

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 7th to 9th 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)**
 - 7th - 9th century CE rock-cut cave temple 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 **Muthumakkal Thazhi** (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.

- 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](#)

