Masroor Rock-Cut Temples

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Why in News?

The Masroor rock cut temples are the architecture marvels of India.

- **Located in –** Kangra Valley along the Beas River in Himachal Pradesh.
- They are a remarkable group of rock-cut Hindu temples.
- **Period** – Dating back to the **8th century CE**.
- **Significance –** This temple complex is among the most significant examples of monolithic rock-cut architecture in northern India.
- **Other names** – It is often called the *"Ellora of Himachal"* and the **"***Himalayan Pyramid."*
- **Influenced by** – *Gupta style* of architecture.
- Despite their historical importance, there are no references to the complex in ancient scriptures or historical texts.
- **Discovered by** – The site came to scholarly attention in 1913 when it was reported by Henry Shuttleworth, followed by a detailed survey by Harold Hargreaves in 1915.
- **Key features**
- The complex comprises *15 rock-cut temples* designed in the Nagara style of North Indian temple architecture.
- Dedicated primarily to Lord Shiva, Lord Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana, the temples are carved from a single sandstone rock formation. Uniquely, they face northeast towards the *Dhauladhar Range,* unlike most Hindu temples that traditionally face east.
- The layout follows a symmetrical square grid, with the central shrine surrounded by smaller temples in a mandala-like arrangement.
- Intricate carvings, reliefs, and friezes depict deities and stories from Vedic and Puranic traditions.
- However, many sculptures have been damaged or lost over time, largely due to earthquakes.
- Despite this, the Masroor Rock-Cut Temples remain an outstanding testament to India's rich cultural and architectural heritage.

Reference

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