

Rock art of Bijawar Sub-division: study in light of Putlikadanta and Pournkadanta rock art site, Chhatarpur District, Madhya Pradesh, India

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Abstract: Putlikadanta and Pournka-dantaisa rich rock art site in the Bijawar region of Chhatarpur district, located on a mountain cliff near Deora village. The figures painted on the shelters are ranging from Prehistoric to Historical period. A brief discussion of this art heritage will provide a rich tradition of ancient human activities in this area.

Introduction

Rock art of Central India is well known for about more than one hundred years¹. The thematic, chromatic, chrono-stylistic, techno-stylistic and finally visually simple and complex motifs from the painted sandstone shelters of this region are varied in several aspects. Life ways and the challenges of everyday life of the prehistoric hunter-gatherers, pastoralists, nomadic tribes, horticulturalists, shifting hill cultivators and finally agriculturalists have been the subject matter of rock paintings here in this part of South Asia. The paintings of different colours and style with various superimpositions represent the underlying mechanisms of the creation of art, which is always subject to interpretative analysis, discussions and semiotics.

Study Area

In physical settings the Deora Village lies east of Bijawar Sub-division in the Chhatarpur district, and is a major part of the area covered with Bijawar reserved forest area (Fig. 1). This is a dry deciduous mix jungle with small seasonal water channel, deep cutting narrow valleys, which has played a vital role for diverse ecosystem as well as ethnic people for their subsistence and extract natural resource². The long narrow cliff added valley along with water body has attracted people of

different period as well as wild animals for their shelter and for subsistence. These are the basic co-relation between the human nature relationships which are transformed to develop different cultural practices and possible the pictographic by the rock art author of these days.

They recorded some of their important activities on in different colour, size and methods available proper rock surface in the areas. The site is closely located on the perineal water source of Symrinala, which is a tributary to river Ken. The water body originate near Saigarh village of Bijawar region and flow in eastern direction, during her journey the water source has passes through other rock art site such as Ghongra, Manosaya, Hatnitod etc.

Previous Researches

The Putli-ka-danta and Pourn-ka-danta rock art site are lies in the south-eastern portion and about three kilometer from the Deora village, which is part of Bijawar sub-division of Chhatarpur district. The rock art site reported for the first time in 1956-57 by S.K. Dixit and described the findings with limited narration in Indian Archaeological Review³, but after that there was no detail discussion on this site. In recent years a number of rock art sites were reported from this locality and some discuss about its detail description was given⁴, but there is a need to further study the rock shelter and understand its cultural pattern, nature, colour composition etc., and reconstruction the cultural activities of this region, which

¹ Cockburn, J. 1899. 'Art. V.—Cave Drawings in the Kaimūr Range, North-West Provinces,' *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (New Series) 31 (01), pp.89-97.

² Laurad, C.E. 1907, *The central India state*. Gazetteer series, eastern states, (Bundelkhand) Gazetteer, Vol- VI-A-text, Lucknow (1995 reprint).

³ Dixit S.K. *Deora rock painting*. IAR-1956-57.

⁴ Tiwari S.K, 2000, *Riddles of India rock shelter painting*, Sarup and sons, New Delhi, p.62



Figure 1. Google earth view and political map showing the rock art site, Chhatarpur, Madhya Pradesh.

were narrated through different colour composition.

Local Inhabitants

The Gond, Kondars, Sond of Bundelkhand is a well documented aboriginal group living in this region along with Hindu caste people and using several natural resources from long past. Extensively the Gond oral traditions claim that they inhabited in this part and centralised in the Gondwana territory for several thousand years. There are several historical documents; archaeological entities including hero stones of the ethnic group support their stronghold in the region. This area has one of the concentration zone of Bundelkhand rock art histories which are mainly located at Bijawar's forest zone. The ethnic unit Gond are primitive in nature and still practice traditional way of life in many ways but the Sond are sub type of main Gond tribe and adopted some modern cultural aspects. Where are the other ethnic group Kondars has their separate cultural identity with its different cultural practices.

