



# BHIMBETKA ROCK SHELTERS

*The Stories of Early Humans Written on Stone*

Bhimbetka Rock Shelters are one of the most important prehistoric heritage sites in India. Located in the Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh, near the Vindhya mountain ranges, Bhimbetka preserves thousands of years of human history. The site consists of hundreds of natural rock shelters where early humans lived, created art, and carried out their daily activities. The name Bhimbetka is believed to be associated with Bhima, one of the powerful heroes of the Indian epic Mahabharata. The large rocks and caves found here are believed to have reminded local people of places connected with Bhima. Bhimbetka is famous because it contains some of the oldest examples of rock paintings and evidence of human life in India. The paintings and archaeological remains found here provide information about how early humans hunted, lived together, interacted with nature, and expressed their creativity. These shelters are not just caves; they are records of human evolution preserved on stone. The site contains more than 700 rock shelters, and many of them have paintings created during different periods of history. These artworks allow us to understand the thoughts, beliefs, and lifestyle of people who lived thousands of years ago.

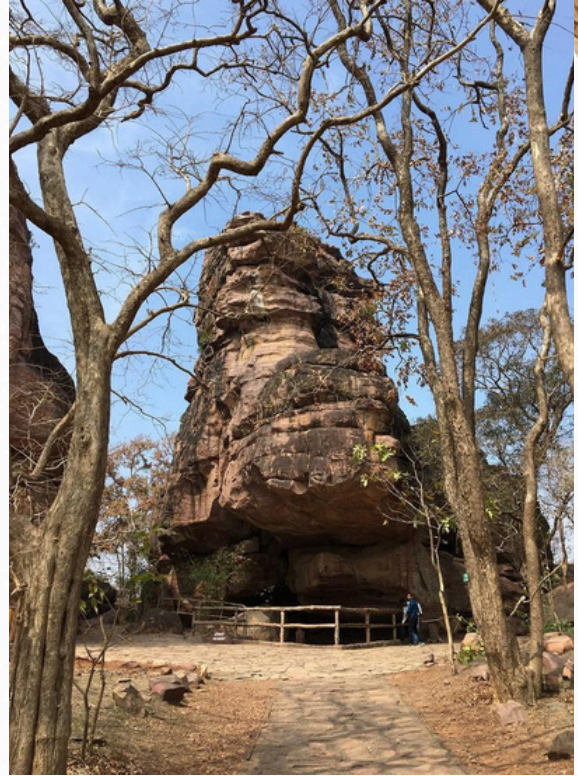
## Formation and Origin

The Bhimbetka rock shelters were not created by humans. They are natural formations that developed over millions of years due to geological processes. The rocks are mainly made of sandstone, which slowly changed shape because of natural forces such as wind, rain, temperature changes, and erosion. Early humans used these naturally available spaces as their homes and resting areas. Over a long period of time, these natural processes created large rock overhangs, caves, and sheltered spaces. These formations provided protection from extreme weather conditions like heavy rains, strong sunlight, and cold winds. Early humans used these naturally available spaces as their homes and resting areas. The location of Bhimbetka was ideal for prehistoric communities because it had access to natural resources. Water sources, forests, animals, and plants were available around the shelters, making survival easier. The surrounding environment supported hunting, gathering, and later forms of human settlement. The earliest evidence of human activity at Bhimbetka belongs to the Stone Age. Archaeologists have discovered that people continued to use these shelters for thousands of years, and different generations added their own paintings and marks to the cave walls.



## Archaeological Findings

Archaeologists have discovered many important objects and remains from Bhimbetka that help us understand prehistoric life. The most famous discoveries are the rock paintings found on the walls and ceilings of the shelters. These paintings show scenes from everyday life and provide a visual record of ancient communities. Many stone tools have also been found at the site. These include hand axes, scrapers, blades, and other tools made from stone. These objects show the skills and intelligence of early humans, who learned how to shape stones for hunting, cutting, and other activities.



Evidence of fireplaces and living spaces has also been discovered. These findings suggest that humans stayed inside these shelters, cooked food, and used fire for warmth and protection. Archaeologists have also found remains that indicate the use of natural resources from the surrounding environment. The findings from Bhimbetka help researchers understand the development of human society. They show how early humans slowly learned to use tools, communicate through art, and build communities.

## Rock Paintings and Their Themes

The rock paintings of Bhimbetka are the most special feature of the site. These paintings were created using natural materials such as minerals, stones, charcoal, and plant-based colours. Red and white are the most commonly seen colours, while other shades were also used in some paintings. A major theme found in Bhimbetka paintings is animals. Early humans painted animals such as deer, bison, elephants, wild boars, and other creatures that lived around them. These paintings show the close relationship between humans and nature.



