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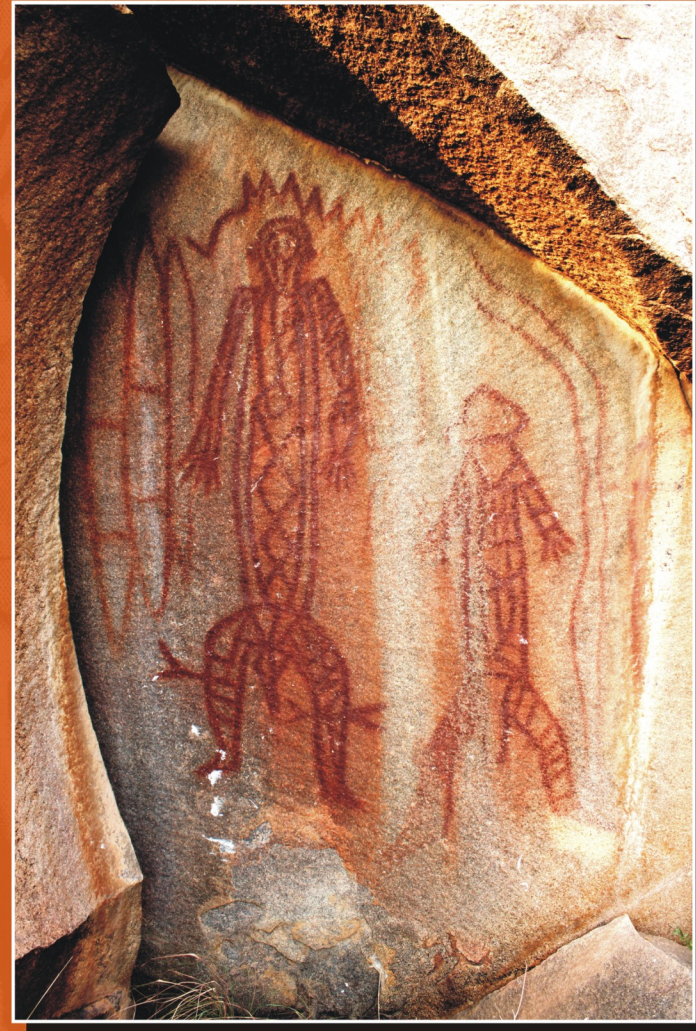
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**Rock Art: Recent Researches and New Perspectives**  
(Festschrift to Padma Shri. Dr. Yashodhar Mathpal)  
Edited by **Ajit Kumar**

# Rock Art: Recent Researches and New Perspectives

(Festschrift to Padma Shri. Dr. Yashodhar Mathpal)



Edited by  
**Ajit Kumar**

*Rock Art: Recent Researches and New Perspectives (Festschrift to Yashodhar Mathpal)*  
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This book is a humble tribute to Padma Shri. Dr. Yashodhar Mathpal, a scholar whom I had known from his rock art research works on Bhimbhetaka and Kerala. I got to meet him in person at New Delhi, while attending the International Conference on Rock Art organized by the IGNCA in 2012. I was deeply drawn to his scholarship, simplicity and affectionate approach. When I placed before him the thought and request of bringing out a festschrift volume in his honour, he acceded to it after some persuasion.

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Editing the articles and making it presentable for publication was an arduous task happily undertaken. In this task, I have had the support and active collaboration of young dynamic assistant editors like Rajesh.S.V, Abhyan, G.S, Raj.K.Varman and Sachin Kr. Tiwary. The credit of setting the books in its entirety goes to Rajesh, S.V, and I am indebted to him for it. I am thankful to proprietors of New Bharatiya Book Corporation, New Delhi Shri. Subhash Jain and Deepak Jain for conceding to publish the book.

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**(Vol. II)**

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**Ajit Kumar**



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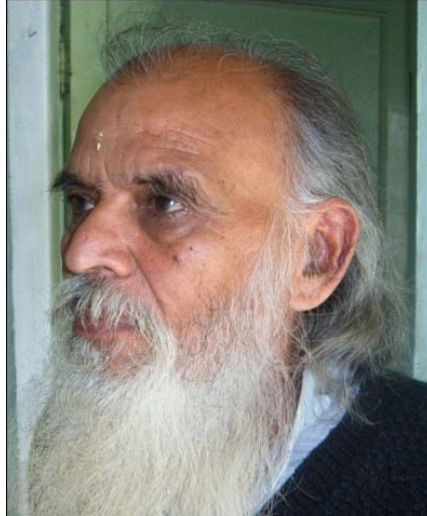
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## Yashodhar Mathpal



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Padma Shri. Dr. Yashodhar Mathpal was born in 1939, in the small village of Naula, in Almorah district, he is an acknowledged Archaeologist, Curator, Philosopher, Gandhian and Artist.

