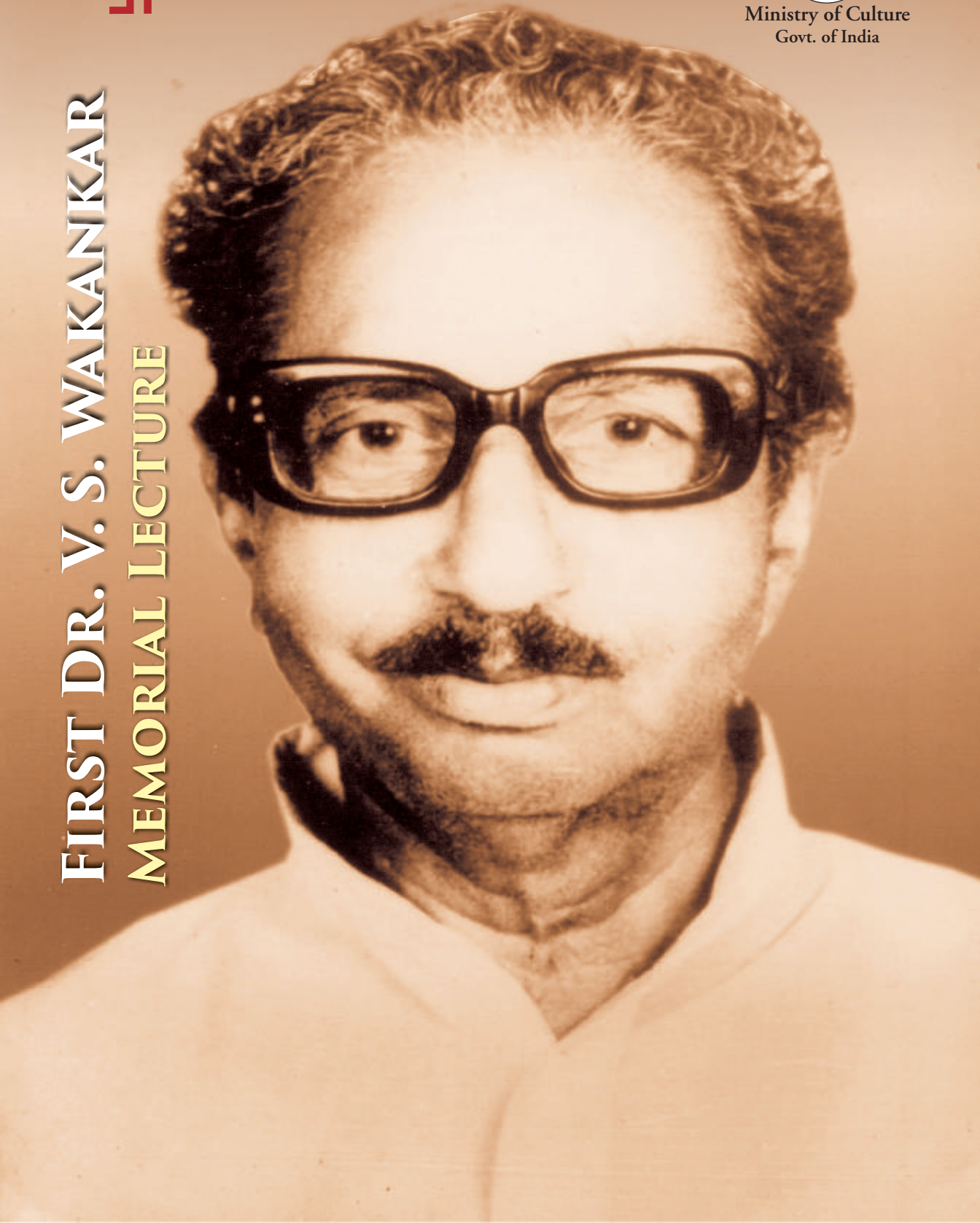




Ministry of Culture
Govt. of India

**FIRST DR. V. S. WAKANKAR
MEMORIAL LECTURE**



Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar Memorial Lecture



VISHNU SHRIDHAR WAKANKAR
A Versatile Genius

by

G. B. Deglurkar

Organised by

Adi Drishya Department
Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts



1st Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar Memorial Lecture 2017

Memorial lecture published on the occasion of
First Dr. V. S. Wakankar Memorial Lecture 2017

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FOREWORD

The Adi Drishya Department of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) is visualised to study and experience the ancient worldview through its different art forms and associated subjects. It partakes of the holistic worldview, so forcefully articulated throughout the Indian tradition(s) and emphasised by modern researches.

Human creativity in the form of rock art is enormous. Rock art, the first creative act of the human being is traced back to the prehistoric era. Man's natural imagination perhaps manifested itself through the form of rock art. It is a creative and pro active process that influenced the mind of the people. It involves deliberate construction of representations and reflect human tendency to reciprocate its nature in one way or the other.

The uniqueness of IGNCA's approach to the arts lies in the fact that it does not segregate the folk and the classic, the oral and written, the aural and the spoken, and the ancient and the modern. Here, the emphasis is on the connectivity and continuity between the various fields that ultimately relate human-to-human and human-to-nature.

While realising the importance of the adi drishya studies, the IGNCA has created a separate department for it. It manifests its academic, research work in its publications, international and national seminars, conferences, exhibitions, lecture series and digital and physical data base.

Under the aegis of Adi Drishya department the IGNCA is initiating a Memorial Lecture series in honour of eminent archaeologist, art historian and great humanist, Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar, the pioneer of rock art studies in India. Also known as the *Pitahma* of Rock Art studies in India, Dr. Wakankar has made enormous contributions which includes extensive field work on rock art in India and abroad - Europe, North America and the Middle East. He was involved in numerous archaeological surveys and explorations which includes the ravines of the Chambal and Narmada rivers, as well as tracing the basin of the now dried up Saraswati river, said to hold secrets to much of the Indian civilization. Dr. Wakankar was awarded the Padmashree Award, one of India's highest civilian honours in 1975. This will be an annual feature in which we intend to invite eminent scholars of Rock Art to give lecture on any aspect related to the great tradition of Rock Art. The first lecture will be delivered by Dr. G. B. Deglurkar, renowned archaeologist and art historian.



Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi
Member Secretary
IGNCA



Father and son, Bhimbetka



Profile of woman, Bhimbetka



Chinkara, Bhimbetka



Adi Drishya Department

Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts


The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) has conceived a major academic programme, which relates to exploring artistic manifestations emanating from man's primary sense perceptions. Amongst the senses that lead to aesthetic experience are vision (Drishya) and hearing (Shravya). Rock art forms the crucial component of the Adi Drishya Department. IGNCA is perhaps the only organization in India that has a separate department solely working on primeval vision of man. This new initiative is to widen the vision/scope to various art forms and traditions that has been in practice since ages.

The newly formulated department has been conceived with an aim to give special attention to a new kind of inter-disciplinary research involving allied disciplines like Anthropology, Geology, Art History etc., which can open new horizons to the study of prehistoric art. The IGNCA's concern with prehistoric rock art is neither restricted to the Archaeologists, and the prehistorians' concern with establishing a linear chronological order of prehistoric rock art, nor is it restricted to the identification of style and school as criterion for establishing chronology. Instead, it is a concern for man's creativity across time and space and civilisations and cultures through the perception of the sight.

Rock art study is an emerging discipline in India. It is an integral part of our culture since it reflects its existence from time immemorial. It is a form of historical record that helps us to understand the development of artistic and cultural traditions and belief systems in various ecological niches at various chronological contexts. It cannot be studied in isolation; it has been related to its cultural, ecological and chronological contexts to understand its meaning and significance.

