



Vadnagar: India's Oldest Living City

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Why in News?

A joint study by the Indian Institute of Technology (Kharagpur) and [Archaeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#) has found evidence of cultural continuity in Vadnagar, Gujarat, even after the Harappan collapse.

- The study challenges **the notion of a "Dark Age"** by providing evidence of cultural continuity in Vadnagar even after the collapse of the [Harappan civilization](#).

What are the Key Highlights of the Excavation at Vadnagar?

- **Age of Settlement:**
 - The study reveals **evidence of a human settlement** in Vadnagar dating back to as **old as 800 BCE**.
 - This places the settlement in the **late-Vedic/pre-Buddhist Mahajanapadas** or oligarchic republics period.
- **Climate Influence:**
 - The rise and fall of different kingdoms over a 3,000-year period, as well as recurrent invasions by Central Asian warriors, are suggested to be driven by **severe changes in climate**, such as variations in rainfall or droughts.
- **Multicultural and Multireligious Settlement:**
 - Vadnagar is described as a **multicultural and multireligious settlement** that included [Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, and Islamic influences](#).
 - The excavation uncovered **seven cultural stages (periods)**, including Mauryan, Indo-Greek, Indo-Scythian, Hindu-Solankis, Sultanate-Mughal, and Gaekwad-British colonial rule, up to the present day.
- **Archaeological Artifacts:**
 - Various archaeological artifacts were discovered during the excavation, including pottery, copper, gold, silver, and iron objects.
 - The findings also include **intricately designed bangles** and coin molds from the [Indo-Greek rule](#).
- **Buddhist Monastery:**
 - One of the significant discoveries is the presence of one of the oldest Buddhist monasteries in Vadnagar, **adding to the historical and cultural richness** of the settlement.
- **Radiocarbon Dates:**
 - Unpublished radiocarbon dates suggest that the settlement could be as old as 1400 BCE, which challenges the **notion of a Dark Age**.
 - The **"Dark Age"** refers to the period between the collapse of the [Indus Valley Civilization](#) and the emergence of the [Iron Age](#) and cities like Gandhar, Koshal, and Avanti in Indian history.
 - If true, it implies cultural continuity **in India for the last 5500 years**.

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

- ASI, under the Ministry of Culture, is the **premier organization for the archaeological**

research and protection of the cultural heritage of the nation.

- Maintenance of ancient monuments and archaeological sites and remains of national importance is the prime concern of the ASI.
- Besides it regulate all archaeological activities in the country **as per the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958**. It also regulates **Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, 1972**.
- It was founded in **1861 by Alexander Cunningham**- the first Director-General of ASI. Alexander Cunningham is also known as the “Father of Indian Archaeology”.

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