

# CONCEPT OF PREGNANCY IN PREHISTORIC MEDICINE IN NORTH INDIA

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## Introduction

Ever since human race existed on this earth, it always shared the emotions which ultimately resulted in various behavioural responses including a quest for panacea. Such gross observations became the foundation stone for the history of medicine, and man for the first time became interested in consoling the grief, helping the pet animals and observing the physiological process like pregnancy. Western historians have considered their palaeolithic rock paintings as one of the important landmark in documenting the history of medicine, and they have proved that only Western Europe rock paintings have maximum contribution in the dawn of prehistoric medicine. However, few paintings of North India have given a new thought that probably primitive man of this country had equal contribution in documenting the history as aurugnasian man of Western Europe. Taking into consideration above facts the prehistoric rock paintings of Mirzapur Distt. in U.P. were explored and their relevance has been discussed.

## Material and Methods

Prehistoric rock paintings of Mirzapur

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Distt. which fulfil the criteria of palaeolithic era (7000-10,000 B.C.) as per description of Archaeological Society of India were screened for any evidence of pregnancy and labour process. A series of three such paintings were studied.

## Observations

A set of 3 rock paintings have a close similarity which depicts a mammal (cow) having a full grown animal inside the womb. The miniature animal has a cephalic presentation towards uterine outlet and the limbs have been drawn in flexion attitude. Both of these observations have strict sense of scientific basis, as if some one has observed it in utero or during the period of parturation (Fig. 1).

The other painting shows a miniature four legged animal with breech presentation but lacks specification (Fig. 2). The



Fig. 1

third painting deals with a full grown baby animal (Fig. 3). A line diagram has shown probably a pregnant lady without embryological details (Fig. 4).

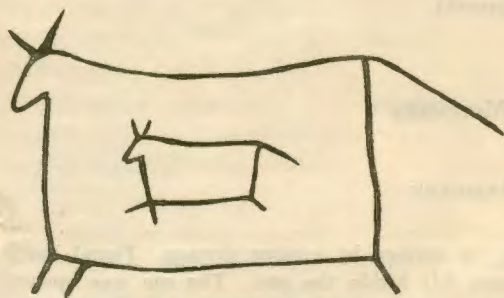


Fig. 2

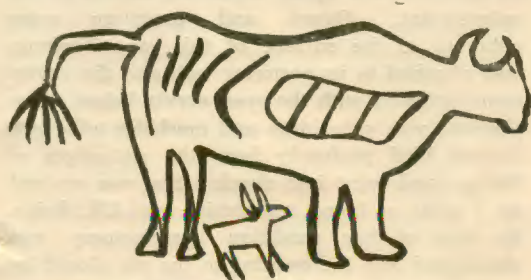


Fig. 3



Fig. 4

#### Discussion

Pregnancy being a physiological process had little importance to many early physicians and priests and probably women like animals delivered the baby and cared them. However, it was only occasional complication which drew the attention of the male partner and thus the knowledge of obstetric became a scientific talk amongst the physicians and a group of skilled people who ultimately tookover the job of obstetricians. It was only neolithic period where some paintings and inscription regarding pregnancy has been depicted.

The palaeolithic (7000-10,000 B.C.) painting of North India has a very strong background to suspect that these primitive races were skilfull observer and had a better understanding of pregnancy related to its complication. Thus this was an earliest observation to be documented in the evolution of history of Medicine of obstetrics in India.

#### Reference

1. Gupta, J. P.: Prehistoric Indian arts. National Publishing House, 196, p. 163-198.