

# HINDUISM

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Paper 8058/01  
Paper 1

## Key messages

Candidates must address the specific question asked and select relevant knowledge to support their arguments in order to gain the highest marks.

Responses that write about the general topic, showing no selection and failing to address the question asked limit themselves to Band D.

Conversely, responses that are tailored to provide a direct response to the question must also select and use relevant subject knowledge in order to support their knowledge.

Many candidates compare a 'Vedic ideal' to the problems and failings of the modern world, and assume that this fulfils the requirement for analysis and critical argument even where it is entirely unrelated to the question. This is only worthy of credit where it genuinely forms part of an answer to the question (and even here it is sometimes not the best approach). In most questions it is a drain on the time available to candidates.

Candidates should have a clear understanding of the differences in beliefs and approaches of the various reformers on the syllabus, as well as what they had in common.

## General comments

There was a noticeable improvement in the scripts this year compared to last, with a greater percentage of candidates following the rubric accurately and almost all candidates completing all five questions compared to last year when an unprecedented number completed only four, or occasionally three questions. Where candidates did not follow the rubric, they tended to miss out a section completely (most commonly **Section C**) whilst still answering five questions.

There was an improvement in the number of candidates who are consciously tailoring their responses to the specific question asked, rather than writing everything they know about the general topic. This was very gratifying to see. Some candidates, however, addressed the question, but did not show sufficient evidence of knowledge on the subject used in support of their arguments. Candidates need to show a balance of sufficient well selected and relevant subject knowledge and evaluation and judgement in addressing the specific question posed. There are still some who write about the general topic with no attempt to respond directly to the question, and these candidates limit themselves to a mark in Band D regardless of how much knowledge they demonstrate.

An issue for candidates this year seemed to be the selection of relevant material. Many used quotations from other scriptures or from famous figures (not all of whom had a connection to Hinduism) as part of their responses or to support their argument. This can be useful, and some candidates did it extremely well, situating the subject matter within the wider context of Hindu teaching and practice whilst keeping it relevant to the question, and where this was done well it contributed to a higher mark. However, many candidates attempted to use this technique and lost track of what the initial question had been, effectively including a great deal of material that had only a tangential link to the question or was irrelevant. This often limited the band that the response could be awarded.

**Question 10** was most frequently attempted, with **Question 4** also very popular. **Questions 7 and 12** were least popular and, on the whole, less well answered. **Question 3** was the most popular question in **Section 1**, but was not, generally, well answered.



## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

This question was not particularly popular but those candidates that did choose it tended to show a high level of knowledge about Indra. Varuna was less well addressed and was often only addressed in a closing paragraph. This was a question where a significant number of candidates displayed a high level of knowledge but did not critically address the question of the relative importance of the two deities and so restricted themselves to Band D. Where candidates did attempt to answer the question directly, they generally concluded that Indra was the greater god based on his exploits or on the number of hymns addressed to him. Where a counter argument was offered, it tended to be that Indra had moral failings due to his pride and lust. Some candidates suggested that his consumption of soma was a moral failing, showing a lack of understanding. Varuna was far less well known and understood therefore few candidates argued for the importance of Varuna in his capacity as the embodiment of *ṛta/dharma*. Where candidates went beyond narrative description the question was generally well answered. Responses that gave a clear argument for the supremacy of (usually) Indra achieved Band C, while the few that offered arguments supporting both before reaching a conclusion reached Band B or A.

#### **Question 2**

This question was not generally well answered. Most candidates were aware of some of the contents of the *Isa Upanishad* (most commonly the first verse) but few attempted to distinguish moral teaching from other teachings in the *Upanishad* and several showed evidence of struggling to understand what the *Upanishad* was teaching. The strongest responses addressed the issues of not coveting and of *nishkama karma* and explained these in terms of their importance in a virtuous life, of achieving *moksha*, and in terms of their centrality to Hinduism as evidenced in other texts. Done well this was very successful, but too many candidates were drawn into lengthy discussions of texts such as the *Bhagavad Gita* and did not focus sufficiently on the *Isa Upanishad*. Other candidates gave a fairly detailed account of the *Isa Upanishad* but did not attempt to distinguish specifically moral teaching or to comment on its importance beyond generic statements about it being 'glorious' and actually said very little. Some candidates said that the *Isa Upanishad* was very important and taught that one had to be single minded in pursuit of *moksha*, for example using *Nachiketas* in the *Katha Upanishad* to support point, but then spent the rest of the response talking about the *Katha Upanishad*. This was not a useful approach and of the responses that did concentrate on the *Isa Upanishad*, most achieved band D or C.

#### **Question 3**

This was the most popular question in **Section A** but was the least well answered. Most candidates did not display a high level of knowledge about the *Brahmacharya Sukta*, but instead wrote in great detail about the *Brahmacharya ashrama*. Most ignored the question's focus on the theme of creation completely or added a line or two about the creation of a new person who had a role in adult society. Where this argument was made well it was credited. Again, a large number of candidates chose to make their responses primarily about *Nachiketas* and the *Katha Upanishad*, which was not the main focus of the question.

