



CUET 2026 May 11 Shift 1 History

Question Paper (Memory-Based) with Solutions

Conducted by National Testing Agency (NTA)

General Instructions

- (i) The examination will be conducted in Computer-Based Test (CBT) mode.
- (ii) Each question carries +5 marks for correct answer and -1 mark for wrong answer.
- (iii) The total number of questions are 50.
- (iv) Duration of the exam is 1 hour (60 minutes).

Q1. Identify the incorrect statement regarding the 'Subsidiary Alliance System' from the following options.

- (a) Nawabs were dependent on the British Army for their protection.
- (b) Under this system, the British would be responsible for the internal and external protection of Indian rulers.
- (c) Nawabs and local rulers were allowed to keep their own army as well.
- (d) Subsidiary Alliance was the strategy of the British to acquire more territories in India.

Correct Answer: (c) Nawabs and local rulers were allowed to keep their own army as well.

Solution:

Concept: The Subsidiary Alliance System was a sophisticated diplomatic and military tool introduced by Lord Wellesley (1798–1805) to establish British paramountcy in India without the immediate cost of direct annexation. It functioned as a "protectorate" system where Indian states surrendered their external sovereignty to the British East India Company in exchange for a guarantee of security against domestic and foreign rivals.

Step 1: Evaluating the military obligations (The core of the system).

The most critical condition of the Subsidiary Alliance was the total disarmament of the native ruler. To ensure the ruler could never challenge British authority, the Company demanded that:

- The native ruler must disband their own standing army.
- A British armed contingent (the subsidiary force) would be stationed permanently in the state's territory.
- The ruler had to pay for the maintenance of this force, either through cash or by ceding a part of their territory.

Therefore, statement (c) is the **incorrect** statement because rulers were explicitly forbidden from maintaining their own independent military forces.

Step 2: Analyzing the loss of external sovereignty and protection.

Under statements (a) and (b), the British took over the "protection" role. While this sounded beneficial, it meant:

- The ruler could not employ any other Europeans (French, Dutch, etc.) in their service without British permission.
- The ruler could not negotiate or enter into any alliance with any other Indian power without the British Resident's mediation.
- In return, the British promised to defend the state from any external invasion or internal rebellion. This made the Nawab or Raja a "protected" figurehead, completely dependent on British support.

Step 3: The expansionist strategy of the British.

Statement (d) is correct because the system was a "bloodless" way to acquire land and resources. The cost of maintaining the British army was often set so high that the Indian rulers inevitably fell into debt. When they failed to pay the "subsidy," the British used the default as a justification to annex large tracts of fertile land (in the case of the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Nawab of Awadh).

Quick Tip: To remember the Subsidiary Alliance, think of it as "Protection at the cost of Independence." The British provided the shield, but they also took away the ruler's sword (army) and tongue (diplomacy).

Q2. Which scholar, due to his ignorance, incorrectly considered Sanchi to be a center of 'Tree and Serpent worship'?

- (a) James Fergusson
- (b) Walter Elliot
- (c) H.H. Cole
- (d) Colin Mackenzie

Correct Answer: (a) James Fergusson

Solution:

Concept: The interpretation of ancient Indian monuments by early European scholars often suffered from a lack of understanding of Buddhist iconography and literature. Sanchi, one of the most significant Buddhist sites in the world, was subject to various interpretations before its purely Buddhist nature was universally recognized by art historians and archaeologists.

Step 1: The Misinterpretation by James Fergusson.

James Fergusson was a pioneering 19th-century historian of architecture. In his 1868 work titled *"Tree and Serpent Worship"*, he focused heavily on the intricate carvings found on the gateways (toranas) and railings of the Sanchi Stupa. Because many of the reliefs depicted trees (the Bodhi tree), wheels (Dharmachakra), and serpents (Nagas), he concluded that the site was dedicated to the worship of nature and snakes rather than being a Buddhist commemorative structure.

Step 2: The reason for the error.

Fergusson's ignorance stemmed from the fact that he was largely unfamiliar with Buddhist hagiography and texts. At the time he was writing:

- He did not realize that the "Tree" was a symbolic representation of the Buddha's Enlightenment (the Bodhi tree).
- He did not understand that early Buddhist art was "aniconic," meaning the Buddha was represented by symbols (like the empty throne, the wheel, or the tree) rather than in human form.
- Consequently, he viewed the figures of Nagas (serpents) as primary deities of worship rather than as protective or subordinate spirits within the Buddhist cosmological framework.

