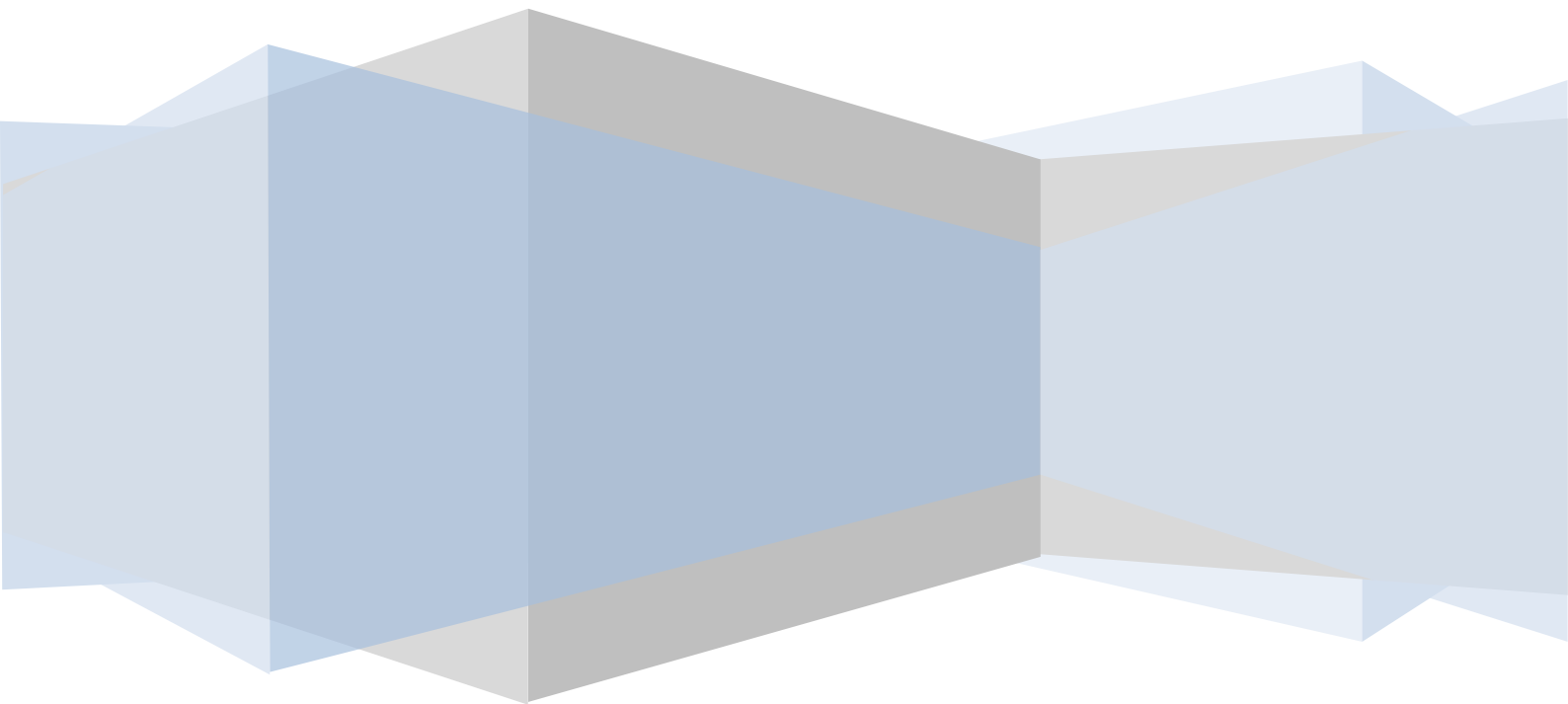


# Chapter 5: Cave Architecture

## Short Answers

CSM 02: History of India and Indian National Movement

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**This chapter contains:**

- Bhaja Caves
- Barabar Caves
- Amarnath Cave
- Badami Caves
- Bagh Caves
- Belum Caves
- Bhimbetka Rock Shelter
- Borra Caves
- Dungeshwari Caves

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# 1. Bhaja Caves

The **Bhaja Caves** are India's finest example of Buddhist cave building. They are in the Pune area, near Lonavala, Mumbai, in the hill village of Bhaja. The Bhaja Caves are among the oldest caves in Western India, dating back to the 2nd century BC. This article will explain to you the concepts related to Bhaja Caves which will be helpful in Indian Art and Culture preparation for the UPSC Civil service exam.

## 1.1 Bhaja Caves

- **Location** - The cave is situated on an important historical trade route that runs eastward from the Arabian Sea to the **Deccan Plateau**.
- It is a collection of 22 rock-cut caves located 400 feet above the Bhaja hamlet.
- **Time of development** - The Bhaja caverns are thought to have been formed around **200 BC, roughly 2,200 years ago**.