The aim is to: i) Document rock art sites, its environment and communities living around these sites; ii) Discuss the extant theories of rock art and the intrinsic value of palaeo-art as the cultural heritage of humanity and not merely the cultural property of a particular nation where it is found; iii) Examine concrete cases for the conservation, preservation and management of rock art caves and shelters; iv) Identify the common conservation hazards and interventionist practices; v) Evolve strategies of rock art site management, conservation and computerized documentation; vi) Enrich children, common people and serious scholars.

IGNCA has initiated many projects/programmes for its study, research and outreach in this regard. A number of Survey and Pilot Study programmes are being organised as a part of IGNCA's National Project on Rock Art of India to encourage the scholars and students to work in this emerging discipline and keep them updated on the status of rock art research in a global perspective and to encourage Indian scholars to take up this new discipline very seriously as it is directly related to the primeval vision of man and is perhaps the first creative act of human being. Its proper exploration and study can take our civilization thousands of years back.



IGNCA has initiated field documentation at national level for preserving the rock art sites/data, which are otherwise prone to human vandalism and natural factors beyond one's control. While recognizing the importance of rock art for the present generation and posterity, the phase wise field documentation has been planned in different states of India with rock art concentration. The main objective of the project is to make textual, contextual, video-photo documentation and communicate with people in the hinterland for archaeological research, and to build up a bio-cultural map, a mental and ecological atlas of the rock art landscape on the basis of documentation of related folklore and natural and manmade features. Based on this research and documentation etc., the publications are being brought out both in print and electronic media. A digital and physical database is in the making for further research and analysis.

As a part of its outreach programme, IGNCA is organising different programmes for capacity building like organisation of special lectures and orientation workshops for researchers and university students. For creating general awareness among the school/college students and the public at large; temporary and mobile exhibitions, children workshops are being organised at the national/state/international levels. General awareness workshops are also being organised at tehsil/block levels for the local administration and for the community members around the rock art sites. First Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar Memorial Lecture will be organised this year on 3rd April, 2017.

Further, we are planning to sensitize the younger generation about the importance of the first creative art of man i.e. rock art, through various programmes/campaigns, namely; rock art appreciation courses (online & offline) and diploma course, booklets for school children on introduction of rock art, 'Speaking Stones' (Awareness and Interactive programme) on rock art for school and college students, Dr. V.S. Wakankar Rock Art Gallery at IGNCA and FAQs on rock art to get acquainted with basic knowledge on rock art for children and general public at large.

The impact of the projects/programmes launched and undertaken by IGNCA is immense and overwhelming. It can be assessed by the responses of the children, scholars and general public participating in these programmes/events throughout India. The reviews in professional journals and its wide coverage in both print and electronic media (national/vernacular) are quite encouraging. Some of the universities have started taking up the subject very seriously.

Briefly, the goal to be set is not merely the development of a database and multimedia gallery/displays but also to establish Adi Drishya into a school of thought and research on alternate means of understanding prehistoric art. For achieving all these goals, the outreach/general awareness programmes, inventorisation, research and interpretation of rock art is going on hand in hand.

Dr. B. L. Malla
Project Director
Adi Drishya Department, IGNCA

Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar

(4th May, 1919 - 3rd April, 1988)

Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar was born on 4th May, 1919 at Neemuch, a town in the Malwa region of the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. His distinguished academic career earned him the title of 'Pitamaha' of Rock Art studies in India. From 1954 onwards, he carried out extensive field work on rock art in India and abroad - Europe, North America and the Middle East. It is estimated that he discovered and documented some 4,000 decorated shelters in India alone. In 1957, he discovered the Bhimbetka rock art site which was inscribed as the UNESCO World Heritage Site in the year 1970.



Dr. Wakankar, an active freedom fighter was awarded with numerous prestigious awards including Padmashree in the year 1975, which is one of India's highest civilian honour by Government of India. He held important positions in various academic institutes and was involved in numerous archaeological surveys; he explored the ravines of the Chambal and Narmada rivers, as well as traced the basin of the now-dried-up Saraswati river, said to hold secrets of the Indian civilization. He carried out archaeological excavations at various sites in India and abroad.

Dr. Wakankar was also an expert and had collections in the field of numismatics and epigraphy. The collection is now part of the Wakankar Shodh Sansthan. Moreover, he studied numerous inscriptions dated from the 2nd Century BC in Sanskrit, Prakrit and Brahmi. Dr. Wakankar has published 6 books and over 400 research papers. He established the Wakankar Indological Cultural Research Trust in Ujjain, India. Today, Wakankar Shodh Sansthan hosts a collection of over 7500 sketches of rock art paintings sketched by Dr. Wakankar himself.

Main Contributions

Research: Discovered and studied more than 4000 rock caves in India; also discovered rock shelters paintings in Europe & America.

Excavation: Archaeological surveys of Chambal and Narmada River valleys, Saraswati river in Assam, South India; Navada Toli (1955), Maheshwar (1954); Indragarh (1959); Manoti and Aura (1960); Verconium Roman site England (1961), Incoliev, France (1962); Kayatha (1966) Bhimbetka (From 1971 to 1978); Madsaur (1974 & 76), Azadnagar (1974), Dangwada (1974 & 82), Runi'a (1980).

Worked with: H.D. Sankalia, Mortimer Wheeler, Kashinath Krishna Lele, Anant Vaman Wakankar, S.K. Dikshit, Robert Brooks, Jerry Jacobson, N.R. Banerjee, S.B. Deo, M.K. Dhvalikar and Tilner.

Discovered and Deciphered: Rock edicts and copper plates belonging to Gupta Maukhari Auliker Parmar and Bhulund periods; in America discovered Pre-historic paintings.

Exhibitions: One man show-Jaipur, Ujjain, Indore, Khairagarh, Austria, Rome, Paris, Frankfurt and America; Founder and Director of All India Kalidas Paintings and Sculptures Exhibitions.

Positions held: Director, Bharat Kala Bhawan, Lalit Kala Sansthan, Rock Art Institute, Ujjain; Director, Excavation Deptt. Archaeological Museum, Vikram University, Ujjain; Prantiya Boudhik Pramukh of R.S.S. Madhya Bharat Founder and former President Sarasvati Shishu Mandir, Ujjain; General Secretary, Sanskar Bharati, India; President, Theosophical Society, Ujjain; Patron, Kala Patrika Akar, Ujjain; Chief, Babasaheb Apte Itihas Sankalan Samiti, (M. P. & Gujrat); President, Vidyarthi Parishad, Madhya Pradesh; Member, All India Kalidas Samaroh Committee.

Foreign Travel & Fellowships: In 1963 travelled in Europe on Dorbaji Tata Trust travel grant, from 1961 - 63 research on a French Government scholarship; in 1966 was offered invitation and facilities by the Department of State U.S.A for American Rock Shelters; in 1981 participated in a seminar on Rock Shelters in Cap-odi Ponte, Italy.



VISHNU SHRIDHAR WAKANKAR:

A Versatile Genius

G. B. Deglurkar*

The Adi Drishya Department of Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts has given me this cordial privilege to deliver a talk on a versatile genius Dr. Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar to this august gathering of celebrated art historians, scholars in fine arts and professional artists –teachers here in this hall.

