

# HINDUISM

Paper 9014/01

Paper 1

## General comments

All Examiners noted a significant and encouraging improvement in overall performance, mainly the result of candidates getting to the heart of the question quickly, rather than writing the long introductions which have hampered many in past years. As is noted below, on specific questions some candidates did try to depend on copying out learned lesson notes alone, whereas taking more time to read the question, as advised on the front sheet of the paper, might have gained them considerably higher marks. One candidate even wrote an apology for not having read the question carefully at first - this was appreciated, but it is the candidate who suffers from a rushed approach to answering the question: there is often no time left to put things right.

Shorter and better organised answers, therefore, were often a pleasure to read, particularly as there is evidence that some candidates are now doing some real research on the topics studied, possibly reading more material independently. When access to so much background information on the Internet is available, sources of extra material should be fairly straightforward to find. The number of candidates who performed poorly because they depended on O Level notes was greatly reduced - again a most encouraging sign.

English and presentation continued to maintain a good standard, but many candidates could have saved valuable time by not writing out the question. Verbosity was slightly less of a flaw than last year, but little attention has been paid to the advice to candidates to avoid unnecessary words:

- **Linking words** such as 'hence' and 'therefore' are difficult to use well - it is better to omit them;
- **Sequencing words** such as 'moreover', 'to conclude', etc. can also be dispensed with. Examiners can see that a candidate is making a new point or writing a final paragraph;
- **Expressive words** such as 'indeed' are not required.

Candidates should practise cutting out superfluous words, leaving more time for material that gains marks.

Despite noting clear and commendable signs of improvement and genuine engagement with the syllabus topics in the examination as a whole, all Examiners complained once more about two things that wasted a great deal of their time:

- **Careless numbering of questions** on scripts: many failed to number their questions **legibly and accurately**. Many never numbered their answers in the left margin of each page.
- **Failure to use the grid on the front sheet**: the clear directive to use the grid **to identify the questions answered** was, once again, ignored by more than 99% of candidates. All Centres **must make this requirement clear to both candidates and invigilators**. Only answers which are correctly numbered can be awarded marks.

## Comments on specific questions

### *Section A*

#### **Question 1**

It was pleasing to see that many more had prepared for a question on the Vedic gods than in past years. There were some thoughtful and well-informed answers, showing familiarity with the mythology and traditions surrounding Indra as well as the ability to engage with the title 'Lord of the gods' (which involved being able to discuss Indra's place in the pantheon and the terms in which he is addressed in Vedic hymns).

#### **Question 2**

Some answers were rather 'general' although the candidates obviously knew about the text of the Nasadiya Sukta. In questions involving a set text, however, it is only possible to gain good marks if there is close reference to the words and ideas studied. Saying that the verses in question are 'beautiful' or 'profound' or

'remarkable' is in essence only repeating the question. There were many very good answers from candidates who had obviously studied the text closely and could in that way capture 'religious' awe as well as his scientific fascination with the created universe. Comparison with other myths or ideas (from Hinduism and/or other religious traditions) was not irrelevant here, and candidates introduced it to good effect.

### Question 3

A popular question. Most candidates managed to avoid the time-wasting elements of 'telling the story' and/or explaining what Upanishads are. Yama's advice to Naciketas was in general well understood, although only the better candidates paid attention to the 'difficulty' of the path to liberation, as mentioned in the quotation. (Here it could be noted that often poorer candidates claim that religious texts provide an 'easy' guide to liberation or goodness or happiness, whereas in every religion saints and sages have testified to the difficulties and disciplines involved.)

### Section B

#### Question 4

This question on 'the demands of dharma' was quite well done by many, and showed that candidates were often able to produce well-reasoned commentary on the Mahabharata narratives. Weaker answers tended to regard the actions of Duryodhana and Draupadi as illustrating totally opposed poles on the moral spectrum, however. A case could be made, and was hinted at by some candidates, that the two both had strengths and weaknesses like all human beings and that, for example, Duryodhana at least went some way to fulfilling his dharma as a brave Kshatriya.

#### Question 5

There were some very interesting and thoughtful answers to this popular question. Good marks could be obtained by concentrating on Krishna as a moral teacher (as long as some comparison was made with Rama in this respect), or by a straight comparison of Krishna devotion with Rama devotion in Hinduism at different times and in different places. Both approaches produced some excellent responses. Weaker answers tended just to contain all the candidate knew about Krishna without context or comment.

#### Question 6

Weaker candidates managed to gain some valuable marks in this question by knowing the Ramayana stories of Sita, Lakshmana and Bharata and relating the moral virtues of these characters to the good qualities required of people today. Unfortunately the same group of weaker candidates often over-stated their case by painting a picture of modern urban and family life as corrupt from top to bottom, awash with selfishness, corruption and crime and without a single saving grace. This uncritical approach did candidates no favours, ignoring as it did the support of families, friends and communities which must be there to enable any candidate today to be in higher education in the first place.

### Section C

#### Question 7

Although, it appears, not a topic widely studied, the Alvars and their influence produce some first-rate responses from candidates who have put a lot of work into this topic. This year again, some excellent essays were seen. Study is required, however. Reading one paragraph in an introductory book or set of notes is not sufficient preparation.