A few candidates said that the *Purusha Sukta* or the *Nasadiya Sukta* address the theme of creation, but the *Brahmacharya Sukta* does not and where this was well argued it was credited. The strongest responses showed a greater knowledge of the content of the *Sukta* and concentrated on the idea of *tapas* as a way of generating creative energy, although this tended not to be linked to cosmology. The majority of responses to this question were limited to Band D or lower as they did not show sufficient knowledge or understanding of the set text and did not address the question.

### **Section B**

#### **Question 4**

This was the most popular question in **Section B** and one of the most popular on the paper. Candidates knew the stories concerning Rama extremely well and tended to give long and very detailed responses showing examples of good behaviour from Rama. Some of these were very general and related to his praiseworthy attributes such as treating people from low castes well, whilst stronger responses concentrated more specifically on *dharma*. Narrative responses such as this generally achieved Band D. Stronger responses tended to show how examples for Rama's life could help people today to live dharmic lives by

following his example, usually in regard to the treatment of parents, siblings and spouses. These tended to be in Band C, while the responses that critically addressed the issue of how far Rama's behaviour was dharmic and so a useful example to modern Hindus (particularly regarding his treatment of Sita and Bali) were the ones that achieved the higher bands. There were some very good discussions among the strongest responses concerning whether Rama's exile of Sita was a good example of dharma or not, and how the conflicting dharmas of a grihastha and a king should be negotiated.

Most candidates either implicitly or explicitly equated Rama's teachings with his actions during his life, as well as his dialogue with his brother and advisor trying to convince him to return to the throne. Both of these approaches were acceptable and credited.

### Question 5

Many responses treated the statement as a truism but were still able to show selection and application of knowledge by avoiding attempts to retell the entire story of the Mahabharata. Only a few candidates attempted this latter approach. Most selected examples from the lives of specific characters, usually Draupadi, Yudhistira and Duryodhana to illustrate the operation of karma throughout the epic, and some of these were detailed and showed a high level of both knowledge and understanding. A significant minority, but still noticeably more than expected, went a step further and considered the possibility of an alternative or equal concern of the text – usually dharma. A small minority of candidates wrote exclusively about the Bhagavad Gita, possibly picking up the ideas of the following question about the teachings on karma in the Bhagavad Gita, and this was credited to an extent, although it was not a complete attempt to address the question and could not be credited as such. Overall, candidates tended to perform well on this question with a highly detailed knowledge of the text and most attempting to address the question.

### Question 6

This was a popular question and candidates clearly had a very detailed knowledge of Krishna's teachings in the Bhagavad Gita although far fewer were able to accurately select those from Chapter 2. Responses tended to be very detailed showing a high level of knowledge and understanding. Here again, candidates tended to bring in material from other texts, and whilst some did this very well, in the majority of cases it was irrelevant and did not add to the quality of the response. Few candidates achieved Band B or A in this question as very few attempted a judgement on the question. Quite a few candidates talked about the value of Krishna's teachings and how much better society would be if they were followed today, but the question was about how central the teachings are to Hinduism and very few attempted to address this. This meant that performance on this question was quite disappointing despite the high levels of knowledge.

## Section C

### Question 7

This was the least popular question in the section. Most candidates who did attempt this question struggled and many did not recognise it as being primarily about the Alvars. Although reasons could be inferred from most of the descriptions given of medieval India, and the problems arising from Brahminism, Caste discrimination and the incursion of Islam, very few candidates explicitly addressed the issue of why the Bhakti movement became popular. Given the required content in this section of the syllabus, most also seemed quite limited in the relevant knowledge. A significant number wrote only about Surdas and Tulsidas – who are named on the QP; most who mentioned the Alvars did so only in passing and a substantial number of responses named no people or groups of people involved in the movement at all, preferring to discuss what bhakti is and how it leads to liberation. It is also worth noting that a significant number of candidates were unclear on what was meant by the Medieval Age with some referring not only to Surdas and Tulsidas (who are not really Medieval) but also to the British Raj and even to Gandhi. Having said this, where candidates did address the Alvars in detail and attempt to answer the question, there were some very good responses. It could be said, therefore, that this question produced a good level of discrimination, with the most able candidates performing extremely well.

### Question 8

This was the most popular question in **Section C** and was, on the whole, well answered. The weakest responses showed little selection or discrimination but tended to include everything the candidate knew about Surdas with little in the way of a conclusion. A few of the weakest responses showed no knowledge of the bhava of parental love in the writings of Surdas but rather attempted a 'common sense' response about Surdas being abandoned by his parents and seeing God as a parent. This approach received some

credit but rarely beyond Band E as it showed a lack of knowledge and understanding. Others wrote extensively about Krishna as the object of bhakti and devotion but showed little knowledge of the poetry of Surdas. Most responses explained the bhavas as they appear in the writings of Surdas in some detail, and the very strongest responses compared these, discussing which was most important. Encouragingly, candidates reached a variety of conclusions about this, arguing variously that all were equally important, that parental love was the most important as it is absolutely unconditional, or that the love of Radha and the gopis represented the pinnacle of Surdas's thought as a metaphor for the Absolute and the individual souls. This variety shows a pleasing level of critical engagement with the question.