## 1.2 Features of Bhaja Caves

- The **Hinayana sect of Buddhism** is represented by the Bhaja Caves.
- The architectural design of the **Bhaja Caves** is similar to that of the Karla Caves.
- Their elaborate facades have made them famous.
- The most unique characteristic of the caves is that the beam of light of the setting sun enters the insides of the caves.
- The **stupas**, which are 14 in number and arranged in a huddle, are one of the cave's most notable characteristics.
  - They are thought to contain the relics of monks who lived and died in the **Bhaja caves**.
- Two of the stupas feature a relic box on the upper side, and all of them are intricately sculpted.
- Five of the **14 stupas** are inside the smaller cave, while the other nine are outside.
- Exquisite **headdresses, garlands, and jewelry** adorn the sculptures in the **Bhaja Buddhist grotto**.
- There are several animal representations and inscriptions of Buddhist monks' names, as well as some **Buddha paintings**.
- A **Chaitya Griha**, or prayer hall, is unique to the cave. The hall is surrounded by 27 pillars, with wooden beams affixed to the ceilings.
- The ceiling beams are the original ones, which is a unique feature. With an open, **horseshoe arched** entryway, it is the most stunning huge shrine chaitya griha.
- The **chaitya griha** features wooden construction prototypes and a vaulted horseshoe ceiling. Another interesting aspect of the cave is the wooden construction.
- Simple **rock-cut Viharas** termed dwelling rooms and water Cisterns can be found throughout the **Bhaja cave Buddhist complex**.
- The **viharas** are ornamented with unique reliefs and have pillared verandahs in front.
- Bhaja's viharas are divided into two levels. There are also a few viharas with two stories. At Bhaja, there is only one vihara with sculptural embellishment.

- One of the carvings **depicts a woman playing the tabla** and another doing the dance, indicating that the **Tabla** (or Pushkara as it was then known) has been used in India for over **2000 years**.
- Near the last cave, there is a **spectacular waterfall**, the water of which flows into a little lake at the bottom during the monsoon season.
- The **Archaeological Survey of India** - ASI has designated the inscriptions and cave temple as a Monument of National Importance.

### **1.3 Conclusion**

The Karla Caves and the Bhaja Caves have similar architectural styles. The enormous shrine-chaitya griha-with an open, horseshoe-arched entrance is the most spectacular monument; according to the Archaeological Survey of India, the chaitya griha is the most prominent component of the caverns and one of the earliest of the sort. Unique reliefs from Indian mythology adorn the chaitya.

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## 2. Barabar Caves

The **Barabar caves**, located in the Barabar hills in **Bihar's Jehanabad district**, are India's oldest instances of **Mauryan rock-cut construction**. In Barabar, there are four caverns going back to **Asoka's rule (273-232 BC)** and his grandson **Dasaratha's reign**, which were originally built for the **Ajivika sect**. This article will explain to you the concepts related to **Barabar Caves** which will be helpful in Indian Art and Culture preparation for the UPSC Civil service exam.

### 2.1 Barabar Caves

- The **Lomas Rishi Cave, Sudama Caves, Vishwakarma Caves, and Karan Chaupar Caves** are among the Barabar caves.
- The caves of Barabar Hill are the world's oldest rock-cut caves.
- These caves were carved out of a single piece of solid granite.
- **Location** - The Barabar Caves are located in a hilly location near Makhdumpur, Bihar, 25 kilometres south of **Jehanabad**.
- **Time of development** - The caverns of Barabar can be traced back to the **Mauryan Empire** in the **3rd century BC** (322 BCE -185 BCE).

### 2.2 Features of Barabar Caves

- **Emperor Ashoka** built the Barabar Caves for the benefit of **Ajivika ascetics**, and it is hence known as the **birthplace of the Ajivika sect**.
- The caves of Barabar Hill are **Buddhist caves**. A few Hindu and Jain sculptures can also be found.
- The **Nagarjuni Hills** (comprising three caves) are located two kilometres from the Barabar Hills Caves (which include four caves).
  - They are referred to as '**Satghar**' since they are thought to be from the same time period.
- The **Baba Siddhanath Temple**, also known as the **Shiva Temple** and formerly known as Siddheshwar Nath Temple, is situated atop one of the Barabar Hills' highest peaks.
  - This temple is supposed to have been constructed during the **Gupta Dynasty's reign**.
- The fascinating echo effect may be found in all of the Babrabar caves.

