

HINDUISM

Paper 2055/01

Paper 1

General Observation

The current syllabus is designed to introduce candidates to the basic concepts, themes, stories, and views of Hinduism, as well as some important philosophical features very popular in Hinduism. With a view to making candidates familiar with the history of Hinduism, the four sections give candidates opportunities to study the different issues that are significant to understand and appreciate the trends that have shaped and transformed the picture of Hinduism since the Vedic age until now. In line with the assessment objectives, questions are set to test the cognitive levels of knowledge acquired through application.

This year it has been observed that the performance of candidates has not been as good as it was last year. It has been observed that many candidates did not pay attention to the assessment objectives and paid little attention to the setting of the questions. Many relied too much on their study materials and in their answer the topic learnt was reproduced instead of focusing on the REAL issue(s) of the question.

It is noted that

- candidates are not well acquainted with the syllabus.
- for split questions, candidates tend to ignore part of the question.
- incorrect numbering of questions answered occurred in many scripts.
- in some scripts, answers were given in point form and some unnecessary illustrations were provided.
- lengthy, irrelevant introductions and background knowledge are written as part of an answer.

Teachers are advised to draw the attention of candidates to:

- Read the questions carefully before attempting to answer.
- Focus on the actual question rather than the topic learnt at School.
- Be aware of the time in order to allow enough for each question.
- Answer five questions, one from each of the four sections and one more from any section.
- Avoid losing too much time in story telling, biographical details and unnecessary details and concentrate on the actual question.

Such measures will surely help candidates to write better, consistent answers.

Section A

It has been a pleasure to note that when answering about the Upanishads and the Shri Ramacharitamans, most candidates did very well, hinting at the core views of these texts. However some candidates relied too much on the stories and other irrelevant materials. The Bhagavad Gita does not seem to attract candidates, only a few scripts were observed to have answers from the text. Bhakti is the issue on which the question was based but many wrote lengthy answers without focusing on the bhakti of the ferryman as expressed in Tulsidas's works. They gave many details which were not relevant to the question.

Quotations must be in English, if they are ever quoted in other languages, they must be explained in English.

Question 1

This was a question which enabled many candidates to score highly. However, some scripts could not reach the satisfactory standard as they lacked the relevant points. Mediocre scripts relied too much on the stories without even mentioning the key and standard views of the Upanishadic philosophy. While the question asked about only two images of the Chandogya Upanishad, some answers explored all the other images. These were not relevant to the question.

Some key points for such a question are:

- This whole universe is Brahman.
- Brahman is one without a second.
- The soul is eternal.
- That which cannot be seen is the essence of existence.
- Atman and Brahman are one.
- Knowledge is important to experience Oneness.

Question 2

This question was the least attempted question. Those who attempted this question relied more on the setting, the war rather than the actual issue. Only two verses of Chapter 2 from the Bhagavad Gita are prescribed in the syllabus, yet some answers gave an overall view of the whole chapter. However, few candidates were capable of producing relevant information and quotation.

Some relevant views that could have been useful are:

- The setting and the hesitation of Arjuna.
- The nature of nishkama karma in the Bhagavad Gita.
- The importance of gunas.
- Sacrifice and disinterested actions.
- Krishna's involvement in karma.

Question 3

Most scripts were pleasant to read with relevant materials. The focus here, for some answers, was mainly on the concept of devotion in general ignoring what Hindus can learn from the story of the ferryman specifically. As in other questions, weak candidates were unable to express themselves as they relied too much on their class-notes.

For such a question candidates may refer to:

- The ferryman's sincerity, devotion and spirit of service.
- Tulsidas's view on bhakti.
- Accessibility of God through sincere devotion.
- Rama's grace to grant liberation to any one characterised with single minded devotion.

Section B

Question 4

Although a popular question, few candidates were able to analyse the symbolism Ganesha and the significance of Ganesh Chaturthi. As in the past lengthy pages were written on the myths surrounding Ganesha, it is unnecessary to write one or two pages on such information.

Points that could have been used are:

- The significance of the physical features.
- The moral significance of Ganesha.
- The auspicious nature of His blessings.
- The different forms used to worship Him.
- He is the symbol of good luck.