Yashodhar Mathpal belongs to a category of dedicated and selfless lovers of art. His artistic talents came to the fore, as a child, when he had to assist his uncle, an astrologer, in drawing horoscopes and illustrating almanacs. Perusing his skills and interest, he later obtained his Masters degree in fine arts from Lucknow Arts College. Mathpal came back to his village and started teaching in the school founded by his father, who was a social worker and a follower of Gandhi. His father's nationalist idealism exposed him to Gandhian thought and philosophy which cultivated in him austerity and simplicity.

In 1973, he read a magazine article on the rock paintings of Bhimbetka near Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh. He resigned his job and with the few hundred rupees he had saved, set out to join the Deccan College under the University of Pune to obtain his Ph.D in Archaeology on Bhimbetka rock-paintings. Mathpal studied and reproduced the rock painting of Bhimbetka laboriously. He discovered that primeval drawings often tell stories of the lives of our ancestors who painted them. Consequent to obtaining his doctorate, Mathpal has carried out archaeological exploration-excavations and rock art studies in the regions of Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and the Shivaliks.

Mathpal has tried to visualize the life of the prehistoric man and has captured some really beautiful glimpses of these on his canvas. His reproductions breathe with a life of their own and have received praise from art-lovers all over the world. His paintings have been exhibited in France, Italy, Portugal,

England and Australia. He has also converted his drawings into glossy picture-postcards, to popularize and bring out the depth of ancient rock art.

It is one thing to eulogize art/folk-art and folk culture, and yet another to dedicate your life to the preservation of this rich and rare cultural heritage. With only his vision and invincible spirit by his side, Dr. Mathpal embarked on a venture which today has flowered into the Folk Culture Museum in Bhimtal. It is a one-man show and he runs it without accepting any aid either from the government or from any individual. The museum houses more than 700 stone implements of prehistoric period, collected and classified by Mathpal himself, old fossils, pottery and bricks recovered from prehistoric/historic excavation sites, dozens of woodwork specimen from Kumaoni region, rare manuscripts, and other folk and tribal crafts are the pride of his collections

He has authored eight books and has more than 175 published papers. He has presented papers in various national and international seminars and conferences and won accolades. His efforts and contribution to promote Indian culture has received appreciation from the society at large. He has been felicitated with several awards of international and national fame including Padma Shri from the Government of India. He continues his life, which is a saga of persistence, perseverance and patience at Bhimtal, nurturing his endeavour to preserve folk art and culture.

### **About this Book**

This book is a humble tribute to Padma Shri. Dr. Yashodhar Mathpal, a scholar whom I had known from his rock art research works on Bhimbhetaka and Kerala. I got to meet him in person at New Delhi, while attending the International Conference on Rock Art organized by the IGNCA in 2012. I was deeply drawn to his scholarship, simplicity and affectionate approach. When I placed before him the thought and request of bringing out a festschrift volume in his honour, he acceded to it after some persuasion.

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Dr. Ajit Kumar

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# Rock Art of Maharashtra

**Kantikumar A. Pawar**

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***Abstract:** It is interesting to note that the rock art sites were reported in India much before their discovery in Europe, as early as 1867-68 by A.C. Carlyle. Since then, through the painstaking efforts of scholars, nearly 5000 painted rock shelters have been brought to light in the entire Indian subcontinent. Prior to a decade, nearly all the states of India have been dotted with rock art sites except Maharashtra. Extensive survey in parts of Maharashtra during the last ten years, have brought forth rock shelters with pictographs, petroglyphs and associated cultural material which is being discussed in this paper. Attempt is also made to refer to rock art discoveries made by other authors in Maharashtra.*

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## Introduction

A unique factor of man's creative genius lies in rock art, as it incorporates various fascinating primitive themes of ancient life. This phenomenon is found worldwide and fortunately India is immensely rich in rock art ranging from pre-historic rock to almost modern (Bednarik 1993). Pioneering discoveries of rock paintings in India were made in 1867 by Archibald Carlyle from Mirzapur district of Uttar Pradesh. F. Fawcett was the first to bring to light rock engravings from South India at Kuppagallu in Karnataka in 1892. Subsequently, scholars have tried to study the rock art systematically. About 5000 painted rock shelters have so far been reported from central Vindhyan region, Chhota Nagpur plateau and southern Deccan region of India. However, surprisingly not a single painted rock shelter was reported from Maharashtra till around 2004 (**Fig. 1**). Though, Dr. V. S. Wakankar had mentioned about the possibility of rock shelters in some parts of Maharashtra, especially in Vidarbha region he does not report rock paintings. Vidarbha which forms the eastern part of Maharashtra is surrounded by painted caves and rock-shelter sites. There are rock art sites in Nimar and Chindwara districts of Madhya Pradesh to the north, and Gupansar area in Chattisgarh to the east. Further south, we find rock art sites in Betamcherla and Adoni regions of Andhra Pradesh and in places like Balchaker, Hassan Patri, and Hirebenekal in Karnataka; and Kilvalay, Settavarai, etc., in Tamil Nadu (Pawar 2006).

