



BHIMBETKA:

# THE ETERNAL DAWN



Etched deep in the heartlands of India is the beginning of the greatest story ever told. The story of us. Tens of thousands of years ago, before the birth of language, culture and civilisation; around the time when we had just looked beyond the realms of survival towards the horizons of self-expression - that's when the caves of Bhimbetka became the grand canvas for prehistoric art that appear to the date from the Neolithic period right through to the historical period.

Discovered in 1957 and recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 2003, the Bhimbetka caves are located in Madhya Pradesh's Raisen district. They consist of over 700 rock shelters and an extensive array of paintings and petroglyphs that document the dawn of humankind.





## THE MYTHOLOGICAL ORIGINS

The name Bhimbetka owes its origin to the epic of Mahabharata, and translates to “the sitting place of Bhima”. Legend has it that Bhima - the second of the five Pandava brothers and one of the main protagonists of Mahabharata - used to spend time here during his exile.

## A PERISCOPE INTO OUR PAST

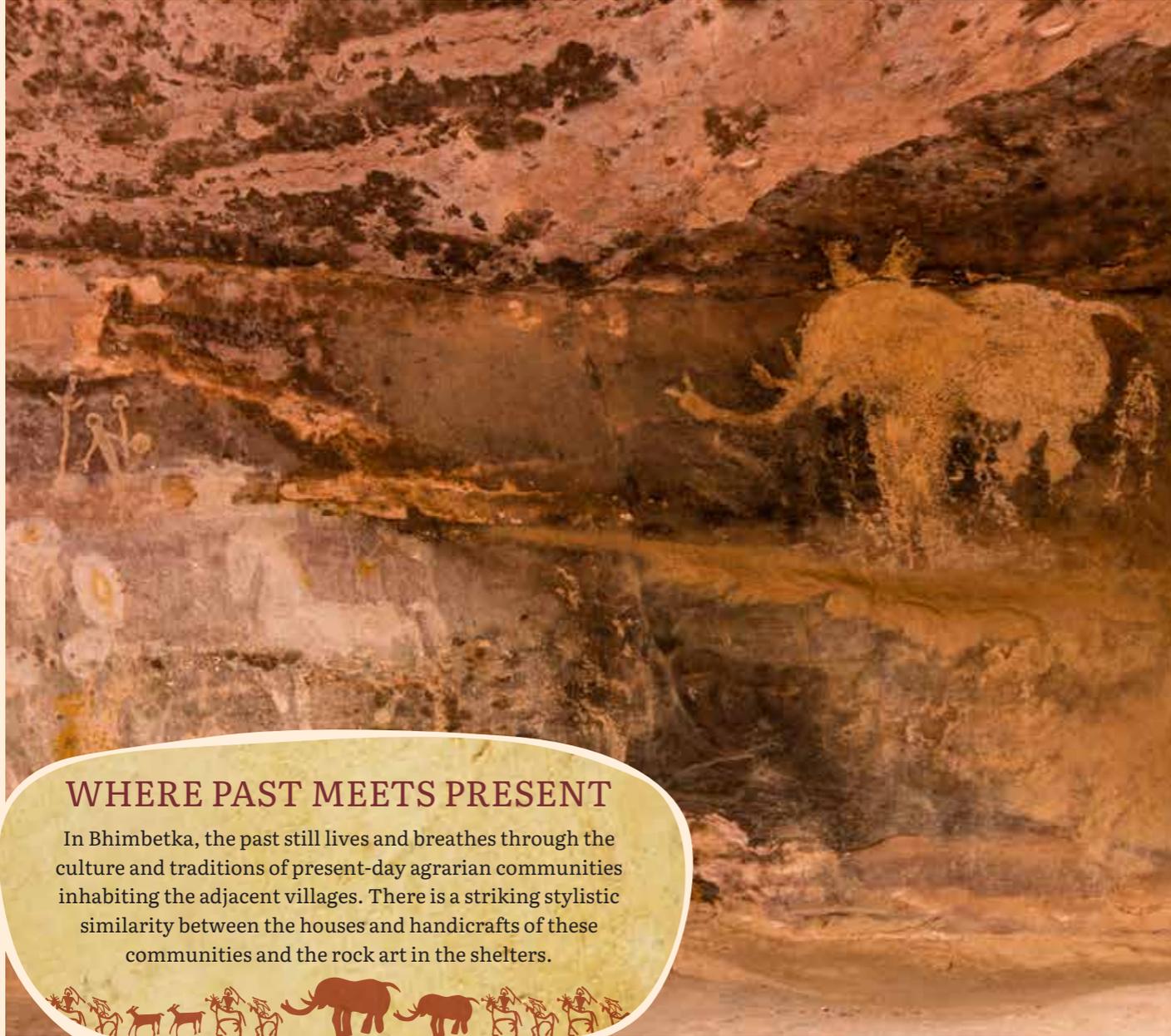
The caves of Bhimbetka are an invaluable chronicle of human history. The paintings and petroglyphs in these cave systems were made over various prehistoric periods, and give us a glimpse into our own cultural evolution. The rock shelters of Bhimbetka appear to date from the Mesolithic period. From nomadic hunter-gatherers' linear representations of animals to settled farmers' more subtle representations of wildlife, humans and agriculture; and finally to the early historical times where we see depictions of spirituality and religious motifs, Bhimbetka takes us on an epic journey through the eons.



## AUDITORIUM CAVE

With its soaring spaces and cathedral-like atmosphere, the Auditorium Cave stands out as the largest and most impressive structure at Bhimbetka. The cupules (cup-shaped depressions) carved around this shelter are believed to be over one hundred thousand years old, and these petroglyphs are among the oldest examples of prehistoric art in the world. The quartzite cave has also been dubbed as “Chief's Rock” or “King's Rock”, and is the crown jewel of the Bhimbetka cave system.





## WHERE PAST MEETS PRESENT

In Bhimbetka, the past still lives and breathes through the culture and traditions of present-day agrarian communities inhabiting the adjacent villages. There is a striking stylistic similarity between the houses and handicrafts of these communities and the rock art in the shelters.



## THE PAINTINGS

When looked at as a whole, the paintings of Bhimbetka become a narrative of epic proportions, spanning over many millennia and recounting countless tales. Animals, birds, musical instruments; hunting, pastoral and domestic scenes; marching soldiers, great wars, tree gods and magical chariots - they all come alive in these cave walls. The densely painted Zoo Rock, which depicts the diversity of wildlife, is particularly popular.



## How to Reach

- By Air : 59 kms (approx.) from Raja Bhoj Airport, Bhopal
- By Rail : 47 kms (approx.) from Bhopal Junction
- By Road : 47 kms (approx.) from Bhopal City



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