

## **Sithannavasal**

**Prelims:** Current events of national and international importance | Art & Culture

## Why in news?

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has taken continuous steps to conserve, research, and promote the Sittanavasal monuments.

- Location Sittanavasal, Viralimalai, Pudukkottai district of Tamil Nadu.
- It is famous for its 2nd-century Jain cave complex that **flourished as a Jain center** from the  $7^{th}$  to  $9^{th}$  centuries.
- "Sithannavasal" means "*the abode of great saints*," referring to the Jain ascetics who lived there.
- Status Declared as a *monument of national importance* under the care of the ASI.

## Features of the site

- Rock shelter With Jain ascetic stone beds. The Jain Beds are collectively known as *Ezhadi pattam*.
- **Inscriptions** Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions dating back to early centuries a rare Brahmi Tamil script inscriptions are found near the beds.
- Arivar Temple (Meditation Hall)
  - $_{\circ}$   $7^{\text{th}}$   $9^{\text{th}}$  century CE rock-cut cave temple with with Mahavir statues
  - The ceiling of the temple is full of *Fresco herbal painting* dates back to Mahendravarma pallava.
- **Paintings** Rare early *mural paintings*, reflecting Jain traditions and ancient art styles.
  - The murals are among the few *surviving early examples* of Indian painting traditions, *comparable to Ajanta*.
  - Famous paintings royal couple, lotus tank with marine creatures.
- Burial Practices Excavations revealed <u>Muthumakkal Thazhi</u> (burial pots), the Jain monks placed in pots and buried after death.
- Conservation Efforts by ASI Special repair works and annual

maintenance, continuous research and promotion of the site.

- $_{\circ}$  The mural paintings are reported to be in a good state of preservation.
- Cultural Significance It represents the spread of Jainism in South India and showcases early religious art.
- Archaeological Importance The inscriptions and stone beds provide insights into ascetic practices and early Tamil culture.

## References

- 1. PIB | Historical Importance of Sithannavasal
- 2. Government of Tamil Nadu | Pudukkottai District