Step 3: Context of other scholars.

- **Walter Elliot** was an official who collected sculptures from Amaravati but did not propose the 'Tree and Serpent' theory for Sanchi.

- **H.H. Cole** was a later archaeologist who actually advocated for the preservation of Sanchi in its original location rather than sending pieces to museums in London.
- **Colin Mackenzie** is famous for discovering the ruins of Hampi and the Amaravati Stupa, but his work was primarily surveying and documenting.

Quick Tip: To remember this, associate "Fergusson" with "Foliage and Fauna." He saw the trees (foliage) and serpents (fauna) but missed the Buddha! It highlights how early Western scholars often viewed Indian art through the lens of their own limited cultural perspectives.

Q3. What is the Telugu work on statecraft composed by Krishnadeva Raya called?

- (a) Amuktamalyada
- (b) Vennello Adapilla
- (c) Mahaprasthanam
- (d) Amaravati Kathalu

Correct Answer: (a) Amuktamalyada

Solution:

Concept: Krishnadeva Raya (reigned 1509–1529), the most famous ruler of the Vijayanagara Empire, was not only a brilliant military commander but also a great patron of literature and a prolific writer himself. His reign is often considered the "Golden Age" of Telugu literature. He was known by the titles *Andhra Bhoja* and *Abhinava Bhoja* due to his literary contributions.

Step 1: Identifying the work on statecraft.

Krishnadeva Raya wrote the epic poem **Amuktamalyada** in Telugu. While the primary narrative of the book describes the life of the Alwar saint Andal (Goda Devi) and her wedding to Lord Ranganatha, it contains a famous section dedicated to **Niti** (political ethics) and statecraft. In this section, he provides detailed advice on how a king should govern, manage the economy, treat his subjects, and handle foreign relations.

Step 2: Key principles of statecraft mentioned in Amuktamalyada.

In the text, Krishnadeva Raya emphasizes:

- **Dharma:** The king must protect the virtuous and punish the wicked.
- **Economy:** The importance of improving irrigation and trade to fill the state treasury.

- **Minorities/Tribals:** How to bring forest tribes into the mainstream to ensure internal security.
- **Diplomacy:** The king should keep a close watch on his enemies through an efficient spy system.

Step 3: Differentiating from other options.

- **Vennello Adapilla** is a famous Telugu novel by Yandamoori Veerendranath (modern literature).
- **Mahaprasthanam** is a collection of revolutionary poems by the famous modern Telugu poet Sri Sri.
- **Amaravati Kathalu** is a collection of short stories by Satyam Sankaramanchi.

Quick Tip: To remember Krishnadeva Raya's works, associate them with his languages. He wrote **Amuktamalyada** in Telugu (his state language) and **Jambavati Kalyanam** (a drama) in Sanskrit. Remember: "Amukta" = Telugu Statecraft.

Q4. Who is the individual known for deciphering Asokan Brahmi in 1838?

- (a) Indian pandits
- (b) Alexander Cunningham
- (c) James Prinsep
- (d) None of the above

Correct Answer: (c) James Prinsep

Solution:

Concept: The decipherment of the Brahmi and Kharosthi scripts was a watershed moment in Indian historiography. These scripts were used in the earliest inscriptions of ancient India, particularly those of the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka. Before their decipherment, much of India's early political history remained unknown or misunderstood.

Step 1: The role of James Prinsep.

James Prinsep was an officer in the mint of the East India Company and the founding editor of the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. In 1837–1838, he successfully deciphered the **Brahmi** script, which was used in the majority of the Edicts of Ashoka. He also deciphered the **Kharosthi** script used in the northwestern parts of the subcontinent.

Step 2: The breakthrough in identifying Ashoka.

While deciphering the inscriptions, Prinsep found that most of them referred to a king called *Piyadassi* (meaning "pleasant to behold"). It was only later, by cross-referencing these findings with Buddhist chronicles like the *Mahavamsa* and *Dipavamsa* from Sri Lanka, that scholars were able to link the name *Piyadassi* to the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka. This discovery completely transformed the understanding of ancient Indian history, shifting the focus to a ruler who promoted non-violence and Dhamma.

Step 3: Differentiating from other options.

- **Indian pandits** were consulted by early European scholars like William Jones, but they were unable to read the ancient Ashokan Brahmi as the script had evolved significantly over 2,000 years into modern regional scripts.
- **Alexander Cunningham** is known as the "Father of Indian Archaeology" and was the first Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). While he did extensive work on Ashokan sites, he was not the one who first deciphered the script.

