

## **Domain - Specific MCQs -**

### ***Humanities Domain: English | History | Media and Communications***

“The subcontinent is a huge geographical area, and the transition to literacy did not take place everywhere at the same time. For instance, areas outside the literate Harappan zone were inhabited by non-literate people. Going by the earliest surviving samples of deciphered writing, the beginning of the historical period in north India would have to be placed in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. However, it can be presumed that this writing had a history on perishable material, one that must go back to at least the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Lists of historical kings and philosophers of this century are available for parts of north India. Considering all these factors, there is a good case for placing the beginning of the historical period in north India in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The evidence of 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE Brahmi inscriptions from Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka, 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE Tamil–Brahmi inscriptions, and the political history reflected in Sangam literature suggest that the transition to the historical period in South India occurred sometime between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE. Of course, if the Harappan script is deciphered someday, the dates for the beginning of the historical period in northern India will have to be pushed back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE, or even earlier.” Singh U. (2009). *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th century*. Pearson. pp. 07.

When did the historical period begin in North India?

- a) 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE
- b) 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE
- c) Both a and b
- d) None of the above

The earliest Brahmi inscriptions, found in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, date from which century?

- a) 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE
- b) 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE
- c) 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE
- d) None of the above

Which one of the following is correct?

- a) Harappan people were literate
- b) People outside Harappan zone were non-literate
- c) Both a and b
- d) None of the above

Which of the following is a false statement?

- a) First Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions are from 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE
- b) First Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions are from 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE
- c) Sangam literature reflects political history
- d) Historical period in South India is dated between 4<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE

In this paragraph, the beginning of the Historical period has been marked by which of the following

- a) Harappan inscriptions
- b) Writing that has been deciphered
- c) Sangam literature
- d) Use of iron tools

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The Age of Pandemics shows that pandemics can originate anywhere and at any time. As proven by the most recent cholera pandemic, which originated in Indonesia, there was nothing truly 'Indian' about the disease. And yet, in the nineteenth century, it was a widely held belief that British India was the home of cholera or 'the factory of cholera', as described by one French delegate at the 1894 International Sanitary Conference. But we now know that the *Cholerae vibrio* thrived in certain maritime ecosystems and only occasionally found its way to human bowels. Similarly, there was nothing 'Chinese' or 'Indian' about the plague, and reservoirs for plague foci existed in other parts of the world as well. It was a disease that essentially hurt rodents first, and then humans.

If the 1889-90 influenza pandemic was dubbed the 'Russian flu' on the basis of its supposed origin, the more accurate term for the 1918 pandemic would be the 'American flu', certainly not the 'Spanish flu'. In fact, at different times, influenza earned a variety of names based on its most proximate source. In Japan, it was referred to as 'American Influenza', in Ceylon as 'Bombay Fever', in Dakar (Senegal) as 'Brazilian Flu' and in Northern Rhodesia as 'White Man's Flu'.

Such labels may appear harmless but have, in the past, led to discrimination against migrants coming from the region where the disease is supposed to have originated.

This is why the WHO, sensibly, does not prefix a disease with a location. The phrase ‘Chinese virus’ for COVID-19, as used by some political leaders, is unwarranted. This is not to rule out the possibility of a country deliberately creating a pandemic in the future through biochemical weapons. In the infamous Unit 731 in north-eastern China in the 1930s, Japanese forces experimented with cholera, plague and other diseases and in 1949, a few of the Japanese soldiers were indicted by the Russians for using bio-weapons against the Chinese during World War II. Curiously, the official name for Unit 731 was Epidemic Prevention and Water Supply Department and its overall efforts backfired spectacularly when the diseases they unleashed killed their own soldiers.

Chinmay Tumble, *The Age of Pandemics, 1817-1920: How They Shaped India and the World*, Harper Collins, 2020, pp. 186-187.

Based on the above passage, answer the following questions:

What was influenza called in Japan?

- a) American flu
- b) White man's flu
- c) Yellow flu
- d) Brazilian flu

In the nineteenth century, it was a widely held belief that British India was the home to

- a) AIDS
- b) Tuberculosis
- c) Cholera
- d) Influenza

Who was alleged to be using biochemical weapons against the Chinese?

- a) Americans
- b) Indians
- c) Japanese
- d) None of the above

Which disease affects rodents first?

