

**HISTORICAL PHASE OF ROCK ART IN INDIA**

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ABSTRACT

Rock art is the collective name given to the practise of painting and bruising on the natural surfaces of caves, shelters, and rocks. It is a phenomena that occurs all across the world and is among the first creative expressions produced by humans. It is quickly becoming a prominent topic of study and research all around the world, with a methodology that draws from a variety of academic disciplines. The range of rock art that can be found in India is extensive and diverse, both in terms of its aesthetics and the subjects it explores. Its chronology can be followed from the Upper Palaeolithic all the way up to Historic times, and there is probably even an echo of it in the artistic articulations of modern day tribal and ethnic communities. This can be done by starting at the beginning of the chronology and working your way backwards. Rock art in India may be found over the length and width of the whole nation, typically in settings that are quite similar to one another but with some regional differences. It is to India's great good fortune that enormous concentrations of this significant cultural inheritance, which takes the shape of an art form, can be found throughout the country. Rock art from the Historic period in India is distinguished by the presence of writing in Brahmi, Kharoshti, Shankha, and even Nagari scripts. This type of rock art is categorised as belonging to the Historic period. In the paintings and engravings, one can observe the beginnings of numerous religious icons and emblems representing the dominant religions of the time.

keywords: Rock art, History

INTRODUCTION

Vishnu Wakankar, who is generally renowned for his memory, is considered the "father" of the field of rock art studies in India. When he found the Bhimbetka shelters in 1957, he immediately began working there, both on the art and on excavations. He dated some of the pictures to the Mesolithic and even to the late Palaeolithic, which surely sparked studies on Indian rock art. As a result of his tireless efforts, he was able to locate and document a diverse collection of rock art locations. Rock art in India may be found over the length and width of the whole nation, typically in settings that are quite similar to one another but with some regional differences. In addition to India, other regions that are particularly abundant with the existence of rock art include South Africa, Australia, North and South America, and Europe. According to Yashodar Mathpal, the history of rock art studies in India may be broken up into three major periods. The first one, which would span the years 1867 to 1931, would be that of adventurers and enthusiasts. During the second era, which lasted from 1952 through 1972, "greater emphasis was devoted to faithful documentation," but "during the third period, which currently predominates, the study of rock art has become a science and a subject of inquiry" (Mathpal 1992: 213-14). Last but not least, it is important to remember the contributions that the Rock Art Society of India (RASI) has made since it was established in 1990. Archibald Carlleyle, who was working as the Earliest Assistant of the Archaeological Survey of India at the time, made what is believed to be the first discovery of rock art in 1867. This find was made in the sandstone hills of the

Vindhyas Mirzapur District (what is now Uttar Pradesh). This was a full twelve years prior to the uncovering of the Altamira treasure. His findings were not made public until 1906, a significant amount of time after they were initially made. There have been reports of rock art sites in India. These sites are often found in rocky terrain that are composed of sandstone or sedimentary rocks. This is largely referring to the Vindhya, Cuddapah, Kaladgi, and Bhima basins, as well as the Satpura and Aravalli ranges, which may be found strewn over the states of Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan. The Vindhyan mountains in Madhya Pradesh and its Kaimurean expansions in Uttar Pradesh contain the greatest number of archaeological sites per square kilometre. In addition, a sizeable number of sites may be found in the granite hills that are found on the peninsula of India. These regions encompass parts of the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Rajasthan, as well as the Datia district of the state of Madhya Pradesh.