Maharashtra is politically and geographically the second largest state in India extending over approximately 307,713 sq.km. The geographical boundary of Maharashtra has 35 districts and on linguistic basis divided into five regions viz. Konkan, Western Maharashtra, Khandesh, Marathwada and Vidarbha (**Fig. 2**). Present article focuses on the sites found in Vidarbha and Konkan regions (Singh 1971).



Figure 1: Rock Art Sites in Indian Subcontinent

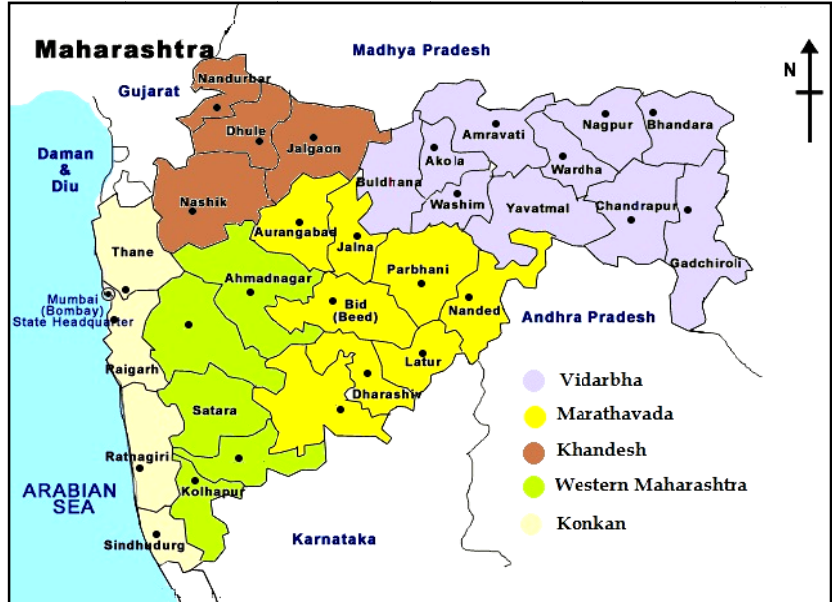


Figure 2: Political Division of Maharashtra

For the first time, painted rock shelters were discovered from two different sites in the Parasgarh-Nagbhir hills of Chandrapur district of Maharashtra. First at Waghahi hillock in Chimur tahsil of Chandrapur District and subsequently from the village Navtala close to earlier discovered site (Mane 2003; Pawar 2006, 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). Konkan region of Maharashtra too has yielded large numbers of engravings (Gogte, Shirvalkar and Pradhan, 2008).

## Geo-Physical Environment in Vidarbha

**Geography:** Vidarbha lies between 19°-21° N and 76°-80°30' E. It presently comprises of eleven districts, and occupies roughly 93654 sq.km. Geographical and climatic features divide this region broadly into two main zones i.e. Western Vidarbha and Eastern Vidarbha. Western Vidarbha, comprising of five districts, lies between the hill ranges of Ajanta (South) and Gawilgarh (North). This region, excepting, of course the nuclear portion of the Purna valley have considerably high plains (Chikaldara plateau top has a height of 1200 mt. above M.S.L) and hills (Melghat). Eastern Vidarbha, comprises of the remaining six districts of region, which portrays a 'hummocky' landscape with low and irregular hills and sluggish streams. Ramtek hill, has a height of about 400 m above M.S. L.

**Geology:** Parasgarh-Nagbhir hills run north-north-east to south-south-west for a distance of about 20 km and have an average width of about 10 to 12 km. It is almost a single ridge of a cuesta type, with an excellent cliff section facing west and in part south; the dip slope faces eastwards and the ridge is flat-topped. This ridge is made up of almost horizontally bedded Vindhyan sandstones which are



underlain by limestone of the same age. At the lower end of this hill, there is a large natural tank like depression. The hill range is surrounded by various big and small lakes. This hill range is further divided into different elevated portions, known locally by various names, viz. Pendhari peak (474 m), Sat Bahini (459 m), Siwap Hurki (383 m) and the Muktabai Pahar (411 m). "Muktabai Pahar" (20° 35'N & 79° 33'E) is composed mainly of hillocks of rudaceous and ferruginous sand stones. Mineralogically, these sandstones are composed mainly of Quartz and some mica flakes, and the sandstone here is weak. Coarse grained mineral structure is the main reason for its weakness. Stratigraphically, this sandstone belongs to the 'Kamphti' formation of the Mahadeo group of the upper Permian to the lower Triassic i.e. 280-180 million yrs B.P (Wadia 1994).

