

HINDUISM

Paper 2055/01

Paper 1

General Comments

Questions 1, 2, 7, 8 and 10 were quite popular among candidates. Candidates achieved best when they were able to use the information they have learnt and apply it to the demand of the questions set. It is best for candidates to avoid lengthy biographical details, mythological accounts, and use of narratives. Those demonstrating knowledge of relevant information, the use of argumentative and analytical skills and the application with evidence of understanding reasonably expected from an O level student were highly rewarded.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

This was the most popular question in this section. The texts were well mastered and, in some scripts, quite stunningly elaborated.

- (a) Part (a) was competently answered by a large majority of candidates. Most candidates narrated quite well the story of the gods put at test by the spirit (Yaksha). The transition from utter arrogance to utter humility was well worded. Commendable answers came from a large number of candidates who, while avoiding simple narratives, coherently addressed the question by mentioning how Indra was the first of the great gods to learn about the spirit.
- (b) The personality of Uma was generally well explained. Those candidates achieving highest marks had successfully explained the meeting of Indra with Uma. Some candidates were able to show how the latter dispelled the ignorance of Indra by revealing the Nature of Brahman. The inherent 'moral dimension' was dealt with quite competently. Excellent answers came from those candidates who were able to analyse the nature of Brahman by referring to the Advaita Philosophy.

Question 2

This question was also very popular among candidates. Most of them, while identifying some of the forms of Bhakti, were quite successful in showing their familiarity with the story of Rama's meeting with Shabri in the set text. They seemed to be better informed of Tulsidas' stand that even an uneducated woman with no social standing could also become God's dearest devotee through sincere Bhakti, irrespective of gender, caste, creed and colour. The best responses demonstrated understanding of the significant message of Rama's meeting with Shabri and successfully analysed the concept of Bhakti by referring to the Navdha Bhakti in acceptable detail.

Question 3

Only a few candidates attempted this question. Most of the answers showed a fair understanding of the text. The specific details required by the question were not fully explored. Some candidates wrote essays on the confusion of Arjuna and about his adversaries on the battlefield. Some time was wasted writing irrelevant material by describing the story of the Mahabharata and the ensuing battle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. Very few candidates were able to treat the question in a focused manner, though some were able to highlight the superiority of action over inaction in accordance with one's own swadharma. The best responses showed evidence of their understanding of Krishna's teaching that he himself never ceases to

work and that only selfless action leads to Moksha. By distinguishing these two types of actions (Nishkama and Sakama), some candidates were able to score well in this question.

Section B

Question 4

Some candidates did rather well as they were able to expound the spiritual importance and the philosophical relevance of Lord Ganesha. Stronger responses were able to give a better interpretation of the deity. Those who disagreed with the quotation argued that devotion was also given to Ganesha without any vested motive. Others hinted at his importance in the different events such as examinations, business, marriage and community involvement (Ganesh Chaturthi).

Question 5

A fair number of candidates showed their familiarity with most of the details associated with the festival. Some showed a good understanding of the stories, the legends and the cultural implications associated with the festival. Those earning the highest marks addressed the philosophical, the religious and the spiritual significance of the festival allied to the sense of self-sacrifice. The carrying of 'Kanwars' during the pilgrimage and the keeping of fast before, during and after the festival were well explained. Those who scored the highest marks attempted to mention that Mahashivatri reminded devotees of their annual renewal of vows.

Question 6

Among those who attempted this question were some who did not focus on the essence of the question. Most candidates dealt with the popularity of Lord Rama in the Hindu tradition or narrated his life story together with the legends associated with him. The significance and purpose of Lord Rama as an Avatara were not properly dealt with by many. Some candidates wrote extensively about the ten Avatars of Vishnu without really answering the question set. However, better responses explored the idealistic personality of Lord Rama as an ideal ruler, ideal brother, ideal son and an ideal husband. They could clearly project Rama as both God and an ideal human being in all his relationships.

Section C

Question 7

A few candidates displayed good knowledge of the Purusharthas and aptly discussed the nature of Dharma, its characteristics and its significance in a reasonable way. The answers, however, lacked relevant information on Dharma as the only goal a Hindu needs to strive for. Some candidates discussed some elementary views of Artha and Kama, without really showing how these two can be realised if properly dictated by Dharma. Better responses addressed the word 'discuss' and strived to justify how Artha is the aim of a householder and how Artha is used for the welfare of the whole family at the different stages of life. But very few candidates could discuss its ensuing economic wellbeing. It is worth remembering that, in order to sanctify life, Artha has to be always utilised in relation to Dharma by honest means. Some very commendable answers showed a sustained disagreement within the discussion about how Purusharthas are realisable goals.

Question 8

- (a) The first part of the question was well answered by most candidates. They could give satisfactory evidence of their knowledge about the traditional duties of the Grihastha Ashrama. There were some excellent answers with interesting views on the concept of Ardhangini, the two objectives of the Grihasthi (Kama & Artha), the three Rinas and the Panch MahaYajnas.
- (b) The arguments put forward in this part by some candidates were quite interesting. However, the principles, the ethics and the ideologies associated with the 'Grihastha Ashrama' in the modern context were missing. A majority of candidates managed to write about how the householder's stage of life is still valid today, though there were some disagreements in relation to the increased rate of divorce cases. The best responses mentioned how the other three Ashramas largely depend on the householder and the place of charitable works in the institution of the family.

Question 9

This question was the least attempted by candidates. Those who did write in a narrative way about the samskaras prescribed in the syllabus. They missed out reasoned arguments for and against the retention of traditional practices. There were excellent answers which referred to some statements in agreement and disagreement about the necessity for Hindus to observe the traditional samskaras. Candidates could have achieved better if the idea of 'Twice-born' were properly interpreted by showing the privileges of the sacred thread and their ability to read scriptures. In summary, the samskaras were not democratic ceremonies available to all Hindus.

Section D

Question 10

- (a) In this part, most candidates did not go further than the simple biographical narration of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Though a brief description of his youthful experiences and his different divine experiences of Mother Kali were required, most candidates wrote the full story.
- (b) Some candidates missed the focus of this question. Good responses did justice to it by mentioning how Ramakrishna Paramahansa was known to be a devout (saintly) person and how his Godly approach attracted many contemporaneous people. Very few answers dwelt upon how Swami Vivekananda, as Ramakrishna Paramahansa's most sincere follower, was able to propagate his teachings in his public addresses and in print. Sporadic mention was made about the way Swami Vivekananda carried the legacy by the founding of the Ramakrishna Mission, having as its aims social service, education and religious activities.

Question 11

This was the least popular question. Those who answered it listed the ten principles of the Arya Samaj and sometimes ignored any comparison with the Brahmo Samaj. Better responses showed an accurate knowledge of the founding and principles of both the Arya Samaj and the Brahmo Samaj and then discussed briefly the foremost social reforms of both. Some candidates were able to show how the Arya Samaj was more widely accepted through its educational reform, while at the same time still contributing much to the advancement of modern society. Few candidates were able to show how the Brahmo Samaj, which was less popular due to its Western influence, had minimised religious activities.

Question 12

This was not a popular choice. Those who did answer it tended to ignore the fact that the word 'reformers' was plural. They referred to all the reforms of Raja Rammohan Roy rather than focusing on the abolition of sati. Some scripts showed a high degree of confusion about the other reformers.

If candidates had discussed the reformers' efforts to relieve the social problems that were caused by gender inequalities, they would have improved their responses. Very few could hint at the practice in which Hindu widows were burnt alive on the pyres of their husbands as against a religious rite to attain liberation. This question required the work of at least two of the reformers but most answers were limited to one.