

Sangam age pushed to 800 BCE

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In news— In the latest development, the Sangam age has been pushed to 800 BCE based on the archaeological findings in Keladi along the Vaigai river, about 13 km from Madurai.

Key findings-

- K. Amarnath Ramakrishna, who discovered Keeladi and led the first two seasons of excavations between 2014 and 2016, submitted his 982-page report to ASI Director General V. Vidyavathi recently.
- Based on the results of stratigraphy of the cultural deposits found in the first two phases, the period of the Sangam era archaeological site has been placed between 8th century BCE to 3rd century CE.
- **Sangam age was believed to be between 300 BCE to 300 CE.** The new report repositions the Sangam age between 800 BCE and 300 CE.
- Even this period of history has been classified into three periods.
 - The pre-early historic period between 800 BCE to 500 BCE.
 - Mature early history between 500 BCE to the end of 1st century BCE and
 - Post early history from 1st century BCE to 300 CE.
- According to the report, the fertile nature of the area and cattle rearing played a crucial role in its evolution paving the way for excess production of rice and sea trading of the inhabitants.
- About 5,800 artefacts were unearthed at Keeladi during the first two phases of excavation.
- In 2017, the Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology took over the excavations and thousands of artefacts continue to be unearthed at the site confirming the rich urban life of the ancient Tamils.

- In 2019, the Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology(TNSDA), in a report, stated that the cultural deposits unearthed during (fourth phase) excavations could be safely dated to a period between 6th century BCE and 1st century BCE. .
- The findings in the TNSDA report placed Keeladi artefacts about 300 years earlier than previously believed – 3rd century BCE.
- Now, the ASI report, which studied only 2% of the site, has further pushed the Sangam age to 800 BCE.

The Sangam age-

- The Sangam period or age, particularly referring to the third Sangam period, is the period of the history of ancient Tamil Nadu, Kerala and parts of Sri Lanka dating back to c. 3rd century CE.
- It was named after the mythical and legendary Sangam academies of poets and scholars centered in the city of Madurai.
- In Old Tamil language, the term Tamilakam referred to the whole of the ancient Tamil-speaking area, corresponding roughly to the area known as southern India today, consisting of the territories of the present-day Indian states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, parts of Andhra Pradesh, parts of Karnataka and northern Sri Lanka also known as Eelam.
- According to Tamil legends, there were three Sangam periods, namely Head Sangam, Middle Sangam and Last Sangam period.
- Historians use the term Sangam period to refer to the last of these, with the first two being legendary.
- The Sangam literature is thought to have been produced in three Sangam academies of each period. The evidence on the early history of the Tamil kingdoms consists of the epigraphs of the region, the Sangam literature, and archaeological data.

- Between 600 BCE to 300 CE, Tamilakam was ruled by the three Tamil dynasties of Pandya, Chola and Chera, and a few independent chieftains, the Velir.