**Drainage:** The entire region of Vidarbha is drained by three major rivers, the Purna (tributary of the Tapi River), the Wardha and the Wainganga (tributary of the Godavari River). The Wardha River divides the Vidarbha region into the above mentioned (two) zones.

Eastern Vidarbha is drained mainly by the Wainganga River, which originates about 12 km from Mundara village of Seoni district in the southern slopes of the Satpura Range of Madhya Pradesh and flows south through Balaghat in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. In Madhya Pradesh it has a very winding course of approximately 360 miles. After joining the Wardha the united stream comes to be known as the Pranahita, which ultimately falls into the Godavari. The river has developed extensive flood plains, with sweeping graceful meanders and low alluvial flats and terraces. The river has high banks of about 10 to 15 m on either side. The Wainganga River receives numerous tributaries on either bank and drains the western, central and eastern regions of the Chandrapur, Gadchiroli and Nagpur districts. The chief tributaries of the Wainganga are the Garhavi, Khobragadi, Kathani and the Potphondi on the western bank and the Andhari on the eastern bank (Deshpande 2002 376).

## Flora and Fauna

It is required to understand the present floral and faunal wealth of the region, especially in case of studying rock art. A number of varieties of plants are found in the dense forests of the Chandrapur district. They are Babul (*Acacia nilotica*), Bel, Salar (*Boswellia serrata*), Bans (*Dendrocalamus strictus*), Bahera (*Terminalia bellerica*), Jamun (*Syzgium cumini*), Mohwa (*Bassica latifolia*), Teak (*Tectona grandis*), Peepal (*Ficus religiosa*), Imli (*Tamarindus indica*), Charul (*Holopteica integrifolia*), Ber (*Zizybus jujube*), Palas, Khiar, Karanji, Umber, Ajan, etc. They are mainly found in the hill sides and plain plateau.

Parasgarh- Nagbhir hill ranges are extremely rich in wildlife. Tiger (*Panthera tigris*), Panther (*Panthera pardus*), Wild boar (*Sus crofa*), Indian Black Bear (*Ursus labiatus*), Black Buck (*Antelope bezoartica*), Indian Gazelle or Chinkara (*Antelope Arabica*), Sambhar (*Rusa unicolor*), Cheetal (*Cervus axis*), wild Dog (*Cyon alpinus*), Nilgai or Blue Bull (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*) Squirrel (*Gunarubulus pennanoti*), Monkey (*Mecaca muiatta*), Langur (*Seinnopithecus entellus*), Barasinga, Hare, Hyena, wolf, Jackal, etc. are found in their wild varieties.



## Rock Art in Vidarbha

As mentioned earlier, Vidarbha Comprises eleven districts but only Chandrapur, Bhandara and Gadchiroli in eastern part of Vidarbha has Sandstone formations which have revealed the presence of painted rock shelters in this region. All the discovered painted rock shelters are found from Chandrapur district alone. Dongargaon and Navtala, rock shelter sites from Chandrapur district have rock paintings or pictographs in them (Fig. 3). At Hirapur and adjoining places in the same hill range, few Petroglyphs have also been found.

