

HINDUISM

Paper 8058/01

Paper 1

Many candidates produced competent responses to the questions set. Some showed ability to select relevant information and use it to construct a strong case. It is important candidates read the question on the paper, rather than presenting everything they know about a topic, even if this information is correct. Most candidates wisely wrote only a short introduction, after which they concentrated on the question to be answered. A few spent too long writing around the topic. The best answers were those which referred to the question throughout the essay, not merely as a final paragraph. Shorter answers which addressed the question directly often gained higher levels than long and detailed responses which were not related to the actual question. Candidates should avoid repeating extravagant phrases from popular biographies such as 'his name is written in golden letters' and 'he drank the cup of poison but tasted the nectar of immortality' - these do not display the particular knowledge which this examination requires.

Some candidates showed evidence of close study of the set texts and a few showed evidence of some independent work. This approach always enhances an answer. Candidates can expand their knowledge and deepen their understanding by consulting up-to-date reports and commentaries.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

There were a few good answers to this question. A significant number of candidates had confused Varuna with Vayu. To do well here, candidates needed to have read some of the hymns addressed to Varuna and to have studied why this god in particular is said to uphold *ṛta* - the moral law. The best answers referred to the stern aspect of Varuna and the worshipper's prayers for his sins to be forgiven by this god, even sins of which he had been unaware. Reference to the 'power-struggle' between Varuna and Indra was also relevant.

Question 2

The Nasadiya Sukta was the most quoted of the set texts here. A few succeeded in explaining why such attempts were made to understand the universe and the concept of 'creation'. Candidates were free to agree or disagree with the statement about 'the insights of the past.' Some responses could have been improved by considering why these ancient texts are still held to have value by Hindus whose education and professions rely on modern scientific models.

Question 3

Knowledge of the Upanishad texts was good, with only a few candidates spending time on narrative alone. As far as the question was concerned, candidates had to distinguish between 'abstract ideas' and 'practical guidance'. Many could have improved their answer by spending more time on this aspect. Most supported the view that the Parable of the Chariot counted as practical guidance.

Section B

Question 4

This question was well tackled by most. The majority of candidates realised that analysis was required here, rather than narrative. Only a few limited their answers by discussing only the military aspects of the story. In most cases a good case was made that the ancient epics can continue to provide moral guidance, even in a vastly different social setting.

Question 5

Krishna's importance as the source of the Bhagavad Gita was the main theme of most essays. This aspect was well tackled in most cases. More attention could have been given to the concept of Krishna's influence 'from age to age' as an avatar of Vishnu.

Question 6

Most answers concentrated on Sita's actions as representing an ideal. A few candidates were able to expand their argument by mentioning Urmila, Kaikeyi and others, as the question invited. In general, answers could have been more critical in pointing out the difficulties of women in a modern setting, many of whom struggle successfully to be good wives and mothers today. Not *all* are guilty of unfaithfulness, laziness and greed - a claim made in many answers.

Section C

Question 7

Asked to discuss 'movements', candidates should have been able to write in general about the Alvars and similar groups, and the appeal of these groups to Hindu worshippers who did not have access to knowledge of Sanskrit texts or elaborate ceremonies. Reference to 'saint-poets' was made by some, and good understanding of bhakti was shown by those who discussed only Surdasas and/or Tulsidasas - but they were poets, not 'movements', so such answers did not actually centre on the topic in the question.

Question 8

Most candidates showed some knowledge of the moral themes in the work of Tulsidasas. Biographical material was not required in this answer. Only a few answers referred particularly to the theme of victory over evil in the Ramcaritamanas, for example the struggle between Rama and various demons, and finally his defeat of Ravanna.

Question 9

The best answers to this question showed clear and critical knowledge of the topic, without including material which was not required, such as discussion of the poetry about the child Krishna or of all of Surdasas's modes of bhakti. In questions of this type candidates need to pay particular attention to selection of material, to avoid wasting valuable time on other aspects.

Section D

Question 10

Responses here were good, especially where candidates used biographical material to good effect. Many candidates could describe and some understood the significance of Ramakrishna's ecstatic experiences, particularly those which involved Christian or Islamic aspects. More attention could have been given by many candidates to Ramakrishna's influence on Swami Vivekananda, who developed his master's thinking.

Question 11

The concept of *ahimsa* was known and understood by most candidates. Those who wrote the best answers were able to select relevant examples of Gandhi's words and actions in order to build their case. Selection was important, as neither a general biography nor a general account of Gandhi's attitudes to social reform were required.

Question 12

Most candidates were able to tackle the descriptive part of this question. Critical comment proved more difficult. Candidates need to gain some knowledge of the influence of the Arya Samaj and of those who opposed its aims. They also need to guard against statements that Dayananda (or another reformer) 'eradicated' certain evils or achieved 'social equality'.