ROCK ART STUDIES IN INDIA

Research on rock art in India has a long and illustrious history. Pictographs were first "recorded" by Carlylle in 1867 – 1868, and a number of explorers noted rock art sites in India during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's. Petroglyphs were first reported in the subcontinent by Henwood in 1856, while pictographs were first "recorded" by Carlylle in 1867 – 1868. Rock art research in India became a more deliberate pursuit after the discovery of a large complex of painted rock shelters at Bhimbetka by V. S. Wakankar in the 1950s. As a result, a number of researchers began programmes of exploration and documentation, with a considerable focus on the central region. As a consequence of this, throughout the second half of the twentieth century, rock art documentation grew more organised, chronicling the aesthetic variation of different locations. The many finds that were obtained during this time period led to a number of syntheses of rock art traditions, which enabled the construction of stylistic sequences possible. This was done with the assistance of supporting evidence from larger archaeological research at rock art sites and locations, which revealed that part of the images might pertain to the Late Pleistocene period. The claim that cup markings found buried beneath Middle Paleolithic deposits at Auditorium Cave in Bhimbetka provide evidence for some of the world's earliest rock art is, however, contentious and has not yet received widespread support among scholars of rock art in India and elsewhere. Throughout the course of the twentieth century, a wide range of methodological approaches were utilised. Early scholars had a propensity to concentrate their efforts on documenting the most intricate and visually beautiful parts of rock art. However, as studies gradually grew more organised, more methodical methodologies were adopted. Recording methods have varied greatly from one researcher to the next, and because of issues with poor replication from photography, prohibitively expensive publication costs, and time constraints, the majority of the recording that has been done has been done in the form of either freehand sketches or watercolour renditions.

An example of a more systematic and accurate recording system is the work that was done by Mathpal (1984) at Bhimbetka, which is one of the largest and most well-known rock art complexes in India. This work involved the direct tracing of all figures at rock shelters across a single hill-site complex. Throughout the entirety of India's scholarly history, one of the most important concerns has been the direct interpretation of the meanings represented by rock art artwork. The study of domestic fauna, scenes of hunting and dancing, pastoralism and food production, as well as religious and military imagery, have provided a common means to investigate rock art imagery and undertake regional comparisons. However, this has been done without an attempt to understand why the rock art has been produced or what role it played. In spite of the fact that researchers have on occasion tried to analyse the intentions of the rock art creators, these

attempts have been conceptually informed only very infrequently. considers most of the iconography used by the Indians to be of a more secular nature, stating that there is "no reason to hunt for mystical interpretations for this art." Others have suggested that a significant portion of the imagery is symbolic, and that it is generally associated with ceremonial practises. tentatively implies that rising abstractness in style is related to a shift away from rock art with a seemingly plain narrative function toward the development of rock art with deeper symbolic and ritualistic functions. In attempt to understand rock art, a number of researchers have employed ethnographic similarities with present tribal communities in India. The experts' levels of appreciation for the acceptable use of these analogies differ, however, as do their interpretations of the rock art. Earlier researchers frequently and uncritically drew parallels with small-scale hunter-gatherer or agro-pastoral communities that lived near rock art sites. These comparisons gave the impression that these communities were living in societies that had undergone little to no change over the course of centuries or even millennia. Recent years have seen the beginnings of a more sophisticated approach to the relationship between ethnographic studies and rock art.

SOME OF THE IMPORTANT ROCK ART SITES:

In south of India, some important rock art sites are Kupgal (Sanaganakallu), Badami, Maski, Piklihal, Tekkalakota in Karnataka, Budagavi, Chintakunta, Kethavaram, Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh, Alambadi, Padiyandal in Tamil Nadu and Edakkal and Ezuthupara rock shelters in Kerala.



Fig.1. The white and red rock art paintings of human beings and animals. (Right) A view of the rock art painting site at Chintakunta in Kadapa district.

The locations of Dras, Kargil, Mulbekh, Nurla, and Leh in the region of Ladakh are among the most significant rock art sites in North India. It should go without saying that this region's high altitude, topography, and climate have all contributed to the dearth of rock paintings. Along the upper reaches of the Indus River and her tributaries in the Karakoram Hills and also in Ladakh, a significant number of rock engravings have been discovered. These are most likely from a later time period. In addition to that, there have been reports of rock engravings in the Zaskar Valley and the neighbourhood of Chilas, which is located on the banks of the Indus River. Even in the foothills of the Himalayas, close to the ancient city of Almora near Chamoli in Garhwal, there have been reports of several rock paintings. Paintings have also been discovered at sites in Varanasi, Allahabad, and Agra, all of which are located in the Ganga Yamuna valley in the state of Uttar Pradesh. In the 1860s, Archibald Carlyle first became aware of rock shelters in the Mirzapur district that contained paintings when he was in this area. In this region, a single district that

is 11,310 square kilometres in size contains 115 rock art sites. Bhaladharia, Bijayagarh, Likhunia, Hathvani, Lakhma, and Mukhadari are a few of the other significant shelters in the Mirzapur region.