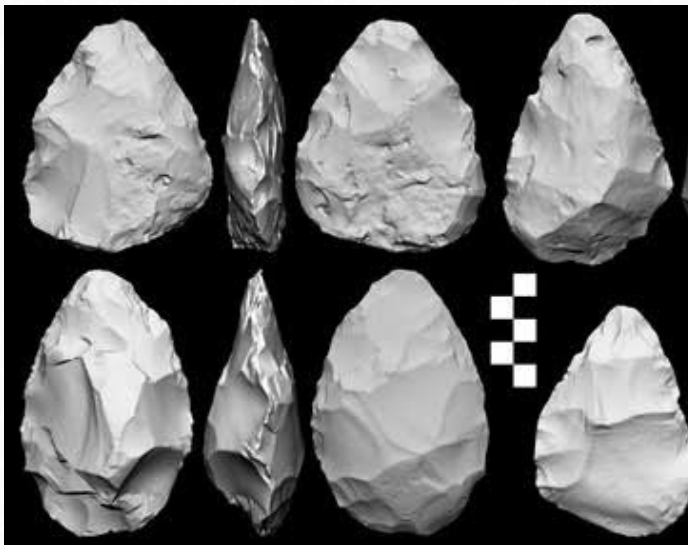
Hunting scenes are also very common. Many paintings show groups of people carrying bows, arrows, and other tools while hunting animals. These images tell us about the survival methods and teamwork of prehistoric communities.

Apart from hunting, some paintings show dancing, celebrations, and group activities. These scenes suggest that humans were not only concerned with survival but also had social and cultural activities. The paintings may also represent rituals, beliefs, and the way early humans understood the world around them. The artwork of Bhimbetka proves that humans have always had the desire to create, communicate, and preserve their experiences.



## Emergence of Tool Culture

The continuity of human evolution from the Lower Palaeolithic Period is noticed by the smaller size of stone tools in the following Middle Palaeolithic Period besides new tools like scrapers. During the Upper Palaeolithic Period newer tool types like: blades, borers and burins had also emerged. However, it is in the Mesolithic Period that there is a clear change in the materials and tool typology. Earlier, the tools were largely made of quartzite and sandstone, whereas the tools being made in the Mesolithic Period were most often of chalcedony. The stone tools of this period include blades, triangles, trapezes, crescents besides quern and muller.



The Mesolithic culture at Bhimbetka continued much longer as understood by the presence of Chalcolithic potteries in otherwise Mesolithic contexts. By the Early Historic times it appears that interaction with the surrounding cultures became more pronounced. This is evidenced by the presence of rock-cut beds in a rock shelter on the top portion of an inselberg like outcrop not far from the later built temple at this site. In all respect it resembles the Sallekhana spots observed in South India.

### DO YOU KNOW?

Bhimbetka also provides evidence of early human creativity. The paintings are not only about survival but also about imagination, storytelling, and cultural expression.



### DO YOU KNOW?

The cave also has a small inscription of the Maurya/Sunga period. Within the general area of Bhimbetka Group of rock shelters small stupas have been found at Bhimbetka, near Bhoranwali, at Bineka, at Lakhajuar and midway between Lakhajuar and Bhimbetka.



## Activities

# WORD SEARCH

H	Y	R	O	T	S	I	H	N	G	P	A	S	B	M
Z	E	D	Y	Y	I	L	K	N	A	N	Z	H	A	L
C	A	R	R	D	R	X	I	O	I	T	I	O	R	G
P	I	E	I	D	U	T	S	M	A	M	V	K	C	N
Q	M	V	V	T	N	A	A	N	B	V	X	H	H	W
W	D	A	D	I	A	L	C	E	O	K	S	E	A	O
R	T	C	A	R	S	G	T	K	C	O	R	V	E	R
I	E	P	V	U	V	K	E	E	M	E	K	Y	O	F
S	Y	T	Y	Q	A	Z	X	P	C	L	E	N	L	H
B	D	G	L	S	V	U	K	V	A	H	F	H	O	S
S	C	L	T	E	X	N	E	P	D	P	N	W	G	Z
E	E	K	A	F	H	Z	Y	A	D	W	Y	Y	Y	R
V	C	S	W	D	T	S	B	B	W	U	U	U	Q	U
G	J	C	O	G	M	C	K	I	H	N	E	J	D	S
S	T	O	N	E	J	E	P	A	Q	D	J	E	S	V

ANIMALS    ARCHAEOLOGY    BHIMBETKA  
CAVE    HERITAGE    HISTORY  
PAINTING    ROCK    SHELTER  
STONE

## Activities

### Create Your Own Cave Painting

Imagine you are a prehistoric artist living thousands of years ago. Create your own cave painting using simple symbols of animals, humans, plants, and nature. Think about what story your painting tells.

### Poster Making - "Save Bhimbetka, Save Our Past"

Students can design a poster using drawings, slogans, and creative ideas related to Bhimbetka. They can include elements like prehistoric animals, cave paintings, rock shelters, early humans, and messages about conservation.

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