### 2.3 Lomas Rishi Caves

- The man-made **Barabar caves**, also known as the **Grotto of Lomas Rishi**, are located on the southern side of the Barabar hills.
- As a sanctuary, the **rock-cut Lomas Rishi Cave** was dug out.
- It is the earliest surviving example of the ogee-shaped Chandrashala or Chaitya Arch, which has long been a popular feature of Indian sculpture and rock-cut building.
- Lomas Rishi Cave's arch-like facade is a perfect recreation of monks' wood and thatch cottages.

- The **Lomas Rishi Cave** is divided into two rooms. After passing through a brief tunnel, there is a large rectangular hall, approached from the side, that serves as an assembly hall.
- A second, smaller hall, with an oval-shaped interior and a dome-shaped roof, is located further within.
- The chambers' interior surfaces have a spectacular glass-like gloss and are extremely beautifully finished. In the Barabar Caves, this is a common construction.
- The cave served as a model for the bigger Buddhist Chaitya halls located in Maharashtra, such as the Ajanta or Karli caves, and had a significant impact on the **South Asian rock-cut building heritage**.
- **Lomas Rishi Cave** was excavated and given to the Ajivikas monks during the time of **Mauryan ruler Ashoka**.
- The **Ajivikas** were an ancient Indian religious and philosophical sect that competed with **Jainism** and eventually died out. They pondered in caves, rejecting both the Vedas' authority and Buddhist beliefs.
- The inscription of the elephant and other symbols can be seen on the cave's wall and at the entrance of **Chaitya arch**. The Lomas Rishi Cave does not have any Ashoka inscriptions.
- Buddhists used the **Lomas Rishi Cave** after Ajivikas since the cave's door jamb contains the Bodhimula and Klesa-Kantara inscriptions.
- **Anantvarman**, a Hindu ruler of the **Maukhari dynasty**, dedicated a statue of **Krishna** to the cave, according to a Sanskrit inscription on the arch.

## 2.4 Sudama Caves

- **Sudama Caves** are near to the Lomas Rishi Caves on the left side of the Barabar Hills.
- Sudama cave, according to an inscription placed near its entrance, was perhaps the first cave dug in the **Barabar cave group**.
- **Emperor Ashoka** donated Sudama cave, as shown by an inscription in **Brahmi** inscribed in the cave's entrance employing his protocol name (Priyadarsin, "He who provides joy").
- A short entrance porch leads to a rectangular path at the Sudama cave's entrance.
- The **Sudama cave** has an arched roof. It has a vaulted circular room within which is a rectangular mandap.
- Sudama caverns' interior walls are an **engineering marvel**. The extremely flat and polished granite surface provides a mirror image.
- The wall between the two chambers features a central entryway and an unusual upper hemi-spherical part that is curved and bowed towards the centre, like the roof of native bamboo and thatch beehive homes.

## 2.5 Vishwakarma Cave

- **Vishwakarma Cave**, like other Barabar caves, is made up of two rectangular rooms. The room is completely open to the exterior, like an extended porch.
- **Vishwamitra caves** is another name for it.
- The "**Ashoka Steps**" built into the cliff provide access to this cave.
- During Ashoka's 12th year of reign, he offered Vishwakarma cave to **Ajivikas**.

- It's the only cave in the series that doesn't have any inscriptions from after the Asoka period.
- Emperor Ashoka dedicated Vishwakarma cave in **260 BC**, and 7 years later, he dedicated **Karan Chaupar cave**, which is a short distance from Vishwakarma cave.

## 2.6 Karan Chaupar Cave

- Karan Cahupar is located on the **Barabar Hills'** northern flank.
- It has an **Ashoka inscription** dated the 19th year of his reign on it.
- The Buddhist practice of **retiring (Vassavasa)** during the monsoons is described in an inscription found at the cave's entrance.
- The inverted **swastika** at the conclusion of the inscription shows that this cave, one of the four **Barabar Caves**, was reserved for **Buddhist monks**.
- A mound near the entrance is also covered with later Buddhist sculptures, indicating that the cave once belonged to Buddhists.
- At one end of the cave is a rock-cut seat. It is made out of a single rectangular room with gleaming surfaces.
- An inscription from the **Gupta dynasty** in the entry chamber says "**Daridra Kantara**" ("The Cave of the Beggars").

## 2.7 Conclusion

The **caves of Barabar** come in a variety of **shapes and sizes**. While the **Lomas Rishi Cave** features an oblong vaulted space, other caves have circular domed shrines with stone representations of timber structure. The inside of a number of the caverns have a high polish known as '**Mauryan polish**.' No other rock-cut caves in India can match their age, and others built in subsequent centuries provide testament to their craftsmen's continual improvement in technical skill and design. As a result, it can be claimed that the **Barabar caves** are the origins of India's rock-cut building history.

