

HINDUISM

Paper 2055/01
Hindu Gods and Festivals

General comments

- There were very few rubric errors seen, most candidates answered one question from each section as required.
- There was little evidence of candidates running out of time.
- The most popular questions were 1, 4 and 5.
- Many candidates gave more information/wrote more than required for the point marked **parts (a)** and **(b)**; with many writing a full sentence when 1 word would gain the mark.
- Good knowledge of Hinduism is worthy of note, but this was not always applied to the question. There were many descriptive answers that did not focus on what had been asked (expansion of this in individual question sections).
- There was a lack of analysis and evaluation in the **part (d)** responses with many being blocks of knowledge presented as a view and a counter view but lacking a dialogue between the views, lacking discussion. Although many did offer a personal view, actual conclusions were rare.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

(a) (i) The vast majority of candidates answered correctly and gained the mark. Many answered with a full sentence when one word is sufficient.

(ii) Many gained the mark for correctly stating weapons, a notable amount of whom went on to exemplify, which was not needed for this response. A few candidates only gave an example which was not credited as the question asked for a type not an example.

(b) This was answered well with most responses gaining 3 marks. The most common response was the story about Ganesha using his tusk as a pen to continue writing the scripture/Mahabarata, followed by yielding to Shiva's axe, with throwing his tusk at the moon being the least common. No other stories were seen.

(c) A range of responses were seen, some which scored in the lower levels were descriptive, re-telling a story or stories without addressing what can be learned from it/them, those in the top levels used either one or more stories and linked it/them to what could be known. Most used was Shiva drinking the poison to protect humanity, showing his goodness and care for humanity.

(d) Most candidates approached this by comparing the three roles of the Trimūrti, some were very descriptive, but others contrasted the roles with the view that maintainer was more important, or that the three worked together and no single role was more important than another. Most responses were in Level 3.

Question 2

(a) (i) Most candidates gained this mark, many offered other names when only one was required.

(ii) Most candidates gained the mark, many offering more than one feature. Most common responses were six heads, spear and peacock vehicle.

- (b) Most candidates gained marks here with many giving a list of meaning, fewer developing one meaning, both were valid responses and were credited accordingly.
- (c) Most responses gave descriptive details about Durga's creation; not all linked it to her importance so scored lower marks. Some better responses were seen that were able to explain her importance both from her creation and from other aspects such as general protection and nature as a mother, Ma Durga.
- (d) Some candidates took a descriptive approach that was mainly retelling the stories, some said that they told us the attributes, others compared with murti that also communicate the attributes. Better responses addressed that the stories help us know the attributes and are more accessible. Stories from the epics and about the deities on the specification were most referenced. Most responses were in Level 3 or 2, with fewer in Level 4.

Section B

Question 3

- (a) (i) Most gained the mark, spelling was not always accurate, but credit was given where the name was recognised. Again, writing a full sentence instead of the one word was common.
- (ii) Most candidates gained the mark by giving the correct response. Again, writing a full sentence instead of the one word was common.
- (b) The most common response was to state that Rama is the perfect man, and most candidates gained some marks, although not all gained all of them. Candidates displayed good knowledge of the Ramacharitmanas and details of the story, some were purely descriptive without sufficiently suggesting how the event referenced served as an example. A significant number of candidates wrote more than what is expected for 3 marks.
- (c) Many used material from **part (b)** again, and again knowledge of the Ramacharitmanas was good, better responses linked this to why Rama is a focus for devotion, others were purely descriptive so accessed fewer marks. Many linked Rama to Vishnu and the importance for Vaishnavites and the festival of Divali.
- (d) Candidates did quite well with this question, many compared the examples of Rama through the story with the teachings of Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita. Again some more descriptive responses were seen that told the stories and recounted some teachings, presenting blocks of knowledge which did contrast, but lacked discussion and dialogue to link them. Some were able to suggest that teachings often come through the stories and so separation is not possible. Most responses were in Level 3.

Question 4

- (a) (i) Most gave the correct answer.
- (ii) Most gave the correct answer.
- (b) Good knowledge was shown here, with almost all candidates gaining 3 marks. Many gave far more detail and expansion than was required for 3 marks.
- (c) Most candidates exemplified the response with the avatars named on the syllabus, although some gave more general answers that did not reference any examples of avatars. A notable misconception was that Vishnu is the only deity with avatars.
- (d) This was well answered with good knowledge of both avatars, their stories, teachings and festivals. Those that scored lower marks were for descriptive responses that lacked discursive analysis and evaluation. Most responses were in Level 3, with fewer in Levels 2 or 4.

