



BELUM CAVES IN KURNOOL DISTRICT GENERATE INVISIBLE INCOME TO STATE

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ABSTRACT :

In 12th century A.D, the Vidders who carted stones for the construction of temple at Alampur, Mehboob Nagar on the left bank of river Tungabhadra, used the sight where the town now stands as a stopping place before crossing the Tungabhadra. Kurnool is one of the important districts in the state of Andhra Pradesh and most prominent districts of Rayalaseema region. The major important tourist places in Kurnool district are the belum caves geographically and historically important caves, The word Belum caves is derived from 'Belum' which means caves in Sanskrit. The caves in the past were being used as to dump wastes from nearby places. Belum caves provided employment to local people and its has become source of revenue for them tourism industry may generate invisible income to government.



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KEYWORDS : Kurnool District, Belum Caves, Invisible Income, Employment.

PROFILE OF KURNOOL DISTRICT

1.1 Kurnool District:

In 12th century A.D, the Vidders who carted stones for the construction of temple at Alampur, Mehboob Nagar on the left bank of river Tungabhadra, used the sight where the town now stands as a stopping place before crossing the Tungabhadra. They greased their cart wheels with oil supply by local oil merchants and called the place "Kandanaoolu" which in course of time came to be known as "Kurnool".

Kurnool occupies an area of approximately 17,656 km¹. It is surrounded by the districts of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka on its north Mehboob Nagar, south Anantapur and Kadappa, east Prakasham and west Bellary districts.

On the formation of Andhra state on 1st October 1953, Kurnool became its capital and continued till 1st November 1956 when Andhra Pradesh was formed. The district is strategically located on one of the important highways NH7 and NH18. The district headquarters, Kurnool town is 200km away from the state capital Hyderabad. Kurnool district is gifted with rich natural resources and bounded on the north by major rivers of Krishna and Tungabhadra. One of the largest hydro –electric power project is constructed across river Krishna at Srisailam.²

¹ States and Union Territories – Andhra Pradesh, Govt. of India, Pg. No. 1100

² Industrial Profile of Kurnool District – P.g No.4

Nallamallas and Yerramallas are the two important mountain ranges in the district running parallel from north to south with thick vegetation. Nearly 18% of the total geographical area is under thick forest cover which is a rich source of forest wealth. Further the district is also endowed with rich minerals and enormous deposits of limestone suitable for cement manufacture

TABLE NO. 1.1
DEMOGRAPHIC DETILS OF KURNOOL DISTRICT:

S.NO	PARTICULARS	1991	2001	2011
1.	Area (sq.km)	17.65	17.65	17.65
2.	Population in tota; in lakhs	29.73	35.29	40.46
3.	Male	14.96	17.69	20.40
4.	Female	14.77	17.630	20.06
5.	Density per sq.km	168	200	229

Source : National Information Centre, HYDERABAD

DEMOGRAPHIC DETILS OF KURNOOL DISTRICT:

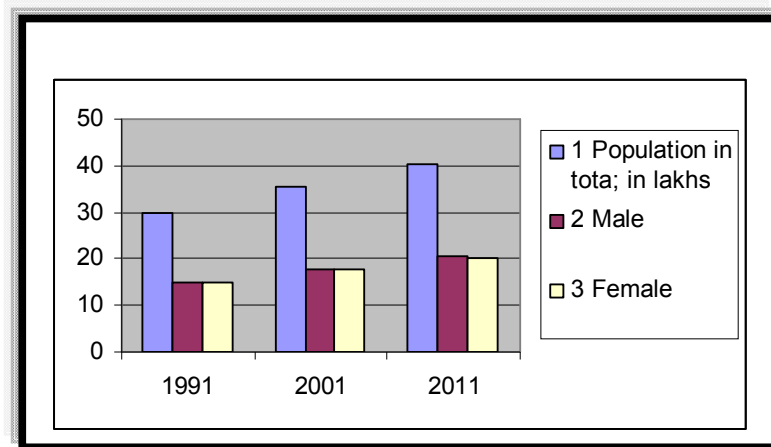


Table no 1.1 summarizes the demographic details of Kurnool in last 3 census period. Kurnool extends over an area of 17,650 sq.km. It is noted that the population of the district gradually increasing during the last 3 decades. However, total population of district increased from 29.73 lakhs to 40.46 lakhs in 2011. Perhaps, as a result the density of population also increased from 168persons/sq.km to 229persons/sq.km from 1991-2011. It is interesting to note that the male and female population steadily increased from last 3 decades and fond nearly 3% of growth rate from 1991-2011.