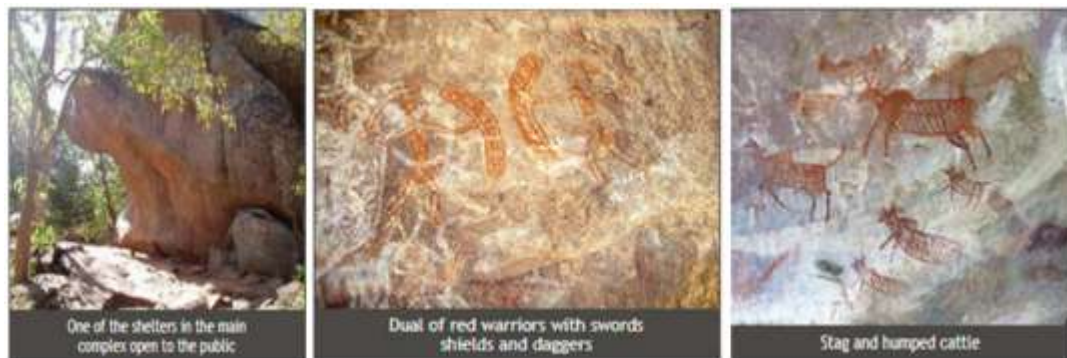


Fig.2. Rock Art Site of Bhimbetka

There have been numerous discoveries of rock shelters, the majority of which have been made in the Vindhyan region, with some coming from the Satpura ranges. The most significant examples of rock art in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh can be found in and around Bhopal, the state capital. The renowned Bhimbetka complex of rock shelters, which was inscribed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2003, can be found in the Raisen district forty kilometres to the south of Bhopal. It is believed that Acheulian people created the petroglyphs that can be found in Auditorium Cave (Bhimbetka III F-24). They consist of ten cupules, also known as cup marks, and a long line that meanders. The petroglyphs that date back to the Acheulian period are the oldest examples of rock art that have been discovered to date.

NATURE OF ROCK ART IN INDIA:

The rock art seen in India may be broadly classified into two categories. Pictographs and petroglyphs are the names for these markings.

Pictographs:

The bulk of the pictographs in India are monochrome, although some also exist in bichrome and polychrome forms. The majority of pictographs are shown as paintings and may be seen on the walls and ceilings of naturally created caves and rock shelters. The Indian pictographs have a strong preference for red in its many guises, from a dark violet to a yellowish brick red, and this preference can be seen throughout the pictographs. Pigments taken from the locations were subjected to both chemical analysis and microscopic investigation, both of which revealed the existence of red haematite nodules containing iron oxide. White, the colour that was used the second most frequently after red, was produced either from calcium carbonate nodule or kaoline clayey deposits. White was the colour that was used the third most frequently after red. A great number of pictographs have been drawn in both red and white colours, with the white colour typically serving as the filling in for the figures and the red serving as the outline for the figures. In a good number of these paintings, the white colour has become quite faint, leaving only the red outline. Mineralized chalcedony of the appropriate colour was used to create some of the very first rock paintings, which were found in rock art sites located in central India and Odisha. These paintings showed scenes in green and yellow.

Petroglyphs:

These or rock bruising form the second most important type of rock art which were done either by rubbing, hammering, scooping or pecking of rough granite surface. Rarely are bruising found on quartzite rocks because of the extreme toughness of the stone. At times dots and cup-marks have been found in some shelters which have been made by hammering the surface gently, and some of the cup-marks are as deep as 50 cm with an equal diameter throughout its depth. These include shallow dots, small holes, conical and U-shaped cup marks and were probably done by a drilling technique with the help of metallic instruments. Cup marks are attracting the attention of rock art scholars and archaeologists now days. Another interesting feature of rock art not only in India but also other parts of the world is that both the paintings as well as bruising have been found in superimposed layers where a single surface has been used for several times. For rock art studies the term 'superimpositions' is used which means when one rock art motif is placed over another or an earlier motif.

