

# HINDUISM

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Paper 8058/01

Paper 1

## Key Messages

To gain the highest marks, candidates must identify the *specific* topic given in the question. Answers which only deal with a topic in general terms cannot gain high marks, even if the information given is detailed and factually correct. Candidates must study the *specified texts* (where these are specified in the Syllabus), and not depend on information about the texts taken from general textbooks or class notes.

## General Comments

Response to the questions this year was fairly good from many candidates, and very good or excellent from some. Most candidates showed that they had read the question, but too many then ignored the question completely, or referred to it only in a final paragraph. This happened despite evidence, in many cases, that the candidate had enough knowledge to achieve much higher marks. All candidates should be encouraged to have the confidence to answer the question set. A 'direct' answer almost always scores more highly than an 'all-purpose' pre-prepared one. There are a number of candidates whose work lacks evidence of research or independent reading, and who could have made use of the wealth of information available in libraries and on the Internet. Answers to questions in **Section D** continue to be weakened by statements that a reformer 'banned', 'eradicated' or 'eliminated' certain social abuses. Such statements should be avoided. Ideal situations might have been the ultimate aim of the reformers, but to say that some problem was or has since been eradicated requires firm statistical evidence.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

There were a few excellent and well informed answers, but in general answers were rather superficial and insufficiently detailed for this level of examination. Only a few answers this year confused Varuna with Vayu, but little was known about Varuna as the lord of *ṛta*. The famous Vedic hymns to him do not appear to have been read. Work on Indra was usually better. In general, there was little attempt at development of the answer, despite the fact that the 'power struggle' between Indra and Varuna should have been studied.

#### **Question 2**

Marks for this question tended to be low, for the reason that only a small minority of candidates appear to have studied the set text. This was so even when they had learned that the text in question (Brahmacarya Sukta) is to be found in the Atharva Veda. Most of the answers asserted that the Sukta was a set of rules for the Brahmacarya Ashrama - a topic set for Paper 2. In one or two cases, there were clues that some phrases from the Sukta had been learned, but, because the Sukta itself had not been studied, the 'creative power' thrust of the question itself was not properly understood.

#### **Question 3**

This topic was quite well tackled by many candidates, who knew the text well and had a good grasp of Upanishadic teaching. The actual question was seldom referred to, however, despite the challenging suggestion that 'the gods' lacked vital knowledge on matters of life and death.

## **Section B**

### **Question 4**

As with **Question 2**, marks for this question tended to be low because many candidates had not actually studied BG Chapter 9, and depended in their answers on their knowledge of Chapters 2 and 3 with an occasional reference to 'devotion'. The few candidates who had studied this short but beautiful set text found no difficulty in gaining high marks.

### **Question 5**

Answers here tended to be well thought out and, often, sensitively argued. Knowledge of the text was good, though discussion was sometimes rather superficial, failing to grasp the idea of Yudhistira's character and actions as potentially 'instructive' for Hindus and other readers of the Mahabharata.

### **Question 6**

The narrative material and the religious concepts were generally well understood and discussed in answers to this question.

## **Section C**

### **Question 7**

A few candidates had studied the Alvars in detail, knowing their names and quoting from their works, so gaining high marks, especially if they also aimed to answer the question about the 'protest' element in their teaching. In general, candidates did know that there was Hindu opposition to Buddhist and Jain influences, which the Alvars among others were influential in encouraging.

### **Question 8**

Most answers made a reasonable attempt to engage with the question, citing Tulsidas's story-telling ability, poetic genius and depth of devotion to Rama. More could have been said about the 'popular' appeal of a Ramayana in a vernacular which made it accessible to many more Hindus than the Sanskrit versions.

### **Question 9**

Many candidates wrote out all their notes on 'modes of bhakti', without considering the main theme of the question, which was Surdasa's sense of inadequacy and the poems in which he expresses his identification of 'maya' as the source of all temptation. Candidates who had studied the poems of Surdasa did very well, however.

## **Section D**

### **Question 10**

Knowledge of Ramakrishna's life was good, although often presented as from a simplified biography, without much consideration of his influence as a moral and religious teacher. A few candidates were able to gain high marks by showing knowledge of Ramakrishna's sayings and his continuing legacy in the Ramakrishna Mission.

### **Question 11**

Although this was a popular question, marks were often lower than they might have been, owing to lack of specific knowledge of any reformer's work. In particular, there were too many erroneous assertions that the campaigns of a reformer had 'banned' or 'eradicated' some abuse, or had aimed for 'social equality'. Some thought had been given, however, to reasons why change was difficult to achieve.

**Question 12**

As with **Question 11**, basic knowledge was often shown in the answer, but candidates could not develop this into a discussion. More practice is needed in this area, so that candidates can appreciate some of the social, moral and religious complexities faced by all Indians at the time when India was, in the opinion of many, ready for independence.