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### 3. Amarnath Cave

**Amarnath Cave** is a Hindu temple in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. The cave is located at an elevation of 3,888 meters, approximately 141 kilometers (88 miles) from Srinagar. It is accessible through a commute from Pahalgam town. The cave of Amarnath holds a unique **significance for Lord Shiva**. This article will explain to you the concepts related to **Amarnath cave** which will be helpful in Indian Art and Culture preparation for the UPSC Civil service exam.

#### 3.1 Amarnath Cave

- Amarnath Cave is revered as one of Hinduism's holiest shrines.
- The cave, which is located in **Lidder Valley**, is surrounded by glaciers and snow-capped mountains and is snow-covered for the majority of the year, except for a brief period in the summer when it is open to pilgrims.
- The cave of Amarnath holds a unique **significance for Lord Shiva**.
- Shiva is a deity who, according to the Rigveda, is the purifier of good and **destroyer of evil**.
- **Lord Shiva** is thought to be a living God, whose presence has been confirmed by astronomy, **Vedic mythology**, and even rituals.
- Lord Shiva was a highly respected deity in ancient India, according to findings from Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro.

#### 3.2 Historical Background

- According to Hindu religious beliefs, this is the location where Shiva revealed to his divine consort, Parvati, the secret of life and eternity.
- **Queen Suryawati** is said to have given trishulas, banalingas, and other sacred emblems to this temple in the **11th century AD**.
- **Aryabhatta's Rajavalipataka** makes numerous references to the trip to **Amarnath Cave Temple**.
- The pilgrimage's origins are described in the Sanskrit book "**Bringesha Samhita**."

#### 3.3 Features

- According to the **Rigvedic scriptures**, there is only one entity, despite the fact that he is addressed by numerous names by mankind and some great sages.
- "**Ekam Sat**," which means "**there is only one truth**," is a famous verse from the scriptures.
- The Parmeshwar is said to have taken up the world's concerns in three incarnations, known as the **Holy Trinity**. Shiva is a deity who, according to the Rigveda, is the purifier of good and destroyer of evil.
- The **Shiva Lingam** is a **stalagmite formation** found inside a 40 m (130 ft) high cave at a height of 3,888 m on the **Amarnath Mountain**, which has a summit of 5,186 m.
- The **stalagmite** is formed when water drops fall from the cave's roof onto the cave floor and freeze, causing an upward vertical development of ice.

- The stalagmites that make up the lingam, Shiva's corporeal manifestation, form a solid-dome shape here.
- As two smaller stalagmites, **Parvati and Ganesha** can also be found here.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

The narrative of the sacred cave is told in the Puranas, although there are a number of current accounts about its recovery. Every year, thousands of worshippers walk over the south Kashmir Himalayas to Shri Amarnathji's Holy Cave Shrine, which is one of India's four major pilgrimages.

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## 4. Badami Caves

The **Badami cave temples** are a collection of **Hindu and Jain cave temples** in Badami, a town in Karnataka's Bagalkot district in the north. The caves, which date from the **6th century**, are noteworthy examples of Indian **rock-cut architecture**, particularly Badami Chalukya architecture. This article will explain to you the historical background and features related to **Badami caves** which will be helpful in Indian Art and Culture preparation for the UPSC Civil Services exam.

### 4.1 Historical Background

- The cave temples in Badami, the capital city of the **Chalukya kingdom**, also known as Early Chalukyas are dated from the late 6th century onwards and are numbered 1 to 4 in order of their construction.
- Only **Cave 3**, which is a temple dedicated to Vishnu, has an accurate date.
- Mangalesha dedicated the sanctuary in **Saka 500** (solar calendar, 578/579 CE), according to an inscription unearthed here.
- These rock cave temples have been dated to the 6th century according to an inscription written in the old Kannada language.
- As a result, the cave is India's **earliest firmly-dated Hindu cave temple**.

### 4.2 Features

- **Badami** is a modern name for **Vataapinagara**, the early **Chalukya dynasty's** capital, which dominated much of Karnataka from the sixth to the eighth centuries.
- Badami is located on the west side of a **man-made lake**, flanked on the north and south by forts created in later periods by an earthen wall with stone stairs.
- In Badami, there are a total of four cave temples. All of these temples have beautiful carvings with **statues of Hindu gods**.
- The architecture of these temples is a seamless blend of **North Indian Nagara** and **South Indian Dravidian styles**.
- A sanctum, a hall, a verandah, and pillars are all included in each cave. The location of **Cave Temples** is adorned with beautiful carvings and wonderful sculptures.
- A reservoir can be seen at the cutting edge, which serves as a perfect foreground to these architectural structures.

