

PLACES IN NEWS

TOPRA KALAN VILLAGE

Evidence of human settlements dating back around 1500 BC has been discovered from Topra Kalan village in Haryana.

This period marks the transition from the Indus Valley Civilization (Bronze Age) (3300 BC to 1300 BC), to the Iron Age in India (around 1500 BC to 600 BC).

Iron Age sites

Mayiladumparai in Krishnagiri district of Tamil Nadu threw up a date of 2172 BC in 2022, making it the oldest site for Iron Age in India. But since the date was close to the dates that emerged in Brahmagiri, archaeologists asked the state government to be cautious. But the dates from Sivagalai jumped by over a millennium – 3345 BC.



Tamil Nadu
Sivagalai: 3345-2427 BC
Adichanallur: 1800-905 BC
Kilnamandi: 1769-615 BC
Vallam: 1448-916 BC
Thelunganur: 1435-1233 BC
Mayiladumparai: 2172-1569 BC

Karnataka
Brahmagiri: 2140-1490 BC
Kadabakele: 820-400 BC
Kumaranahalli: 1300 BC
Bukkasagara: 1620-1440 BC
Watgal: 1519 BC
Maski: 1895-1756 BC



Telangana/Andhra Pradesh:
Gachibowli: 2200 BC
Sanganakallu-Kupgal: 1400-1200 BC
Veerapuram: 1257 BC
Ramapuram: 1595-1345 BC

Uttar Pradesh:
Atranjikhhera: 1265-1100 BC
Lahuradewa: 1300 BC
Dadupur: 1800-1700 BC
Jhusi Aktha: 1100 BC
Raja-Nala-Ka-Tila: 1400-1200 BC
Bihar:
Abhaipur: 1371-980 BC
Malhar: 1800-1600 BC
West Bengal:
Pandu Rajar Dhibi: 1257-1234 BC
Mangalkot: 1111-1103 BC

Maharashtra
Adam: 1614-1011 BC
Madhya Pradesh:
Eran: 1400-1300 BC
Raipura: 1867-1720 BC
Haryana:
Ahar: 1300 BC

Key Archaeological Evidences Discovered at Topra Kalan

1. Original Site of Ashokan Pillar

Topra Kalan in Haryana is historically significant as the original location of the Delhi-Topra Ashokan Pillar, inscribed with Emperor Ashoka's edicts. This pillar was later transported to Delhi by Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlaq in the 14th century, reflecting the site's enduring importance.

2. Connection to Buddhism

Records by Sir Alexander Cunningham (the "father of Indian archaeology") and Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang highlight Topra Kalan as a hub of Buddhist activity during the Mauryan period (322–185 BCE). This makes the site crucial for understanding the spread of Buddhism in north India.

3. Discovery of Painted Grey Ware (PGW) and Other Pottery

Archaeologists uncovered Painted Grey Ware, stamped pottery, moulded bricks, beads, Black-and-Red Ware, and other ceramic types. These findings reflect cultural transitions from the late Bronze Age.

4. Age to the early Iron Age in northern India.

Structural Remains, Excavations revealed walls, raised platforms, and room-like enclosures at a depth of 4–5 meters, indicating the existence of organized settlement structures.

Possible Buddhist Stupa, A dome-shaped architectural feature discovered at the site is believed to be the remains of a stupa, further linking Topra Kalan with Buddhist religious practices.

Key Features of the Iron Age in India

1. General Characteristics

The Iron Age succeeded the Bronze Age and was marked by the widespread use of iron for making agricultural tools, weapons, and household implements. Iron smelting involved extracting ore, melting it at high temperatures, and shaping it into functional objects.

2. Mentions in Ancient Texts

In the Rigveda, the term *ayas* referred to copper or bronze rather than iron. Later texts such as the Atharvaveda used *ayas* and *karshnyas* specifically for iron. Other metals mentioned in Vedic texts include *rajata* (silver), *trapu* (tin), and *sisā* (lead). By the early historic period, Buddhist texts and Kautilya's *Arthashastra* refer to the growing significance of iron technology in administration, warfare, and agriculture.

3. Cultural Associations in North India

Black-and-Red Ware (BRW)

Distinguished by black interiors and red exteriors, achieved by inverted firing. Found in Harappan contexts (Gujarat), pre-PGW contexts in northern India, and megalithic sites in southern India, showing continuity across regions.

Painted Grey Ware (PGW)

Characterized by fine grey pottery with black geometric designs. PGW sites in the Ganga valley yielded iron artifacts, suggesting technological transitions in the 1st millennium BCE.

Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW)

A hallmark of India's "Second Urbanization" (700–100 BCE), this highly polished wheel-made pottery coincided with the rise of urban centres, the Mauryan empire, and the spread of Buddhism. This phase reflects the peak of iron technology integration into state formation.

Iron Age in South India (Megalithic Culture)

Peninsular India's Iron Age is largely represented by megalithic sites with stone burials and habitation remains.

1. Naikund (Vidarbha, Maharashtra): Revealed iron-smelting furnaces and slag deposits, proving indigenous metallurgy.
2. Paiyampalli (Tamil Nadu): Produced abundant iron slag, showing early mastery of iron production.

3. Sivagalai (Tamil Nadu, 2019–2022 excavations): Suggests iron use as early as the 4th millennium BCE, showing advanced fire-control technology for iron extraction earlier than previously believed.

Iron Age in Central India (Malwa Region)

Sites like Nagda, Eran, and Ahar date to around 750–500 BCE, representing the transition from Chalcolithic to iron-based societies in central India.

Iron Age in Middle and Lower Ganga Valley

Important sites such as Pandu Rajar Dhibi, Mahisdal, Chirand, and Sonpur (750–700 BCE) represent the Post-Chalcolithic pre-NBPW stage, bridging the gap between village farming communities and urbanizing iron-based cultures.

