The rocky hills of the desolate inter-State border that Ke-rameri mandal in Kumram Bheem (KB) Asifabad district shares with Jivti taluk in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra are home to a few natural caves. They look quite mysterious as little is known about the centuries-old hol-low structures.

The natural wonders known to the aboriginal people – like the Jangubai Cave Temple and the Kaplai Caves – are their pilgrim centres which have remained hidden from the outside world. Reason? Difficulty in accessing the places, and more importantly, because the Adivasis do not like ‘interference’ of outsiders in the name of exploration.

Among the caves of faith is the Jangubai Cave Temple, a popular pilgrim centre for the Raj Gond, Pardhan and Kolam tribes of former composite Adilabad district. It is located in Kota-Parandoli gram panchayat, and is the smaller one running to a length of just about 75 ft. It is the Kaplai Caves which are said to be much longer, even running into a few kilometres, according to Kolam tribe elders. “I have visited Kaplai almost every year since I remember,” asserted Sidam Mutha, a leader of the tribe from Jaduguda in Jainoor mandal of KB Asifabad district. “The cavity formed in the sedimentary rock is about 5 km long with passages branching out at intervals leading to different places,” he explained.

Kaplai can be accessed from Parandoli village or Anarpalli in Kerameri mandal. But both the routes are unmotorable. The latter involves a foot journey of about 3 km on the hillocks, made more difficult near the cave owing to the mandatory bare-foot walk on the loose pieces of sharp-edged rock.

A stream runs under the rocky roof inside the cave which is where the Adivasis take the holy dip. The water now found is at a distance of about 70 metres from the steeply inclined mouth. Kolam pilgrims from Jaduguda and Gundala in Narnoor mandal of Adilabad district recently visited the place for giving the wooden ‘ayyak’ (traditional totem) or Bheem god the annual ritualistic bath in the cave stream.