Ancient Civilisation in Maharashtra

Prelims - *Current events of national and international importance | History of India*

Mains (GS-I)- *Indian Heritage and Culture*

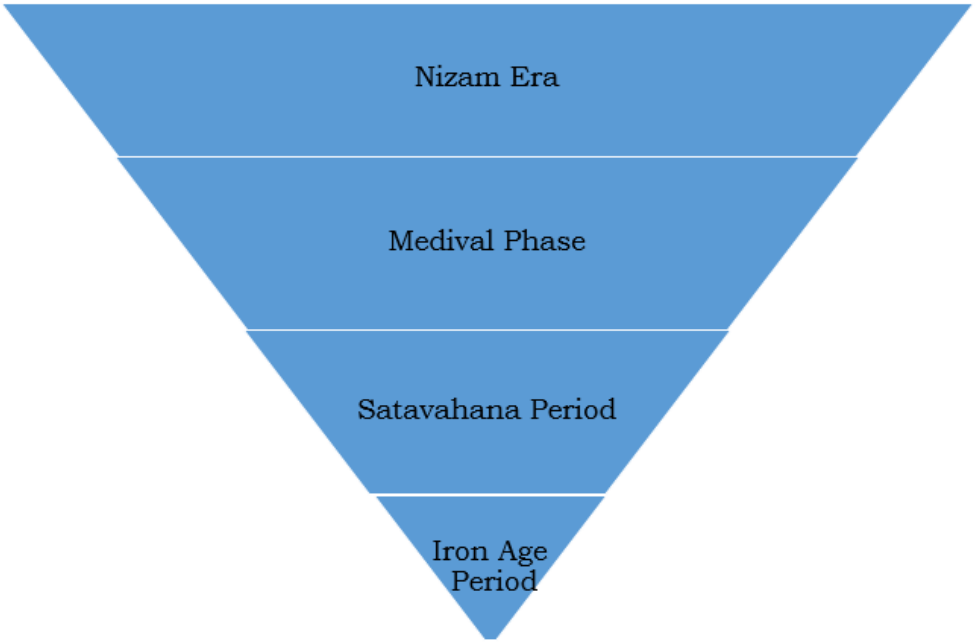
Why in News?

Recently, Nagpur University researchers have unearthed a potentially 3,000-year-old Iron Age civilization in Maharashtra's Yavatmal district.

- **Prime site of excavation** – It was a *mound* that produced a cultural deposit measuring around 8.73 meters in thickness, indicating a multi-period and extensive occupation.

*In archaeology, **mounds** commonly describe zones of long human settlement, in which soil and rubbish of a cultural nature accumulate over centuries or millennia.*

- **Findings** – It revealed a *multi-layered settlement* with distinct cultural periods.



1st Cultural Phase - Iron Age
• It represents the base layer of the settlement. • Artefacts such as iron instruments and certain classes of pottery were found.
2nd Cultural Phase - Satavahana period

• It presents their inhabitation in the Deccan plateau, from about the 2nd century BCE to the 3rd century CE. • Artefacts of this era included ceramic shapes and other artefacts typical of this transformative period in history.
3rd Cultural Phase - Medieval phase
• Settlement contains evidence of reuse or reoccupation. • Although it yielded fewer artefacts, their presence was sufficient to position it within the chronological sequence of the site.
4th Cultural Phase - Nizam period
• It is the highest occupation level. • It indicates that the mound was subsequently reused as a watchtower during the 18th to 20th century.

- **Architectural observation** - Remains of ***round houses***, a feature commonly used by early agrarian and tribal communities.
- The houses featured *limestone floors*, which indicate some planning and stability in building.
- *Wooden posts* has been inserted around the perimeter of the houses, probably to frame organic material roofs such as thatch and wood.
- There was a house plan with a *chulha or mud oven* suggesting that there was a ***dedicated cooking space in the house***.
- **Artefacts findings** – Different styles and textures of pottery.
- *Iron tools, beads* made of semi-precious stones, terracotta beads and ***bone artifacts*** were also found.
- **Significance** – It offer insights into the *daily lives and technological advancements* of the ancient inhabitants.
- Excavated artefacts reveal that they were also involved in craft, trade, and perhaps ritualistic practices.
- The findings of beads can be seen to reflect involvement in broader trading circles or *cultural exchange with the outside world*.
- **Future prospects** – Organic samples were sent to the Inter University Accelerator Centre (IUAC) in New Delhi to reach a correct timeline.
- ***Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS) dating***, a highly precise technique employed to estimate the age of ancient materials by measuring carbon isotope decay, will be carried out by the IUAC.

Reference

Times of India| Discovery of Multi-cultural Settlement in Maharashtra

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