

THE ELEVENTH CONGRESS OF ROCK ART SOCIETY OF INDIA, BHANPURA-2006: A REPORT

The eleventh Congress of Rock Art Society of India (RASI) was held at Kamala Saklecha Gyan Mandir, Bhanpura from 28 to 30 December 2006. The Congress was organized jointly by Bhanpura Itihas Parishad and Directorate of Archaeology, Museums and Archives, Government of Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal. The rock art and archaeology of Chambal valley was the main theme of the Congress. A brief report of the same is given below:

The inaugural function of the Congress was started in the courtyard of the school at 10:00 am on 28 December 2006. The function was chaired by Shri Rajesh Yadav, MLA, Garoth and Bhanpura. Shri Mangilal Kasania, Chief Justice, Family Court and Narmada

Development Authority, Indore was the Chief-guest. Prof. R.C. Agrawal, Jt. Director General, Institute of Archaeology, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, Shri Nitesh Vyas, Collector, Mandasaur, Shri Vijay Kumar Bhandari, Secretary Gyanodaya Trust, Shri B.P. Nagaich, Deputy Commissioner, M.P. Archaeological Department, Indore and Shri Muhammed K.K. were the special guests of the function. A small exhibition on rock art and archaeology of Bhanpura region was also organized by Bhanpura Itihas Parishad on the occasion. The Volume No 16 of Purakala, the journal of Rock Art Society of India and "Prag-Jyoti", the Congress booklet-cum souvenir were released on the occasion by the Chief Guest along with other guests. Dr. P.K. Bhatt anchored the inaugural function. The local citizens and scholars of Bhanpura interested in rock art and culture were present in larger number during the function.



Fig.1: Release of Purakala-2006 by the guests of the RASI Congress, Bhanpura. Shri Mangilal Kasania, Chief Justice, Family Court and Narmada Development Authority, Indore M.P., third from the left, was the Chief Guest of the Congress.



Fig.2: Prof. R.C. Agarwal, President RASI, addressing the RASI Congress, Bhanpura-2006.

The inaugural function was followed by the academic sessions. The first session was chaired by Prof R.C. Agrawal. It was opened with the keynote address by Shri Muhammed K.K., Superintending Archaeologist, Archaeological Survey of India, Bhopal Circle. Muhammed highlighted the use of new digital technology in the documentation of rockshelters and rock art, with particular reference to Kathotia.

The prestigious Dr V. S. Wakankar memorial lecture was delivered by Prof. Subrata Chakrabarty from Viswa Bharati, Santiniketan in the morning on 29 December. Prior to it Dr. G.L. Badam gave a brief but touching introduction about late Dr. V.S. Wakankar, specially about his humanly qualities and great contribution to Indian rock art and archaeology. It was chaired by Prof V. H. Sonawane from University of Baroda. Prof. Chakrabarty spoke on "Palaeoart and Ourselves".

On 29th December, 2006 afternoon, the delegates paid an academic visit to famous Cupule site Daraki Chattan, Indergarh hill. The visit to Daraki-Chattan was followed by a session on conservation and protection of Daraki-Chattan and its environment. It was organized

in the open in front of Indergarh hill and by the side of Indragarh reservoir. Besides the Congress delegates the local citizens participated in the discussion with great enthusiasm. In the function Prof. R.C. Agrawal, Dr. Giriraj Kumar, Shri Muhammed K.K., Prof. V.H. Sonawane, Dr. G.L. Badam, Shri R.K. Pancholi, Dr B.L. Bamboria, Dr P. K. Bhatt and others expressed their great concerns and views. They also gave suggestions for protection and preservation of the earliest cupule site of the world. It was unanimously resolved that the site should be taken under protection by the Archaeological Survey of India and every effort should be made for its protection, further scientific research and popularization of the site. World Heritage status by the UNESCO is the ultimate goal. Shri Muhammed assured his full cooperation provided a forceful initiative has to be taken by the general mass in the form of support from the M.P. and M.L.A of the region and district collector of Mandsaur. It was assured with full confidence and enthusiasm. On the next day scholars were taken to the famous Chaturbhujnath nala rock art site in Gandhisagar game sanctuary and the Magazine rockshelter in the cliff overlooking the water in Gandhisagar gorge.

