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Q2

Mesolithic rock cut architecture of India not only reflects the cultural life of the times but also a fine aesthetic sense comparable to modern painting. Critically evaluate this comment.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · GS I · 12 marks · Indian Heritage and Culture

Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

Core demand of the question

- Mesolithic rock cut architecture of India not only reflects the cultural life of the times but also a fine aesthetic sense comparable to modern painting. Critically evaluate this comment
- Cover what Mesolithic art actually is, daily life in the pictures, and whether "rock-cut architecture" and "modern painting" are fair phrases
- Keep the explanation within a 12-mark length

Revision summary

Mesolithic India left painted and engraved shelters, not cave temples.

Bhimbetka and related sites show hunt, dance, and animals.

Rock-cut architecture belongs to Mauryan and later religious caves.

The line can look modern to us, but the makers had ritual and group aims.

The comment is fair on culture, weak on architecture and on equating two art worlds.

Flow diagram

Mesolithic foragers -> Shelter painting Bhimbetka

Shelter painting Bhimbetka -> Hunt dance ritual

Shelter painting Bhimbetka -> Lively line

Later rock-cut caves -> Different craft

Lively line -> Modern comparison is taste

Conclusion

- **Evaluate by splitting the comment:** strong on cultural life, cautious on aesthetics, reject "rock-cut architecture" as a label for Mesolithic India.
- Name **Bhimbetka** as a UNESCO rock-art landscape and keep Ajanta out of the Mesolithic box.

Mesolithic shelter painting records food, ritual, and a lively eye for animal and human form. It is not rock-cut architecture, and it is comparable to modern painting only as a later compliment, not as the same art world.

Facts & figures

Bhimbetka

Rock-shelter complex in Madhya Pradesh with Mesolithic and later paintings; a UNESCO World Heritage landscape.

Microliths

Small stone tools that define much of the Indian Mesolithic toolkit.

Adamgarh

Another important painted-shelter and Mesolithic site in the same broad central Indian belt.

Barabar caves

Mauryan rock-cut cells, centuries after the Mesolithic, true architecture in stone.

Ajanta chaityas

Later Buddhist rock-cut halls; not Mesolithic and not the same as shelter painting.

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