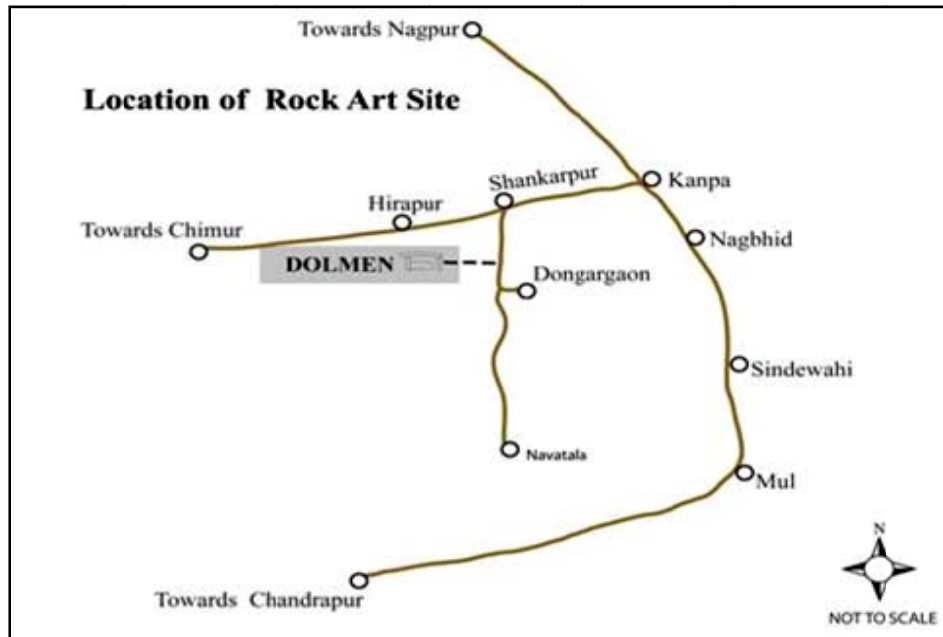


Figure 3: Location Map of the Sites

## Dongargaon

Dongargaon or *Waghahi hill* ( $20^{\circ} 35'N$  &  $79^{\circ} 33' E$ ) harbours the painted rock shelters and perhaps are the only known rock shelters from the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. This hill is part of Perjagarh-Nagbhir range as mentioned above and locally known as “Sitamai dongar”. Two different clusters of rock shelters have been identified within the periphery of this hillock i.e. *Nagargota* and *Pandubara*. Waghahi hill is 105 km from Nagpur district. On the state highway leading from Nagpur to Chandrapur is the village Kampa (88 km away from Nagpur), 8 km west of Kampa, on Kampa-Chimur road is the village of Shankarpur and about 6 km south this village is “Dongargaon” and 3 km further south of it is the Waghahi hill, atop which are the rock shelters (Pawar 2011).

The Waghahi hills are located in the thick forested region, which covered the 60% land of Chandrapur district. Nagargota rock shelters are located atop the Waghahi hill, 1.2 km East of the village Dongargaon and Pandubara rock shelter is 3 km towards south of the same village. Both shelters are situated on the same hill, but they are found opposite to each other. The walking distance between both these is some



1.5 km. A natural depression like a lake is present at the foot of the Waghai hill, which is one of the major water sources in this area even today. Many domestic as well as wild animals use this lake for drinking water. The rich and varied topography of this district is almost unparalleled anywhere else in the state.

### Nagargota Rock Paintings

This cluster is nearly 135m above the ground level and has four rock shelters running South-West to North-East (**Fig 4**). This place is covered by huge sand stone blocks and deep fissures. The paintings at Nagargota are found on the ceiling, exterior and on the cliff sides of the rock shelters. Of the nearly 35 paintings, 22 are of animals and 13 of human. Majority of these paintings were painted shades of red ochre ranging from dark red or purple red to dull red colour (**Fig. 5**).



Figure 4: Rock Shelters at Nagargota



Figure 5: Paintings Drawn on the Surface of Shelter

Due to weathering factors like rain, heat and insects, today most of the paintings are not clearly visible. The animal figures depicted in these rock paintings are mainly Barasingha, Deer and humped cattle. Many animals are shown grazing and hunting scenes are completely absent. Both wild and domesticated animals are depicted in the rock shelter. Human figures are stick shaped and small in sizes without weapons. There are also a few large figures like the horse rider (?).

Rock paintings of Nagargota can be categorized into two-stages. A few of the rock paintings in dark red colour and relatively large and crude seem to be the earliest rock paintings, and smaller sized well executed paintings in bright red colour may be later. Regarding the size, large animal figures have a maximum height of 30 cm and length 40 cm while the smaller paintings measure 7 cm in height and 4 cm in length. Out of thirteen human figures, seven are depicted on ceiling of the rock shelter no. 1 and they are about 4 to 5 cm. Four other human figures have an average height of 18 cm. One human figure





is shown carrying arrows on the back. These human figures are painted in dark red colour. Most of the paintings are in flat wash, while the horse rider (?) is rendered merely as outlines (**Fig. 6**). The details of paintings are given in **Table 1**. Since the remaining rock paintings are in fragmented condition their identity is uncertain.

