

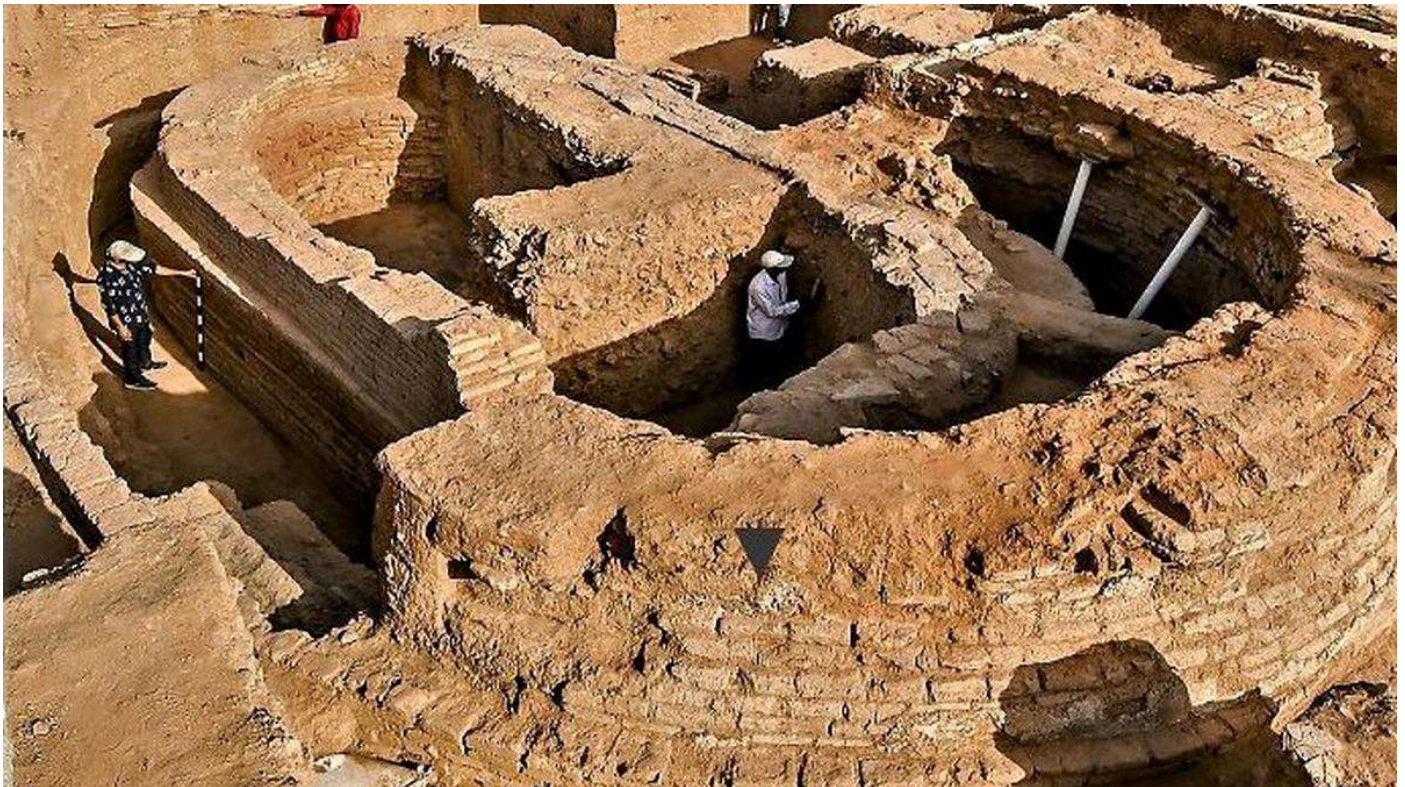
# India's oldest living city found in PM Modi's native village Vadnagar: multi-institution study

A deep archaeological excavation at Vadnagar, shows evidence of a human settlement that is as old as 800 BCE contemporary to late-Vedic/pre-Buddhist Mahajanapadas or oligarchic republics.

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The study also indicates the rise and fall of different kingdoms during the 3,000-year period. Photo: Special Arrangement

A joint study by the Indian Institute of Technology (Kharagpur) has found evidence of cultural continuity in Vadnagar — the Prime Minister's native village — even after the Harappan collapse, thus making it likely that the “Dark Age” was a myth.

“From deep archaeological excavation at Vadnagar, a consortium of scientists from IIT Kharagpur, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Physical Research Laboratory (PRL),

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), and Deccan College has now found evidence of a human settlement that is as old as 800 BCE contemporary to late-Vedic/pre-Buddhist Mahajanapadas or oligarchic republics,” the institute said in a press release circulated on Friday.

“The study also indicates that the rise and fall of different kingdoms during the 3,000-year period and recurrent invasions of India by central Asian warriors were driven by severe change in climate like rainfall or droughts. The findings [have been] just published in a paper titled ‘Climate, human settlement, and migration in South Asia from early historic to medieval period: evidence from new archaeological excavation at Vadnagar, Western India’ in the prestigious Elsevier journal *Quaternary Science Reviews*,” it said.

While the excavation was led by the ASI, the study was funded by the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums (Government of Gujarat), entrusted with building India’s first experiential digital museum at Vadnagar. According to the institute, the research at Vadnagar and Indus Valley Civilization has also been supported by “generous funding” from Sudha Murthy (former chairperson of Infosys Foundation) for the last five years.

## **Treasure trove of artefacts**

“Vadnagar was a multicultural and multireligious (Buddhist, Hindu, Jain and Islamic) settlement. Excavation in several deep trenches revealed the presence of seven cultural stages (periods) namely, Mauryan, Indo-Greek, Indo-Scythian or Shaka-Kshatrapas (AKA ‘Satraps’, descendants of provincial governors of ancient Achaemenid Empires, Hindu-Solankis, Sultanate-Mughal (Islamic) to Gaekwad-British colonial rule and the city endures even today. One of the oldest Buddhist monasteries has been discovered during our excavation. We found characteristic archaeological artefacts, potteries, copper, gold, silver and iron objects and intricately designed bangles. We also found coin moulds of the Greek king Appollodatus during the Indo-Greek rule at Vadnagar,” said ASI archaeologist Dr. Abhijit Ambekar, co-author of the paper.

The period between the collapse of the Indus Valley Civilisation and the emergence of the Iron Age and cities like Gandhar, Koshal, and Avanti is often depicted as a Dark Age by archaeologists.

“Archaeological records are rare, the earliest one being the rock-inscription of Emperor Ashoka during the Mauryan period (320-185 BCE) at Sudarsana Lake, Girnar hill, Gujarat. Our evidence makes Vadnagar the oldest living city within a single fortification unearthed so far in India... Some of our recent unpublished radiocarbon dates suggest that the settlement could be as old as 1400 BCE contemporary to very late phase of post-urban Harappan period. If true, then it suggests a cultural continuity in India for the last 5500 years and the so-called Dark age may be a myth,” said Prof. Anindya Sarkar of IIT Kharagpur, who is the lead author of the paper.