HISTORY OF ROCK ART RESEARCH:

ino Santiago In November of 1879, Tomas Sanz de Santuola's daughter Maria, then 12 years old, spotted animal drawings on the ceiling of the Altamira caverns in northern Spain. These caves are located in the Sierra de Altamira. In 1867 and 1868, an English official working for the Archaeological Survey of India named Archibald Carlyle found murals on the walls of a few shelters at Sohanghat, which is located in the wooded part of the Kaimur mountains in Mirzapur District, in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The fact that this finding was discovered twelve years before Marcelino de Santuola's discovery of the Altamira caves in Spain makes it a remarkable and extremely fascinating find. Later on, in 1906, Vincent Smith published Carlyle's stories of his discoveries in Indian Antiquary. These accounts were written by Carlyle. Carlyle made important contributions to the field of archaeology when he established a connection between the prehistoric people who made stone implements and the microliths, pieces of charcoal, and red haematite that were discovered on the floors of rock shelters. As a result, he came to the conclusion that the chronology of the paintings began in the Stone Ages. By researching the subject matter of the paintings, he had also concluded that the paintings were not all painted at the same time and belonged to distinct centuries. He came to this conclusion as a result of his examination of the paintings' subject matter. After such a fantastic beginning, in 1883, an officer of the British government's Opium Department named John Cockburn submitted the first scientific report on Indian rock paintings. This paper was written on the paintings. Francke, C.A. Silberrand, C.W. Anderson, and Percy Brown were the individuals who were responsible for carrying on the tradition of rock art studies in India. In addition to the English archaeologists who pioneered the study of rock art and made significant discoveries, a large number of researchers from other countries have made significant contributions. In 1921, the Curator of the Patna Museum, Manoranjan Ghosh, investigated the rock art complex of the Mirzapur region as well as many sites at Raigarh and Adamgarh near Hoshangabad in Madhya Pradesh. As a result of his research, he published a book on Indian rock art in 1932. Even though engravings had previously been discovered in South India, it wasn't until 1933 that K.P. Jayaswal described rock carvings (petroglyphs) in Vikramkhola, which was then located in the Sundargarh district of Odisha but is today in the Jharsuguda district. In the years that followed, other carvings were discovered in various locations, including on the bank of the river Indus, on the Kupgallu hill close to Bellary, and on the Gotgiribetta ridge close to Bangalore. G.R. Hunter and D.H. Gordon found painted caves in the Mahadeo Hills in Panchmarhi, which is located in the state of Madhya Pradesh, in the 1930s. It is important to highlight another significant contribution made by A. H. Brodrick, who has made an effort to evaluate and evaluate Indian paintings in the context of a more global perspective. Fred Fawcett, together with the aid of Hubert Knox and Robert Sewell, discovered petroglyphs, also known as rock

bruising, in the southern region of India in the year 1892 on the Kuppallu hill in the Bellary District. Although Fawcett's examination of the location of Kuppallu and his discovery of more rock sculptures in the Edakkal caves in the Kozikode District of Kerala took place in the 1890s, the year 1901 was the first year in which its clear reference was made. Leonard Munn also made significant contributions to the early study of rock art in South India, and these efforts are notable.

V.S. Wakankar added an entirely new dimension to the field of study, which is why he is honoured with the title of 'Founder of modern rock art studies in India.' As a result of his contributions, the grand new chapter of rock art research in India was unfolded, and it was for this reason that he was given the title. Wakankar had spotted what looked like ancient structures atop a sandstone hill when he was riding a train from Bhopal to Nagpur. These rocks had been carved into interesting shapes. This resulted in the discovery of the Bhimbetka rock shelters in 1957 in Bhopal in the state of Madhya Pradesh. These rock shelters are one of the most well-known locations in the world that have enormous concentrations of rock paintings. Stone Age Paintings in India was a book that has been released by Wakankar and R.R. Brooks jointly. After the discovery made by V.S. Wakankar, a number of scholars and explorers concentrated their efforts in and around the central region of India. Rock art experts such as Jagadish Gupta, Bridget Allchin, Nagaraja Rao and Malhotra, K. Paddayya, A. Sundara, K.Rajan, R.K Varma, V.N. Misra, J. Jacobson, and subsequently G.S. Tyagi and Yashodhar Mathpal were active throughout the 1970s. They contributed to the field in many capacities. Throughout the course of the twentieth century, a wide range of methodological approaches were utilised. Major academic programmes have been developed up and implemented by organisations such as the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA). These programmes are designed to investigate creative expressions and evaluate their place in the global context. Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the premier organisation for the archaeological research and protection of cultural heritage of India, which is under the Department of Culture, Government of India, has been involved in promoting, conserving, and preserving rock art of India for a very long time. ASI is a part of the Indian government. One of the most significant contributions that the ASI has made toward the advancement of rock art research is the fact that it was instrumental in Bhimbetka's induction onto the World Heritage list as a World Heritage site on July 3, 2003, under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). At its location in Bhopal, in the state of Madhya Pradesh, the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS), also known as the National Museum of Mankind, is working to increase awareness of rock art. In addition to these organisations, the National Studies Laboratory, the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, and the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), all of which have the goal of encouraging and promoting rock art research in the nation,