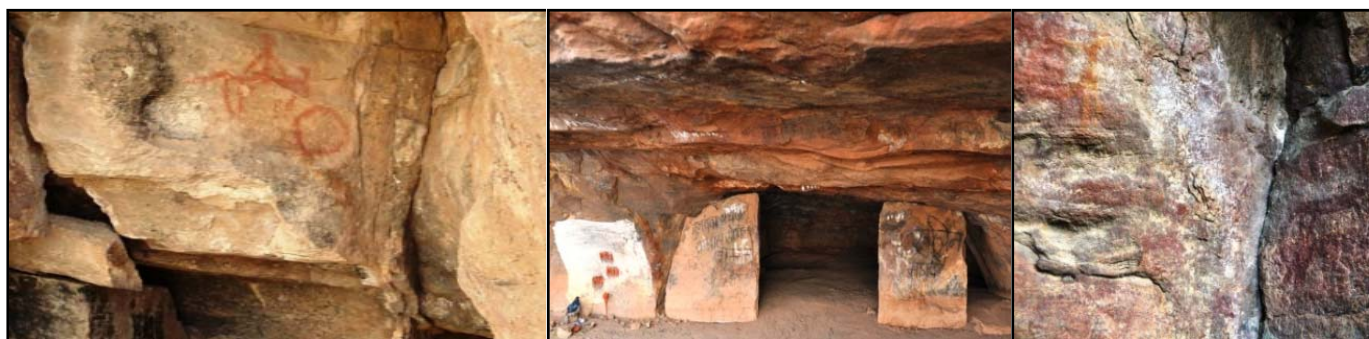


Figure 6: Depiction of Horse Rider

Figure 7: Rock Shelter at Pandubara

Figure 8: Paintings in dark Brown colour

Table 1: Description of Nagargota Paintings

Sr. No.	Subject matter of art	Colour
1)	Seven human figures	Dark red
2)	Four grazing deers (?)	Dark red
3)	Running deer	Dark red
4)	Two big Barasingha	Dark red
5)	Humped cattle	Bright red
6)	Human with arrows	Dark red
7)	Horse rider (?)	Faint red
8)	Antelope	Dark red
9)	Tree	Dark red
10)	Unidentified animal	Dark red

### Pandubara Rock Paintings

Four rock shelters are located at Pandubara and like at Nagargota, only shelter I and IV are painted. Rock shelters no. II & III are covered with semi dressed stone slabs (**Fig. 7**). On the top of these rock shelters a few structures done with huge boulders similar to the megalithic cairn circles are observed. Probably these shelters were used by the Megalithic/Early historical communities.

Total number of paintings at Pandubara is about 17, out of which 12 are clearly visible and the remaining are distorted and hence unidentifiable. Most of the paintings are painted in different shades of red ochre colour (dark red and reddish brown). A few rock paintings are in dark brown colour (**Fig 8**). Two paintings are in red colour with the outlines in yellow colour. Paintings were drawn in various sizes. Smallest paintings are 6 cm in height and 9 cm in width and large ones are 21 cm in height and 18



cm in width. Here the paintings are fine when compared to those of Nagargota. Animal painted include Deer, Barasingha, elephant, rhinoceros (?), wild boar and Bovids. Other paintings include human figures in outlines of yellow colour, Swastika and two animal figures with 3-4 segmented lines on the body are unique to this site (**Fig. 9**).

Human figures were drawn in dancing posture. Some traces of a swastika mark is visible on the ceiling of the rock shelter IV. A deer figure is shown elegantly and the body portion of it is filled with rectangular and semicircular design. Most of the paintings were drawn on bare uneven rough surface of cliff side, while only a few are done on the ceiling portion of the rock shelter. The details of paintings are given in **Table. 2**.



Figure 9: Depiction of Segmented figures, Swastika and Deer



Figure 10: Microlithis from Nagargota

Table 2: Description of Pandubara Paintings

Sr. No.	Subject matter of art	Colour
1)	Wild Boar	Dark red
2)	Rhinoceros (?)	Dark red
3)	Elephant	Dark red
4)	Human figure	Yellow ochre
5)	Reflection of Deer	Dark red
6)	Deer (Inside body rectangle and semicircle drawn)	Dark purple red
7)	Two segmented animals	Dark purple red
8)	Swastika figure	Bright red
9)	Barasingha	Dark red
10)	Geometric figure	Dark purple red



## Style

Style, patina, superimposition and themes observed in rock paintings are considered as the parameters to study the rock paintings and determine their chronology. Rock paintings at Waghai hill according to their artistic form is divisible into a) Silhouette b) Half filled c) Decorative d) Outline e) Bichrome drawings f) X-ray g) Segmented h) Geometric.

## Authors

The authorship of some of the early rock paintings on the basis of the microlithic assemblage (**Fig.10**) found at Nagargota can possibly be assigned to Mesolithic communities. A few burial structures similar to those of Megalithic cairn circles noticed atop Pandubara may indicate the Horse rider (?) depicted to be of Megalithic or Early Historical period.