Section C

Question 5

- (a) Most candidates gained the 2 marks here.
- (b) Most candidates gained at least some marks, the most common response included installing clay murti, immersing water, offering sweets/gifts and worship most commonly puja. Some gave very generic responses such as 'prayer' and 'meditation' without tying them to the festival celebrations.
- (c) Most responses achieved Level 2. Candidates were able to give practical reasons for not fasting, such as age; old or young and health, along with other things that might be done to observe the festival. Some suggested that some Hindus would not fast to observe Maha Shivaratri as they might not observe this festival but rather observe others.
- (d) At the top end there were some good discussions comparing different festivals. Lower scoring responses mostly managed to give examples of festival celebrations and festival observance that involved sacrifice. Most responses were in Level 3.

Question 6

- (a) Most responses gained 2 marks. Most common responses were carrying a cavadi and piercing the skin.
- (b) The only story seen was Idumban carrying the mountains. Most responses gained full marks with accurate detail. Many wrote more than was required.
- (c) Knowledge of the role of Lakshmi in Divali was good, but many responses were descriptive focusing on how she is worshiped, such as puja and rangoli patterns, rather than why, so did not score highly. Some answers wrote about wanting good finances and prosperous new years.
- (d) Some good responses contrasted this as a newer festival with those that have longer tradition and scriptural origin. Better responses addressed diversity within Hinduism and looked at why, for example, personal deities are worshipped and the effect of geographical areas. Lower scoring responses were descriptive, stating there are other festivals more widely celebrated.

HINDUISM

Paper 2055/02
Scriptures, Ethics and Hindu Life

General Comments

Overall, most candidates showed good exam skills: there were few rubric errors and few unfinished papers.

Many candidates wrote at greater length and/or in greater depth than was required for the points-marked **(a)** and **(b) part** questions, for example giving full descriptions when the command word was 'Name' or 'Give'. This is indicative of a good level of knowledge of Hinduism; this was evident throughout but application of that knowledge to the specific question asked was less common, with responses often constituting a description of the full topic area rather than addressing the specific element that was required for the focus of the explanation or discussion. Analysis/evaluation was somewhat limited with the **(d) part** responses, with a lot of relevant knowledge set out and, for the most part, organised into two opposing views on the issue. This is the beginning of discussion but a full response meeting the requirements of the higher levels requires some reflection on or dialogue between these different views, along with a conclusion.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This was the less popular choice in this section with **1(b)** and **1(c)** tending to be less thoroughly answered.

- (a)** Most candidates gave two correct responses; washing Rama's feet and offering him fruit were the most common, but a variety of examples was seen.
- (b)** While most candidates choosing this question did attempt a response very few gained all available marks. Some described the concept of jnana without relating it to the text and some described the content of the text without explicitly relating it to jnana. Some responses gave an explicit, focused answer to the question asked.
- (c)** Similar to part **(b)** above candidates choosing this question were familiar in broad terms with the content of the relevant piece of text but found the concept of 'the nature of the self' more challenging. Responses were often quite vague and generalised rather than Hinduism specific.
- (d)** This question gave rise to some good responses with most candidates considering areas like the age of the texts, translation issues and the connections between specific Upanishads and traditions of Hinduism to demonstrate the existence of various approaches to the texts. Fewer dealt explicitly with ambiguities of meaning in the contents of the texts themselves but those who did so did it well.

Question 2

- (a) (i)** Almost all candidates gave correct responses to this, using one of a variety of acceptable terms to indicate a wise or holy person.
- (ii)** Again, almost all responses to this were correct; most candidates said Hanuman's true form is a monkey while a minority used the term Vanar/Vanara. Both were credited.
- (b)** This question asked explicitly about the first meeting between Rama and Hanuman and so qualities Rama praised later in the story were not creditable responses. A noticeable minority of responses gave general descriptions of Hanuman's nature and so did not gain all the available marks.