Question 5

Some candidates wasted time enumerating the incarnations of Vishnu. Their attention should have been on the purpose of incarnation. Many candidates could not give an appropriate description of the qualities and potentialities of Rama as an avatara of Vishnu. The general trend was to give a summary of the Ramayana.

The second part, on Divali, was mostly descriptive, missing out the core significance of the festival.

Candidates were expected to refer to:

- The themes of joy.
- Significance of light in the festival.
- The defeat of evil and restoration of moral order.
- The universality of the festival.

Question 6

Candidates tended to give a lengthy description of the birth of Kartikeya without showing the moral and spiritual implications. Here also candidates gave some knowledge of Kartikeya from their personal experience gathered from the celebration of Cavadi in their surroundings. There were some relevant points.

An answer may have included some of these points:

- Kartikeya's warlike nature and its ethical purport.
- Kartikeya's popularity in the South of India.
- The construction of cavadi and community involvement.
- The significance of Vel.
- The devotional aspects of the festival.

Section C

This section presents to candidates the most important aspects of Hindu ethical traditions. Unfortunately, most scripts displayed only what had been studied and the actual question was not tackled. Only a few candidates were successful in giving good and relevant points to the questions.

Question 7

Selection of material was missing. Many candidates wrote about the four ashramas when they had to give their opinions on the Brahmacharya and Vanprastha and Sanyasa ashramas. Principles like nishkama karma and dharma, showing how they would lead to the development of a better individual and society, were not explored.

Some relevant points could be:

- The principles of the Brahmacharya ashrama have relevance even today.
- Its teachings on self-reliance, self-restraint, respect and other virtues are still valued today.
- Its place in shaping the personality of the child.
- Vanprastha and Sanyasa ashramas may give elderly persons safety.
- Today the setting is different with industrialization, social mobility, smaller houses and longer life.

Question 8

Few candidates were able to relate the relevance of purusharthas to the modern context. In a few excellent answers, the significance of purusharthas, their interrelationship and relevance today were elucidated.

Some good points for the question are:

- Kama and artha are intended to be sought under the control of dharma.
- Moksha is possible only when dharma is applied in life.
- Some people may bypass grihastha ashrama living an ascetic existence in a single-minded effort for liberation.

Question 9

Some candidates were unable to correlate the traditional aspects of varnas to a modern context whereby security, stability and progress would be achieved. Few examined the negative aspects of the caste system, especially jati. There was a reproduction of the class notes rather than an attempt to respond the question. There were some scripts in which interesting points were raised.

Some views relevant to the question are:

- Origins of varna.
- Place of swadharma in the traditional varna system.
- In some given circumstances it was transmitted from one generation to another.
- Varna and caste, their positive and negative arguments.
- The inappropriateness of varna in the industrialized setting.

Section D

Question 10

While many dealt extensively on the life and spiritual experiences of Ramakrishna, few were able to synthesize these experiences to his teachings on universality of religions, oneness of God (Personal and Impersonal).

They were expected to raise facts like:

- His depth of mystical experiences within and outside Hinduism.
- All religions are true.
- His influence in the life of later reformers.
- Significance of his visions.

Question 11

Many were unable to really understand the demand of the question. Reference to the actions initiated by R.M. Roy to eradicate sati was seldom made in the first part of the question, whilst in the second part the efforts of Gandhi to fight against untouchability were ignored, many relied more on the biographical issues.

Some relevant issues for a question of this nature could be:

- The efforts of R.M. Roy and the support of the British.
- Sati banned in 1829.
- Results of this campaign.
- Whether this social problem was solved instantly.
- Most reformers found caste to be anti-social.
- Abuses on the basis of caste.
- Inequalities observed because of caste.
- Reforms brought by all reformers, in particular M. Gandhi.
- Is caste still an issue in Hindu society today or it has been totally eradicated?

Question 12

This was the least popular question in this section. Few answers referred to Gandhi's concept of Truth, Non-violence, and Satyagraha as well as the means he used to oppose injustice (salt march, jail), showing his fearlessness. More answers spent time giving life sketches of Gandhi rather than discussing the question.

Selective materials for the question could have been:

- Gandhi's devotion to Truth and opposition to all kinds of injustice.
- His reforms based on speeches, writing, hunger strikes and his symbolic actions.
- His belief in *ahimsa* and passive resistance.