Dr. Wakankar is popularly known as Haribhau and he became popular because of his research of the paintings on the rocks of Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh. Haribhau was born in 1919 (4th May) and was born for researches related to Indian culture. He had an indomitable urge for discoveries and was a creative genius. Fine arts was his first love and he used to think that the art is for life sake and not for art's sake. Therefore, he initiated a movement to propagate importance of fine arts in man's life and create awareness of that in society. He encouraged ordinary people not only to take interest but also to take care of the artifacts, even broken images, dilapidated temples which constitute an important facet of our culture.

Wakankar's Major Discoveries:

1. His tryst with Rock Art: The Rock shelters of Bhimbetka
2. Saraswati Shodha
3. Excavations at various sites in Madhya Pradesh.

1. His Tryst with Rock Art

Rock art is one of the greatest surviving arts which possess a large body of evidence of the artistic, cognitive and cultural beginnings of human beings. In that way it is universal. Rock art evoked interest as an evidence of human cognition/behavior in the prehistoric period. It makes one's own beliefs visible which is in fact intangible. The study in this direction is hardly a century old. It was then realized that it is helpful to know man's creativity across time and space. As a tool to articulate human thought the medium of this art was intelligently used by men living in the remote past. As Chinmaya Garekhan puts it "The areas of human anxiety or even ecstasy may have acted as the primeval urge to paint or engrave" (Biswas, 2012: vi) on the rock for art is a voyage from non-manifested to manifest and invisible to visible. Rock art, in short, is like foot prints of human mind on the passage of time. India is fortunate in possessing one of the largest concentrations of this precious and ancient world heritage.'

**Dr. G. B. Deglurkar, born on 10th September, 1933 is an eminent Indian archaeologist and art historian. He held important positions in many institutions and universities during his tenure of service. He was the former President of Deccan College, Deemed University, Pune. He has done his Ph.D on 'Cultural History of Marathwada with special reference to the Old monuments'. He has published about 20 books in English and Marathi and also has more than 100 articles to his credits. He has received many awards for his outstanding contribution to Indian archaeology. He has rich experience of 24 years in the field of art and culture and archaeological excavations. He has widely travelled across the world and has attended many conferences and seminars.*

We are lucky to have a very able, versatile, artist knowing archaeology to initiate research in rock art at Bhimbetka comprising at least six hundred caves and rock shelters having paintings on their walls. I am very lucky for Haribhau himself had taken me around these shelters and explained the marvelous beauty of rock art.



Dr. Wakankar (3rd from left) along with his students at Bhanpura, Chambal in 1955

In 1957 an opportunity knocked at Wakankar's doors. While going to

Nagpur from Bhopal he came across some hillocks with huge boulders. After enquiring with the fellow travellers he came to know that these are known as Bhimbetka rock shelters wherein some grottoes possibly with some paintings exist. He jumped out of his compartment as the train had no station there. This jump of his was destined to take Indian rock art in a new direction (Indurkar, 2003). Here was a researcher who with single minded devotion, undaunted by lack of logistic support or presence of wild animals in the then dense jungles, conducted so many explorations. His primary tool kit consisted of empathy for the tribals and villagers, down to earth communication skills and ample common sense. He used to carry his luggage consisting of baked potatoes, a water bottle; magnetic compass and match box besides a heavy bamboo stick (Wakankar, 2005).



Venus of Bhimbetka

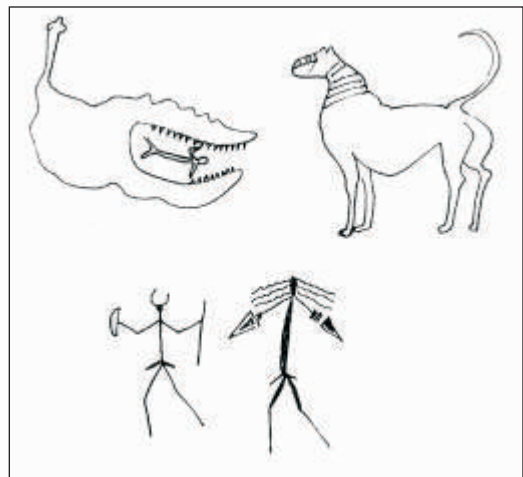
In a true sense he was the discoverer of the Bhimbetka rock art; though in 1888 Kinked, a British surveyor had made a passing remark of these painted rocks. In fact it is a cluster of more than 600 caves and rock shelters. Wakankar incessantly worked upon these paintings for quite a long period. At the same time he thought of working on this topic for a Doctorate Degree. But instead of restricting his research only to the rock paintings at Bhimbetka he chose to cover the entire painted rock shelters of India. He 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. Only a man

like him can dare to think of such a big thing. The canvas was really vast and it was a Herculean task. To put it in a nutshell, he covered 36 regions spanning almost the entire country enumerating in this work 1532 rock shelters mainly from Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Karnataka. The most important rock shelters amongst these were documented with reference to paintings of over 40 types of animals, 18 themes, many type of painted inscriptions besides surface collection of artifacts. Drawings showing different subjects like battle scenes, royal scenes, headgear, animals like deer, bear, bison, hyena, elephants, rhinoceros, along with fish and birds have been portrayed after observing them minutely. The compilation of theme based paintings collected from different contexts has shown the bounties of Indian rock art that enthralls the layman and gives clues to the scholars for further research.



Peahen, Bhimbetka

Himself being a well established 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. He could trace superimpositions (in 1961) to know different layers so that one could trace out different styles. His study was very systematic. For dating he compared various paintings from different places with the pottery drawings and inscriptions in rock shelters. Further, not only he dealt with the human activities which could be deduced from these paintings but also minutely gleaned out hundreds of varieties of fauna and flora existed in that remote past. The minute details with which he studied these paintings, the methodology he adopted and the artistic approach towards the paintings. I feel he provided an ideal for the artist as well as for the researchers. Even then I am inclined personally to attach more importance to his attitude in outlining the socio-religious aspect of paintings. As we know him, being an artist he tried to infuse life in the archaeological finds as art does it. It is in a way utterly difficult to infer activities in human life from the pre-historic rock paintings but this has been done successfully by Dr. Wakankar. Let us elaborate this point; Archaeology reveals the man's past of millions of years and art is such a medium which infuses life in the skeletons dug out by the archaeologists. Thus the strength of art enabling archaeologist visualize life of human beings in the past is simply commendable. All of us know that the excavations at