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF ROCK ART IN INDIA:

Upper Palaeolithic Period:

The chronology of Indian rock paintings has not been established by an absolute technique of dating, in contrast to some of the rock paintings of Europe and Australia, which have been reliably dated by utilising AMS (Accelerator Mass Spectrometer) dating by pigment analysis. Even if there are efforts being made, we are still very early on in the experimental stage. As a result, researchers and academics have focused largely on analysing the rock art's subject substance, superimpositions, and style in addition to other factors in order to establish a provisional chronology. Rock art in India most likely dates back to an extremely ancient time. It is generally agreed that two Acheulian petroglyphs discovered in the Auditorium rock shelter (III-F 24) in Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh, India, represent the world's oldest known example of rock art. These were

characterised by a big circular cupule that had been scooped out and a pecked meandering line that ran to the edge of the cupule. Relatively recently, around four hundred and fifty cupules from Daraki-Chattan, which is located close to Bhanpura in the Chambal valley, have been dated to the Palaeolithic. Intriguingly, artefacts made of haematite and quartz crystals were discovered in India dating back to the Acheulean period, which is considered to be the beginning of the Lower Paleolithic period. These artefacts are considered to be evidence of artistic expression. There is a unique haematite nodule from location V at Hunsgi (Karnataka) that has striation lines on its worn out facet. These marks give the impression that the nodule was used as a crayon to colour or mark a rock surface at some point in the past. Additionally, quartz crystals from the bottom of the Lower Paleolithic deposit discovered in Singi Talav (Rajasthan) were gathered for its visual characteristics and must have been utilised for body ornamentation or other comparable uses. These crystals were discovered in Rajasthan. In early Indian rock art, human figures often have the form of a perfect "S," and often portray activities like as hunting, dancing, and sprinting. This kind of rock art is considered to be among the first examples of rock art in the world. The complex motifs of older paintings created in red ochre have been layered with these dynamic S-shaped human figures that have been overlaid on them.

Mesolithic Period:

Pictographs are the most common type of rock art that was created during the Mesolithic period. Scholars believe that the paintings from the Mesolithic period depict a people that is primarily engaged in hunting and gathering. The entire nation of India adheres to the same format and content for it. It is packed with a vast variety of descriptive elements that cover a very broad span. The human figures are shown in a static and abstract manner, whilst the animal shapes are really accurate. When it comes to human forms, the male figures are more like sticks, while the female figures are more like bulky boxes with elaborate body designs as infilling that consist of spiral or honeycomb design patterns. In addition, X-ray portrayals of the internal organs of a person or animal's body are a distinguishing feature of the Mesolithic rock art that was created in India during that time period. The rock art of this time period is dominated by paintings that portray hunting-related activities. These paintings offer an impressive level of detail for a wide range of game animals, including both large and tiny species. Animals such as gaurs, humped cattle, buffalo, rhinoceroses, elephants, tigers, leopards, boars, sambars, chital, chinkara, nilgai, blackbucks, monkeys, jackals, foxes, dogs, rats, and porcupines are included in this category. These paintings show spears and arrows with microliths at their tips and barbs, suggesting that they were used as a weapon. Aside from hunting, several of the other sorts of activities seen appear to be contemporary versions of activities such as slaughtering animals, gathering fruit and honey, dancing, singing, playing musical instruments, drinking, and dining inside a building with a roof over it. The majority of the canvases have been painted in various hues of red, including crimson, purple, chocolate, orange, and white. It is possible to observe multiple layers by superimposing one image on top of another. Archaeologists have also grouped certain pictures into the category of religious or cultic, which refers to depictions that suggest a deeper meaning in the process of their formation. These include tales from mythology that portray gigantic beasts or gods racing after puny humans, as well as accounts of medical care and activities similar to burials. When compared to rock paintings, the number of Mesolithic engravings is rather low. The subject matter often takes the form of animal-like forms, abstract patterns, and even simple scratches at times.

