

# TNPSC Group I — History & Culture

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## A. Quick Revision Notes

### Indus Valley Civilisation

Bronze Age Harappan civilisation, c.2500–1900 BCE. Harappa discovered 1921 (Daya Ram Sahni), Mohenjo-daro 1922 (R.D. Banerji). Key sites: Mohenjo-daro (Great Bath, Great Granary), Harappa, Dholavira & Lothal in Gujarat (Lothal = dockyard), Kalibangan (ploughed field), Rakhigarhi (largest). Features: grid-pattern town planning, standardised baked bricks, underground drainage, uniform weights and measures. Script pictographic, undeciphered, written right-to-left (boustrophedon). Trade with Mesopotamia. Worship of Pashupati (proto-Shiva) and Mother Goddess. Chalcolithic (used copper/bronze, no iron). Declined around 1900 BCE.

### Vedic Age

c.1500–600 BCE, Indo-Aryans. Four Vedas: Rig (oldest, 1028 hymns, 10 mandalas), Sama, Yajur, Atharva. Early/Rig Vedic (1500–1000 BCE) on Sapta-Sindhu region: pastoral, cattle as wealth, tribal polity, king = rajan, sabha and samiti assemblies. Later Vedic (1000–600 BCE): moved to Ganga plains, iron (krishna ayas), settled agriculture, rigid varna system, larger janapadas. Gayatri mantra (to god Savitri) is in the Rig Veda. 'Satyameva Jayate' is from the Mundaka Upanishad. Upanishads are the philosophical end of the Vedas (Vedanta).

### Mauryan & Gupta Empires

Mauryas founded 321 BCE by Chandragupta Maurya, guided by Chanakya/Kautilya (Arthashastra); capital Pataliputra; Megasthenes (Indica) was Greek envoy. Ashoka (268–232 BCE): Kalinga war 261 BCE led him to Buddhism and Dhamma; rock and pillar edicts in Brahmi; Sarnath Lion Capital is India's national emblem. Guptas (c.319–550 CE), the 'Golden Age': Samudragupta (Prayag/Allahabad Prashasti by Harisena), Chandragupta II Vikramaditya (defeated Shakas; Fa-Hien visited). Achievements: Aryabhata (zero, decimal), Kalidasa, Nalanda university, temple architecture.

### Sangam Age & Ancient Tamilakam

c.300 BCE–300 CE. Three Tamil dynasties: Chera, Chola, Pandya. Three Sangams (assemblies of poets) held at Madurai under Pandya patronage. Literature: Tolkappiyam (oldest Tamil grammar, by Tolkappiyar), Ettuthogai (Eight Anthologies), Pattupattu (Ten Idylls), Pathinenkilkanakku (includes Thirukkural by Thiruvalluvar). Twin epics: Silappatikaram (Ilango Adigal) and Manimekalai (Sattanar). Society organised into five tinai (landscapes). Ports: Puhar/Kaveripoompattinam, Musiri, Korkai (pearls). Extensive Roman trade (yavanas), attested by coin hoards.

### Cholas, Cheras & Pandyas

Imperial Cholas (9th–13th CE) founded by Vijayalaya (850 CE). Rajaraja I (985–1014) built the Brihadisvara (Rajarajeswaram) temple at Thanjavur (UNESCO) and a strong navy. Rajendra I reached the Ganga (Gangaikonda Cholapuram) and led a naval expedition to Srivijaya (SE Asia). Famed for local self-government — the Uttiramerur inscriptions describe kudavolai (election by lot) and Chola bronzes (Nataraja). Pandyas: capital Madurai, Meenakshi temple, pearl trade. Cheras: modern Kerala/Kongu, capital Vanji/Karur, Muziris port.