Preliminary appraisal

From long distance these two shelter are visible and looks like teeth of human being so local people called these shelter as Pourn-ka-danta that means "mountains teeth" and Putli-ka-danta means "teeth of the paintings", in both cases shows the evil spirits activities in these shelters. Because of that local people avoid going to the shelter, in another belief people used to say that these are depicted through human blood which was soaked by chudel a kind of female evil spirit.

The Putli-ka-danta and Pourn-ka-danta are two natural rock shelter close to each other at distance about 20 m (Fig. 2), are full of rock painting related to animals activities, human being, geometric design and abstract painting. The first rock shelter is popularly known as Putli-ka-danta and the second one is named as Pourn-ka-danta.

It is located about 3 km east of the Deora village on top of the cliff. The first rock shelter has two shelter cell located in two storey manner. So, for detail description the lower shelter cell numbered as Cell-I and the second located top of it has named as Cell- II. The Pourn-ka-danta shelter has only one shelter.

The Putli-ka-danta shelter is surrounded with a bushy jungle; it has a slight inclination floor, curve and smooth wall along with long projected high over hanging roof, the Cell-I has roughly 'C' shaped in nature with wide opening orientation of west. The paintings are mainly located on the curve wall surface and there are four concentration depiction showing animals, human activities, geometric and abstract figures. The shelter is about 5.00 meter length floor in north-south direction and 2.60 meter height from the present floor level. The first concentration of painting located at the extreme right side of the wall surface in which 19 animals, one human and one geometric figure are noticed within 80 cm x 80 cm area (Fig. 3). The second concentration placed just left to the first one and reported 16 numbers of animals including a horse figure, one geometric, one man and one small animal with in a 132 cm x 70 cm in north-south and in east west direction area. In third concentration situated left upper part of the second concentration and painting represent eight animals, three men and four geometric figures with in 122 cm x 160 cm space in north-south and east-west direction (Fig. 4). The fourth or the last painting concentration are noticed on lower part of the second concentration, here most of figures are superimposed (Fig. 5), however two animals and three man figure are important because of white colour used for representation (Fig. 6). Besides that there are figure of geometric design along with nine man and eight animals are quite impressive. All painting represented in this shelter are through brown, red ochre and its various shades. The body of animals are represented in roughly

rectangular, rhomboid and some cases body upper part as half circle type and the inner part of body decorated through horizontal stroke in single or multiple. The human figures are represented through line drawing (Fig. 7) and roughly bi-triangular in nature and fill up with colour.

The Cell-II has small, in comparison to the previous one; it is about 250 cm length and 107 heights, facing towards west (Fig. 8). It is comprises two concentration zone of paintings, the first concentration has reported 10 animals and two geometric motifs along some obliterate figure in orange red colour (Fig. 9), whether the second painting concentration located further ahead to it and identified two animal with few obliterated figure in red ochre. Here the paintings



Figura 2. General view of the Putli-ka-danta and Pourn-ka-danta rock.



Figura 3. A close-up view representing animal chased by human being, Putli-ka-danta rock shelter.



Figura 4. Representation of animals chased by man at the Putli-ka-danta.



Figura 5. Abstract painting on wall surface of Putli-ka-danta rock shelter.



Figura 6. Animal and human painting on white pigment, Putli-ka-danta rock shelter.



Figura 7. Human activities in brown pigment, Putli-ka-danta rock shelter.