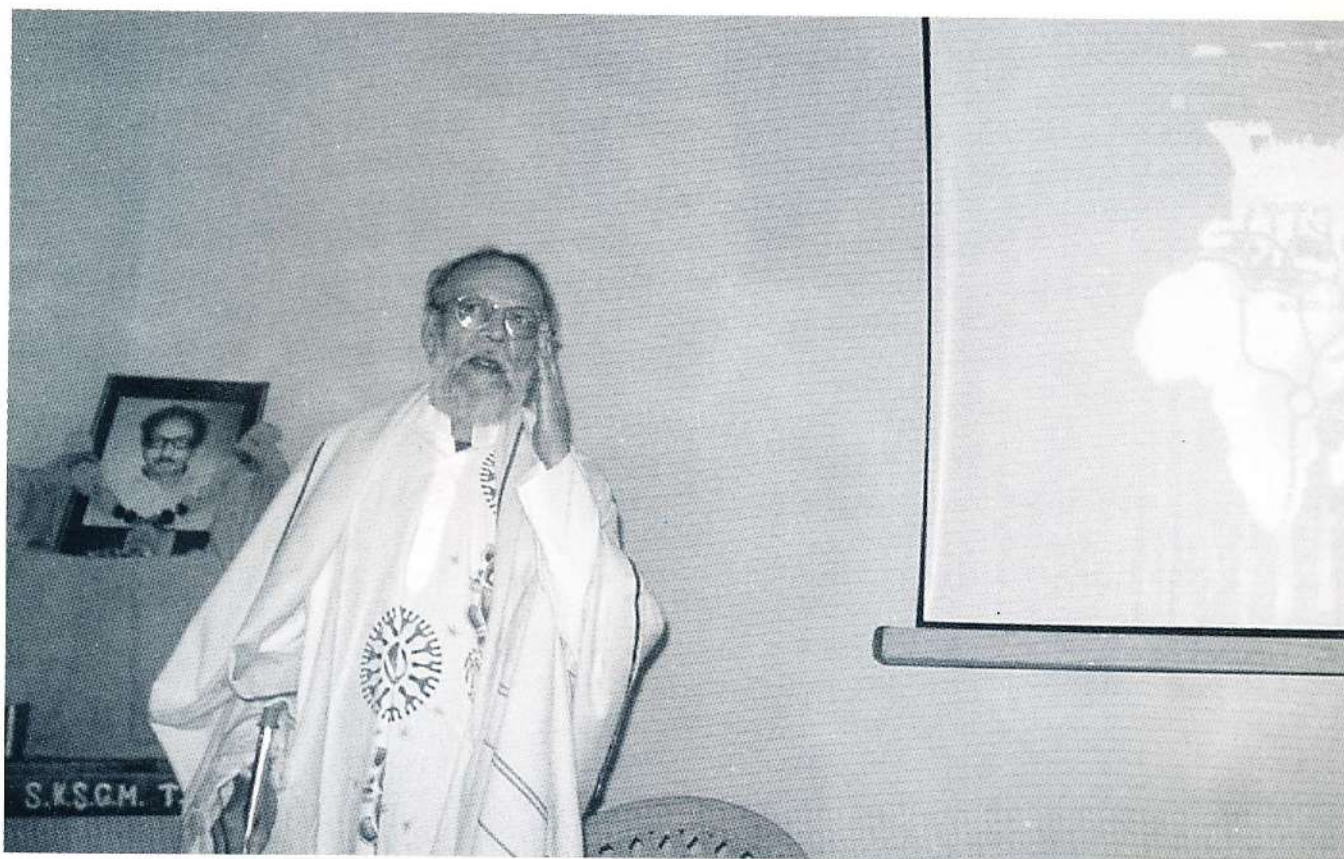


Fig.3: Prof. Subrata Chakrabarty from Viswa Bharati, Santiniketan delivering Dr V. S Wakankar meorial lecture in the RASI Congress, Bhanpura-2006.