## Chronology of Nagargota and Pandubara Paintings

Comparatively speaking (Sonawane 1984), the rock paintings at Nagargota shelters appear to be of Mesolithic period (10000–6000 B.P). The most significant evidence in this context are the microliths found, but in the case of Pandubara rock shelters microlithic as absent but there are a few Megalithic Cairns atop the Pandubara shelters. In style, technique and colour depiction, the paintings here bears similarities with the central Indian rock paintings. Pandubara paintings probably belong to Iron Age/ Megalithic period. In Vidarbha region the Megalithic culture can be dated to circa. 1000-200 B.C. Excavations of megaliths in Takalghat-Khapa, Mahurzari and Naikund have revealed horse bones and horse bits which suggested Megalithic builders and their association with horse. The depiction of horse rider (?) possibly suggests that this painting belongs to Megalithic culture. So, on the basis of style and material evidences, chronology of Waghai hill paintings can be placed from Mesolithic to Megalithic/Historical period.

## Navtala

Navtala (20° 41.2' N, 79° 30 63.3' E), is a small village situated on the foothills of the Parasgarh-Nagbhir hills covered by dense forest. This village is approximately 14 km from Dongargaon, in the south-east direction, close to Chimur tahsil. The explorations at Navtala revealed significant evidences of rock-shelters with paintings (Pawar 2011). The rock shelters at Navtala are 3km south-east of the present village atop a hillock which is part of the Parasgarh- Nagbhir hills. Sandstone formations of these hills have nearly twenty eight rock shelters, divided in two rows, opposite to each other, cut across by a stream or Nullah (**Fig.11**). These rock shelters are 14 km away from the previously documented painted shelters at Waghai hill. A huge natural lake, called *Madnagarh*, is present at the foot of the hill, which is one of the major water sources in this area even today. Many domestic as well as wild animals drink water from this lake. Most of the rock shelters at this site are closed by fallen boulders, perhaps because of a landslide. Paintings have been found only in two rock shelters, on its surface. The paintings are drawn by using red ochre colour. Identification of these paintings is very difficult due to its weathered



nature (**Fig. 12**). Total numbers of paintings are four, out of which, one is a fish motif. The others seem to be geometrical and their exact shape is untraceable (Pawar 2012).



Figure 11: Rows of Rock Shelters at Navtala



Figure 12: Depiction of Fish and Geometrical Paintings

## Petroglyphs in Vidarbha

Petroglyphs/Engravings/Cupules/ Cup-marks are one of the major component of rock art can be found from lower Paleolithic period to the medieval time. Their association with family groups/clan, celestial and astronomical configurations and rituals etc., have been discussed by various scholars. Presently, many scholars working on rock art opinion that cupules or Petroglyphs are oldest non-iconic form of rock art (Kumar 2001; Bednarik 2001, 2002). Several megalithic monuments in central India and south India bear cupules or cup marks. However, majority of these are associated with only one type i.e. stone circle or cairn with peripheral boulders. During excavation at Hirapur, the author has noticed cupules on the capstone of a dolmenied cist, which happens to be a rare type of megalith from the Vidarbha region (Pawar 2012).

## Engravings at Nagargota

Other interesting petroglyph from Nagargota rock shelter is the vertical strokes (11 of them) engraved on a rectangular sandstone slab at the ground level of the rock shelter (**Fig.13**). These strokes intersect each other at some point. It is very difficult to understand the specific pattern involved in this engraving. Probably these were resultant of sharpening some tools or equipments (Pawar 2006).

## Irave-Jhari

Irave-Jhari (20° 38' 52.56' N, 79° 34' 63.3' E) is a village situated approximately 5 km away north of the Waghahi hill rock shelters and 4 km from the Hirapur megalithic site excavated by the author. During Exploration at Irave-jhari very interesting formation of cupules were observed on the lower portion of the hill. Here, a total of 79 cupules were carved in a circular fashion roughly extending a meter in diameter. Circle is divided into four quadrants by two axis and each axis has 24 cupules (12 on each side) except in the centre of the dividing point of these two axis (**Fig.14**).



## Hirapur Cup-marks/Cupules

Hirapur (20° 35' N ; 79° 33' E) in Chimur tahsil of Chandrapur district excavated by author for three seasons have yielded interesting burial architectural evidences (Fig. 15). On some of these megalithic structures, cup-marks have been noticed and are a conspicuous factor associated with megalithic burials in the region. Many megalithic edifices in Vidarbha like those Junapani, Naikund, Mahurjhari, etc., have cup-marks on the surface of peripheral boulders. However the presence of cup-marks on the capstone of dolmened cists and on menhir is interesting evidence and not noticed earlier.



Figure 13: Engravings on Slab inside of Shelter



Figure 14: An Astronomical Observatory



Figure 15: Excavated Megalithic Burials near the site



Figure 16: Cupules on a burial Capstone

On the surface of the capstone of one of the dolmen, forty nine cup-marks have been observed (Fig. 16). The cup-mark patterns seem to point to north-south, out of this forty nine cup-marks, twenty are placed in two rows, each having ten, running parallel in north-south direction and one in centre of these. This line of cupules again crosses in east west direction in two lines with eight in each in a line. Remaining cupules are scattered around this linearly criss-crossing cupules in indefinite manner. Interestingly to the left side of these cupules cluster, there is an engraved mark running east west measuring around a meter and is quite a novel feature associated with cupules (Pawar 2012).



