Jain Community Protests

Why in news?

Jains are protesting in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and New Delhi over demands related to two holy sites.

What are the two holy sites?

- In Jharkhand, the issue is about Sammed Shikhar on Parasnath hill being declared a tourist spot and an eco-sensitive zone.
- In Gujarat, the row is over vandalising a shrine in the Shetrunjay hill in Palitana of Gujarat and related security concerns.

What is the Jharkhand issue?

- Parasnath hill is home to Sammed Shikhar, which is the site where 20 of the 24 Jain Tirthankars are believed to have attained salvation.
- In February 2019, the Jharkhand government notified the Parasnath area as a 'tourist spot', along with temples such as Baidhyanath Dham in Deoghar and Basukinath Dham in Dumka.
- In August 2019, the Union Ministry of Environment declared the hill an eco-sensitive zone and added that the area had "tremendous potential to support thriving eco-tourism".
- There are protests now because the Jains say that they came to know about the notification only in December 2022.
- The Jains say that declaring the hill as an eco-tourism spot is a problem, as it will affect the decorum of this place.

Parasnath Hill
• Parasnath Hills are a range of hills located in Giridih district, Jharkhand. • The hill is named after Parasnath, the 23rd Tirthankara. • Twenty of 24 Jain Tirthankaras attained salvation on this hill. For each of them there is a shrine (gumti or tuk) on the hill. • These hills house one of the most important pilgrimage centre for Jains called the **Sammed Sikhar**. • The place is habited from ancient times, but the temples are of recent origin. Some of the temples are more than 2,000 years old. • The Santhals call it Marang Buru, the hill of the deity. They celebrate a hunting festival on the full moon day in Baisakh (mid-April).

What is the Gujarat issue?

- This row began when a police complaint was filed that someone had vandalised the Adinath Dada's Pagla, a marble carving representing the feet of Lord Adinath, the first

Jain Tirthankar.

- The pagla is housed in a small shrine in Rohishala village near the Shetrunjay hill, considered holy by the Jains.

Shetrunjay Hill
• The Shatrunjaya Hill located in Gujarat is studded with temples, built over 900 years. • This hill houses the town of Palitana, which has grown rapidly to serve the pilgrim trade. • It is said that Adinath (also known as Rishabha), the founder of Jainism and the first Jain Tirthankara attained enlightenment in Palitana. • Rishabha gave his first sermon in the temple on the hilltop. • The biggest temple is the Adinath Temple. • **History** - The Palitana temples on Shatrunjaya Hill were built over a period of 900 years starting from the 11th century. • Kumarpal Solanki, a great Jain patron, built the first temples on this site. • The temples were destroyed by Turkish Muslim invaders in 1311 AD, when the saint Jinaprabhasuri, who was then 50 years old, presided over the temples, but later restored them to their glory.

Reference

1. Indian Express | Jain Community Protests
2. Giridih District Website | Parasnath
3. Gujarat tourism Website | Shetrunjay

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