

HINDUISM

Paper 8058/01

Paper 1

Key messages

- To gain the highest marks, candidates must read the question carefully, to identify first the specific topic given in the question, then what is being asked about it. Questions will never call for a candidate's full classroom notes on any topic. The key to success is thoughtful selection of material.
- Candidates for this paper must study the specified texts and not depend on general textbooks, or on classroom notes which only describe the texts.
- All answers must be legibly numbered and written continuously, without unnecessary space being left between paragraphs or the next answer. Extra sheets should be tied in the correct order, so that it is clear which question is being answered.

General comments

Response to the questions this year was generally good from many candidates. The number of excellent, thoughtful and knowledgeable responses was most encouraging. Areas where attention and improvement are still required are the following:

- Some candidates gave 'all-purpose answers', as if they had been committed to memory by all candidates from some Centres. Such answers appear on the examination scripts almost identical in wording and structure. Because they treat the question topic in a general way, these answers can achieve a proportion of marks for the 'knowledge' component, but cannot be awarded higher marks because the actual question has not been addressed.
- It was noted once more that some candidates, in a rush to answer, ignored the question completely or referred to it only in a final paragraph. This happened despite evidence that they often had enough knowledge to achieve much higher marks. All candidates should be encouraged to attempt an answer to the question set. A 'direct' answer almost always scores higher than an 'all-purpose' one.
- There was strong evidence this year of research or independent reading in the best responses offered, but many candidates need to make use of the wealth of information available in libraries and on the Internet (e.g. on the Vedic hymns or the reformers). There is no topic on the syllabus for which detailed information is not quickly and easily available.
- Answers to questions in **Section D** are often weakened by statements that a reformer 'banned', 'eradicated' or 'eliminated' certain social abuses or inequalities. Such statements should be avoided. Ideal situations might have been the aim of the reformers, but to say that some problem was or has since been eradicated requires firm statistical evidence.
- Inaccurate numbering of questions (or failure to number questions) risks losing ALL marks for that answer. Candidates must be reminded that numbering is part of the exercise - otherwise the Examiner is not able to give a mark. Some candidates choose to write out the wording of the question from the examination paper. In those cases, if no question number appears, this will at least indicate which question is being attempted - but the 'writing out' takes valuable time.
- Use of English was usually good, but some candidates waste time on clichés such as 'crystal clear', 'pristine purity', 'in a nutshell', 'in guise of conclusion' etc. These should be omitted. Clear everyday English is best. Words which should be checked include: *spiritualism* ('spirituality' is better, since 'spiritualism' can mean a specific religion or belief system; *indulge in* (this does not mean 'do' or

'follow' a practice); *primordial* (this does not mean 'important' - and the form 'premodial' is not in English dictionaries); *empirical* (often misunderstood and misspelt); *Big Bang* (often appears to be misunderstood). Reference to Newtonian physics in the context of the law of karma also produced questionable logic: if the 'reaction' to an evil deed is said to be 'equal and *opposite*', then surely it would be the opposite of 'evil', which was not what candidates intended to say.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Answers usually showed at least adequate knowledge of the persona and different roles of Agni, but very few gained high marks for knowledge of Varuna, although this god is on the syllabus for study. Too many answers confused Varuna with Vayu, so the whole theme of Varuna's rather stern jurisdiction was lost. A brief study of the main Vedic hymns to Varuna would have equipped the candidate to give a good answer.

Question 2

Most candidates showed ability to discuss the complex ideas in the Nasadiya Sukta confidently and sensitively. The highest marks went to those who were able to refer in detail to the text, showing understanding.

Question 3

Though the most popular choice in **Section A**, this question was not particularly well answered. Some candidates spent too much time explaining what the Upanishads are, and on narrating the story of Naciketas' 'boons' without reference to the question. The Upanishads' distinctive identification of Brahman with Atman was often ignored, although some candidates quoted the Mahavakyas to good effect.

Section B

Question 4

This turned out to be a very popular choice and there were many very thoughtful responses, showing knowledgeable selection of material from the set texts. Few marks could be given for a crude feminist manifesto, unsupported by the stories themselves. Most candidates agreed with the quotation, though not all managed to support their opinion with evidence, and some completely forgot to write about Sita as well as Draupadi. Sita's divine status was very rarely mentioned. An interesting quality to be praised, as many candidates opined, was for a woman not to 'cross her limits' - though what these limits were/are, who set them and on what authority, was not made clear.

Question 5

This was a fairly open-ended question, allowing candidates to discuss in depth what they had studied from the Gita, and to relate Arjuna's doubts to modern dilemmas and moral problems. Most answers were at least adequate. Many were excellent, showing evidence of having studied the set text in detail.

Question 6

Most candidates concentrated on the story of Dasharatha, but some did especially well by widening the discussion to other characters in the epic, such as Sita, who did not appear to have 'deserved' the hardships she agreed to undergo. Good candidates made a variety of excellent points, any one of which could be credited as long as it was supported by evidence from the text. Jabali's scepticism was relevant here, but mentioned by very few.

Section C

Question 7

Only a few candidates offered answers on this topic. Those who had studied the Alvars in detail were able to gain high marks, especially if they showed understanding of themes of the poets' songs and bhakti devotion. They also had to identify who 'the sages' were, and why their 'wisdom' and rituals were thought to be worthless in the pursuit of the Supreme.

Question 8

Almost universally candidates answering this question appeared to be reproducing classroom notes without having read any of the actual text. Answers tended to concentrate entirely on Tulsī's teachings, on the lordship of Rama and ways of worshipping him. But whereas the poet's careful attention to metre is not a topic for this paper, no reader of the work in translation can be unaware of the wealth of metaphor, the descriptions of natural scenery and the lyrical flow - all of which mark Tulsidas out as a poet intent on expressing himself in poetry. That he chose to use his poetic talent in praise of Rama was an idea ignored by many candidates, who did not even pause to consider it, leaving answers very unbalanced.

Question 9

In the main, candidates understood what was being asked and did very well, confining their material to the tales of the youthful Krishna as recounted by Surdasā. A few answers of outstanding quality were seen.

Section D

Question 10

This question appeared to have been understood, but answers were often rather vague, and many failed to identify what 'Hindu principles' might be considered. 'Satya' and 'ahimsa' were understood, but Gandhi's passionate adherence to 'truth-force', based on his understanding of the Gita, was usually illustrated in rather simplistic terms such as 'getting the British out of India' and 'promoting equality for Harijans'. His praise for teachings not specifically Hindu was known by some, for example his approval of Jain ethics and the principles expressed in Jesus' 'Sermon on the Mount'.

Question 11

Apart from those who used this question to give an 'all-purpose' answer on reformers, most candidates achieved good or very good marks, by aiming to show their knowledge of Roy's achievements. (The best candidates also knew that the honorific 'Raja' was initially a reward for services rendered and nothing to do with Roy's theology or his social zeal.)

Question 12

The 'outward-looking' aspect of 19th and 20th Hindu reformers' work appears not to be widely studied for this paper. Most answers were weak because they were very vague at the outset as to what 'Western ideas' might be. Political ideas such as 'democracy', 'universal suffrage' or 'equality of opportunity' might have been seen as 'western' ideas which were not going to be quickly adopted by conservative thinkers, but business systems, scientific education, engineering training for manufacture etc., emerging from the Industrial Revolution in Europe were going to be necessary if traditional trades, confined to particular castes, were to be developed to make India prosperous. Candidates typically ignored such practical issues, though some noted the technological excellence which India has now achieved. The writings of Swami Vivekananda on 'east' and 'west' are instructive in this historical context.