- a) Diabetes
  - b) Plague
  - c) Cholera
  - d) All of the above
- 

Manjula had three daughters and a son. One of the daughters had just attained puberty, the other two were still young. The eldest daughter was the nicest of them. She had not been affected by her mother's nature. That she was different was the result of another story. Vithabai the albino had no children and longed for one. And so she had looked after Manjula's eldest, treating her as her own, bringing her up in comfort. Since she had been brought up in Vithabai's care, in her clean and wellcared-for home, this girl did not seem to be Manjula's child at all. She was also fairer than her mother. This was the girl Chander wanted to marry. It had been a dream he had nursed from childhood. Vithabai also thought it might be a good match. But then she was not the girl's real mother.

When the child came of age, Manjula asserted her rights. She claimed her daughter from Vithabai. She had no intention of letting her daughter marry Chander. She would say, 'He has no home of his own, he's a vagrant.'

It was then that I saw the destructive power of love at first hand. Chander could never sit idle. Next to the toilets lay a large open space where everyone threw their garbage and the little ones squatted to shit. Chander put all the children to work. In a couple of days, he had the entire ground cleaned. In a month, he had turned it into a beautiful garden. Rose shrubs began to bloom. Then Chander prepared for Diwali, working for a week or more. He set lamps in front of his door, strung up fairy lights and paper buntings. He erected a terracotta fort as well. We were all admiration for his handiwork. But then he heard that Manjula's eldest daughter was engaged to another. The news destroyed him. He trashed his decorations. Like a madman, he ravaged the garden that had been such a delight to our eyes. He uprooted the bushes. In minutes, he had turned it into a wasteland again. This was a new side to Chander. Otherwise, he had seemed a peaceable fellow, with a smile on his face, always willing to help anyone who came his way.

For a long while afterwards, he didn't say much to anyone. He was nursing his psychic wounds. Then he turned his attention to Manjula's second daughter. She was very young, barely ten or twelve years old. But Chander waited for the next two or three years. Perhaps he had made up his mind that he would only marry one of Manjula's daughters, any one of them—who knows? But he did manage it. He married the second daughter. Manjula had mellowed too. She offered no real opposition to the match.

Meanwhile, Vithabai's life took a tragic turn. The loss of a child that she had taken as her own daughter broke her. When her husband died, she fell on bad times. He left no savings. Slowly, the

furniture and the household goods began to find their way into the Marwari's shop. In a short time, the well-appointed house emptied.

Excerpted from, Daya Pawar, *Baluta*, trans. by Jerry Pinto, pp. 143-144.

Based on the above passage, answer the following questions:

Which of these phrases would best describe the relationship between Vithabai and Manjula in this passage?

- a) Antagonistic
- b) Friendly
- c) Therapeutic
- d) Non-existent

Which of the following is true about the passage?

- a) The author tells us stories about his neighbours, offering details about their livelihoods and education.
- b) The author tells us about a family, narrating a couple of incidents in their lives.
- c) The author provides us with autobiographical details about his own wedding to one of three sisters.
- d) The author's main intention is to tell us about how unemployed men can win pretty brides.

The passage notes that Vithabai's life turned "tragic." Which of these words best captures the meaning of "tragic"?

- a) Devastating
  - b) Boring
  - c) Terrifying
  - d) Alone
- 

Many fears about Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) are based on an underestimation of the human mind. Some people seem to believe that the mind is like a computer. It's all just information processing, algorithms all the way down, so of course machines are going to eventually overtake us.

This is an impoverished view of who we humans are... The brain is its own universe. Sometimes I hear tech people saying they are building machines that think like people. Then I report this ambition to neuroscientists and their response is: That would be a neat trick, because we don't know how people think.

The human mind isn't just predicting the next word in a sentence; it evolved to love and bond with others; to seek the kind of wisdom that is held in the body; to physically navigate within nature and avoid the dangers therein; to pursue goodness; to marvel at and create beauty; to seek and create meaning.

A.I. can impersonate human thought because it can take all the ideas that human beings have produced and synthesize them into strings of words or collages of images that make sense to us. But that doesn't mean the A.I. "mind" is like the human mind. The A.I. "mind" lacks consciousness, understanding, biology, self-awareness, emotions, moral sentiments, agency, a unique worldview based on a lifetime of distinct and never to be repeated experiences.

David Brooks, "Many People Fear A.I. They Shouldn't." *The New York Times*, 31 July 2024.