### Delhi Sultanate & Mughals

Delhi Sultanate 1206–1526, five dynasties: Slave/Mamluk (Qutb-ud-din Aibak began Qutb Minar; Iltutmish; Razia Sultana), Khilji (Alauddin — price/market control, Malik Kafur's southern raids), Tughlaq (Muhammad bin Tughlaq — token currency, capital shift to Daulatabad; Firoz Shah), Sayyid, Lodi. First Battle of Panipat 1526: Babur defeated Ibrahim Lodi, founding the Mughals. Akbar (Din-i-Ilahi, Mansabdari, abolished jizya), Shah Jahan (Taj Mahal, Red Fort), Aurangzeb (largest extent, reimposed jizya).

### Bhakti & Sufi movements

Bhakti stressed personal devotion, rejecting ritual and caste. In Tamil Nadu (6th–9th CE): Alvars (Vaishnava) and Nayanars (Shaiva). Saints: Ramanuja (Vishishtadvaita), Ramananda, Kabir (nirguna, dohas), Guru Nanak (founded Sikhism), Mirabai, Tulsidas (Ramcharitmanas), Chaitanya, Namdev, Tukaram. Sufism = Islamic mysticism through silsilas: Chishti (Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti at Ajmer; Nizamuddin Auliya) and Suhrawardi. Both movements preached love, tolerance and unity of God, and spread through vernacular languages, easing Hindu-Muslim relations.

### Advent of Europeans

Vasco da Gama reached Calicut in 1498 (received by the Zamorin). Portuguese came first — Albuquerque captured Goa in 1510. Dutch East India Company formed 1602 (factory at Pulicat, TN). English East India Company chartered 1600 by Elizabeth I; factories at Surat (1613), Madras/Fort St George 1639 (Francis Day), Bombay, Calcutta. French East India Company 1664, base at Pondicherry (1674), Dupleix. Danes at Tranquebar (Tharangambadi). The Anglo-French Carnatic Wars (1746–63) and Battles of Plassey 1757 and Buxar 1764 established British power.

### Revolt of 1857

The First War of Independence (Sepoy Mutiny) began 10 May 1857 at Meerut; immediate cause was greased Enfield cartridges (cow/pig fat). Mangal Pandey (Barrackpore, 29 March 1857) was an early spark. Leaders: Bahadur Shah Zafar (Delhi, symbolic head), Nana Saheb and Tantia Tope (Kanpur), Rani Lakshmibai (Jhansi), Begum Hazrat Mahal (Lucknow), Kunwar Singh (Bihar). Suppressed by 1858. Consequences: end of East India Company rule; Government of India Act 1858; direct Crown rule; Queen Victoria's Proclamation. Tamil Nadu was largely unaffected.

### Indian National Movement

Indian National Congress founded 1885 by A.O. Hume; first president W.C. Bonnerjee (Bombay). Phases: Moderates (1885–1905; Dadabhai Naoroji's 'drain of wealth', Gokhale), Extremists (Tilak — 'Swaraj is my birthright'; Lal-Bal-Pal), then the Gandhian mass phase. Partition of Bengal 1905 sparked the Swadeshi movement. Home Rule Leagues 1916 (Tilak, Annie Besant); Lucknow Pact 1916. Gandhi: Champaran 1917, Non-Cooperation 1920–22 (ended after Chauri Chaura), Civil Disobedience/Dandi Salt March 1930, Quit India 1942. Independence on 15 August 1947.

### Tamil Nadu in the freedom struggle

V.O. Chidambaram Pillai ('Kappalottiya Tamizhan') launched the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company in 1906 at Tuticorin to challenge British shipping. Poet Subramania Bharati inspired nationalism ('Vande Mataram' journal). Vanchinathan assassinated Collector Ashe in 1911. Tiruppur Kumaran died holding the national flag (1932). The Salt Satyagraha in TN was led by C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) at Vedaranyam in 1930. Rajaji later became the first Indian Governor-General. Congress in TN was strengthened by Satyamurti and K. Kamaraj.

### Social & religious reform movements

Raja Ram Mohan Roy founded the Brahmo Samaj (1828) and helped abolish Sati (1829, with Lord Bentinck); called the 'father of the Indian Renaissance'. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar championed widow remarriage. Dayananda Saraswati founded the Arya Samaj (1875), 'back to the Vedas', with Shuddhi. Swami Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Mission (1897) after his 1893 Chicago address. Jyotiba Phule started the Satyashodhak Samaj. Annie Besant led the Theosophical Society (headquarters at Adyar, Chennai). Sir Syed Ahmad Khan led the Aligarh Movement.

