

## **Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka, District Raisen, M.P.**

The rock-shelters of Bhimbetka inscribed as world heritage by UNESCO in year 2003, are located about 45 km., north-east of Bhopal, the state capital of Madhya Pradesh. Situated along the Bhopal-Hoshangabad highway, these shelters bear proximity to the Bhiyapura village in Raisen district. The fringes of the ancient *Vindhyachal* ranges are home to the extraordinary rock shelters and paintings, its awesome rocks are fortifying the ancient treasures within. The rock shelters of Bhimbetka were discovered in 1957-1958 by Dr. V. S. Wakankar. Archaeological excavations yielded remain, serially from the Lower Paleolithic Age to the Early Medieval Period. Over 400 painted rock-shelters are found distributed in five clusters, namely: Bineka, Bhonrawali, Bhimbetka, Lakhajuar (east) and Lakahjuar (west). Here in Bhimbetka, 15 caves are richly painted and out of them few caves have been named as Auditorium, Zoo rock & Boar rock by Dr. Wakankar.

The rock paintings of Bhimbetka is one of the earliest record of art in India and sources of contemporary life of different human occupations right from Mesolithic (C. 8000-2500 BCE), Chalcolithic (C. 2500-500BCE) to Historic period (C. 500 BCE onwards). The paintings are found depicted on the walls, ceilings and small hollows or niches of the naturally formed rock-shelters. Many times paintings are found located at considerable heights and inconvenient places. Most of the paintings are in red or white colours though occasionally paintings in lush green or yellowish colours are also seen.