

HINDUISM

Paper 2055/01

Paper 1

A significant number of candidates chose more than two questions from each section this year. It was also noted that some candidates started an essay, only to strike it out and then appear to run out of time. Choosing the correct number of questions to answer is important. Reproduction of class notes or materials learned by heart is not a fruitful strategy in this examination, candidates need to be able to adapt the information that they have learnt so that it becomes relevant in their response to the questions set.

Candidates should also be able to:

- (1) Avoid lengthy biographical details, mythological accounts, and avoid using a narrative style.
- (2) Master prescribed thematic issues.
- (3) Show evidence of analytical thinking in their answers and not restrict themselves to narrative accounts.

Scripts demonstrating knowledge of relevant information, evidence of understanding and analytical skills gain the higher levels. Candidates also need to write clearly and the writing needs to be legible.

Section A

Question 1

Material from the set texts was used well and, in some scripts, quite strikingly. Candidates using a narrative-style could have obtained the higher levels if they had shown understanding of what an allegory is and why the story is called an allegory. The personality of Uma was written about very well in some scripts. Many candidates successfully pointed to the conceit of the gods and the importance of discrimination. Good levels for such a question are obtained once candidates identify the needs/key issues in the question: "What is this spirit?" and "What is an allegory?" and dwell on the importance of the philosophy of the Upanishads.

Question 2

- (a) This was the most popular question of this section. Candidates demonstrated their knowledge of the Chandogya Upanishad well. Most candidates appeared familiar with the themes, key issues and stories of this Upanishad. The story-part was excellent. In some scripts the 'concept of jnana' was reasonably discussed, although some clearer points needed to be brought. Candidates needed to describe Svetaketu's training as a Brahmin well in order to achieve the higher levels.
- (b) Candidates needed to focus on the key/essential philosophical views of the Chandogya Upanishad such as the nature of the Self, the subtle essence of one's existence, Oneness vis-à-vis Multiplicity and the place of 'That is thou' in order to achieve the higher levels.

Question 3

As in the first two questions, the story and the narrative and the setting were of a good standard. The concept of bhakti was dealt with reasonably in some scripts. The answers showed some good understanding of the devotional views of Tulsidas. It was significant to observe that the nine forms of devotion were discussed well. Many candidates also referred to the views of Tulsidas on equality, easy accessibility to divinity as well as the better opportunities through devotional practices.

Section B

Question 4

- (a) Some candidates discussed the nature of avatara in terms of the bodily manifestations of Vishnu well. References to the Bhagavad Gita and other texts which discuss the idea of descent of God were appropriately made. The importance of the avatara was discussed well.
- (b) In this part, candidates did not perform as well as in part (a). Candidates portrayed Krishna in a general way rather than focusing on the 'significance of Krishna as the flute-player.' The flute is perhaps a unique feature of Krishna's personality and has a significant place to play in Krishna's divinity.

Question 5

Diwali is a very popular festival celebrated by all Hindus. Candidates were familiar with most of the details associated with it. Scripts showed good understanding of the stories, legends and cultural issues associated with the festival.

Question 6

Candidates had scope to write at length, describing the differences in the way the two gods are basically portrayed in images. They had to refer to the qualities for which they are worshipped. There were some good answers, but a balanced view was needed for such a question. Ideas associated with the worship of both; their popularity and similar views were good. Most answers displayed good narratives but direct engagement with the question was missing. Candidates could have included some of the following: both gods being part of Shiva's family; the complementary qualities of each god; devotional attitudes; and the popularity of one compared to the other.

Section C

Question 7

At the outset, the question asks for a discussion of the place of artha as one of the four purusharthas for any Hindu. Some elementary views of artha were discussed, by some candidates, without focusing on the question itself. Candidates gave a general view of artha without dwelling in depth on the place and use of artha in one's life. Candidates could have included that artha is earned only in the stage of the householder and that artha is used for the welfare of the family, economic well-being and wealth has to be always used in connection with Dharma and honest means to be blessed in life.

Question 8

- (a) The first part of the question attracted better responses with most candidates giving satisfactory evidence of knowing about the importance of childhood samskaras. They wrote about the two popular samskaras; Namakarana and Mundana. Candidates need to refer to the performance of samskaras as 'adherence' to long-established customs, continuity of tradition and the upholding of social customs binding the community together.
- (b) Many answers showed a basic understanding of the Brahmacharya ashrama. Good candidates gave correct information regarding the life-style in the Brahmacharya ashrama. Candidates also raised the ethical issues of modern candidates and tried to explain the necessity of Brahmacharya ashrama today. In addition to that, candidates could have referred to the hard-work, state of celibacy, dedication to study and that the Brahmacharya stage 'is a moral preparation for adult life as a householder.'

Question 9

Candidates could have used their knowledge of **Section D** to apply to this question. Most candidates gave a summary of the varna dharma. Some candidates discussed the arguments for and against the division of society. Some candidates referred to the origin of varna. The arguments in favour of varna, could have included that varna ensures stability, a respected place in society while valid points against it could have been it places restrictions to be able to mix socially, worship and marriage.

Section D

Question 10

To answer this question candidates needed to be able to analyse Gandhi's teachings, thoughts and ideas not just describe his life experiences and the influence of his parents. Those who wrote on truth or ahimsa gave basic information without engaging with the question, M.K. Gandhi as 'the greatest reformer.' Candidates could have used their knowledge of truth and ahimsa, showing that all his actions were based on these beliefs. A comparative study with other reformers was necessary. Gandhi's legal education, broad vision and the state of affairs of the period he lived in, which all contributed to make him acquire greater influence world-wide, could have all been included in an answer to this question.

Question 11

In this question, most candidates did not go beyond simple biographical observations. They could have used knowledge of Ramakrishna Paramahansa's life to explore the relevance of his early years of seeking God within Hinduism and different religious traditions to show how all these shaped his visions of life and spirituality. An important point would be that in contrast to all his contemporaries, he did not seek anything politically. Later, the Ramakrishna Mission carried his legacy through social service, education and religious activities.

Question 12

- (a) Answers for part (a) gave the impression of better organisation, although candidates needed more than just narration. The question asked for 'WHY', but the responses were more of a description of his work without focusing on the key reasons for the foundation of Arya Samaj. For example, reference to 'Back to the Vedas', the social and religious conditions prevailing during that time, could have been discussed.
- (b) For part (b) candidates referred to some reforms but not to all of them. For this question, the basic requirements for a good answer were the efforts to relieve social problems caused by caste, the problems of untouchables, gender inequalities, inaccessibility to education, and reforms to ensure public health.