### Dravidian & Self-Respect movement

The Justice Party (South Indian Liberal Federation, 1916) led the non-Brahmin movement and brought the first communal Government Order (reservation) in 1921. Periyar E.V. Ramasamy founded the Self-Respect Movement (Suyamariyathai, 1925) after leaving Congress, promoting social equality, anti-caste rationalism, women's rights and self-respect marriages. He formed the Dravidar Kazhagam (DK) in 1944. C.N. Annadurai broke away to found the DMK in 1949. The anti-Hindi agitations (1937–40 and 1965) were central to the movement, asserting Tamil identity.

### Indian art, architecture & culture

Temple styles: Nagara (North, curvilinear shikhara), Dravida (South, pyramidal vimana with gopurams — Cholas), Vesara (Deccan hybrid — Chalukyas/Hoysalas). Rock-cut art: Ajanta (Buddhist paintings), Ellora (Kailasa temple, Rashtrakutas), Elephanta. Dravidian landmarks: Brihadisvara (Thanjavur), Meenakshi (Madurai), Mahabalipuram (Pallava Shore Temple and rathas, UNESCO). Eight classical dances include Bharatanatyam (Tamil Nadu), Kathakali (Kerala), Kathak, Odissi, Kuchipudi, Manipuri. Carnatic music Trinity: Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar and Syama Sastri.

## B. Practice MCQs (25)

1. The Indus Valley Civilisation's town planning is best evidenced by which unique feature found at Mohenjo-daro?

- (A) Grid-pattern streets with a covered drainage system
- (B) Iron smelting furnaces
- (C) Large stone temples
- (D) Sanskrit inscriptions on pillars

- 2. Which Mauryan emperor issued the Edict at Dhauli (Odisha) expressing remorse after the Kalinga War?**
- (A) Ashoka
  - (B) Chandragupta Maurya
  - (C) Bindusara
  - (D) Brihadratha
- 3. The Gupta period is called the 'Golden Age' primarily because of advances in which field?**
- (A) Development of the caste system
  - (B) Literature, science, mathematics and art
  - (C) Maritime trade with Rome only
  - (D) Military conquests and territorial expansion
- 4. Who founded the Vijayanagara Empire in 1336 CE?**
- (A) Krishnadevaraya
  - (B) Prataparudra
  - (C) Harihara I and Bukka I
  - (D) Malik Kafur
- 5. The Bhakti movement's concept of nirgun bhakti (devotion to a formless God) was most closely associated with which saint?**
- (A) Tukaram
  - (B) Mirabai
  - (C) Kabir
  - (D) Ramanuja
- 6. Akbar's Din-i-Ilahi was primarily intended to:**
- (A) Impose Zoroastrian beliefs on the court
  - (B) Establish a new Sufi order under Chishti guidance
  - (C) Promote a syncretic spiritual order combining elements of multiple faiths
  - (D) Replace Islam with Hinduism as the state religion
- 7. The Battle of Plassey (1757) is significant because it:**
- (A) Ended the Maratha power in India
  - (B) Established British supremacy in Bengal, marking the start of British political dominance
  - (C) Defeated Hyder Ali of Mysore
  - (D) Led directly to the annexation of Awadh
- 8. The 1857 uprising is variously called a 'Sepoy Mutiny', 'First War of Independence' or 'Great Rebellion'. Which historian famously called it India's First War of Independence?**
- (A) R.C. Majumdar
  - (B) V.D. Savarkar
  - (C) S.N. Sen
  - (D) Karl Marx
- 9. The Non-Cooperation Movement (1920–22) was called off by Gandhi after which event?**
- (A) Death of Bal Gangadhar Tilak
  - (B) Simon Commission visit
  - (C) Jallianwala Bagh massacre
  - (D) Chauri Chaura incident
- 10. Which Tamil intellectual and social reformer founded the Self-Respect Movement in 1925?**
- (A) C.N. Annadurai
  - (B) Maraimalai Adigal
  - (C) E.V. Ramasamy Periyar
  - (D) Subramania Bharati