Quick Tip: To remember this, think: "Prinsep brought the **Prince** (Ashoka) back to history." Without Prinsep's linguistic breakthrough in 1838, we might still be wondering who the mysterious 'Piyadassi' of the stone pillars was!

Q5. Mahatma Gandhi strongly criticized the modern age for what specific reason?

- (a) Poor depended on rich
- (b) Humans lacked technology
- (c) Humans became poor
- (d) Machines enslaved humans

Correct Answer: (d) Machines enslaved humans

Solution:

Concept: Mahatma Gandhi's critique of "modern civilization" was primarily articulated in his seminal 1909 work, *Hind Swaraj*. He viewed modern civilization not as a sign of progress, but as a "black age" or a "curse" that prioritized material comfort over spiritual and moral growth. A central pillar of this critique was his opposition to the unchecked rise of industrialization and machinery.

Step 1: Understanding Gandhi's view on Machinery.

Gandhi believed that while machines were designed to save time and labor, in reality, they led to the exploitation of the masses. He argued that:

- Machines led to the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, rather than providing employment for the many.
- The reliance on large-scale industrial production turned humans into "cogs in a wheel," stripping them of their creative dignity and self-reliance.
- He famously stated that machinery is the "chief symbol of modern civilization; it represents a great sin," because it makes humans subservient to the tool rather than the other way around.

Step 2: The concept of "Enslavement".

Gandhi's use of the term "enslavement" regarding machines referred to psychological and economic dependency. He felt that as humans became accustomed to machine-made goods and automated processes, they lost their manual skills and the ability to live a simple, autonomous life (*Swaraj*). This is why statement (d) is the most accurate representation of his specific criticism of the "modern age."

Step 3: Evaluating other options.

- **(a) & (c):** While Gandhi was deeply concerned about poverty and the gap between rich and poor, he saw these as *outcomes* of the modern industrial system rather than the root philosophical reason for his critique of the "age" itself.
- **(b):** This is incorrect because Gandhi's critique was that the modern age had *too much* focus on technological advancement at the expense of human ethics, not a lack of it.

Quick Tip: To understand Gandhian philosophy, remember the word **Charkha** (spinning wheel). The Charkha was his answer to modern machinery—it was a simple tool that empowered the individual and promoted self-reliance, directly opposing the "enslavement" caused by large factories.

Q6. "I think it would be extremely dangerous for them if they were segregated from the rest of the community and kept aloof in an air-tight compartment where they would have to rely on others even for the air they breath ... The minorities if they are returned by separate electorates can never have any effective voice."

Who is the 'I' in the lines above?

- (a) Vallabhbhai Patel
- (b) Rajendra Prasad
- (c) Govind Ballabh Pant
- (d) Jawaharlal Nehru

Correct Answer: (c) Govind Ballabh Pant

Solution:

Concept: During the framing of the Indian Constitution (1946–1949), one of the most intense debates revolved around the rights of minorities and the demand for "separate electorates." While some members, like B. Pocker Bahadur from Madras, argued in favor of separate electorates to ensure minority representation, many nationalist leaders strongly opposed them, arguing they would divide the nation.

Step 1: The Argument of Govind Ballabh Pant.

Govind Ballabh Pant was a prominent freedom fighter and a member of the Constituent Assembly. In a powerful speech delivered on August 27, 1947, he argued that separate electorates were not only suicidal for the nation but also harmful to the minorities themselves. He used the "air-tight compartment" analogy to explain that segregating a minority group from the political mainstream would leave them permanently isolated and powerless, as they would have no influence over the majority or the government.

Step 2: Understanding the "Effective Voice" Logic.

Pant's logic was centered on integration. He believed that:

- If minorities are in a separate electorate, they become a permanent political "other" that the majority can ignore.

- In a joint electorate, candidates must appeal to all communities to win, which forces the majority to consider the needs of the minority to secure their votes.
- Therefore, true "effective voice" comes from being an indispensable part of the whole community rather than being "aloof" in a separate system.

Step 3: Context of other leaders.

- **Vallabhbhai Patel** also strongly opposed separate electorates, calling them a "poison that has entered the body politic of our country," but the specific quote regarding the "air-tight compartment" and "relying on others for the air they breathe" is attributed to G.B. Pant.
- **Jawaharlal Nehru** and **Rajendra Prasad** shared these secular concerns but expressed them through different speeches and policy frameworks during the Assembly sessions.