#### First Cave

- The **first and most important cave** was constructed around **578 A.D.**
- The cave is accessible through a 40-step staircase. The cave, which is dedicated to Lord Shiva, houses 81 statues of Lord Shiva in the **shape of 'Nataraj,'** who has 18 arms.
- The cave, which is made of red sandstone, features an open portico, a hall with several columns, and a sanctum. Paintings of infatuated couples adorn the **ceilings and pillars**.

## Second Cave

- The **second cave** is located on top of a sandstone hill.
- According to Hindu beliefs, **Lord Vishnu** is the preserver of the Universe, and this Cave Temple is devoted to him.
- **Lord Vishnu** is depicted as a '**Trivikrama**' (**dwarf**) in this image, with one foot commanding the Earth and the other commanding the sky.

## Third Cave

- The **third Cave Temple**, perched on a hill, **dates back to 578 A.D.** The cave's front elevation is roughly 70 feet wide.
- The images of '**Ganas**' are etched into the platform. The temple's architecture goes back to the **Deccan style of building**.
- This temple exemplifies creative excellence and sculptural brilliance.
- The sculpture depicting **Lord Vishnu** with a serpent has gotten a lot of attention.
- Lord Vishnu is portrayed here as **Narsimha, Varaha, Harihara** (Shiva-Vishnu), and Trivikarma in his different incarnations.

## Fourth Cave

- The **fourth Cave Temple** is known for being dedicated to **Lord Mahavira**, the **Jains' 24th Tirthankara**.
- The cave is thought to be the most recent of the four caves.
- It dates back to the **7th century**, almost 100 years after the construction of the first three caves.
- The **figure of Lord Mahavira** in a sitting posture can be found in this shrine.

## 4.3 Conclusion

The creative beauty and sculptural grandeur of Badami's cave temples are immediately apparent. The rich traditions of India are portrayed in these cultural monuments. People travel from all over the world to see these architecturally stunning and religiously significant sites. The Badami Caves complex is part of the Malaprabha river valley's "Evolution of Temple Building – Aihole-Badami-Pattadakal" **UNESCO World Heritage Site** candidate, which is regarded as a cradle of temple architecture and served as a model for later Hindu temples in the region.

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## 5. Bagh Caves

The **Bagh Caves** are a collection of nine rock-cut monuments located on the southern slopes of the **Vindhyas** near Bagh, Dhar district, Madhya Pradesh, India. They were developed around the **6th century A.D.** These are known for mural paintings by ancient Indian master artists. The term "**cave**" is a misnomer because these are not natural caves, but rather examples of **Indian rock-cut construction**. This article will explain to you the features related to **Bagh Caves** which will be helpful in Indian Art and Culture preparation for the UPSC Civil service exam.

### 5.1 Bagh Caves

- **Location** - They are located on the banks of the **Baghani River** in **Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district**.
- The most beautiful paintings known to have been created by prehistoric man can be found in these rock cut caverns. Only 5 of the original 9 caverns have survived.
- **Time of development** - According to mythology, **Buddhist monk** Dataka constructed these caves. The caves were carved between the late **4th and early 6th centuries AD**.
- These caves were first discovered in **modern times in 1818**.

### 5.2 Features

- The **Bagh caves**, like the **Ajanta caves**, were carved out of the perpendicular sandstone rock face of a hill on the far bank of the Baghani, a seasonal stream.
- Only five of the nine caves have survived, despite their Buddhist inspiration.
- All of them are '**viharas**,' or **monks'** resting places, with a quadrangular design. The 'chaitya,' or prayer hall, is a tiny chamber usually found toward the back.
- **Cave 4**, also known as the **Rang Mahal**, is the most important of the five caves that still exist (Palace of Colors).
- **Mural Paintings** are well-known in **Bagh Caves**. A thick **mud plaster** of a brownish orange colour was used to cover the walls and ceilings before painting.
- **Lime-priming** was applied over the plaster, and then the paints were applied.
- The employment of a permanent fast-drying painting medium consisting of coloured pigment mixed with a **water-soluble binder** media is referred to as tempera technique.
- In various places of India, the sophisticated form of art represented in the **Ajanta paintings** can also be seen in surviving wall paintings and mural remnants.
- **Ajanta Caves** are perhaps the only instances of Indian murals visible to the outside world.
- However, it has been established that the tradition that began at Ajanta actually began in ancient times. And it didn't stop at Ajanta; it was carried on by people of many faiths in various places of India.
- A **reddish-brown grainy** and thick mud plaster was spread out on the walls and ceilings to prepare the ground.
- Only **Caves 3 and 4** had survived the ravages of time when the Bagh caves were discovered. Bagh's murals exemplify the "**golden age**" of Indian classical art.