The Congress was attended by 130 participants. The young students from the Institute of Archaeology, ASI, Delhi and the Institute of Tourism, Mandasaur were among the enthusiast learners. Scholars like Shri Muhammed K.K., Prof. Subrata Chakrabarty, Prof. V.H. Sonawane, Dr. G.L. Badam and Prof. R.C. Agrawal chaired different academic sessions. In the six academic sessions of the three days seminar 45 research papers were presented. New developments in rock art research in different parts of the country were discussed and debated. The themes of the paper presented include: scientific dating of rock art, conservation and management of Daraki Chattan and Chaturbhujnath Nala; Rock art and ethno-archaeology and artistic appreciation of rock art. Besides, concepts, motifs, different themes and new discoveries made recently in rock art were also discussed. Dr. Giriraj Kumar specially discussed the Lower Palaeolithic Art of Daraki Chattan and its significance to the world archaeology, established by the achievements of the EIP Project, a joint venture by RASI and AURA under the aegis of IFRAO

and with the support of ASI, ICHR and Australia-India Council, Canberra. Thus, Daraki-Chattan from Bhanpura region stands on the map of the world as the principal site of the Lower Palaeolithic art in the world. The second one, Bhimbetka is also from India. With this achievement comes great responsibility on us for its scientific protection and promotion. Now it becomes our sacred duty to make it known to the world with all our wisdom and energy put together.

The Valedictory Function of the conference was held on 29-12-2006 at evening. In the function Shri L.L. Prajapat, SDM, Garoth and Shri Jayant, Tehsildar and Shri R. Karjare, Naib Tehsildar were present. Prof. R.C. Agrawal, President, RASI and Jt. Director General, Archaeological Survey of India concluded about the grand success of the 11th RASI Congress and expressed thanks to the organizers i.e. Office Bearers and members of Bhanpura Itihas Parishad and officers of Directorate of Archaeology, Museums and Archives, Government of Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal especially Shri Pankaj Rag



Fig.4: Dr. B.L. Bamboria addressing in the Valedictory function in the RASI Congress, Bhanpura-2006. Sitting on the dias from the left. Dr. P.K. Bhatt, Prof. R.C. Agarwal, Dr. Giriraj Kumar and Prof. V.H. Sonawane.

and Dr. O.P. Misra. At last Dr. P.K. Bhatt and B.L. Bamboria of Bhanpura Itihas Parishad expressed their vote of thanks the Directorate of Archaeology, Government of Madhya Pradesh and shri Rajesh Yadav for providing financial support, and all the officers at district, tehasil and local levels for their all possible co-operation and help to make this congress a great success. They expressed thanks to Shri Pankaj, Rag, Commissioner, Directorate of Archaeology, Shri Jayadeep Govind, Commissioner, Ujjain, Shri Nitish Vyas, Collector and Chairman, District Archaeology Association, Mandsaur, Shri L.L. Prajapat, SDM, Garoth, officers of Forest department and local residents. They also expressed their humble gratitude to the authorities of Kamala Saklecha Gyan Mandir, Bhanpura for providing the Institute for holding the Congress. Dr Bhatt and Dr Bamboria also expressed their heartfelt thanks to their friends and family members working as the embers of the organizing committee and also otherwise day and night with out showing any sign of tiredness. The credit for the success of the congress goes to them.

Besides, The RASI Executive Committee meeting was held in Kamala Saklecha Gyan Mandir, Bhanpura on 28 December 2006. It was attended by Prof R. C. Agrawal, Prof V.H. Sonavane, Dr Somnath Chakraverty, Dr Ashvini Kumar Sharma, Dr P.K. Bhatt, Dr B.L. Bamboria, Dr M.L. Sharma, shri M.L. Meena, shri Arakhita Pradhan and Dr Giriraj Kumar. It was followed by RASI General Body meeting on 29 December that was attended by all the delegates of the Congress. In both the meetings issues discussed and decisions and recommendations made are as follows:

1. Daraki-Chattan, because of its Palaeolithic rock art, is a site of global significance. RASI should continuously make efforts, with the support from local organizations and public, to get Daraki-Chattan declared as protected monument by the Archaeological Survey of India.
2. RASI should extend its full support to Bhanpura Itihas Parishad in its movement for developing the Bhanapura-Gandhisagar plateau as the national

park as this region has plenty of rock art and archaeological sites including Chaturbhujnath nala and Daraki-Chattan.