Quick Tip: To distinguish between the speeches of Patel and Pant on this topic: Patel usually used the metaphor of **"Poison"** or a **"Sword,"** while G.B. Pant used the metaphor of **"Air-tight compartments"** and **"Isolation."**

Q7. Match List – I with List – II:

List – I

- (A) Rani Lakshmi Bai
- (B) Birjis Qadr
- (C) Kunwar Singh
- (D) Nana Sahib

List – II

- (I) Arrah
- (II) Awadh
- (III) Jhansi
- (IV) Kanpur

Choose the correct answer from the options given below:

- (a) (A)-(I), (B)-(II), (C)-(III), (D)-(IV)
- (b) (A)-(III), (B)-(II), (C)-(I), (D)-(IV)
- (c) (A)-(II), (B)-(I), (C)-(IV), (D)-(III)
- (d) (A)-(III), (B)-(IV), (C)-(I), (D)-(II)

Correct Answer: (b) (A)-(III), (B)-(II), (C)-(I), (D)-(IV)

Solution:

Concept: The Revolt of 1857 was a widespread uprising against British rule in India. It was characterized by various regional leaders spearheading the resistance in their respective strongholds. Matching these leaders to their centers of revolt is essential for understanding the geographical spread of the movement.

Step 1: Matching the well-known leaders.

- **(A) Rani Lakshmi Bai:** She is perhaps the most iconic figure of the revolt. Following the annexation of her state under the "Doctrine of Lapse," she led the resistance from **Jhansi** (III).
- **(D) Nana Sahib:** The adopted son of the last Peshwa, Baji Rao II, he led the uprising in **Kanpur** (IV) after the British refused to continue his father's pension.

From these two alone, we can look for an option where A-III and D-IV. Only option (b) satisfies this.

Step 2: Verifying the remaining pairs.

- **(B) Birjis Qadr:** He was the young son of Wajid Ali Shah, the deposed Nawab of **Awadh** (II). Following the annexation of Awadh, his mother, Begum Hazrat Mahal, proclaimed him the Wali (ruler), and they led the revolt in Lucknow/Awadh.
- **(C) Kunwar Singh:** An 80-year-old zamindar from Jagdispur, he was the chief organizer of the fight against the British in **Arrah** (I), Bihar. He is noted for his remarkable military skill and bravery despite his age.

Step 3: Final Matching Table.

Quick Tip: To quickly solve "Match the Following" questions in history, identify the most famous pair first (like Rani Lakshmi Bai - Jhansi). Usually, this eliminates 50-75% of the options immediately, saving you time during exams.

Q8. Arrange the following foreign travellers according to their year of visit to India in chrono-

logical order.

- (A) Duarte Barbosa from Portugal.
- (B) Francois Bernier from France.
- (C) Marco Polo from Italy.
- (D) Ibn Battuta from Morocco.

Choose the correct answer from the options given below:

- (a) B, C, D, A
- (b) C, D, B, A
- (c) A, B, C, D
- (d) C, D, A, B

Correct Answer: (d) C, D, A, B

Solution:

Concept: Foreign travellers played a crucial role in documenting the social, political, and economic conditions of India throughout different eras. To arrange them chronologically, we must associate each traveller with the specific century or ruling dynasty they visited.

Step 1: Determining the timelines for each traveller.

- **(C) Marco Polo (13th Century):** The Venetian traveller visited South India (the Pandya kingdom) around 1292–1294 on his way back from China. He is the earliest among the given options.
- **(D) Ibn Battuta (14th Century):** Coming from Morocco, he arrived in India in 1333 during the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq. He served as a Qazi in Delhi for several years.
- **(A) Duarte Barbosa (16th Century):** A Portuguese official and writer who visited India (specifically the Vijayanagara Empire and the Malabar coast) between 1500 and 1516. He provided detailed accounts of the trade and customs of South India.
- **(B) Francois Bernier (17th Century):** A French physician and traveller who was in India from 1656 to 1668. He is famous for being the physician to Prince Dara Shikoh and later served at the court of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb.

Step 2: Establishing the Chronological Sequence.

By ordering the years: 1. Marco Polo (Late 1200s) → C 2. Ibn Battuta (1330s) → D 3. Duarte

Barbosa (Early 1500s) → A 4. Francois Bernier (Mid 1600s) → B
The sequence is C, D, A, B.