**11. The Indian National Congress passed the Poorna Swaraj (complete independence) resolution at which session?**

- (A) Lucknow 1916
- (B) Calcutta 1906
- (C) Surat 1907
- (D) Lahore 1929

**12. The Quit India Movement (1942) began immediately after which event?**

- (A) Fall of Singapore to Japan
- (B) Arrival of the Cripps Mission and its failure
- (C) Atlantic Charter signed by Churchill and Roosevelt
- (D) Subhas Bose reaching Germany

**13. Subramania Bharati's contribution to Tamil nationalism was primarily through:**

- (A) Organising the Salt Satyagraha in Tamil Nadu
- (B) Poetry that celebrated Tamil language, women's liberation, and Indian independence
- (C) Founding the Dravidian political movement
- (D) Armed resistance against the British

**14. The Partition of Bengal (1905) by Lord Curzon was opposed primarily because it was seen as:**

- (A) A boundary revision to include Bihar and Orissa
- (B) A response to the Swadeshi movement's demands
- (C) A deliberate divide-and-rule strategy to split Hindu and Muslim Bengalis
- (D) An administrative efficiency measure supported by Congress

**15. The Sangam literature of Tamil Nadu dates approximately to which period?**

- (A) 13th to 16th century CE
- (B) 7th to 12th century CE
- (C) 3rd century BCE to 3rd century CE
- (D) 1st millennium BCE only

**16. Which Chola king sent a naval expedition to Southeast Asia (Srivijaya) in 1025 CE?**

- (A) Rajaraja I
- (B) Kulottunga I
- (C) Rajendra I
- (D) Parantaka I

**17. The Cabinet Mission Plan (1946) proposed which structure for India?**

- (A) Continuation of British rule for another decade
- (B) Direct transfer of power to the Indian National Congress alone
- (C) Complete partition into Pakistan and India immediately
- (D) A three-tier federal structure with a weak central government

**18. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre (1919) occurred in the context of which legislation that provoked widespread protest?**

- (A) Rowlatt Act 1919
- (B) Indian Councils Act 1909
- (C) Arms Act 1878
- (D) Government of India Act 1919

**19. Who was the Viceroy of India when the Constituent Assembly began drafting the Indian Constitution?**

- (A) Lord Mountbatten
- (B) C. Rajagopalachari
- (C) Lord Linlithgow
- (D) Lord Wavell

**20. The Tamil saint-poet Thiruvalluvar is best known for which classic work?**

- (A) Manimekalai
- (B) Thirukkural
- (C) Silappatikaram
- (D) Purananuru

**21. Which of the following metals was completely unknown to the people of the Indus Valley Civilisation?**

- (A) Copper
- (B) Bronze
- (C) Iron
- (D) Gold

**22. The Great Bath, a remarkable structure believed to be used for ritual bathing, was excavated at which Harappan site?**

- (A) Harappa
- (B) Kalibangan
- (C) Lothal
- (D) Mohenjo-Daro

**23. The phrase 'Satyameva Jayate', inscribed below the National Emblem of India, is taken from which ancient text?**

- (A) Rig Veda
- (B) Bhagavad Gita
- (C) Mundaka Upanishad
- (D) Atharva Veda

**24. During the Rig Vedic period, the term 'Bali' referred to what?**

- (A) A specialized military unit
- (B) A voluntary offering made to the chief by the people
- (C) The council of village elders
- (D) A religious animal sacrifice