ROCK ART IN INDIA – NEOLITHIC CHALCOLITHIC PHASE:

The Neolithic and Chalcolithic phases follow in the footsteps of the Mesolithic hunting and gathering culture, which led to the beginning of the domestication of sheep, goats, and cattle by man. The availability of trustworthy stratified archaeological material in the form of present protohistoric art forms is the primary benefit of dating the rock art that dates back to this time. This is also the most important advantage. It is not uncommon to see depictions of both bullock carts and chariots driven by horses. During the Chalcolithic period, there is evidence of processions that are accompanied by acrobats, boxers, weight carriers, and musicians. These performances are suggestive of social stratification. Despite the fact that agriculture was the primary economic activity during this time period, it is only sometimes shown in the paintings. Women were only shown in a relatively peripheral role in chalcolithic images found in India, and this was true both in Central and South India. These artworks represent a man's world. Scenes exhibiting human action similar to that of copulation are rather prevalent. The representation of huge weapons and exquisite long-horned bulls are both widespread in the rock paintings of southern India. Additionally, the bruising frequently show long-horned bulls. The latter, according to the opinions of several academics, is indicative of cultic weaponry. There are a number of rock art sites in the southern part of India that are located in close proximity to megalithic graves, and there is no doubt that some of the drawings and bruises may be connected to burial rituals. In one of these paintings, a deceased individual is depicted inside the burial inventory of a stone circle located in the Benakal woodland.

ROCK ART IN INDIA - HISTORIC PHASE:

In the regions of Ladakh and Chilas in northern India, primarily in the form of petroglyphs but also including Kharoshti and Brahmi inscriptions, there have been discoveries of depictions that relate to Buddhist themes. The depiction of heavily caparisoned horses and elephants, often with riders as if engaged in battle-like activity, dominates the majority of the paintings. Armored soldiers appear to be fighting with metal weapons resembling spears, swords, shields, daggers, and occasionally bows and arrows.

UNDERSTANDING ROCK ART:

According to V.S. Wakankar, the earlier paintings of large animals in India have religious connotations because of the context in which they were created. For example, Yashodhar Mathpal views the majority of the artwork at Bhimbetka as a record of the community's social and economic life. Both Erwin Neumayer and D.H. Gordon have made the assumption that paintings depicting armed men are representations of historical battles. In point of fact, the numerous approaches that have been utilised in the process of interpreting rock art in India have been broadly categorised as "art pour l'art," which translates to "art for the sake of art," as well as economic, historical records, information transmission, worship, social solidarity, ritual symbolism and trance, diversified ritual communication, formation of iconographic units, and as a source of information.

ROCK ART AND ETHNOGRAPHY:

Rock art researchers all over the world have employed the use of ethnographic analogy as a tool to assist in the interpretation of rock art, despite the fact that the validity of such an analogy has also been challenged. Rock art is no longer practised by any living traditions in India, in contrast to the San people of South Africa and the Aboriginal people of Australia. Therefore, interpretation presents a challenge for the people doing the research. In India, there have only been a few instances when credible anthropological interpretations of rock art have been established. Tribal communities such as the Rathvas from Gujarat make Pithora paintings, Savaras from Andhra Pradesh make Edising art, and Sauras from Odisha make paintings on the walls of

