

## GREEN APOPHYLLITE: FINDS IN THE WATER WELL AT CHITEGAON, MAHARASHTRA, INDIA

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1. The location of the Chitegaon village, Aurangabad, Maharashtra, India.

The readers surely remember the thrilling story of finding and mining specimens of green apophyllite from the water wells at Momin Akhada, Indian village near Rahuri, Maharashtra State (Fig. 1). If not, see *Mineral*, the collector's newspaper, for the exciting narrative by Tomasz Praszkiec and Muhammad Fasi Makki (Praszkiec and Makki, 2013). In short, the story was as follows.

The Indian state Maharashtra agricultural conditions are very propitious but there is a keen need for water. As the surface sources cannot give it in sufficient volumes, the wells should be dug. They are much bigger than those in Russia or foreign Europe as the ground water is scarce here and is deposited at significant depths. However, even big and deep water well gets exhausted after a while, and a new one should be dug. In 2001, one of this type wells was being constructed at the Momin Akhada village. At the depth of 15 meters, the digger team penetrated a cavity with nice pale green apophyllite crystals over a creamy stilbite matrix. The apophyllite specimens were



2. **Apophyllite** split crystal on **stilbite** crystals. 6 cm. Well # 3, Momin Akhada, Rahuri, Ahmednagar, Maharashtra, India. Specimen and photo: Boris Z. Kantor.



3. Fahim-Khan, digger of the water well. Chitegaon, Aurangabad, Maharashtra, India. Photo: Shamim-Khan & Hameed-Khan.

4. **Apophyllite**. 5.6 cm. Well # 1, Momin Akhada, Rahuri, Ahmednagar, Maharashtra, India. Specimen and photo: Boris Z. Kantor.



crystals split into bunches (Fig. 2), up to the full spheres in rare cases (Fig. 4). The pieces were highly aesthetic; they were promptly sold at the next *Mineralientage* (Mineral show) in Munich, Germany, yet prior to the Show opening and many re-sold at once.

The similar pockets were uncovered later, in 2004 and 2013, in the two other neighboring wells in the process of their digging. Totally, about one thousand high level specimens were extracted from all the three wells and sold for a short time. Since then, no Momin Akhada apophyllite specimen appeared on the mineral market.

However, a few years later, in 2018, a new sensation succeeded. When digging a well at the Chitegaon village, 24 km to the South of Aurangabad, Maharashtra (Fig. 1), Fahim-Khan (Fig. 4) and Baba, the diggers, penetrated at the depth of 27 meters another vast cave with fine green apophyllite pieces. The cavity section sized 5 x 2.5 meters; the walls of this huge cave were covered with fine aggregates of vivid green apophyllite (Fig. 5, 6) in elegant contrast with the matrix, the white drusy crust of stilbite (Fig. 7) and minor reddish heulandite. “*Iram Minerals Stone*,” the owning company, sold the mined materials to the “*Superb Minerals*,” Indian company. Later a lot of mined specimens were bought by the “*Ashwini Minerals*” and “*Crystal World*.” In 2021, collecting works were resumed in February and continued until September. In total, about 5000 pieces were extracted including a lot of the high level ones (Fig. 8) as well as huge ones like shown in Fig. 9.

But where would all these huge cavities come from? They are the heritage of distant times. 65 to 60 mln years ago the Deccan Traps evolved that take up now the most part of the Maharashtra State area. The area was covered with flows of liquid

