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Pre-Historic Rock Paintings

- Iconography - identification of images through certain symbols/signs and relevant myths or narrative episodes
- Iconology- study of evolution of such signs and symbols in its historical, social and philosophical context.
- The prehistoric period in the early development of human beings is commonly known as the Old Stone Age or the Palaeolithic Age.
- The Upper Palaeolithic times- artistic activities, drawings were human figures, human activities, geometric designs and symbols.
- In India the earliest paintings have been reported from the Upper Palaeolithic times.
- The first discovery of rock paintings was made in India in 1867-68 by an archaeologist, Archibold Carleyle, twelve years before the discovery of Altamira in Spain.
- Remnants of rock paintings have been found on the walls of the caves situated in several districts of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Bihar.
- Paintings -Kumaon hills in Uttarakhand.
- The rock shelters on banks of the River Suyal at Lakhudiyar, about twenty kilometres on the Almora- Barechina road, bear these prehistoric paintings.
- Lakhudiyar literally means one lakh caves.
- The paintings here can be divided into three categories: man, animal and geometric patterns in white, black and red ochre.
- Humans are represented in stick-like forms.
- A long-snouted animal, a fox and a multiple legged lizard are the main animal motifs.
- Wavy lines, rectangle-filled geometric designs, and groups of dots can also be seen here.
- One of the interesting scenes depicted here is of hand-linked dancing human figures.
- Superimposition of paintings in black; over these are red ochre paintings and the last group comprises white paintings.
- Kashmir-two slabs with engravings have been reported.
- The granite rocks of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh provided suitable canvases to the Neolithic man for his paintings.
- Famous sites among them are Kupgallu, Piklihal and Tekkalkota.
- Three types of paintings have been reported from here—paintings in white, paintings in red ochre over a white background and paintings in red ochre.

- the richest paintings are reported from the Vindhya ranges of Madhya Pradesh and their Kaimurean extensions into Uttar Pradesh.
- Palaeolithic and Mesolithic remains, and they are also full of forests, wild plants, fruits, streams and creeks, thus a perfect place for Stone Age people to live.
- Largest and most spectacular rock-shelter is located in the Vindhya hills at Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh.
- Eight hundred rock shelters, five hundred of which bear paintings.
- Hunting, dancing, music, horse and elephant riders, animal fighting, honey collection, decoration of bodies, and other household scenes.
- The rock art of Bhimbetka has been classified into various groups on the bases of style, technique and superimposition.
- The drawings and paintings can be categorised into seven historical periods. Period I, Upper Palaeolithic; Period II, Mesolithic; and Period III, Chalcolithic.

Upper Palaeolithic Period –

- Are linear representations, in green and dark red, of huge animal figures, such as bisons, elephants, tigers, rhinos and boars besides stick-like human figures.
- Filled with geometric patterns.
- The green paintings are of dancers and the red ones of hunters.

Mesolithic Period-

- The largest number of paintings belongs to Period II that covers the Mesolithic paintings.
- During this period the themes multiply but the paintings are smaller in size.
- Hunting scenes predominate.
- The hunting scenes depict people hunting in groups, armed with barbed spears, pointed sticks, arrows and bows.
- Simple clothes and ornaments.
- Men have been adorned with elaborate head-dresses, and sometimes painted with masks also.
- Elephant, bison, tiger, boar, deer, antelope, leopard, panther, rhinoceros, fish, frog, lizard, squirrel and at times birds are also depicted.
- Artists loved to paint animals. In some pictures, animals are chasing men.
- Though animals were painted in a naturalistic style, humans were depicted only in a stylistic manner.
- Women are painted both in the nude and clothed.
- Community dances provide a common theme.
- There are paintings of people gathering fruit or honey from trees, and of women grinding and preparing food.
- Some of the pictures of men, women and children seem to depict a sort of family life.

- In many of the rock-shelters we find hand prints, fist prints, and dots made by the fingertips.

Chalcolithic Period

- Period III covers the Chalcolithic period.
- The paintings of this period reveal the association, contact, and mutual exchange of requirements of the cave dwellers of this area with settled agricultural communities of the Malwa plains.
- Many a time Chalcolithic ceramics and rock paintings bear common motifs, e.g., cross-hatched squares, lattices.
- Pottery and metal tools are also shown.
- The artists of Bhimbetka used many colours, including various shades of white, yellow, orange, red ochre, purple, brown, green and black.
- White and red were their favourite colours.
- Paints were made by grinding various rocks and minerals.
- They got red from haematite (known as geru in India).
- The green came from a green variety of a stone called chalcedony.
- White might have been made out of limestone.
- The rock of mineral was first ground into a powder.
- This may then have been mixed with water and also with some thick or sticky substance such as animal fat or gum or resin from trees.
- Brushes were made of plant fibre.
- The colours have remained intact because of the chemical reaction of the oxide present on the surface of the rocks.
- Some of the most beautiful paintings are very high up on rock shelters or close to the ceilings of rockshelters.
- The paintings made at these places were perhaps for people to be able to notice them from a distance.
- The dancing scene from the Lakhudiyar rock painting found in Uttarakhand.
- At Bhimbetka, in some places, there are as many as 20 layers of paintings, one on top of another.
- Why did the artists paint in the same place again and again? Maybe, this was because the artist did not like his creation and painted another painting on the previous one, or some of the paintings and places were considered sacred or special or this was because the area may have been used by different generations of people at different times.