

HINDUISM

Paper 8058/01

Paper 1

Key messages

- To gain the highest levels, candidates must identify the specific topic given in the question.
- Candidates must study the specified texts and not depend on general textbooks or class notes.
- All answers should be properly numbered and written continuously.

General comments

Response to the questions this year was fairly good from many candidates, and very good or excellent from some. Areas where attention and improvement are still required are the following:

- Many responses could be described as ‘all-purpose’, ‘answers’ committed to memory. 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 levels because the actual question has not been addressed.
- Candidates should be encouraged to have confidence to answer the question set.
- There were some outstandingly good answers, where the candidate had obviously made use of the wealth of information available in libraries and on the Internet (e.g. on the Alvars, the Brahmo Samaj or M.K. Gandhi). There is no topic on the syllabus for which such 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.
- Candidates must be reminded that numbering the questions that they answer is important as sometimes it is not clear which question they are answering. 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. **Candidates must also enter their question numbers in the grid on the front sheet.**
- Candidates must answer one question from **each** section and **one** other question from any section. They will only gain marks from answers which comply with this instruction.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Accounts of Indra’s deeds were usually sound, though the liberation of cows was often omitted. With one or two outstanding exceptions, answers showed no knowledge of the Vedic hymns to Indra, but relied on a textbook description or class notes. Proper study for this, as for all topics on the syllabus, requires reading of the relevant texts. The key word ‘victorious’ in the question was very seldom related to Indra’s superiority over the other great gods.

Question 2

Most candidates took their material from the Purusha Sukta and the Nasadiya Sukta, but few from the Brahmacharya Sukta. There were some thoughtful answers about human beings’ desire to know the origins of the universe. The ‘sacrifice’ element in the Purusha Sukta was well understood. In many cases, however, there was no evidence that the candidate had tried to address the element of ‘life in human societies.’

Question 3

A popular choice, this question was well tackled by many candidates, who referred specifically to the qualities which, for example, Yama detected in the youthful Naciketas. Weaker candidates spent too much time explaining what the Upanishads are, and on narrating the story of Naciketas' 'boons' without reference to the question. A few successfully used material from other Upanishads, such as the story of Svetaketu or the teaching in the Isa Upanishad.

Section B

Question 4

There were some very good responses, showing a varied and thoughtful selection of material from the text. Most agreed with the quotation, though not all managed to support their opinion with evidence. Those who disagreed often put a better case, but not always because they had understood the import of the question. Too many of the weakest answers gave a sweeping verdict on the two characters without realising that they were ignoring 'contrary' points they also offered, such as Yudhistira's gambling and Duryodhana's bravery.

Question 5

Candidates who produced excellent answers here focused on the duties of a Kshatriya and the importance of understanding the immortality of the soul. These candidates quoted relevant texts from the Gita, which they had obviously studied in depth. Many answers stated in very general terms the responsibility to fulfil dharma.

Question 6

This popular question was often answered with story-telling and a moral lesson about (human) brotherly love - the answer to a different question. Here analysis was required, relating to the concept of 'avatar'. Only the best answers engaged with the recognition (by his brothers) of Rama as god, and the necessity of supporting his pursuit of dharma. Many candidates could have achieved much higher levels by reading the question carefully.

Section C

Question 7

A few candidates had studied the Alvars in detail, knowing their names and quoting from their works, so gaining high levels, especially if they also aimed to answer the question about continuing interest in their songs and bhakti devotion. In general candidates were very vague as to what 'medieval period' might mean, but did know that there was Hindu opposition to Buddhist and Jain influences, which the Alvars among others were influential in encouraging.

Question 8

The biographical 'legends' referred to in the question were misunderstood by some as the 'stories' in the Ramcaritamanasa. Some candidates correctly referred to accounts of Tulsidas's childhood and marriage, but failed to develop the answer by using this material. Candidates who had not read the actual text had no concept of the intensely personal nature of this poetry, which made it so universally attractive in Hindu devotion.

Question 9

As with the previous question, candidates did not write about the main theme of the question, which was the imagery in the poetry of Surdasa. With a wealth of material to choose from, however, some candidates did very well, and a few answers of outstanding quality were seen.

Section D

Question 10

This question on the influence of Gandhi was a much more popular choice this year than in the past, and in general answers were fairly good, showing some accurate knowledge of the historical setting and social and political problems relevant to the subject. On the other hand, the key term ‘satyagraha’ seemed to be known and understood by very few. ‘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’.

Question 11

Despite being the most popular question in this section, this was not well answered by the majority of candidates. They answered a question on Rammohan Roy instead. In a large number of answers, the Brahmo Samaj was mentioned only once, or not at all. This meant that good levels could not be achieved, although where the interests of Roy were supported by the Samaj this material was relevant by default. A few candidates were able to tackle the actual questions set. Their answers showed a good grasp of the influence of the Brahmo Samaj from its inception, as well as the reasons why it suffered thereafter from schism and a decline in membership (though not demise as some stated).

Question 12

Although many candidates achieved fairly good levels, the majority of the answers were too general. Candidates often cited all they knew of Dayananda’s reforms, instead of confining themselves to the key area of ‘education’. They were required here to show knowledge of Dayananda’s teachings and writings, which aimed to anchor social reform in Vedic principles as he understood them. As far as education was concerned, it was correct to say that he supported the education of girls and founded schools, but it was vital also to explain how the traditional Brahmacharya education was connected in his mind with this endeavour.