3. The invitation extended by Prof K.K.N. Kurup to host the twelfth RASI Congress by the Shreyas, Sulthan Bathery, District Wayanad in Kerala in 2007 was accepted in principle. President and Secretary RASI should discuss further with the host to decide the dates of the Congress and modalities regarding it. They should also visit the venue and other aspects to assure the standards of the RASI Congress. They were also assigned the responsibility to find out proper scholars to deliver Dr V.S. Wakankar Memorial lecture and Keynote address in the Kerala Congress-2007.
4. The EIP Project has unambiguously established the Lower Palaeolithic antiquity of the cupules in Daraki-Chattan. This is a great achievement made to world archaeology by RASI with the help of AURA, IFRAO, ASI, ICHR and other organizations. It made RASI feel proud. The entire team of the EIP Project, specially its leadership was congratulated for this great contribution. Bhanpura Itihas Parishad, specially shri R.K. Pancholi, Dr P.K. Bhatt and Dr B.L. Bamboria were thanked for extending their full support in RASI activities in Bhanpura region. It was also recommended that RASI, in the leadership of Giriraj Kumar, should continue its research activities in this region with more vigour and enthusiasm to bring out a complete picture of evolution of humanity and culture in this region.
5. The process of the study of the excavated material of the EIP Project and its analysis should be enhanced and a complete report on it should be brought out.
6. The training programme for the students of the Institute of Archaeology, ASI Delhi was appreciated. Now RASI should design a training module in rock art and archaeology for students with suitable teaching aids in the light of experience so gained.

Prof. R.C. Agrawal,
Dr P. K. Bhatt and
Dr B. L. Bamboria

PROGRESS MADE IN GETTING DARAKI-CHATTAN PROTECTED

As per recommendations of the eleventh Congress of Rock Art Society of India, Bhanpura-2006, Dr Giriraj Kumar, Secretary RASI motivated, guided and helped the authorities of Bhanpura Itihas Parishad to involve the Hon'ble M.L.A. and M.P. of the region and send an application through them to the Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India to get Daraki-Chattan protected by the Archaeological Survey of India.

Dr Kumar provided all necessary evidence and feedback to prove the importance of the site in World Archaeology. Dr P.K. Bhatt and Dr B.L. Bamboria took personal interest and convinced shri Rajesh Yadav, Hon'ble M.L.A., Bhanpura-Garoth and shri Laxmi Narayan Pandey, Hon'ble M.P., Mandasaur. Ultimately shri Pandey wrote a letter to Mrs Ambika Soni, Hon'ble Minister for Tourism and Culture, Government of India, New Delhi in this regard on 4 May 2007. In the mean time Dr Kumar, participated in the International Cupule Conference, Cochabamba, Bolivia, 17 to 23 July 2007. On his pleading the Congress passed a resolution with strong recommendation to protect Daraki-Chattan and its surroundings. Prof Roy Querejazu Lewis, Chairman of the Congress and AEARC, sent the resolution to the Government of India through Mrs Ambika Soni, the Hon'ble Minister on 14 August 2007.

These combined efforts bore sweet fruits. The Archaeological Survey of India, Bhopal Circle has taken initiative to take Daraki-Chattan and surrounding area including Indragarh and Chanchalamata hills under its protection. The quick action taken in this regard is also due to the personal interest taken by shri K.K. Muhammed, SA, ASI, Bhopal Circle and his team. He is fulfilling the promise made to the delegates and the public of Bhanpura in the RASI Congress. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the authorities and persons for their cooperation and support in this humanistic endeavour.

Secretary, RASI