

## Lankamala Shaivite Centre (16th century) in Andhra Pradesh

### Why in News?

*A team of researchers at the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Mysore, has uncovered ancient inscriptions and prehistoric rock art in Andhra Pradesh.*

- **Pilgrimage Centre** - The findings, dating from the 4<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century Common Era (CE), indicate that Lankamala was a major Shaivite pilgrimage centre visited by North Indian devotees.
- The presence of North Indian names like Sri Vishishta Kankanadhadi, Yedharmaja, and Chandrahasa confirms that pilgrims travelled long distances to visit the temples of Lankamala.
- Researchers also traced an ancient pilgrimage route between two Shaivite temples, reinforcing the site's religious significance.
- It discovered rock inscriptions and carvings in the Siddavatam, Madduru, Konduru, and Rolabodu forest areas.
- **Inscriptions** - In Gopalaswami Konda, at an altitude of 3,200 feet, they documented 12 label inscriptions written in Siddhamatrika, Shankha script, and Devanagari.
  - The inscriptions, believed to be from the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE, showcase **Kushan-era craftsmanship** and were carved using a unique thumb-engraving technique.
- The team identified 15 additional label inscriptions, including 14 in the rare Shankha script and one in Brahmi.
- This marks the 1<sup>st</sup> discovery of Shankha script inscriptions in the Rayalaseema region.
- A significant find was 2 inscriptions on the same rock from different periods,
  - One in Brahmi from the 4<sup>th</sup> century and
  - Another in Shankha script from the 6<sup>th</sup> century, providing insights into the evolution of writing styles in South India.
- They persevered and identified a total of 28 inscriptions, confirming human presence in the region from the 4<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- It is the first time in 140 years that label inscriptions have been discovered inside a wildlife sanctuary.
- **Rock Shelters** - The team uncovered 3 rock shelters, one containing prehistoric rock paintings.
- The artwork, depicting animals, geometric patterns, and human figures, was created using Red Ochre, Kaolin, animal fat, and crushed bones, enabling the pigments to last for millennia.
- The site is believed to date back to the Megalithic (Iron Age) and Early Historic periods (2500 BCE - 2nd century CE).

### Reference

[New Indian Express | Shaivite centre in Lankamala](#)