#### Question 8

This was not a popular question, and response to it was in general rather poor. Details of Tulsidasa's life were not irrelevant, but, if used, they should have been used to illustrate his poetic aims and passionate devotion to Rama. What this important sage and poet thought about his own creative work is vital to an understanding of it, but few candidates seemed to be prepared to discuss this, even in the simplest terms. The idea that what Tulsidasa was taking enormous pains to present in verse would divide public opinion is not essentially a difficult one, but few candidates appear to have read the question properly or to have had sufficient material to answer it.

**Question 9**

This was the most popular question in Section C. Answers were usually good or excellent. The weaker answers were those which paid less attention to the question and contained few or no actual references to any specific works of Surdas or illustrations from the poems themselves. Reference to specific forms of devotion to Krishna was relevant, but some candidates had obviously learned these without reading any of the poetry. GCE candidates are expected to have some familiarity with examples of the poet's work.

**Section D****Question 10**

Response to this question was significantly better than to similar questions in previous years - a huge improvement. Many candidates were not only equipped with relevant information about Roy's life and work, but were able to use this material to discuss the topic effectively. 'How far ...?' questions have no 'correct' answer - it is a matter of making a case on the basis of evidence given. Some tended to ignore this part or just write one sentence - few marks can be given for this, whereas a candidate who makes a good attempt at reasoning can do very well. (It is worth reiterating every year that, in this Section, the candidate should have no fear of disagreeing with any Examiner's personal opinion.) A common weakness in poorer answers to all questions in this Section was the assertion that the reformer in question had solved certain social problems totally and in perpetuity. More thoughtful candidates were able to give a more realistic picture.

**Question 11**

There were some good answers here also, showing candidates' ability to extrapolate relevant information on 'caste and untouchability' from their lessons on the reformers. (Paragraphs on other aspects, such as attitudes to women in society, should not have appeared, as they could gain no marks.) Practice in *selecting* relevant information for such questions is, therefore, vital. Once again the weaker responses were those which lacked factual information and/or concluded that Hindu society worldwide is currently a paradise of equality and human rights. At one touch they could find much evidence on the Internet to the contrary.

**Question 12**

As noted above the pleasing improvement in response to a 'reformers' question was also seen in answers to this question on Gandhi. The quotation and the question together demanded some thought, but many candidates proved equal to the challenge. There were only a few weak answers which depended solely on repeating biographical details without critical comment.

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Paper 2

## General comments

The overall performance of candidates was, as in previous years, mostly satisfactory. There were, however, signs of an improvement on the last two years in the answers to several topics and, equally pleasing, there were fewer pre-prepared answers (although that was a particular issue with answers to Questions 5 and 7). Candidates do need to think in the examination room, adapting and applying what they know to each specific question actually set on the paper – not the question they would like to have been set.

Section A: Teachers are encouraged to note that while there is a lot of potential in this part of the syllabus, candidates generally find this more philosophical section more difficult. More teaching time might need to be devoted to it.

Section B: Answers to all the questions showed fairly good understanding of the topics, but a general inability to 'discuss' effectively. This is a skills issue and needs to be addressed by (i) focused discussion in class about how to answer such questions, combined with (ii) practice of those analytical and evaluative skills to hone them.

Section C: Responses were good here, showing a good understanding of the various topics.

Section D: In contrast to answers in Section C, many responses here were very generalised, ignoring the specific question set. If an essay does not answer the question actually set, the mark awarded cannot be high.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

Most managed a reasonable response, but few produced an answer which got to the heart of the question - relying too often on the superficial view 'Sankhya is theory and Yoga is practice'.

#### **Question 2**

Most were challenged by this question, indicating a lack of awareness of the real differences between the conception of the Divine in the two Schools, although some few managed to answer the question well. This area need to be addressed through more specific teaching.

#### **Question 3**

This was a popular choice and one which enabled those with a good understanding of Sankara to do well.

#### **Question 4**

Few candidates showed a good understanding of Ramanuja's teaching on Vishista Advaita. The majority were unable to deal with this in any depth, and so could not score well.

**Section B****Question 5**

While some showed a real depth of understanding of Jainism, there were many examples of pre-prepared 'Jainism essays' which ignored any comparison with Hinduism. The 'ethical character' was not usually brought out and very few were able to consider arguments in favour of Hinduism on grounds of its ethical content.

**Question 6**

Some candidates showed a really good understanding of the importance of the Sangha. However, too many wrote in general terms about Buddhism without any reference to the Sangha. Teachers should note that those that did mention the word thought that it was a book or a system or a huge building.

**Question 7**

Few candidates discussed with real understanding the concept of the 'void' in Buddhism, in contrast to the teaching in Hinduism on the true nature of the Self as Brahman. Further, the majority of answers were a 'set formula' essay and were thus unable to comment on the contrast between the two religions.

**Section C****Question 8**

Some very good answers were seen. These showed clear understanding of Vishnu's symbolism and significance in life today.

**Question 9**

Some candidates responded well to the this question, arguing against the comment in a well-reasoned way. However, weaker candidates seemed to be diverted by the negative expressions in the questions and missed the point.

**Question 10**

Examiners were very pleased to see some extremely profound responses to this question. It was generally answered very well.

**Section D****Question 11**

Some candidates understood the reference to different interpretations of the origins of caste. It was remarkable how few candidates actually answered the question on the origins of the four varnas. Instead, most simply described the general teaching based on Purusha Sukta.

**Question 12**

This question on the purusharthas was generally well answered at different levels.

**Question 13**

There were some very well reasoned answers. Equally, however, some essays suggested that the candidates had not studied the law of karma at all.