**25. Who was the Greek ambassador sent by Seleucus Nicator to the court of Chandragupta Maurya?**

- (A) Ptolemy
- (B) Megasthenes
- (C) Fa-Hien
- (D) Hiuen Tsang

## C. Answer Key & Explanations

1. **(A)** Mohenjo-daro and Harappa display grid-planned streets and an advanced underground drainage system, unparalleled in the ancient world.
2. **(A)** Ashoka's Major Rock Edicts, especially the 13th, describe the horror of the Kalinga War (261 BCE) and his consequent conversion to dhamma.
3. **(B)** The Gupta era (4th–6th century CE) produced Kalidasa's literature, Aryabhata's mathematics (zero, pi approximation), Varahamihira's astronomy, and Ajanta cave paintings.
4. **(C)** Brothers Harihara I and Bukka I, formerly commanders in the Hoysala and Kakatiya armies, founded Vijayanagara on the banks of the Tungabhadra in 1336.
5. **(C)** Kabir (15th–16th century) rejected idol worship, caste distinctions, and external religious ritual, advocating direct love for a formless, nameless divine.
6. **(C)** Din-i-Ilahi (1582) was Akbar's attempt at a syncretic spiritual movement blending Islam, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism and Christianity.
7. **(B)** The victory over Siraj-ud-Daulah at Plassey gave the British East India Company control of Bengal, the wealthiest province, beginning political colonial rule.
8. **(B)** V.D. Savarkar's 1909 book 'The Indian War of Independence 1857' was the first to systematically argue that 1857 was a planned national uprising, not a mutiny.
9. **(D)** In February 1922, a mob at Chauri Chaura (UP) burned a police station, killing 22 policemen. Gandhi suspended the NCM immediately, insisting on non-violent discipline.

10. (C) E.V. Ramasamy (Periyar) launched the Self-Respect Movement to fight Brahminical dominance, promote rationalism, gender equality, and Dravidian identity.
11. (D) At the Lahore Session (December 1929), under Jawaharlal Nehru's presidentship, Congress adopted the goal of Purna Swaraj and declared 26 January 1930 as Independence Day.
12. (B) The failure of the Stafford Cripps Mission in April 1942 convinced Gandhi that Britain would not give India independence voluntarily, prompting the August Kranti.
13. (B) Bharati (1882–1921) used poetry as political weapon — verses for women's emancipation, opposing caste, celebrating Tamil pride, and inspiring the freedom movement.
14. (C) The partition divided Bengal on religious lines (Muslim-majority East Bengal vs Hindu-majority West Bengal), which nationalists correctly identified as a divide-and-rule tactic.
15. (C) Sangam literature — including the Eight Anthologies (Ettuthokai) and Ten Idylls (Pathupattu) — is generally dated to 300 BCE–300 CE based on Greek and Roman references.
16. (C) Rajendra Chola I launched the famous naval expedition against the Srivijaya kingdom (modern Sumatra/Malaysia) around 1025 CE, capturing several ports to ensure Tamil trade routes.
17. (D) The Cabinet Mission proposed a three-tier structure: an all-India Union, provincial groupings, and provinces — with a weak centre handling only defence, foreign affairs, and communications.
18. (A) The Rowlatt Act (1919) allowed detention without trial for suspected seditionists, provoking the Satyagraha that drew crowds to Amritsar, where Dyer ordered firing.
19. (D) The Constituent Assembly first met on 9 December 1946, when Lord Wavell was Viceroy. Mountbatten replaced him in March 1947.
20. (B) The Thirukkural, attributed to Thiruvalluvar, is a collection of 1,330 couplets (kurals) covering ethics (aram), polity (porul), and love (inbam), revered across cultures.
21. (C) The people of the Indus Valley Civilisation belonged to the Bronze Age and primarily used bronze and copper, whereas iron was only discovered and utilized later during the Vedic period.
22. (D) The Great Bath is one of the most famous structures found in the citadel area of Mohenjo-Daro.
23. (C) The motto 'Satyameva Jayate' (Truth alone triumphs) is a mantra from the ancient Indian scripture, the Mundaka Upanishad.
24. (B) In the early Vedic period, 'Bali' was a voluntary contribution or tribute made by the tribesmen to their Rajan (chief).
25. (B) Megasthenes was the Greek ambassador in the court of Chandragupta Maurya and the author of 'Indica', which detailed Mauryan administration.