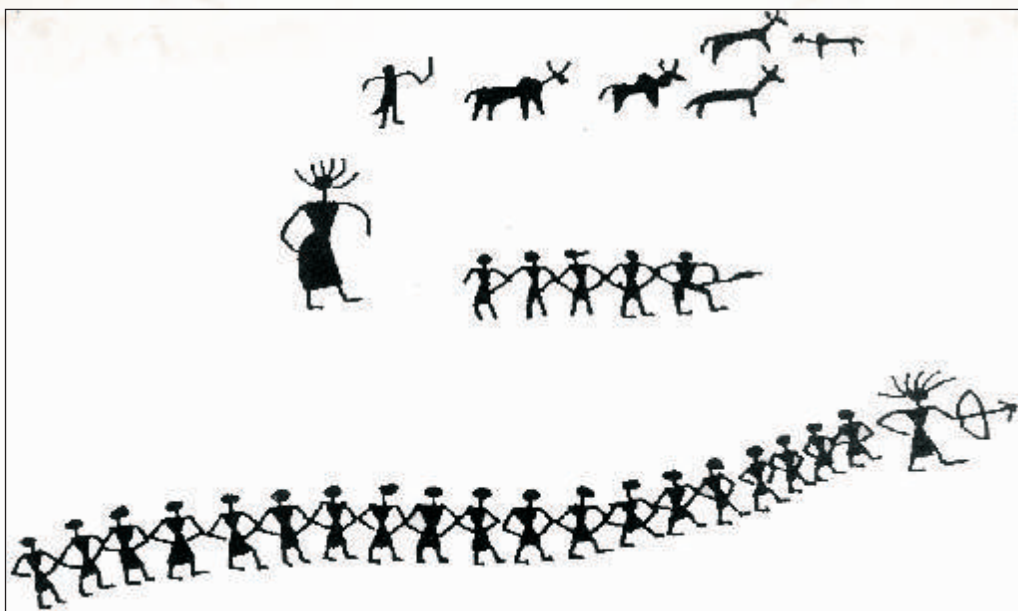


Sorcerers and animals, Sombhadra

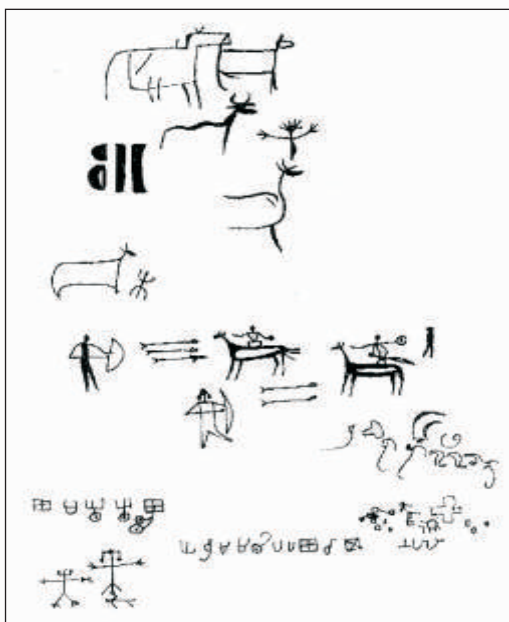
Mohenjodaro and Harappa yielded striking artistic objects. Some of them are painted and others are sculptures in the round denoting progress of those artists in the plastic art. He focused his inference first on Bison as it appeared prominently practically in almost all caves at Bhimbetka. There in the Auditorium and the Pishach rock shelter wherein seen the most impressive line drawing of a bison facing right immediately attracting the attention of the spectator. In some paintings elephants and buffalo also are seen. Perplexed, Wakankar thought for a while as to whether the occurrence at all these places is an accident or points to some general belief. There might be some mystical significance. Having come across such paintings in large number finally he concluded that communal ceremonies, ceremonial dances, sacrifices, fire worship and many other aspects of pre-historic life have been depicted in these pictures and can help us to build a tentative picture of their life. Seeing/visualizing the drawings of these animals invariably without the presence of human beings he rightly concluded based on his own experience that people in those early days were afraid of shortening of their life if their portraits are drawn. This belief is common in many non-literates and the older generation of Madhya Pradesh, and other parts of the country and even in Egypt. Wakankar had come across some scenes depicting ceremonial hunting that too of Neolithic period.



Rhino hunt, Ghormanger



Animals and dancing humans, Modi



Hunting scene with Brahmi script, Pachmarhi



Fallen prey to a hunter, Bhimbetka

Moreover, having seen paintings of therianthropomorphic or half man and half animal, etc. or a man with mask or dressed as an animal engaged in dancing he arrived at the conclusion that these were meant to avert the dangers from these animals. These may be of sorcerers, according to him (op. cit. v11, p. 399).

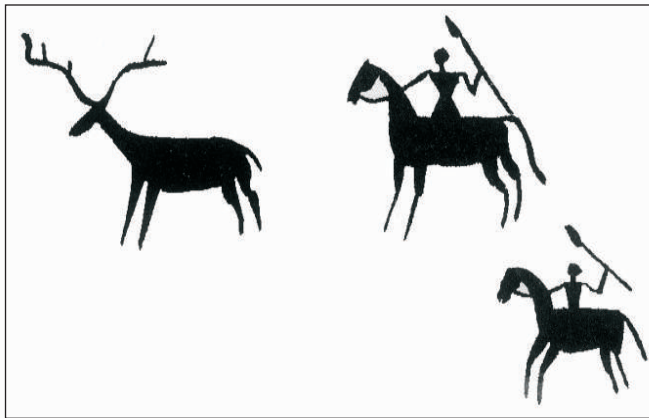


Hunter chasing a group of deer, Bhimbetka

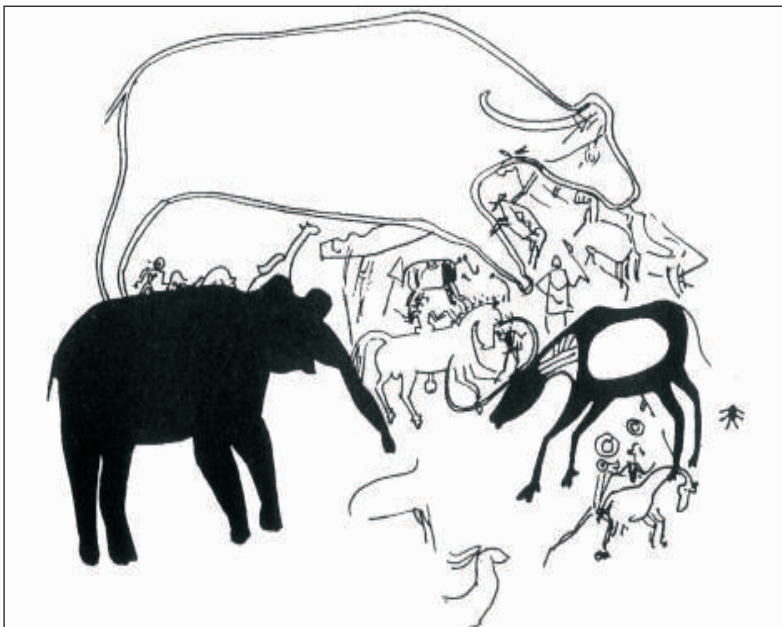


A panorama of Prehistoric life, Bhimbetka

He traced the existence of Palaeolithic man through the evidence of his art activities is not known on the evidence of the early Mesolithic who decorated the walls of the rocks based on the paintings at Bhimbetka and at other places in the vicinity. According to Wakankar, the early paintings of Mesolithic times throw some light on the life of man for art infuses life in all types of objects of past whether it is a painting or a sculpture or even skeletons dug out by archaeologist. The various walks of life have been minutely painted at Bhimbetka and Pachamadhi: families, couples, sexual intercourse, pregnant women, child rearing, initiation, communal dances, heroic acts of fighting and hunting, (either by weapons or by traps), burials, all are depicted in these paintings.