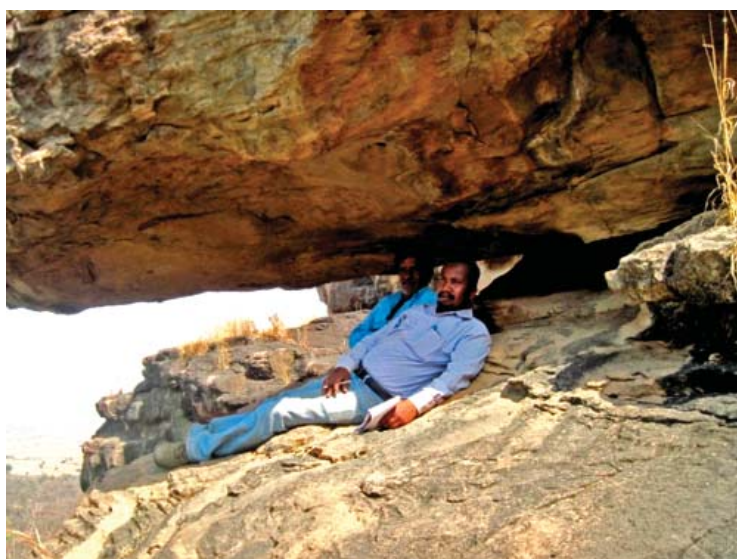


Figura 8. Close-up view of the upper storey of Putli-ka-danta rock Shelter.



Figura 9. Animal representation on upper storey of Putli-ka-danta rock shelter.



Figura 10. General view of the Pourn-ka-danta rock Shelter.

are obliterating because of penetration of rain water to the shelter cell.

The Pourn-ka-danta rock shelter has situated further 10 m east to the Putli-ka-danta shelter (Fig. 10). It is facing towards south, and six meter length in east-west direction, about three meter height from the present floor level. The 'C' shaped quite big shelter has reported very few painting on the wall and its ceiling surface, which are noticed in four sporadic spot and total five animals (Figs. 11 and 12), four small circle with dot in centre (Fig. 13) and few geometric motifs reported. These paintings are mainly noticed on wall surface, all represent through different shades of red ochre.

Tentative Chronology

The absence of absolute dates obtained directly from the paintings, makes it difficult to assign a robust chronology for the different types of paintings in the region so far. Given the difficulties in dating rock art in Central Indian context, it has been imperative to rely on

the visual narratives for interpretative and descriptive statistical analysis. Since the landscape is contested and immobile the artists revisited the shelters overtime to create this vast repository of the then knowledge as an external source of social information, exchange and interaction with the past environment. The deer hunting motif and a large number of wild animal surrounded with human being suggest a phase of predominantly hunting-gathering in the region. These two sites situated within close proximity reveal a vast amount of information, which is full of variety in terms of technique, style, colour composition, subject matter and hence chronology.

Discussion

After detail examination of these shelters on cliff over hanging as part of small term study the paintings were photographed properly for future analysis. The abstract motifs are superimposing and obliterate in few areas so it is difficult to separate those paintings for proper study. The rock art has identified as two phase



Figura 11. Animal represented in series on wall surface Pourn-ka-danta shelter.



Figura 12. Animal represented on wall surface of Pourn-ka-danta shelter.



Figura 13. Circle with dot in centre, Pourn-ka-danta rock shelter.



paintings. Exact dating of the rock art at Putli-ka-danta and Pourn-ka-danta is not possible presently because of it is primary observations based on available data but in chronological method and assessment with other nearby rock art site, the rock art are datable to Mesolithic and Neo-Chalcolithic period as per its style notation, colour composition recorded in shelter surface.

Most of motifs are not identical similar but apparently similar so these are group under respective assemblages for statistical analysis. The Putli-ka-danta and Pourn-ka-danta share several characteristics. Each painting panel serves a separate one, and possible have indicate of individual activities at the site. The human figures recoded on shelter Cell-I is small and have raised hand and their body fill up with colour and roughly bi-triangular in nature. The animals are not sharing their elements in other animas and their body decorated in roughly rectangular variety with horizontal stroke. So it is summarise that the paintings of the each shelters are of different time frame as per their execution style, colour and composition noticed at site. The shelters orientation is varied with facing west and one shelter facing south due to its natural set up of cliff. We invite rock art scholar for have paid their attention and record

details for future research and to understand ancient societies through these depiction. Further exploration, survey, documentation and cataloguing of the painted rock-shelter sites in this region of Chhatarpur should provide fresh data to open up new research avenues complementing recent advances in global rock art.

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