Here are the meanings of some of the words in this passage:

**Impoverished:** Of poor or low quality

**Neuroscientist:** A scientist who studies the brain

**Impersonate:** Act like

**Synthesize:** Put together

Based on the above passage, answer the following questions:

Which of these is a difference between A.I. and the human mind?

- a) Ability to answer questions correctly.
- b) Ability to love others.
- c) Ability to predict the next word in a sentence.
- d) Ability to read people's minds.

Which of the following best describes the view of the above passage?

- a) A.I. is going to overtake human beings.
- b) In the future, A.I. will have all the same capabilities as humans.
- c) A.I. will not replace humans because the human mind has many capabilities that A.I. does not have.
- d) A.I. is useless because it is not like the human mind.

How does A.I. impersonate human thought?

- a) By having the same emotions as human beings.
  - b) By taking ideas produced by humans and combining them in ways that make sense.
  - c) By understanding how humans think.
  - d) By navigating within nature and learning to avoid danger.
- 

If we think closely about anger, we can begin to see why it is a stupid way to run one's life. A good place to begin is Aristotle's definition: not perfect, but useful, and a starting point for a long Western tradition of reflection. Aristotle says that anger is a response to a significant damage to something or someone one cares about, and a damage that the angry person believes to have been wrongfully inflicted. He adds that although anger is painful, it also contains within itself a hope for payback. So: significant damage, pertaining to one's own values or circle of cares, and wrongfulness. All this seems both true and uncontroversial. More controversial, perhaps, is his idea that the angry person wants some type of payback... In other words, if you don't want some type of payback, your emotion is something else (grief, perhaps), but not really anger.

The central puzzle is this: the payback idea does not make sense. Whatever the wrongful act was, inflicting pain on the wrongdoer does not help restore the thing that was lost... The payback idea is deeply human, but fatally flawed as a way of making sense of the world.

Martha Nussbaum, "Beyond Anger" Aeon, 26 July 2016.

Here are the meanings of some of the words in this passage:

Payback: Revenge

Inflict: Force someone to have a negative experience

Pertaining: Related

Based on the above passage, answer the following questions:

In Aristotle's definition of anger, which part is controversial?

- a) Anger is a response to significant damage to something or someone one cares about.
- b) Anger is a response to damage that has been wrongfully inflicted.
- c) Anger contains a hope for payback.

d) Anger is a stupid way to run one's life.

Which of the following options is not part of Aristotle's view of the kind of damage that leads to anger?

- a) The damage cannot be repaired.
- b) The damage is significant.
- c) The damage is seen as wrongful.
- d) The damage is inflicted on someone or something one cares about.

Which of the following options best describes the view on anger being expressed in the passage?

- a) Anger is dangerous.
- b) Anger is justified.
- c) Anger is senseless.
- d) Anger is heroic.

Why is the idea of payback fatally flawed?

- a) Payback can lead to violence.
  - b) Payback does not fix the damage caused by the wrongful act.
  - c) Payback causes significant damage to others.
  - d) Payback leads to grief.
- 

Rajaraja's royal temple required a large staff to attend to its regular ritual needs and to ensure its maintenance. Of the 850 temple employees listed in inscriptions, 400 were dancing girls and sixtyseven musicians. The dancers, brought to Tanjavur from the many smaller temples of Rajaraja's empire, lived in their own houses in two streets adjoining the temple. Each was given the entire yield of rice from one *veli* (roughly five acres) of land, a quantity sufficient to ensure her a comfortable living. Inscriptions imply that the profession was hereditary. Temple dancers were highly accomplished in the arts of poetry, music, dance, drama and painting, and were called upon at various times of the day to dance in the main hall in front of the sanctum, in honour of Shiva. From records of twentieth-century interviews with the last of these dancers, we learn of the status and respect accorded to them; without their dance, the worship of the Lord was considered incomplete and lacking in *rasa*.

The vast number of functionaries needed to support this great religious complex - 174 priests, 143 watchmen, treasurers, accountants, astrologers, lamp bearers, water

sprinklers, potters, tailors, carpenters, goldsmiths and appraisors of jewels - was coordinated by the temple manager, chief Adittan Suryan. Rajaraja made a variety of arrangements to ensure adequate financing. He designated entire villages as gifts to the deity, which then had to supply all the foodstuffs needed for the ritual food offering. The types of food specified as temple offerings include rice-and-curd and are identical to those eaten to this day in the south. Village herders were given a certain number of animals; from the milk yielded, they had to provide a daily supply of butter and ghee for use in the 158 butter lamps that illuminated the temple in the evenings. Inscriptions speak also of money set aside to ensure that fragrant cardamom seeds and the aromatic khus root were available each day for the ritual bath of the deity.