Quick Tip: To remember the timeline of travellers, group them by eras:

- **Medieval (Sultanate):** Marco Polo, Ibn Battuta.
- **Early Colonial/Transition:** Duarte Barbosa.
- **Mughal Zenith:** Francois Bernier.

This mental grouping helps you sort them even if you forget the exact years.

Q9. In the 19th century, why were the French and English interested in the stupa at Sanchi?

- (a) To learn about Indian cuisine
- (b) To study Indian politics
- (c) To display the eastern gateway in European museums
- (d) To promote Indian art and culture

Correct Answer: (c) To display the eastern gateway in European museums

Solution:

Concept: The Great Stupa at Sanchi, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is one of the oldest stone structures in India. In the 19th century, European powers were highly competitive in acquiring exotic artifacts and architectural wonders from their colonies to showcase their imperial reach and cultural "discovery" in their national museums.

Step 1: The French and English requests for the gateways.

The four gateways (toranas) of the Sanchi Stupa are masterpieces of Buddhist narrative art. In the mid-19th century:

- The French sought permission from Shahjehan Begum, the then ruler of Bhopal, to take the ****Eastern Gateway**** to France to be displayed in a museum in Paris.
- For a while, the English also wanted to do the same for museums in London.

Step 2: The resolution and preservation.

Fortunately, the gateways were not physically removed. Instead:

- Shahjehan Begum and her successor Sultan Jehan Begum provided funds for the preservation of the ancient site.
- They allowed the Europeans to take carefully prepared ****plaster-cast copies**** of the gateways.
- These perfect replicas satisfied the French and the English, allowing the original sandstone gateways to remain at their historic location in Sanchi.

Step 3: Evaluating other options.

- **(a) & (b):** These are irrelevant to the archaeological nature of a Buddhist stupa.
- **(d):** While the interest was technically about "art," the primary motivation was not the selfless "promotion" of Indian culture, but the acquisition of physical artifacts for their own European collections (museum displays).

Quick Tip: To remember the survival of Sanchi vs. Amaravati: Amaravati was "looted" because it was discovered earlier when preservation wasn't a priority. Sanchi survived because the rulers of Bhopal took active interest in its on-site preservation and offered plaster casts to the Europeans instead of the originals.

Q10. Arrange the following in a chronological manner.

- (A) Ashtadhyayi of Panini
- (B) The works of Kalidasa
- (C) Compilation of the Puranas (in Sanskrit)
- (D) Natyashastra of Bharata

Choose the correct answer from the options given below:

- (a) D, C, A, B
- (b) B, A, D, C
- (c) A, D, C, B
- (d) A, C, D, B

Correct Answer: (c) A, D, C, B

Solution:

Concept: The chronology of ancient Indian literature is determined by linguistic analysis and historical references within the texts. Sanskrit literature evolved from foundational grammar to specialized treatises on arts, followed by the codification of religious myths and classical poetry.

Step 1: Determining the historical period of each work.

- **(A) Ashtadhyayi of Panini (c. 5th–4th Century BCE):** This is the foundational text of Sanskrit grammar. Panini's work predates most classical Sanskrit literature and set the standard for the language.
- **(D) Natyashastra of Bharata (c. 2nd Century BCE – 2nd Century CE):** This is the earliest and most comprehensive treatise on performing arts, including drama, dance, and music. It belongs to the post-Mauryan/early classical period.
- **(C) Compilation of the Puranas (c. 3rd – 6th Century CE):** Although the oral traditions are older, the major Sanskrit Puranas were compiled and given their final shape during the Gupta period.
- **(B) The works of Kalidasa (c. 4th – 5th Century CE):** Kalidasa is widely considered the greatest poet and dramatist of classical Sanskrit. He is traditionally associated with the court of Chandragupta II (Vikramaditya) during the height of the Gupta Empire.

Step 2: Establishing the Chronological Sequence.

Ordering these by their approximate period of composition/compilation: 1. Ashtadhyayi (Grammar - 500 BCE) → **A** 2. Natyashastra (Performing Arts - 100 BCE/CE) → **D** 3. Compilation of Puranas (Religious Texts - 300 CE onwards) → **C** 4. Works of Kalidasa (Classical Poetry/Drama - 400 CE) → **B**

The correct sequence is **A, D, C, B**.

Quick Tip: A useful mnemonic for literary chronology: ****Grammar (Panini)**** always comes first to define the language, then ****Theories (Natyashastra)**** to define the arts, and finally ****Epics/Stories (Puranas/Kalidasa)**** to utilize them.