

Tamil Nadu's Iron Age

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In news— Recently, the Tamil Nadu government announced that carbon dating of excavated finds in Tamil Nadu pushes evidence of iron being used in India back to 4,200 years ago.

About the excavation-

- **The excavations are from Mayiladumparai near Krishnagiri in Tamil Nadu**, about 100 km south of Bengaluru.
- Mayiladumparai is an important site with cultural material dating back between the **Microlithic (30,000 BCE) and Early Historic (600 BCE) ages**.
- **The site is situated in the midst of several archaeological sites such as Togarapalli, Gangavaram, Sandur, Vedarthattakkal, Guttur, Gidlur, Sappamutlu and Kappalavadi.**
- **Before this, the earliest evidence of iron use was from 1900-2000 BCE for the country**, and from 1500 BCE for Tamil Nadu.
- **The latest evidence dates the findings from Tamil Nadu to 2172 BCE.**
- Mayiladumparai was discovered in the 1990s, and the first excavations from there were made in the 1990s.
- The results of dating, which used accelerator mass spectroscopy, came recently.

Timeline of Iron age in India-

- The dates when humans entered the Iron Age vary from one region of the world to another.
- During the Iron Age, people across much of Europe, Asia and parts of Africa began making tools and weapons from iron and steel.
- **In 1979, use of iron was traced to 1300 BCE at Ahar in Rajasthan.**
- **Later, samples at Bukkasagara in Karnataka, indicating**

iron production, were dated back to 1530 BCE.

- The date was subsequently pushed back to **1700-1800 BCE** with excavations finding evidence of iron smelting at **Raipura in the Mid-Ganga valley**, and then to **1900-2000 BCE** based on investigations in sites **at Malhar near Varanasi and Brahmagiri in North Karnataka.**
- A series of dating results on finds from various parts in India have shown evidence of iron-ore technology before 1800 BCE.
- Before the latest discovery, the earliest evidence of iron use for Tamil Nadu was from Thelunganur and Mangadu near Mettur, dating back to 1500 BCE.

Classification of Prehistoric era-

The Prehistoric era can be divided into three shorter eras based on the advancements that occurred in those time periods. They include:

- **The Stone Age** (Paleolithic) (2.5 million B.C. to 3000 B.C.) – documents the human migration from Africa and first use of tools by Neanderthals, Denisovans and early humans.
- **The Bronze Age** (3000 B.C. to 1300 B.C.) – humans settled in Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley and ancient Egypt; invention of the wheel and metalworking.

The Iron Age (1300 B.C. to 600 B.C.) – formation of planned cities, introduction of ironworks, steel, and writing systems