One of the menhir has 36 cup-marks, which again runs north-south. But here these cupules have not been found in any particular form and most of them are weathered and eroded. These cup-marks or cupules possibly could have been associated with the astronomical situation of the time when the burials has been erected (Wahia 2011).

### Petroglyphs in Konkan

For the first time engravings of aquatic animals, reptiles, geometric motifs and anthropomorphic patterns were found carved on the Laterite surfaces at different places from Rajapur to Palshet (150 km stretch) in the Konkan region of Maharashtra (Fig. 17). Five human figures carved in the form of an arc on the Laterite surface were discovered at Pomendi, which is 16 km from Guhagar. These human figures are surrounded by a few postholes which suggests about the presence of a superstructure in the past. At present, the villagers worship these human figures as *Pach Pandav* (Gogte, Pradhan & Shirvalkar 2008; 115-121). These engravings were dated to early historical period. However, the style of a few animal figures shown in naturalistic outlines may suggest an earlier period. But in the absence of any archaeological material it is difficult to assign a relative date to these engravings. Rock-art enthusiast, Shri. Satish Lalit has recently brought out new rock art sites from Hivale and Kudopi in Sindhudurg dist (Lalit 2013. Times of India report 15.8.2013). These interesting petroglyphs are cut into the laterite rock.

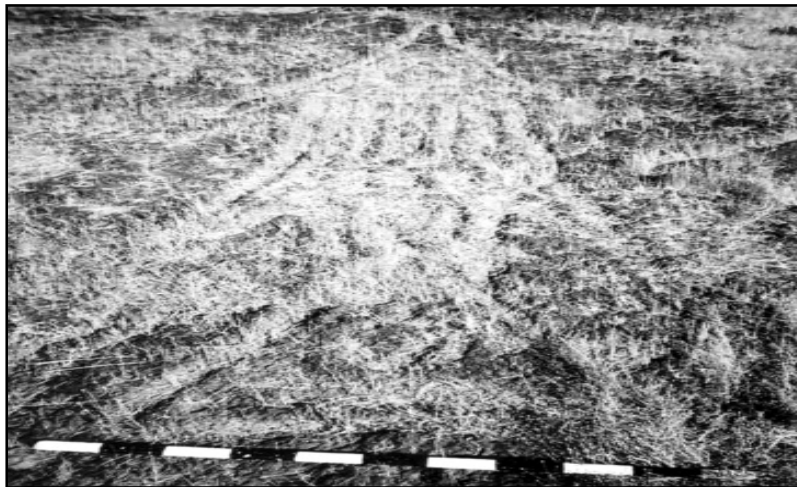


Figure 17: Fish Engravings from Konkan

### Current Defacement of Rock Art Sites

These important evidences of rock art in Maharashtra are day-by-day deteriorating due to natural and human factors. Natural agencies such as the weakened nature of the sandstone rock, weathering, rain, heat and insects are the main factors responsible for defacement of the paintings in Chandrapur area and the engravings on Laterite in the Konkan region. Local populace also causes damages since they go to these shelters annually lime coats these shelters for ritualistic needs. In one shelter at Nagargota a



vertically placed stone is worshiped as a deity. Apart from visitors writing their name over these paintings, the sites are also in danger due to adjoining mining and digging activities.

## Concluding Remarks

Rock art researches during the last decade in Maharashtra have filled the otherwise void scenario and have added the region into the rock art map of India. It is very interesting to note rock art has been noticed in deviant geological formations (Basalt, Laterite and sandstone) in Maharashtra. Discoveries on the sandstone hills at Dongargaon and Navtala villages in Chandrapur district provides significant clue about rock paintings from the region. The discovery of engravings and Petroglyphs in different forms and designs suggested the early existence of pre-figurative art in the region. Engravings in the lateritic zone like Konkan region possibly could have been carved during the early historical period. The laterite formation extends into Goa where again similar rock engravings have come to be reported from Pansimol and other places.

So far in India, very few rock art sites have given proper material evidences of continuous cultural occupation at one place. The site of Dongargaon have yielded microliths and rock paintings as well. It suggests of the link between Maharashtra and Central Vindhyan region. In the vicinity of Pandubara rock shelter Megalithic cairns and Dolmen were found. Did the Megalithic builders use these shelters for living purpose? Or did they have a role in creating these paintings etc., are questions that need further detailed scientific studies.

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