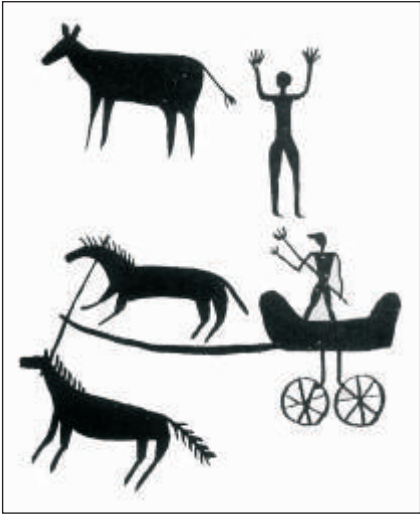


Hunting scene, Kuriyakunda



Bison, elephant and other animals, Adamgarh

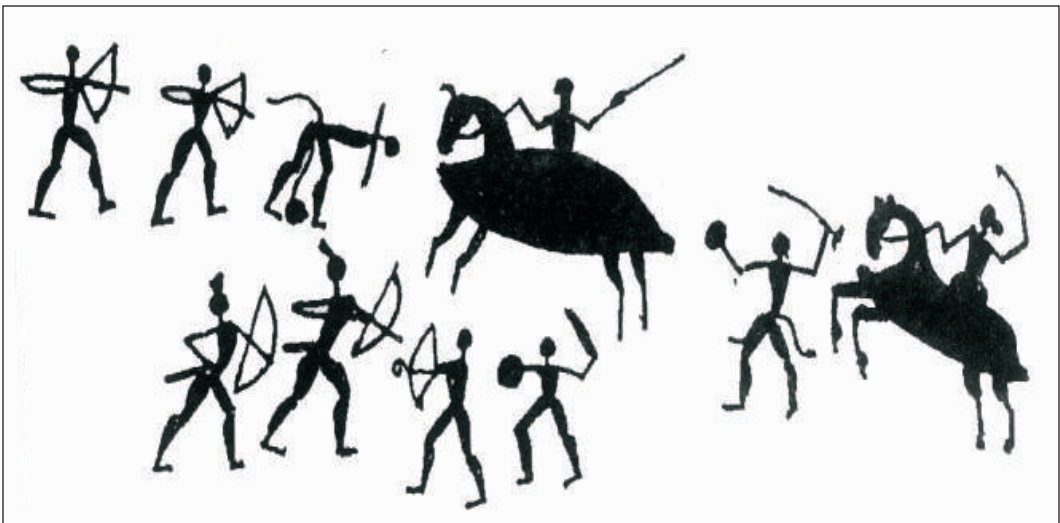
Along with the description of the tribal life, he has not forgotten to refer to the plumed head dresses, masks, ornaments and robes to make the picture complete. To date the picture of Mesolithic men he took support of the excavated finds such as burins, awls and points without which it was not possible to draw such elaborate picture.



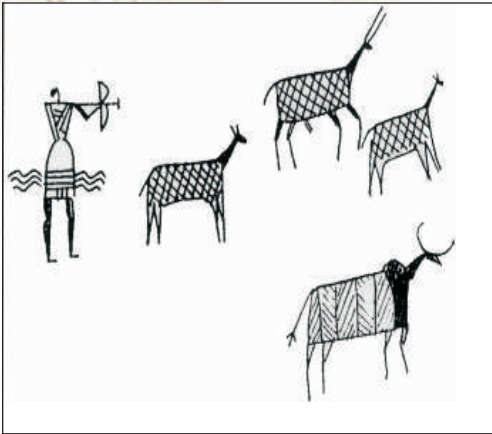
Battle scene, Serhat Vindhem



Animals and stupa, Kotra Viharn



Battle scene, Hoshangabad



Hunting scene, Ghatla

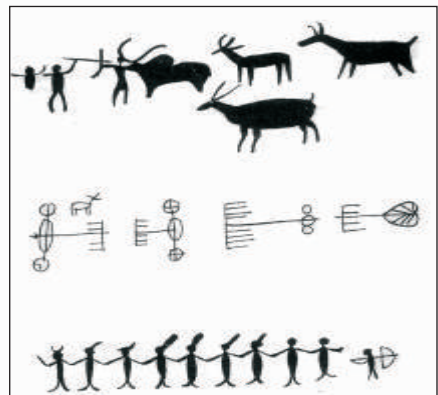


Dancing females, Nimbu Bhoja

Last but not the least Dr. Wakankar himself being an artist of high repute noted his appreciation of rock art which has not received proper attention of the scholars in the field. Most of the famous writers and critics of Indian art, says Dr. Wakankar have regarded these paintings as works of aborigines or jungle tribes. While arguing convincingly, Dr. Wakankar has pointed out that this art travelled through various phases of prehistoric period like Palaeolithic, Middle Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, etc. According to him the earliest settlers at Bhimbetka were the people who used pebble tools and the people who followed them later made tools of a different kind. He relied for this on archaeology to show how men were preparing tools like scrapers, points and borers. In short, it can be said that arousing enormous interest in pre-historic art, Dr. Wakankar after Frazer (Frazer 1890), pointed out that these works of Palaeolithic artists were no more regarded as the works of savages and primitive people.

While appreciating rock art at Bhimbetka and at other places he says that the linear expression of which India has proud heritage and the form and lines in the paintings are delicate and naturalistic. He appreciated the movement, the strength in outline and the sense of composition which remains always balanced and lively. He further brings out how these artists at Bhimbetka passed on from naturalism to forms in which the abstract is dominant.

I personally feel that V.S. Wakankar could do justice to the rock paintings in an authoritative way only because he was an artist, researcher, archaeologist and lover of Indian Culture, all rolled into one. The outstanding nature of this discovery of Wakankar lies in the fact that there is not a



Animals, cart and dancing humans, Patsar

single place containing rock art where there was settlement of man continuously for at least one lakh years as also a solitary place having thousands of paintings. Another point I want to stress upon is that as usual foreigners like Mr. Cockburn, Gordon etc. tried to put these rock paintings in the 8th century B C. While Dr. Wakankar proved that they belong to the pre-historic period. In fact the main achievement of Dr. Wakankar is his successful attempt of dating these paintings although it is relative dating. For this he has taken into consideration the stylistic study of paintings, superimposition of paintings, subjects of paintings, design and decorations of paintings and the pottery and stone tools dug out in the excavations from these rock shelters. That is why Shri M.N. Deshpande gives credit of attempting a fairly satisfactory chronology and dating of the paintings in these rock-shelters, on the basis of stylistic considerations and archaeological evidence (Chakravarti 1984).

Considering such type of enormous and painstaking work touching all aspects of the art of painting of Dr. Wakankar, Dr. Yashodhar Mathpal has rightly called Wakankar a living encyclopaedia of Indian rock art (Mathpal 1984, acknowledgements). All will agree with me that there is no idea of exaggeration in this eulogy.

2. Discovery of the River Saraswati

This is his very striking discovery considered to be a land mark in Indian history. It was known as Saraswati Nadi Shodha Yatra (Saraswati River Research Odyssey). It was sponsored by Shri Moropant Pingale and led by Haribhau Wakankar. Such an expedition was not known to the Indian history for this campaign was to cover approximately a 4000km. long distance that too without any financial help from the government. Wakankar's untiring colleagues and several other voluntary organizations actively participated in this movement. Even Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) also has given support to this adventurous leap. Wakankar could accomplish this off-beat task of discovering the palaeo-channel of ancient River Saraswati.

2.I. Re-arrival of the River Saraswati

The Indian tradition has kept the existence of Saraswati alive. Chanting of a hymn '*Gange cha yamune chaiwa Godawari Saraswati 1 Narmade Sindhu Kaweri Jalesmin Sannidhim kuru*', her memory is kept alive by the Hindus till today, though some of us questioned her existence. They tried their best to disprove this assumption otherwise it would have been difficult for them to reject Aryan Theory. In the *Rigveda* her name first occurred along with 21 other rivers. In fact she was eulogized therein by saying- *Ambitame Naditame Dewitame Saraswati 1 Aprashasta iwa smsi prashastimamba naskridhi 11. Rigveda (2.41.16.)* (O'Saraswati Thou art the Supreme mother among mothers, the greatest river among rivers and the superb Goddess among the deities. O' mother we are ignoramus. Bless us with knowledge). Unlike people of other cultures we Hindus never considered river as a mere flow/ source of water. According to us, she gives water that is *Jeewana* (means life) which mother gives to her child, while Saraswati was giving it to generation after generations

without any break. And out of gratitude and reverence we have given her an esteemed position of a deity. We find 65 *Richas* (Hymns) in the *Rigveda* and her mention in the *Yajurveda*, *Atharvaveda*, *Shatapatha Brahmana*, *Shrimad Bhagawata* and *Manusmriti*. We have references of her in the epics also. The route of the Balarama's pilgrimage was along the bank of Saraswati as recorded in the *Mahabharata*.