their homes. The canvass for these paintings may not be rocks, boulders, or caverns. It's interesting to note that all of these arts are rooted in ritual and are often carried out by shamans. It has been observed that the ritualistic activity of shamanism is frequently connected with the production of images. Art traditions that are practised by a number of other Indian tribes, such as the Gonds, the Murias, the Garsias, and the Nagas, amongst others, are also symbolic in nature and are primarily intended either to appease the souls of ancestors or to ward off evil spirits. Research into traditional or native art forms could be helpful in gaining a better understanding of the rock art of India. Although rock art is no longer created in India, tribal communities such as the Rathwas of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh create Pithora paintings. The Sauras of Orissa and the Savaras of Andhra Pradesh are also responsible for the creation of Saura art and Saura art respectively. The only difference is that instead of using rocks, boulders, or caves as their canvas, some people choose to utilise the walls of their homes.

PROBLEMATIZING INDIAN ROCK ART RESEARCH

Five aspects of rock art research can be identified that require critical appraisal in the Indian context. After reviewing them, we consider how they can inform rock art research through two case studies.

Style and subject

When attempting to derive a relative chronological order, the identification of styles and subject matter is often the place at which one should begin. A stylistic sequence has been constructed for the central region of India, and some research have attempted to tie this to other regions around the nation. However, as research interests have expanded beyond the central region, it has become abundantly clear that the use of this schema is frequently inappropriate and may impede understandings of both the chronology of rock art and the stylistic variability of Indian rock art. The potential for making valuable contributions to the understanding of any one particular phase of rock art is hindered by an intense focus on comparing stylistic features and the frequencies of representations of different types of subject matter across and between sites over wide areas and through different periods. An evaluation of the factors that influence stylistic variability, such as the role of demography and information exchange or the inter/intra group identity, should ideally be made explicit, and comparisons with other forms of material culture may be profitable. This is because demographics and information exchange play a role in how stylistic variability is manifested.

Chronology

Chronological schemes for understanding the development of rock art in India continue to be relatively simplistic due to the absence of the application of chronometric methodologies. Many experts categorise rock art into three distinct time periods: the Upper Paleolithic and Mesolithic, the Neolithic, Chalcolithic, and Megalithic, and the historical. However, the extent to which they may be regarded as chronological categories is debatable and is primarily derived from evaluations of the subject matter. The association between pictures of wild animals and people who hunted and gathered their food is particularly troublesome, as is the use of the term "Mesolithic" to describe this time period. In India, communities of hunter-gatherers have been documented to have persisted for a significant amount of time, making them contemporaneous with all later chronological classifications, and they continue to exist to this day. The critical evaluation of these fundamental chronological categories reveals that these phases may possibly correspond as closely to different kinds of subsistence practise and social structure as they do to any given chronological occurrence. [Citation needed] A simplistic adoption of these images as chronological markers may gloss over not only the stylistic diversity but also the social variability and flexibility in subsistence practises. Some figures,

such as depictions of cattle or metal objects, can provide a limited chronological benchmark that can be used to build a chronological sequence.

Ethnography

The use of ethnographic comparisons, in which there is no direct cultural tie between the informant and the artist, has been met with a rather mixed response in India. In contrast to other current indigenous communities, such as those found in Australia, for instance, very few modern tribal groups are actively engaged in the production of rock art, and many exhibit very little interest in the local rock art sites. Only a minority of researchers support drawing unqualified comparisons between the people who produced prehistoric rock art and modern tribal groupings. Ethnographic research on the production of rock art in India, on the other hand, offers the potential to broaden our overall knowledge of the motivations behind the production of rock art as well as the social, ceremonial, and political settings in which it is produced.

Many studies of rock art, both in India and abroad, have centred on shamanic, religious, or hunting magic interpretations. However, the Indian anthropological record reveals that traditional communities may develop " art " for a far wider range of causes. For example, modern tribal art exemplifies the wide variety of approaches to, and motivations behind, the painting and aesthetic enrichment of habitation places. Women in India frequently create works of art in the setting of their homes, where they do so for a variety of purposes, including ceremonial, medicinal, apotropaic, auspiciousness-producing, or ornamental activities. The application of this to the interpretation of prehistoric rock art presents obvious difficulties, but it does allow for the generation of hypotheses that may be evaluated using alternative methods.