### Question 9

Candidates struggled with this question. Some attempted to deal with the 'crossing of the ocean' with reference of the building of the bridge to Lanka, or to the incident of the boatman, and so failed to address Tulsidas in any meaningful way. Quite a high proportion of the responses to this question said that Rama was the object of Tulsidas's devotion and then went on simply to give a detailed account of Rama's life with little or no reference to the writings of Tulsidas. Responses that explained the writings of Tulsidas, and particularly the Ramcharitmanas and dealt specifically with the ways in which Tulsidas attempted to engage with his readers and help them to approach liberation through bhakti, tended to reach Band C even where there was no specific reference to the 'Ocean of existence'.

### Section D

### Question 10

This was the most popular question on the paper and was attempted by the great majority of candidates. The question was one that lent itself to a narrative approach with an answer to the question, albeit implicit, bound up with the factual account of the actions of Dayananda. As a result, this question achieved some of the highest overall marks on the paper, with the majority of candidates achieving Band C. Some candidates limited themselves by having only a vague knowledge of Dayananda with no clear understanding of the beliefs and actions that distinguished him from the other reformers, and particularly Rammohan Roy.

Some candidates made the majority of their response about Rammohan Roy, which seriously limited their ability to gain marks in the higher bands. Some gave a generic list of issues that were addressed by most reformers that was not specific to Dayananda and showed no clear understanding of his particular agenda or actions. Some attempted to contrast him with Rammohan Roy or even Gandhi in terms of what was achieved. This was not a successful approach as it did not address the specific question that was asked. Most candidates gave a small conclusion saying that Dayananda had made things better, although not all confined themselves to Hindu society in this regard and so tended to drift into irrelevance with accounts of the advances in women's rights in places and contexts that have nothing to do with either Dayananda or Hinduism. Few responses engaged with the word 'all' in the question in a critical way. Those that did suggested that Dayananda was more successful in addressing women's rights than in dealing with caste discrimination, or suggested that things were not improved since the problems still exist. The best responses considered the geographical reach of Dayananda and that his influence was greater in urban rather than rural areas, or discussed the ongoing work of the Arya Samaj. A large number of candidates knew what concerned the reformers but had a limited knowledge of what they did or how this was achieved, claiming, for example, that Dayananda simply 'banned' child marriage and caste discrimination, as if it was within the power of a single individual with no political position to do such things. This is unfortunate, since the extent to which circumstances permitted him to achieve his goals would have been one way of engaging critically with the question.

### Question 11

Candidates had a detailed knowledge of the life of Ramakrishna and most gave very detailed accounts. The weakness for most candidates was a lack of selection that would have showed an understanding of the question. A disappointing number of candidates wrote an 'all I know about Ramakrishna' style answer which included his experiences of Christian and Islamic deity but did not address the question and so tended to be limited to a maximum of Band D. Where candidates did select and give an account of Ramakrishna's religious experience and his teaching about the unity of all religions, such as the different names for water and the parable of the blind men and the elephants, their responses tended to be descriptive and narrative. Responses that attempted to critically engage with the question and address the issue of the centrality of this idea in Ramakrishna's thought were rare. Those that did were able to achieve Band B or A and tended to argue that Ramakrishna's ideas about the equality and/or divinity of women and the irrelevance of caste were more important.

## Question 12

This was not a popular question and candidates who attempted this question tended not to answer it well. Most gave a generic, narrative account of the lives and work of two or more of the reformers and some concluded that they had been more or less successful. Most ignored the question completely. Those that did attempt to engage with the question tended to discuss the collaboration of Rammohan Roy with the British Governor in order to bring about the abolition of Sati. Some also spoke about the Raj and the way in which Gandhi interacted with the British government. Again, however, this was included in the narrative rather than being subjected to critical assessment or judgement. The majority of candidates made no reference at all to the political background of the reformers; this tended to limit their answers to Band E or D. Candidates who also attempted **Question 10** (which was most of them) wrote a very similar response to the one they had written for **Question 10** although the questions were very different and a response that achieved a Band C or B at **Question 10** would achieve much less for **Question 12**.

Throughout this section, but in **Question 12** in particular, candidates lacked a good understanding of the unique features of the different reformers. They had very different approaches and beliefs to each other, and candidates had a tendency to group Dayananda and Rammohan Roy together as if they had no significant differences. Their beliefs about education and the status of the Upanishads in particular was very different and candidates should be able to critically discuss these differences in order to attain the highest bands.