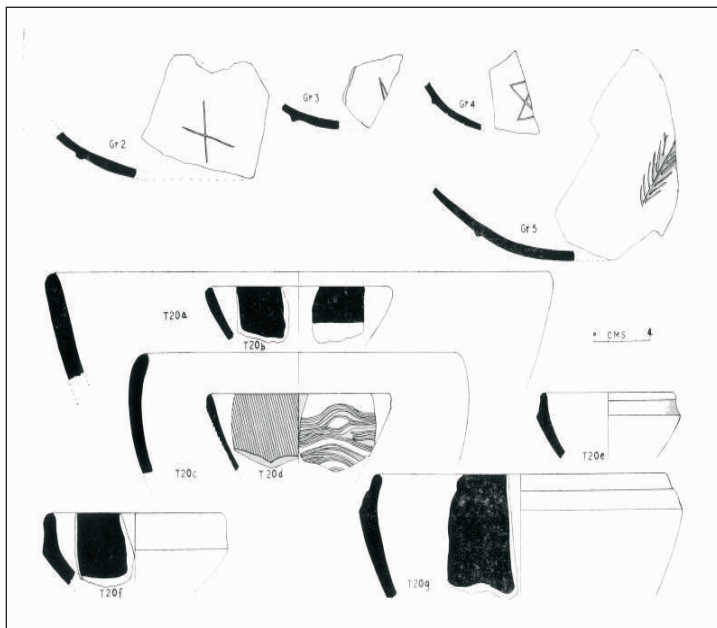
Alas! After disappearance of the River she remained merely in literary form in the *Veda*-s and *Purana*-s. Consequentially entire Saraswati-Sindhu valley became a barren desert. As an outcome of it the river was shrouded behind the 'veil of time'. Thence the onus to trace her dried course has to be shouldered by the inquisitive *suputra*-s of *Bharatmata*. In fact scholars like Cunningham, Macdonel who wrote history of Sanskrit literature in 1887 and A. B. Keith, have tried to trace the existence of this river. But their efforts were on individual level and thus remained incomplete. Dr. N.N. Godbole from the Technology Department of Banaras Hindu University produced his work in 1963 entitled *The Rigvedic Saraswati*. He tried to trace it with the help of photographs taken by the American satellite called 'Landsat'. He was followed by Dr. Parikh (1965), M.A. Krishnan (1968), Will Helmi (1969), and others. Then the challenge was accepted by the Babasaheb Apte Smarak Samiti and the Bharatiya Itihasa Sankalan Samiti of Delhi which have relied upon Wakankar for planning this hazardous expedition. Having accepted this ungrudgingly, rather willingly Wakankar enthusiastically started his work by forming a group of 16 like-minded researchers who were experts in different fields like archaeology, zoology, geology, etc. The march started from Delhi on 19th November, 1985. They have to traverse from Adibadri in the Shivalik ranges and walk down distance of nearly 4000kms. From Adibadri the team searched for traces of the course of Saraswati in the states of Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat. This was a boon in disguise for the archaeologist as he finds hundreds of settlements and towns on the banks of the ancient river Saraswati which was flowing with walloping waters in her course during those times. The civilization found on the banks of Sindhu and Saraswati was and is one and the same. Moreover most of the sites in the vicinity of River Sindhu have been found on her eastern side i.e. towards the Saraswati river valley only. This civilization was born, blossomed and expanded on the banks of Saraswati River and of course Sindhu River. Hence, instead of calling this civilization merely as Sindhu civilization, it would be more appropriate to call it as Saraswati-Sindhu Civilization. One must agree that lion share of this discovery is of Dr. Wakankar's who initiated this campaign. In this way he has contributed a lot in adding a golden page in Indian history. In fact whatever he did and whichever discovery he made or initiated was meant for enriching our culture and glorifying it. (This is based on the works of Dilip Wengurlekar titled *River Saraswati* and Udayan Indurkar's *Drishta Kalasadhak*).

3. Excavations at various sites in Madhya Pradesh

The insatiable urge for finding our ancient roots and Wakankar himself being an archaeologist excavated various 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. V.S. Wakankar started his training

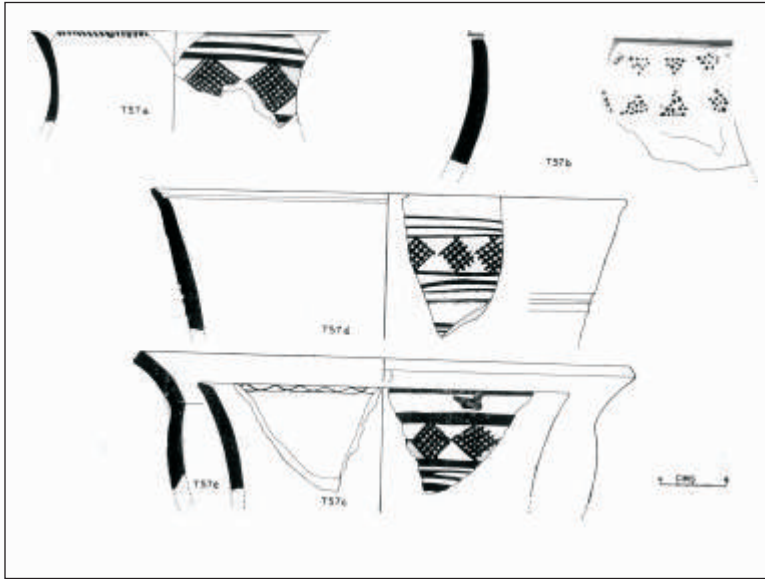
in excavations as site supervisor at Maheshvara and Navada-Toli in 1958. He has explored many Chalcolithic sites in Malwa. He assisted Dr. Sankalia in preparation of the report of Maheshvara and Navada-Toli. One of the aforementioned excavations of Wakankar at Kayatha yielded wonderful results taking Indian culture even prior to that of Harappan period. Veteran and renowned archaeologist Dr. Sankalia has this to say about the importance of this excavation, “As far as the results are concerned, the excavation has established the existence of two earlier cultures at Kayatha. These span at least a period of four centuries according to C-14 dates. The white painted Black-and- Red Ware culture is certainly from southeast Rajasthan. The genesis of this is not positively known whereas the Kayatha culture is very likely an offshoot of the pre-Harappan culture from Sind and northern Rajasthan. Slightly different, as far as the pottery fabrics and designs as well as the elongated flat copper axes are concerned, it was fairly rich, lacking only the large, mud brick houses of the pre-Harappans and the Harappans.....”. He further remarked that the Kayatha has not only provided evidence of an earlier beginning of civilization in Malwa, but has also proved the validity of grouping the rich assemblage of pottery at Navda- Toli into distinct groups according to fabrics and shapes (*Excavations at Kayatha, Preface*).

This excavation has proved that the Kayatha culture is as old as circa 2000-1800 B. C. More over the culture of the earliest inhabitants of Kayatha has been found to be entirely different from any other Chalcolithic culture of the sub-continent. It has also yielded three distinct ceramic industries. This ceramic industry has been labelled as the Kayatha Ware. I do not think that more details of this activity of Wakankar are needed here.

