

## Prehistoric Rock Paintings

What is Prehistoric Rock Paintings?

The term '**Prehistory**' refers to the distant past when there was no paper or language or the written word. Painting and drawing were the oldest art forms practiced by human beings to express themselves, using the cave walls as their canvas.

### **Why did prehistoric people draw these Rock Paintings?**

They may have drawn and painted to make their homes more colourful and beautiful or to keep visual record of their day-to-day life, like some of us who maintain a diary.



*Figure 2: Rock Painting at Bhimbetaka*

In some pictures, animals are chasing men. In others they are being chased and hunted by men. Some of the animal paintings, especially in the hunting, 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.

Some of the pictures of men, women and children seem to depict a sort of family life.

### **Colors used**

The artists of Bhimbetka used many colours, including various shades of white, yellow, orange, red ochre, purple, brown, green and black. But white and red were their favourite colours.

The 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.

What is amazing is that these colours have survived thousands of years of adverse weather conditions. It is believed that the colours have remained intact because of the chemical reaction of the oxide present on the surface of the rocks.

**Bhimbetka:** Pre historic rock shelter is found in Bhimbetka. These shelters have pre historic rock paintings depicting the hunting seen among others.

The painting ranges from the period of Mesolithic to medieval. It is **UNESCO heritage site**.

**Narsingharh:** The cave paintings of Narsingharh (Maharashtra) show skins of spotted deer left drying.

**Kurnool:** Prehistoric rock art **site**, Belum Caves are geologically and historically important caves in the district.