HISTORY OF THE BELUM CAVES:

Belum caves are subterranean caves located at Belum village in Kolimigundla mandal of Kurnool district Andhra Pradesh. They are 96 km away from Kurnool city. It is the second largest caves in the Indian sub-continent. The word Belum caves is derived from 'Belum' which means caves in Sanskrit. In the Telugu it is called 'Bellum guhalu'. The caves have a length of 3229meters. It has long passage , specious chambers, fresh water galleries and siphons. Belum caves are geographically and historically important caves in Andhra Pradesh. There are indications that Jains and Buddhists monks were occupying these caves centuries ago. Interestingly many Buddhists relics were found inside the caves. The first records of the caves were

mentioned in the expedition report of Robert Bruce foote in 1884. There after Belum caves remained unnoticed for almost a century till a German team headed by Herbert Daniel Gabauer conducted detailed exploration of the caves in 1982.

INSIDE THE CAVES:

Oxygen is artificially supplemented through shafts upto the depth of 300ft along with soft illumination. Inside the cave lime stone is dominant. Sections of Belum caves are described as Simha Dwaram (Lion Gate). It is natural. Stalactite found in the shape of lions head. Kotilingalu contains stalactite formations which are akin to shiva lingalam. Patala ganga ,it is a small perennial steam which disappears into the depths of earth. This stream flows south east to Northwest. It disappears and is belliedved to be heading towards a well at the Belum village located 2km from the caves. Thousands hoods have stalactite formations shaped like hood of cobra. The stalactite formations on the ceiling look as if thousands of cobras have opened their hoods. The Banyan tree hall has a huge pillar with stalactite hanging from the ceiling. This gives a look of Banyan tree with its prop roots when seen from below. In the local language it is called 'Voodalamarri' since it looks like a banyan tree with its roots hanging from branches. The excavation work is still in progress and entry is prohibited at certain interior points. For people with heart, Respiratory problems and hypertension entry is strictly prohibited as a precautionary measure.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CAVES:

The caves in the past were being used as to dump wastes from nearby places. Slowly the local people realize the importance of the caves and extend their cooperation with the government of Andhra Pradesh and gradually it developed into a tourist spot . Keeping in view of the caves and the movement of the tourists the government of Andhra Pradesh declared the entire area as protected zone and handed over to Andhra Pradesh tourism Development Corporation. Since then the caves are under the control of Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation. Besides, it has developed the pathways, provided illumination and created fresh air – shafts inside the caves

EMPLOYMENT TO LOCAL PEOPLE:

Belum caves provided employment to local people and it has become source of revenue for them. So tourism industry may generate invisible income to government. Further, it creates employment to local people in that area. Because of the expansion of tourism industry the service sector would be developed. So, it is an excellent tourist potential spot. The government of Andhra Pradesh need to walk the extra mile to create an ambience and environment for tourist. Which will also generate invisible income for them. Tourism may also flourish and a create revenue for the locals whom an extra rupee is always welcome

CONCLUSION:

Kurnool has a vibrant Buddhist history and should be educate at the international about the history of Kurnool. Belum caves are the largest caves in the Indian sub-continent and has geographical and historical importance in Andhra Pradesh. Keeping in view of the well being of the people and to meet the frequent drought, water reservoir constructed at Owk is to irrigate to the area. When tens of thousands of tourists were visited the spot in the past, the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Corporation taken over the tourist spot, and has taken all measures to develop and promote Belum caves. Yet, it is not sufficient at the international level. If the government advertises Belum caves properly at the international level thousands of foreign visitors may visit the spot, thereby the entire area would be developed and it has created jobs to local people. However,the need of hour is the Belum caves should be advertised at the international level, that results more and more tourist will visit the spot and invisible income may generate to state government.

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