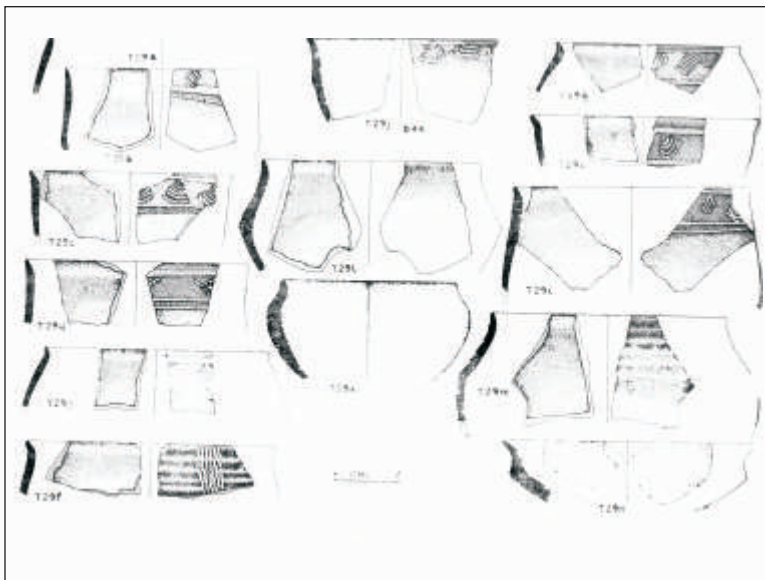


Kayatha combed ware and bowls (Courtesy – Deccan College, Pune)

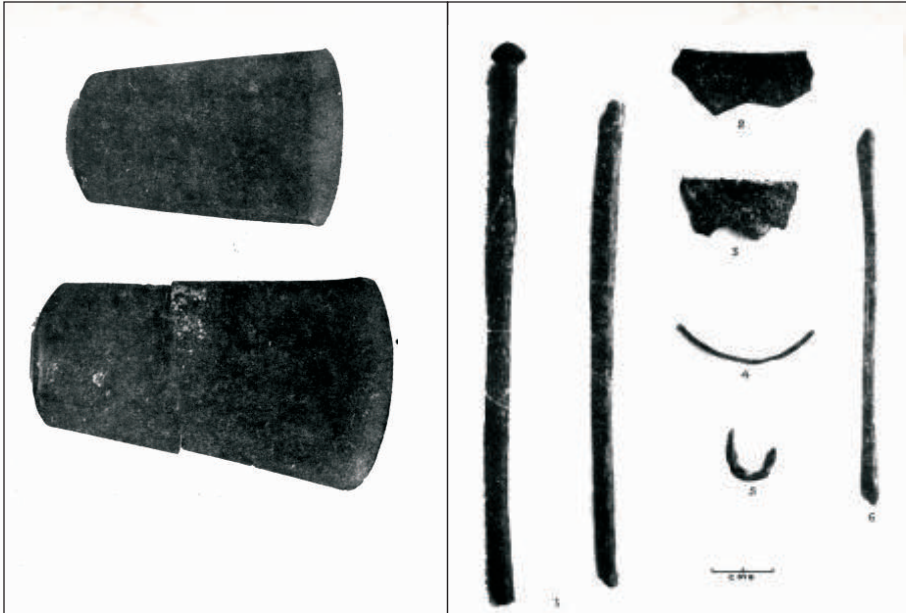
Besides his incredible discoveries and researches his contribution to Indian culture is his collection of many enigmatic images of gods and goddesses now housed in the museum of the Vikram Vidyapeeth at Ujjain. Because of this lessons in iconography have become visual. He knew that art is a voyage from formless to form and from invisible to visible.



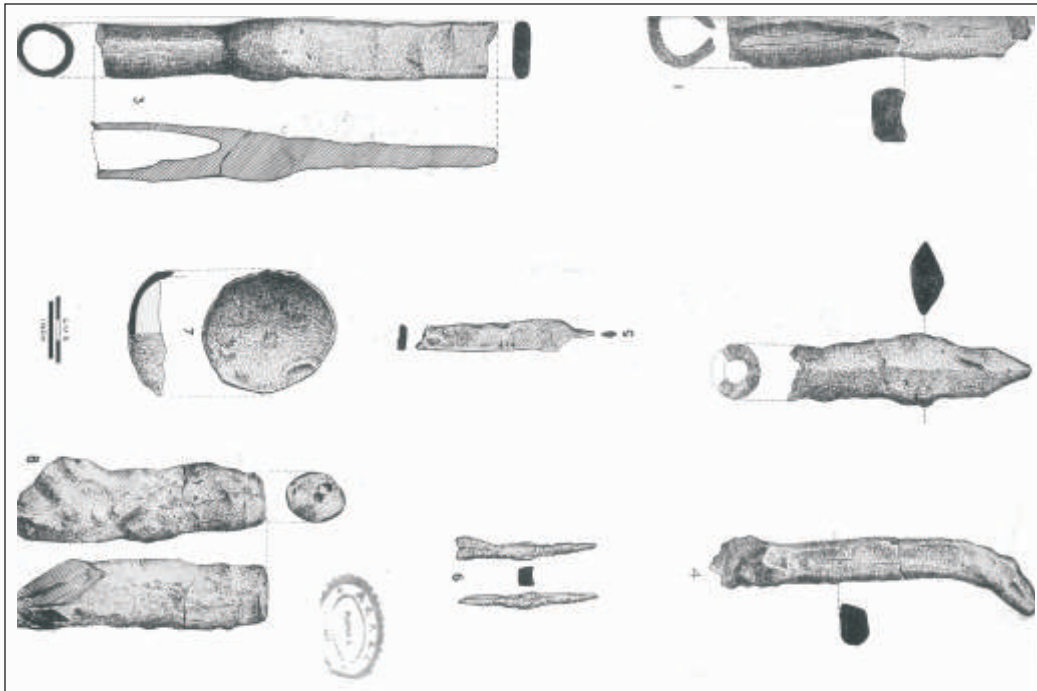
Malwa ware, bowls/ kundas (Courtesy – Deccan College, Pune)



Painted Black and Red ware, bowls (Courtesy – Deccan College, Pune)



Copper axes & Objects (Courtesy – Deccan College, Pune)



Iron objects

Personally I consider temple architecture and iconography are sine qua non of the Indian culture and hence I attach immense importance to these two aspects. Obviously it becomes essential for me to deal at least with iconography to which Wakankar also had given importance considering it as one of the dimensions of Indian culture. I therefore would like to throw some more light on this which was a little known field of research of Haribhau Wakankar.

Indian art does not merely express things but sublime ideas, complex meditations, flashing intuitions. The Hindu artist of the ancient and medieval periods has unfailingly expressed his deep faith in transcendental reality. It is to be noted that art in India assimilates the truth and values of the metaphysical order into all spheres of life—social, moral, artistic. It knows no antithesis between the immediate and the ultimate, the earthly and the heavenly, the sensuous and the transcendental, and enjoyment (*bhukti*) and liberation (*mukti*).

The *Shilpashastra-s* codified the symbols, motifs, and forms of Indian images. Without their depictions in stone, says Havell, the numerous gods of Indian religion would have ceased to exist (Mukherjee 1965:32). In the Indian context art is one of the sources of expressing philosophy and religious predilection of the society. The anthropomorphic forms of the poetic imagination of the Rigvedic nature-worshipper took a long time to crystallize into the iconic moulds.

