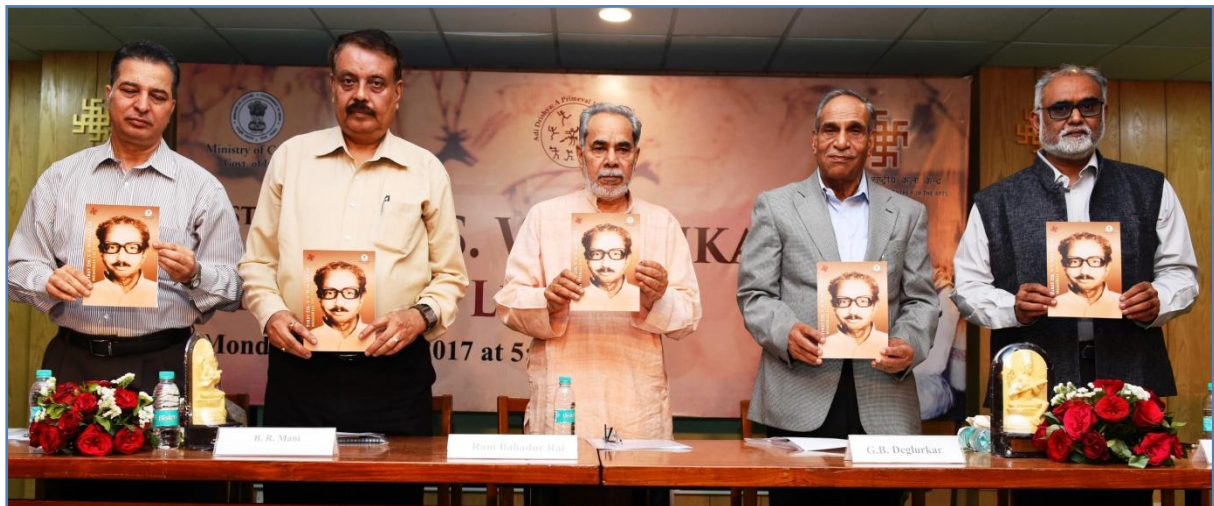
Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi, Member Secretary, IGNCA in his welcome address highly appreciated the contribution of Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar in rock art research of India. He said that whenever one thinks about the rock art, the first name that comes to mind is of Padmashree Haribhau Wakankar. He said that both Dr. Haribhau Wakankar and Rock art of India are indispensable whose journey in rock art research started with his discovery of Bhimbetka rock shelters near Bhopal in 1957, with this discovery he brought to light several

new sites in and around central India. It was Dr. Wakankar, who has shown us through his discoveries and research on rock art that how several thousands of years back our ancestors used to express their creativity. Dr. Joshi also mentioned how Dr. Wakankar's contribution in tracing the ancient Saraswati river highlighted significant facts and evidences related with it.



Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi delivering the welcome address.

On this occasion a booklet titled *1st Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar Memorial Lecture* was released along with two other publications titled; *Silent Rock's an Eloquent Testimony: Rock Art Heritage of Odisha* by Prof. S. Pradhan (this book is based on the IGNCA's interdisciplinary field documentation of rock art sites in Odisha and individual research by Prof. Pradhan) and *Cultural Ecology; Prehistory and Ethno-archaeological Context of Indian Rock Art with Emphasis on Northeastern States* edited by B. L. Malla & Dwipen Bezbaruah (This book is an outcome of IGNCA's National Seminar on Prehistory and Ethno-archaeological background of Assam and its adjoining states held in November, 2015 at Agartala).



Releasing the 1st Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar Memorial Lecture by the Hon'ble Chief Guest.

The Chief Guest on the occasion Shri Ram Bahadur Rai in his address described how several years back he first met Dr. Haribhau Wakankar, quite coincidentally at Keshav Kunj. Later, he visited Dr. Wakankar at his home in Ujjain. Shri Ram Bahadur remembered Dr. Wakankar as a man whose lifestyle was very simple and down to earth. Appreciating the memorial lecture in his honour he congratulated IGNCA in its effort saying that it is a significant step and a great tribute to Dr. Wakankar's legacy.

The speaker on the occasion, Dr. G. B. Deglurkar, Former President, Deccan College, Deemed University, Pune delivered the first Dr. V. S. Wakankar Memorial Lecture titled '*Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar: A Versatile Genius*'. Dr. Deglurkar elaborated broadly about the personality and achievements of Dr. Wakankar; How he discovered the rock shelters of Bhimbetka, and thereafter dedicated a lifetime in discovering and research of the rock art, the first creative act of humankind. Himself being an artist, Dr. Wakankar has drawn almost all figures the pre-historic man had painted on the rocks of the shelters, studied them analytically, enabling him to classify their styles and dating them chronologically. Dr. Deglurkar observed that Haribhau Wakankar was deeply concerned about the lack of awareness in study, documentation and conservation of all and diverse evidences of rock art spread all over India.



Dr. G. B. Deglurkar being felicitated by Member Secretary, IGNCA

A very striking discovery considered to be a land mark in Indian Archaeology was the *Saraswati Nadi Shodha Yatra* (Saraswati River Research Odyssey). It was sponsored by Shri. Moropant Pingale and led by Dr. Haribhau Wakankar. Dr. Wakankar along with his untiring colleagues and several other voluntary organizations actively participated in this movement.



Dr. Deglurkar delivering the first Dr. V. S. Wakankar Memorial Lecture.

Dr. Deglurkar mentioned that besides the above mentioned achievements, the insatiable urge for finding our ancient roots led Dr. Wakankar in excavating major archaeological sites like Maheshvara, 1954, Indragadh, 1950; Manorti 1960; Awara 1960; Bhimbetka 1972-78; Mandasore 1974 and Kayatha in 1966. He also participated in the excavations in England and France.

Dr. B.R. Mani in his address on the occasion remarked on the major achievements of Dr. Wakankar and his contribution to rock art studies and Indian Archaeology. Especially, how he discovered the Bhimbetka rock art site (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) and later dedicated the next 15 years in surveying and study of rock art sites across India.



Dr. Mani during his address (L) and Dr. Malla (R) proposing the Vote of Thanks.

Concluding the event, Dr. B. L. Malla, Project Director, IGNCA proposed the vote of thanks.



A view of the audience at the event.

Release of IGNCA publications on the occasion



Release of IGNCA's publications on Rock Art by the Hon'ble Chief Guest Sh. Ram Bahadur Rai, President, IGNCA Trust.

Team Rock Art
Adi Drishya Department
Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts
11 Mansingh Road, New Delhi