Archaeology

In India, wider archaeological investigations have very infrequently integrated rock art into their research. The dating of rock art may be aided by excavations at locations where rock art has been found; however, this process must be carried out very carefully. There is no evidence of exfoliated rock art in India that has been found in settings that have been dated and stratified. In spite of the fact that there are rock art sites that contain archaeological deposits from both significant antiquity and more modern eras, establishing a straight relationship between the images on the rock art and the archaeological remains is difficult and should be approached with caution. The composition of the archaeological deposits of rock art sites may also be instructive for determining whether or whether the imagery was created in remote, hardly frequented regions or in frequently occupied spaces. Important insights may also be gained by making stylistic comparisons between rock art and other types of decorated material culture that are known through archaeological digs. Examples of decorative Late Pleistocene and Early Holocene material culture include the engraved lithic item from Chandravati, which shares stylistic parallels with some of the oldest rock art known to exist in India, and the adorned ostrich eggshell piece from. In addition, they appear to express some long-term and geographically large themes in symbolic representation, and they have affinities with artwork seen in far more modern forms of rock art. This is unfortunate. It is possible that a more optimistic outlook is needed for this kind of analysis when it comes to the research on agro-pastoral societies, particularly when evidence of pottery production becomes more prevalent in archaeological records. Comparisons between the decorative techniques used on Chalcolithic ceramics and those used in rock art in central India have shown to be fruitful.

The identification of parallel forms of new material culture in archaeological and rock art records provides a potential means of shedding light on the chronology of rock art and also helps tie it in to broader social

changes. This is because these parallel forms of new material culture were created at the same time. A noteworthy example of this is the arrival of cattle in southern India, which is related to the formation of pastoral groups in the late fourth or early third millennium BC. This appears to have been matched pretty closely by the portrayal of cattle in rock art images around this time period. In spite of this, cattle have remained an essential component of daily economic and religious life in India for millennia, and they are shown in a wide variety of post-Neolithic types of art. The depiction of cattle prior to their management and domestication is very improbable (although it is not completely impossible), which establishes a plausible chronological anchor for their first appearance.

Landscape

Researchers are able to better analyse the social environment in which these activities took place when they have a better understanding of the locations in which populations choose to participate in symbolic activity. When rock art is placed in recognised archaeological landscapes, such as cosmological, political, or phenomenological landscapes, for example, more information about the process of creating rock art may be gleaned. This is knowledge that cannot be gleaned from the images alone. Researching rock art in terms of its location in relation to settlement patterns, symbolic landscapes, geographical characteristics, and economic resources has been demonstrated to be a profitable activity in other parts of the world; nevertheless, these methods have not been used extensively in the subcontinent. The understanding of rock art may be aided by a deeper appreciation of how an artist may interpret and engage with the surface that is to be painted or engraved, rather than viewing rock art as merely the adornment of a non-active surface, as is common practise. Rock art could be purposefully placed in highly visible areas to signify certain social groupings, or it might be located next to notable landscape elements that have cosmological significance tied to them. At a number of rock art locations in the south of India, the significance of acoustic or other sensuous aspects has also been uncovered (see below). Stone, in addition to the colours that are utilised in the process of producing rock art, is typically connected with a wide variety of symbolic meanings and phenomenological connotations, all of which may be played upon in the process of producing rock art. Research on the style of rock art that ignores these important characteristics of the surrounding terrain runs the danger of missing the point entirely of the practise of creating rock art.

CONCLUSION:

Rock art studies in India are gradually becoming recognised as a vital topic for research by specialists in a range of professions. This recognition is occurring at an accelerating rate. The vast amount of rock art that can be viewed in India is so much more than simply a gorgeous sight to see. There is a lot of history behind this art. It is conceivable to regard it as an effect of both the mental and physical environment in which it was generated, and thus may be considered an influence. This is because it is possible to perceive it as an effect of the environment in which it was made. It is on the verge of adopting a larger viewpoint in a range of subjects, such as proper dating methods, the geological basis of rock art, computer applications, taphonomy, ethnographic studies, and cognitive research. These are some of the examples of these types of fields. Studies of rock art need to be continued because they create an appreciation for a precious cultural resource and give a deeper knowledge of the way of life of people from a variety of various cultural periods. Because of these factors, it is critical that research of this nature be carried on.

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