As the need to establish a more personal rapport with the divines arose man rather chose to worship them through symbols and rightly so, for how was he to differentiate between

one anthropomorphized divinity and another minus the poetic descriptions. The symbols became the differentiating marks giving shape and form to the various functions and attributes of the gods. Iconography brings forth the ethical values, philosophy and spiritual life. Dr. Wakankar knew it very well that iconography is the final culmination of the sculptural art; it constitutes the highest achievement of the artist. And this was the reason probably, which induced him to collect these images to be housed in museum.

Basically, icons in the advanced stage of development were created to bestow the formless with visual form and enable the lay devotee to transcend beyond himself into a state of eternally blissful union with his god. It is well known that icons were fashioned for



Sarvabhatavaihitra Shiva



Ashtamurti Shiva

various purposes. These are tailored to cater needs of devotees (*upasakanam karyartham Brahmano rupa kalpana*). The cult of worship of objects can be traced from the remote times. More symbols of the *Panchamahabhutas* were transformed into human shape and then turned into superhuman form with multi-arms and more than one heads. Finally the images became *Saguna* manifestation of *Nirguna Parabrahma*, the path to the *Parabrahma* lead either through the ecstasy of the *upasana* of an imaged *Isvara* or through the intellectual metaphysical exercise of various *Darshana-s* and doctrinaire cults. As the Bhakti cult expanded its popular base to become a major socio-religious movement the philosophies and the doctrines had to take recourse to the images to express themselves in a more appealing idiom. Gradually the attempts were made to create a form representative of the *Awyakta* (invisible) Brahma. It was of course the work of the philosophers and the thinkers among the sculptors. I have chosen to call the finest product of their vision *Bimba-Brahma*. The *Bimba*, the image symbolizing *Brahma* was the ultimate in the art of icon making. Neither the sculptor nor the artist could aim to go beyond it.

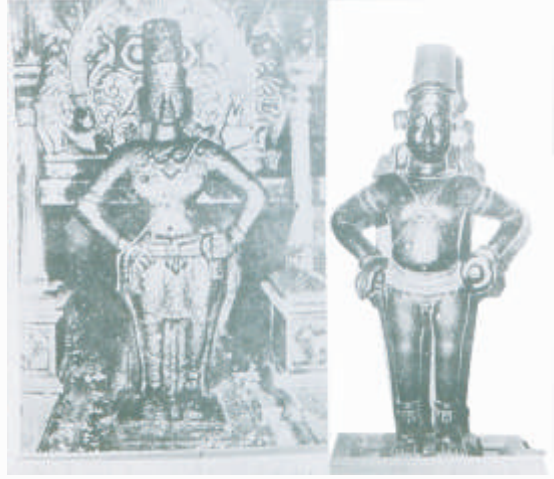
In the *Bimba-Brahma* category there are at least three images namely the *Wilakshana Chatushpada Sadashiva*, *Vaikuntha*, and *Ardhanarishwara*. I would like to elucidate only that of Shiva which would be enough to catch the point. Out of the three such icons- two from Khajuraho and the solitary one from the Markandi temple in Maharashtra- I discuss here the one from the latter place. The Markandi temples are in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra. The icon of Chatushpada Sadashiva is distinct in some feature. It belongs to 10th-11th century C. E. It is located in Register No. 3 on the south face of the Markanda Rishi Temple complex. The icon under discussion is shown seated in *padmasana*. Its three faces are visible. Interestingly it has four legs which feature is unusual. The icon has eight arms holding *damaru*, *trishula* and a *bijapuraka* while the fourth is folded and settles in front of the chest covering a rosary placed over a palm of one of the left hands whereas the three left hands contain from top downwards, a *pothi*, *khatwanga* and a *ghata*. The fourth, as described above, is folded and supports a vertically hanging rosary. The remaining two legs are firmly planted on the pedestal whereas the icon is shown seated on an *asana* with two legs folded in *padmasana*. The totality of the multipronged physical entity endows it with superhuman prowess and striking presence. Hence it is considered a unique icon in the annals of Indian iconography (Deo 1973:31).



Chatushpada Shiva, Markandi Temple

According to me this description is physical one but metaphysically speaking it stands as a visual representation of the *Shaiva siddhanta* which constitutes four principles namely *Charyapada*, *Kriyapada*, *Yogapada* and *Jnanapada*. I therefore inclined to identify this image based on philosophy as *Bimba-Brahma*, the ultimate in iconography.

The uniqueness of this iconic form carries within it a multiplicity of thought, providing at one glance a terse visual formula which gives a mesmeric expression to the *Shaiva siddhanta* or *Shuddha-Shaiva* school appears anthropomorphized in the *Sadashiva murti-s*. The *Wayawiya Sambita* of the *Shivapurana* exposing the *Shaiva siddhanta* described *Dharma* as *catushpada* or four legged. The four *pada-s* of *Dharma*, the word *pada* being understood in its primary and literal sense a foot as well as its secondary sense as support, are enumerated as *Charya* (conduct), *Kriya* (rites and rituals), *Yoga* (meditation), and *Jnana* (knowledge). The rites and rituals (*Kriya*) form the vital link that binds an individual to the social structure: the daily conduct (*charya*) of morality upholds the ethical base of that structure: but beyond the mundane structure of social roles and relationships lies the true knowledge (*Jnana*). The knowledge of the universal functioning of the ultimate of which the mundane world is only a small part; the universal ultimate can be experienced only through inward regression into the depths of one's own *Atman*-through meditation (*yoga*). *Dharma* cannot sustain without any of the four *pada*. The society and its ethical functioning forms the foundation on which the edifice of *Yoga* and *Jnana* is built.



Shri Viththala



Natraj

This is an attempt to show that finally the ancient artist-sculptors succeeded in preparing an image based on the philosophy leading the devotees towards the path of salvation or god realization to which I like to call *Bimba-Brahma*. As *Nada-Brahma* is in vocal music, *Shabbda-Brahma* in grammar, and *Advaita-Brahma* in philosophy it is *Bimba-Brahma* in iconography.

Apart from these researches turning the course of history and adding some golden pages to the history of this country which have shattered the

theories put forth by foreign scholars followed by Indians related to the Aryan Invasion, non existence of the River Saraswati, etc. Wakankar has contributed many more things for the benefit of fellow beings. His priority was to carry forward the mission that was nourished by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha. He wanted to take the message to the youth of this country that our rich culture is very ancient. He knew that to convince them there should be a medium which would attract them. He consulted the elderly persons in the organization and became a founder member of the Sanskara Bharati.

It has spread over in the nook and corner of this country through more than 1500 branches. His efforts were to bring the youth together who have interest in either music or dance or painting or ancient Indian art. The aim of Sanskara Bharati is to bring the youth together through the medium of fine arts. He knows very well that art as well as art history cannot be studied in isolation. The purpose of art for Haribhau was *Jeewanawad* (vitalism) and not merely hedonism or didacticism. For him *Jeewanawad* that is to think as to how different ways of life have been embodied in art, how art is influenced by society and its culture, and influences in turn society and its culture. He established Bharat Kala Bhawan to train students in painting. This all was aimed at to make them imbibe the ultimate goal i.e. *Param vaibhawam netu metat swarashtram*.



Vaikuntha Vishnu



Kalyansundara Shiva

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The opinions expressed in the Memorial Lecture are those of the author and the IGNCA does not necessarily subscribe to them.



*Dr. V S Wakankar (3rd from left) with his parents, S
h. Siddhanath Wakankar and Smt. Sitabai Wakankar (Siting of chair)
and other family members*



'Hunter chasing a group of deer, Bhimbetka'



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