- **Tempera** was used to paint the **Viharas of Bagh's** walls and ceilings, with shards still evident in Caves 3 and 4 (remnants also observed in Caves 2, 5, and 7).
- **Cave 2**, popularly known as "**Pandava Cave**," is the cave with the best preservation.
- These artworks are more worldly than **spiritualistic in nature**.

### 5.3 Conclusion

Bagh Caves, in Madhya Pradesh, are a complex of nine Buddhist caves that were built around the **6th century A.D.** on the bank of the **Bagh river**. In terms of design, execution, and decoration, it is architecturally extremely similar to the **Ajanta caves**. These rock-cut shrines and monasteries are amazing and fascinating.

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## 6. Belum Caves

**Belum Caves** are located in the **Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh**, amidst flat agricultural land. It is also known as **Belum Guhalu** and is the **second-largest network** of underground caves in the Indian subcontinent, with **Meghalaya having the longest (the 22 km-Krem Liat Prah)**. The **Belum Caves** are noted for their **speleothems**, such as stalactite and stalagmite formations. This article will explain to you the features and significance of **Belum Caves** which will be helpful in Indian Art and Culture preparation for the UPSC Civil service exam.

### 6.1 Historical Background

- The Belum Caves became famous after **British surveyor Robert Bruce Foote** discovered them in **1884**.
- Even after Foote's discovery, the caves were used as garbage dumps until 1983, when a team led by **German speleologist Herbert Gebauer** and Indian geologists conducted extensive explorations and mapping.
- It was then that the remains of clay vessels dating back to 4500 BC, as well as mortars and pestles used for grinding Ayurvedic medicines, were discovered here, indicating the caves' antiquity.

### 6.2 Features

- The steady flow of underground water from the now-disappearing **river Chitravathi** carved out this cave system over tens of thousands of years.
- The river's erosion has left deep marks on the cave walls and quartz deposits are also visible within the caves.
- These caves are known for their speleothem structures, such as stalactite and stalagmite formations (**Speleothems** are secondary mineral deposits created in a cave).
- The caves were once home to **Jain and Buddhist monks** who lived there for decades.
- The presence of pre-Buddhist vessels dating back 4500 years verifies this.
- **Simhadwaram** - It translates to "lion's gate." It's a natural arch of stalactites shaped like the head of a lion.
- **Kotilingala Chamber** - This portion has **Shiva lingam**-like stalactite formations. Thousands of such stalactites can be found in this location, giving it a bizarre appearance. It has one massive pillar produced by the junction of **stalactite and stalagmite**.
- **Saint's Bed or Greystone Recliner** - It is possible that Buddhist monks meditated here hundreds of years ago. The site where these relics were discovered has been transformed into a Dhyana Mandir (Meditation Hall).
- **Patalaganga** - It is a little perennial brook that disappears into the earth's depths. This creek flows from southeast to northwest direction.
- **Saptasvarala Guha or Musical Chamber** - It is a seven-note chamber. When whacked with a wooden stick or knuckles, the stalactite formations in this chamber generate melodious sounds.

- The **Dhyan Mandir (Meditation Hall)** - It is located at the entrance. At the Meditation Hall, there is an interesting formation that resembles a bed with a pillow on which to lie.
- According to **local mythology**, many sages used to live here in ancient times. Buddhist monks frequented this area.
- Many Buddhist relics were discovered here, and they are presently housed in a museum in Anantapur.
- **Thousand Hoods** - This section features incredible stalactite formations in the shape of a Cobra's hood. Thousands of cobras have opened their hoods, according to the stalactite formations on the ceiling.
- The **Banyan Tree Hall** area features a massive pillar with stalactites dangling from the ceiling. When viewed from below, this resembles a Banyan Tree with its aerial roots.
  - It's known as "**Voodalamari**" by the locals because it resembles a Banyan Tree with its aerial roots dangling from the branches.
- **Mandapam** - This is a large space inside the cave with spectacular stalactite structures on the walls that give it the appearance of a hall with pillars.

### 6.3 Significance

- The Belum Caves are both geologically and historically significant caves.
- There is evidence that Jains and Buddhist monks lived in these caves centuries ago.
- Inside the caves, many Buddhist relics were discovered. These relics are now housed in the **Ananthapur Museum**.
- The **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** discovered **pre-Buddhist era vessel remnants** and dated these objects to **4500 years BCE**.