- (c) Most candidates understood that karma was relevant to this question and so gave broad accounts of the law of karma and/or of the karma marga. References to the text and how the dialogue gave rise to such teachings was less common. Explicit explanation of the link between 'action' (the term in the question) and the concept of karma were very rarely seen.
- (d) Responses to this question were often one-sided and some seemed to regard the stimulus statement as a truism.

Section B

There was not a clear preference for **Question 3** or **4** across the entry; fairly even numbers of candidates chose each.

Question 3

- (a)(i) Most candidates gave a correct response.
- (ii) Almost all candidates who gained the mark for (i) also gained this mark; some who did not give creditable responses for (i) did manage to gain the mark for (ii).
- (b) While a few candidates confused kama with karma and a similar number mixed up artha and kama most candidates choosing this question did correctly define the term. The more common error was to give a general description covering all four purusharthas.
- (c) Not all responses correctly identified the upanayana samskara as the sacred thread ceremony, but most did at least understand samskaras as a rite of passage and were able to offer a generic response about the importance of this concept in Hinduism; these responses did gain some of the available marks.
- (d) This was another (d) part that led to one-sided and descriptive responses. Many took the form of observing that it was clear Hindus did have to go through them and justifying this by listing all the possible samskaras known about. Very few responses suggested that any of these might be a matter of choice or identified that different life-courses do not necessarily pass through all the ashramas and that therefore the associated rites might not be needed.

Question 4

- (a) (i) While most responses did gain this mark a few gave 'Dalits' or 'untouchables' as their response; as noted in the mark scheme this could not be credited as, by definition, those groups are not varnas.
- (ii) Most candidates gained the mark for this, giving a general response relating to service or unskilled labour.
- (b) This question was well answered by most with many responses going into far greater detail than required for the available marks.
- (c) This question seemed challenging for some with responses saying only that this aim is forbidden for students. However many took a thoughtful approach, contrasting the purpose of the brahmacharya ashrama, for the individual and/or for wider society, with that of the grihastha ashrama in order to explain the inappropriateness of artha for the former. Others took a practical focus, explaining how a student's needs are met without need for them to accumulate their own wealth. This approach led to creditable responses, but it also highlighted an assumption that a student in a secular society living with their parents is the same as a brahmacharya, which suggests a limited understanding of the Hindu concept.
- (d) Responses to this question often began with descriptions of how all the ashramas are linked together, which sometimes led away from a discussion of the specific stimulus.

Section C

Question 5

This was the more popular question in this section.

(a) (i) Almost all responses to this question gave Ramakrishna as the answer; other correct responses would have been creditable but very few were seen.

(ii) Most candidates who gained the mark for (a)(i) also gained this mark.

(b) For the most part this question was answered in general terms relating to equality and tolerance; this was creditable but often not sufficiently developed to gain all the available marks. Specific aspects of Gandhi's work and teachings on other religions were not often seen.

(c) While most responses went into substantial detail about events from Gandhi's life the vast majority of the material was based on things that happened to him/things that he did after his marriage and so could not contribute to the mark for the question. A substantial number of responses made no reference of any kind to his marriage.

(d) A degree of confusion in terms of what texts are parts of the Vedas and/or in how the different parts of Vedic literature relate to one another was noticeable in many responses to this question. This confusion was sometimes in the form of categorising non-Vedic texts as Vedic and sometimes the opposite but a lack of clear understanding of what constitutes the corpus of Vedic writings was clear throughout. The arguments made were generally relevant, but this confusion impacted on how well they were supported and justified.

Question 6

(a) Most candidates gave two correct responses; Christianity and Islam were the most common responses given.

(b) This was a poorly answered question; in most cases answers consisted of summarising the general facts around the meetings with no reference to either party influencing the other. A few responses suggested that they had some values in common but did not often expand beyond that.

(c) Similar to part (b) above this question seemed to lead to some confusion. The confusion about what constitutes the Vedas which was noted in responses to 5(d) also appeared in responses to this question, although in less depth. Most responses took the form of saying that the Vedas are Hinduism and so following them was the obvious course for a Hindu reformer; explanatory development of this was limited for the most part.

(d) Many responses to this question did not address the stimulus but instead discussed whether it is a good thing to support/defend/promote women's rights. Most candidates justified agreeing that it is with declarations about the equality of men and women and then challenging it with historical and sociological information about gender-based inequalities. There was usually relevant material included but the lack of clear focus on the stimulus given impacted on the quality of the discussion.