Amarnath Temple

Prelims – *History of India and Current events of national importance.*

Mains (GS I) – *Indian Heritage and Culture.*

Why in News?

The Amarnath Yatra will be held open soon which is organised only once a year and is conducted with tight security arrangements.

- The Amarnath temple in ***Jammu and Kashmir*** is dedicated to Lord Shiva in the linga form.
- The linga is located on Amarnath mountain, in a cave at a height of 3,888 m, and is blocked by snow most of the year.
- **Discovered by -** It is believed to have been discovered by ***ancient Sage Bhrigu***.
- **Hindu Myth** - Amarnath derives its name from the revelation of the secret of immortality (amaratva in Sanskrit) by Lord Shiva to his consort, Goddess Parvati.
- The cave is known as Amarnath because it is the site where the 'amar katha,' the story of immortality, was shared.
- Additionally, the location is referred to by other names such as *Amaresha and Amareshvara.*
- The linga at Amarnath is regarded as ***swayambhu,*** indicating that it emerged naturally without human intervention.
- **Geographical Features** - The linga is classified as a stalagmite, which forms from mineral deposits accumulating as water drips from the cave ceiling.
- As these water droplets freeze, they create the icy shivling. Consequently, Lord Amarnath is also affectionately known as Baba Barfani.
- The glaciers in the *Lidder Valley*, where the temple is situated, are believed to form concealed water channels that lead to the cave, serving as the source of the water.
- The Shivalinga experiences changes in size by the lunar cycle, reaching its largest form during the full moon in the month of Shravan (approximately in August).
- This ice lingam is thought to represent Lord Shiva, embodying his immortality and his ability to transcend time.
- **Related literary works - Kalhana's Rajtarangini,** written in the 12th century CE, mentions Amarnath at least twice.
- The significance of the place is narrated in an ancient work called ***Amreshwar Mahatamya.***

Reference

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