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Article For Reading:

Further south: On the Iron Age and the south

The Iron Age in India has been a subject of **fascination** and discussion. In the rest of the world, the Iron Age succeeded the Copper-Bronze Age or **bridged the gap** between the Bronze Age and the Early Historic period. But the situation in India is different: when the region north of the Vindhyas belonged to the pre-iron Chalcolithic or Copper Age, the south, with over 3,000 sites, was associated with iron. Many archaeologists have, generally and conservatively, placed the Iron Age to be in the second millennium BCE. Given this backdrop, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin's recent statement, that the origin of iron in the State could be traced to the first quarter of the fourth millennium BCE, is significant as this pushes the antiquity of iron further. After **excavations** in the mid-Ganga Valley of Uttar Pradesh about 25 years ago, early evidence of iron technology was dated to 1800 BCE. But now, the work in Sivagalai in Tamil Nadu, which was carried out between 2019 and 2022, has made authorities **attribute** the introduction of iron in the country to the early part of the fourth millennium BCE, even though the period of 2500 BCE-3000 BCE is taken as a mid-range value. This forms the highlight of a study by the State Department of Archaeology (TNSDA), titled "**Antiquity** of Iron: Recent radiometric dates from Tamil Nadu".

The TNSDA had the scientific dating results of its study validated by renowned institutions such as the Beta Analytic laboratory in the U.S. Mr. Stalin's observation was made **keeping** the findings **in mind**. Early this month, he announced a \$1-million prize scheme for **deciphering** the script of the Indus Valley Civilisation.

The work by the TNSDA should **spur** new thinking with regard to the strategies to be adopted by archaeologists who are working on the Iron Age of India. They may have to **look for** more iron-specific sites than copper-cum-iron sites, which will **save time, energy and resources**. Even though the Tamil Nadu government supports research projects on a wide range of themes in other States, the TNSDA has its **constraints** with regard to territorial jurisdiction. This **underscores** the **need for** complementing Tamil Nadu's efforts with those of other southern States. The Archaeological Survey of India should take the initiative of bringing the entire southern region **under a common fold** and enabling well-designed and coordinated work. After all, the idea is to share available resources and expertise in the country to arrive at more reliable findings. At a time when certain forces are increasingly using history and culture as powerful instruments to pursue their political agenda, **credible** and **concrete** evidence on the antiquity of the country will naturally **put to rest** any claim based on baseless assumptions.

Summary:

The Iron Age in India, traditionally placed in the second millennium BCE, is being reconsidered due to new findings in Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin highlighted recent excavations in Sivagalai (2019–2022) that suggest the introduction of iron in India dates back to the early fourth millennium BCE. This challenges prior estimates, such as the 1800 BCE findings from Uttar Pradesh's mid-Ganga Valley. Validated by renowned institutions like Beta Analytic in the U.S., Tamil Nadu's findings urge archaeologists to focus on iron-specific sites. Coordination between southern states and the Archaeological Survey of India is necessary to streamline research efforts. The study underscores the importance of evidence-based history to counter baseless political narratives.

Vocabularies:

1. Fascination (Noun) (आकर्षण)

Meaning: A strong interest or attraction towards something.

Synonyms: Attraction, captivation, enchantment.

Antonyms: Disinterest, indifference, repulsion.

Example: The fascination with ancient civilizations drives many archaeologists to explore ruins.

2. Antiquity (Noun) (प्राचीनता)

Meaning: The ancient past, especially the period before the Middle Ages.

Synonyms: Age, ancientness, oldness.

Antonyms: Modernity, novelty, newness.

Example: The antiquity of the artefacts discovered in the region amazed historians.

3. Excavation (Noun) (खुदाई)

Meaning: The process of digging to uncover something buried, often ancient artefacts.

Synonyms: Digging, unearthing, mining.

Antonyms: Covering, filling, burying.

Example: The excavation of the site revealed valuable insights into the Iron Age.

4. Attribute (Verb/Noun) (गुण/मूल कारण मानना)

Meaning: To regard something as being caused by a specific source; a characteristic or quality.

Synonyms: Ascribe, credit, assign (Verb); quality, feature, trait (Noun).

Antonyms: Discredit, disconnect, ignore.

Example: Scholars attribute the development of iron tools to advancements in metallurgy.

5. Deciphering (Verb) (डिकोड करना)

Meaning: The act of interpreting or making sense of something, especially difficult to understand.

Synonyms: Decode, interpret, translate.

Antonyms: Encrypt, confuse, obscure.

Example: Deciphering ancient scripts is a challenging task for linguists.

6. Spur (Verb/Noun) (प्रेरित करना/प्रेरणा)

Meaning: To encourage or stimulate action or progress.

Synonyms: Motivate, incite, prompt.

Antonyms: Discourage, hinder, suppress.

Example: The findings in Tamil Nadu will spur further archaeological research in India.

7. Constraint (Noun) (बाधा)

Meaning: A limitation or restriction that prevents progress.

Synonyms: Limitation, restriction, obstacle.

Antonyms: Freedom, allowance, liberty.

Example: Financial constraints often hinder the progress of large-scale archaeological projects.

8. Underscore (Verb) (जोर देना)

Meaning: To emphasize or highlight the importance of something.

Synonyms: Emphasize, highlight, stress.

Antonyms: Downplay, ignore, overlook.

Example: The study underscores the significance of collaborative efforts in archaeology.

9. Credible (Adjective) (विश्वसनीय)

Meaning: Able to be believed or trusted.

Synonyms: Reliable, trustworthy, plausible.

Antonyms: Untrustworthy, doubtful, incredible.

Example: The scientific validation by experts makes the findings credible.

10. Concrete (Adjective) (ठोस)

Meaning: Definite, real, and specific; based on facts or evidence.

Synonyms: Tangible, solid, factual.

Antonyms: Abstract, vague, theoretical.

Example: The researchers provided concrete evidence to support their claims.

Phrasal Verbs from the article:

1. Carry out:

Meaning: To perform or execute a task or activity.

Example: The excavation in Sivagalai was carried out between 2019 and 2022.

2. Put to rest:

Meaning: To resolve or settle something, often a doubt or controversy.

Example: Credible evidence on the antiquity of iron will put to rest baseless claims.

3. Look for:

Meaning: To search or seek something.

Example: Archaeologists may have to look for more iron-specific sites in the region.

4. Focus on:

Meaning: To concentrate attention or efforts on something.

Example: Researchers need to focus on iron artefacts rather than copper ones.

Idiomatic Expressions:

1. Bridge the gap :

Meaning: To connect or bring together two distinct periods, ideas, or groups.

Example: The Iron Age bridged the gap between the Bronze Age and the Early Historic period in many regions.

2. Push the boundaries :

Meaning: To extend the limits of what is considered possible or known

Example: The findings in Tamil Nadu push the boundaries of the known antiquity of iron in India.

3. Save time, energy, and resources :

Meaning: To make efforts more efficient and productive.

Example: Concentrating on iron-specific sites can save time, energy, and resources for archaeologists.

4. Keep in mind:

Meaning: To remember or consider something while making decisions.

Example: Researchers should keep in mind the constraints of territorial jurisdiction.

5. Under a common fold:

Meaning: To unite or bring together under a shared framework or organization.

Example: The southern states should come under a common fold for coordinated archaeological work.

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