### 6.4 Conclusion

Belum's caves, which are known for their cave formations such as stalactite and stalagmite formations, are the longest in India after those in the state of Meghalaya. Long passages, galleries, spacious caverns with fresh water, and syphons can be found in the Belum Caves. To popularise the Belum caves, the Andhra Pradesh government conducted the Belum Caves Festival in January 2020. The festival's name has been suggested as '**Kandanavolu Sambaralu**' since Kurnool district was once known as Kandanavolu.

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## 7. Bhimbetka Rock Shelter

**Bhimbetka Rock Shelter** in **Madhya Pradesh**, is thought to be a **prehistoric rock shelter**. Several experts studied the art on the shelter's walls and concluded that it dates from the **Paleolithic period**. It appears to show traces of human life on the Indian continent, putting it in the early stages of the **South Asian Stone Age**. In **2003**, it was designated as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**. This article will explain to you the historical background and features of **Bhimbetka Rock Shelters** which will be helpful in Indian Art and Culture preparation for the UPSC Civil service exam.

### 7.1 Historical Background

- Prehistoric cave paintings may be seen in some of the Bhimbetka rock shelters, the oldest of which date back to around **10,000 years ago (c. 8,000 BCE), dating to the Indian Mesolithic**.
- The Bhimbetka site is home to India's oldest known rock art as well as one of the country's greatest prehistoric complexes.
- According to studies, **Homo erectus** may have lived in the rock shelters around 1,00,000 years ago.
- This cluster's most recent rock drawings are roughly **30,000 years old**. Many tales have been added to this location due to its antiquity.
- More than **750 rock shelters** have been discovered since then. There are 243 of these in the Bhimbetka group, and 178 in the **Lakha Juar** group nearby.
- The evidence implies that there has been a continuous human presence here from the **Stone Age** through the late **Acheulean** to the late Mesolithic until the **2nd century BCE**, according to the **Archaeological Survey of India**.
- These caves were discovered in **1958** by **Dr. V. S. Wakankar**, a well-known archaeologist.
- The extent and actual significance of the **Bhimbetka rock shelters** were only discovered and documented in the **1970s**.

### 7.2 Features

- The term 'Bhim-betaka' refers to the '**sitting location of Bhima**', one of the **Pandava brothers**.
- Several layers of inhabitation can be seen in the rock shelters.
- At the **Bhimbetka rock shelters** in central India, the **Paleolithic and Mesolithic periods**, as well as the historic period, are all represented.
- It displays the earliest signs of human life in India, as well as **Stone Age** evidence dating back to **Acheulian times**.
- It is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** with seven hills and over 750 rock shelters spread out over a 10-kilometer area. At least some of the shelters have been occupied for over 100,000 years.
- **The first period**, which corresponds to the **Upper Paleolithic epoch**, features enormous animals such as bosons, rhinos, and tigers.
- The **Mesolithic period**, or **the second phase**, is marked by miniature, stylized human figurines.

- Weapons such as **barbed spears, pointed rods, and bows and arrows** are displayed on these figurines.
- They also depict social interactions such as dancing, burials, drinking, eating, and so on.
- The **Chalcolithic phase is the third stage**, characterised by agricultural activities and exchange between nomads and agriculturists.
- **Prehistoric cave paintings** may be seen in some of the **Bhimbetka rock shelters**, the oldest of which date back to around **10,000 years ago (c. 8,000 BCE)**, dating to the Indian Mesolithic.
  - They have a widened colour pattern with red, white, and yellow used in the paintings.
  - These paintings also depict magical creatures, sky chariots, and tree gods.
  - The paintings discovered in the rock shelters bear striking resemblance to those discovered in **Australia's Kakadu National Park**, as well as to **Bushmen cave paintings in the Kalahari Desert** and **Upper Palaeolithic Lascaux cave paintings in France**.
- The use of manganese, wooden coal, and hematite can be seen in the last period, which can be classified as **early mediaeval**.
- The '**Zoo Rock**,' which depicts elephants, bison, deer, and Sambar, is the most striking feature.
- The Archaeological Survey of India has done an excellent job of preserving the site.

### 7.3 Recent Developments

- On the roof of the **Bhimbetka Rock Shelters**, researchers recently uncovered three fossils of the earliest known living species, the 550-million-year-old '**Dickinsonia**.'
- At Bhimbetka Rock Shelters, the fossils were discovered under the top of the **Auditorium Cave**.
- It adds to the evidence of similar paleoenvironments and verifies the 550 Ma assembly of Gondwanaland (mega annum).
- This discovery may aid scientists in better comprehending the connection of geology and biology that led to the evolution of sophisticated life on Earth.