Vidya Dehejia, *Indian Art*, Phaidon 1992., pp. 221-222.

Based on the above passage, answer the following questions:

Which of the following was a functionary at the temple of Rajaraja?

- a) Painter
- b) Cook
- c) Carpenter
- d) Soldier

In the above passage, from where does the author get information about life around the temple?

- a) Inscriptions and personal interviews
- b) Books and stories
- c) Sangam poems and dances
- d) Palm leaf manuscripts and coins

What financing did Rajaraja provide to the temple?

- a) He gifted entire villages to the temple
  - b) He gifted workers to the temple
  - c) He conquered new lands and gave them to the temple
  - d) He went on long sea voyages to get plunder for the temples
-

I began writing this chapter in early March 2020. The microscopic coronavirus was quickly becoming the largest, most threatening, and most inescapable presence on the planet. As cars and people vanished from the streets of Brooklyn, a peculiar sense of dislocation set in. Reading the notes from my visit to the Banda Islands in 2016, I sometimes had the eerie sense of having returned incorporeally to the archipelago.

On that trip, Abubaker Des Alwi lent me a history of the islands by an American historian, Willard Hanna: *Indonesian Banda: Colonialism and Its Aftermath in the Nutmeg Islands*. There, I first read about the lamp that fell in Selamon on the night of April 21, 1621.

The detail, mentioned only in passing, haunted me. Why had such a simple, everyday mishap caused so much panic amongst the contingent of Dutch soldiers?

With the silence of the Brooklyn nights broken only by ambulance sirens, it was possible to imagine that a sudden and unexpected sound might remind everyone of the invisible nonhuman presences that surround us, intervening in everyday life in ways that transform the meaning of ordinary events.

Bodies were stacked outside hospitals in refrigerated trucks; fear seethed in the streets. The sudden cessation of movement had created a sensation of breathlessness. If it were not for the strangeness of lockdown, I may not have searched the internet for a pdf of an eyewitness account of the period. To my surprise one turned up! Written by JA Van der Chijs it was a treasure trove of secrets. I stared at it as though it were a rune stone or petroglyph.

One day, waiting for the 7pm Covid ritual of clapping, cheering and banging pots, I started to scroll randomly through the book. Soon enough I came to some familiar words — the word “lamp,” I discovered, has the same meaning in Dutch and English. On an impulse I typed a Dutch sentence into a translation app. To my surprise, it produced a string of words that made sense: “About midnight from the 21st to the 22nd of April 1621, a lamp fell in the *bale-bale*, where Sonck slept with his counselors, an insignificant event but enough to cause panic among the Europeans, who were always and everywhere seeing treason.”

I began to feed more sentences into the app. There were just enough glimmers of sense behind the often-garbled results to draw me deeper and deeper into the text. So, with more ambulances shrieking past my window, in what had once been the Dutch village of Breukelen, I typed in entire pages. Soon it was as if two nonhuman entities, the internet and the coronavirus, both operating at a planetary scale, had come together to create a ghostly portal to transport me, through the spirit of a long-dead Dutchman, to the Banda Islands on the night of April 21, 1621.

-Extracted and adapted from Amitav Ghosh's *The Nutmeg's Curse*

“On an impulse I typed a Dutch sentence into a translation app.” What does the word “impulse” suggest here?

- a) That the writer is a person without any self-control.
- b) That in that first instance, using the app was unplanned.
- c) That the app only works if you use it at random.
- d) That using apps is something that only happens in moments of idleness.

What role does the Covid-19 pandemic play in this passage?

- a) It's immaterial to the main story, and there to add humour.
- b) It's a minor background detail to the big story of the Nutmeg Islands.
- c) It's one of two factors that come together to propel the story forward.
- d) It's the main thrust of the passage.

What is the significance of the historian Willard Hanna in this passage?

- a) His work is a major source of information, and valuable to a researcher.
- b) Hanna is a famous historian and expert on the Banda Islands.
- c) Willard Hanna is a friend of the writer.
- d) Hanna's book introduced the writer to an event that he then gets more interested in.