### 7.4 Conclusion

The caves offer a rare glimpse into the evolution of culture, from nomadic hunter-gatherers to settled cultivators to spiritual expressions. It has been observed that the contemporary cultural traditions of the agrarian peoples who live in the villages surrounding Bhimbetka are similar to those depicted in the paintings.

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## 8. Borra Caves

The **Borra Caves**, also known as **Borra Guhalu**, are located in the **Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh**, among the **Ananthagiri hills** of the Araku Valley. These caves are thought to be more than **150 million years old**. The cave's name is derived from a hole in the roof above its central area.

### 8.1 Historical Background

- **Borra Guhalu** is the indigenous name for the caves. Borra is the Telugu word for abdomen, and guhalu is the Telugu word for caves.
- **William King George** of the **Geological Survey of India** found the caverns in **1807**.
- There are various legends surrounding the caverns' discovery, which the tribals **Jatapu, Porja, Kondadora, Nookadora, Valmiki**, etc. who live in the communities surrounding the caves tell.

### 8.2 Features

- The **Gosthani River** flows through the caves, which are located in the Araku Valley of the Ananthagiri hill range.
- These are at a height of 1400 meters above sea level.
- Shiva-Parvathi, Rishi's Beard, Mother-Child, Crocodile, Human Brain, Tiger, and Cow's Udder are some of the **stalactite and stalagmite** formations found in these caves.
- There is also a **naturally formed Shivalinga** deep inside the cave, and tribal people from the surrounding areas (Jatapu, Porja, Kondadora, and Nookadora) flock to the caves every Shivaratri to pray to the linga.
- The caves are **extremely deep** and completely **aphotic**. In the caves, there is an area with limited light penetration.
- The caves in the protected forest area are mostly **speleothems** of varying sizes and irregularly shaped **stalactites and stalagmites**.
- In the caves, **Paleolithic tools** have been discovered such as stone implements from the middle Paleolithic culture, which date back 30,000 to 50,000 years and confirm human presence.

### 8.3 Conclusion

At an elevation of around 705m, the caves, which are one of the country's largest, clearly display a range of speleothems ranging in size and irregularly formed stalactites and stalagmites. The caves are karstic limestone structures that reach a depth of 80 meters (260 feet) and are regarded as India's deepest caves. Recently the **Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH)** is working to have Erra Matti Dibbalu (red sand dunes), natural rock formations, **Borra Caves**, and volcanic ash deposits recognized as a geopark in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.

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## 9. Dungeshwari Cave

The **Dungeshwari Cave Temples**, also known as the **Mahakala Caves**, is located 12 kilometers north of **Bodhgaya, Bihar**. Three caverns have Buddhist shrines, including one where the Buddha is said to have meditated. This article will explain to you the important features related to **Dungeshwari Cave** which will be helpful in Indian Art and Culture preparation for the UPSC Civil service exam.

### 9.1 Historical Background

- **Lord Buddha** is claimed to have been safeguarded by the caves in the Dungeshwari Hills before descending to **Bodh Gaya**.
- The Dungeshwari Hills is located near the **Falgu River in Gaya**. In his travelogue, Chinese traveler **Hiuen Tsang** mentions these hills.
- These caves today house a number of temples that are frequently visited by pilgrims who are following in **Lord Buddha's footsteps**.
- The locals refer to the Dungeshwari cave temples as **Sujata Sthan**.
- Buddha is said to have become frail, feeble, and hungry during his self-mortification. **Sujata**, a village woman, brought him food while he was resting under a Banyan tree.
- Buddha accepted her gifts and ate them, revealing a holy truth: neither extreme **self-indulgence** nor **self-abasement** are the paths to enlightenment.
- Buddha realised that by taking the middle road, he would be able to achieve **supreme nirvana**. **Sujata Sthan**, also known as Dungeshwari Temple, is a symbol of this event.

### 9.2 Features

- To commemorate this period of Buddha's life, two tiny shrines have been constructed.
- In one of the **cave temples**, a golden emaciated Buddha sculpture recalling the strict penance is enshrined, while in the other, a big (approximately 6' tall) **Buddha statue** is enshrined.
- **Dungeshwari**, a Hindu goddess deity, is also housed within the cave shrine.
- **There are Hindu and Buddhist shrines in the caves, and some people are drawn to this location because of the sheer energy they feel it emits, as well as its connection to Lord Buddha.**

### 9.3 Conclusion

The cave temples where Lord Buddha is claimed to have pondered before arriving in Gaya for his enlightenment are the most notable features of the Dungeshwari caves. These caves today house a number of temples that are frequently visited by pilgrims who are following in Lord Buddha's footsteps. Dungeshwari, the Hindu goddess, is honored at one of the cave temples.

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