

Examiners' Report
June 2016

GCE Religious Studies 6RS04 1F

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Introduction

At Standardisation meetings examiners considered three important documents for assessment and marking. First, the General Marking Guidance document sets out the policy of positive marking. Secondly, The Generic Mark Scheme divides each level across both AO1 and AO2 into 3 sublevels and this is helpful to achieve precise marking. Finally, the Indicative Mark Scheme is not intended to be prescriptive but to indicate possible legitimate ways of answering a question. The teams of examiners, by adopting these policies, have a broad and detailed understanding of the assessment process.

There are two fundamental principles for examining this paper based on the assessment objectives:

- One is that in AO1 it is essential to examine the text, noting there are various ways of achieving this.
- Two is that in AO2 it is essential to answer the full demands of this evaluative objective. This includes: 'Do you agree with the idea(s); justify your point of view and discuss its implications for understanding religion and human experience'.

Most of the religions in this unit used Ninian Smart's source on the dimensions of religion, including the ritual dimension. This source in the unit 6RS04 anthologies provides a context to the study of religion and illustrates a method used within religious studies.

Question 1

Good practice regarding AO1:

- Some candidates showed evidence of a systematic focus on the passage, noting that this may be achieved via a variety of methods.
- Candidates focused on yoga with the ultimate aim of attaining higher states of consciousness.
- It was important to show an understanding of terms such as yoga, moksha, samsara and dharma.
- The better quality scripts highlighted the significance of the place of ritual in Smart's dimensional analysis of religion, and how this is illustrated across Hinduism.
- Some examined the distinction between pragmatic ritual compared to sacred ritual.
- Good practice displayed the role of ritual across a range of Hindu traditions.
- Candidates presented synoptic links to the source as a whole, and to related anthologies and to links in other units such as 6RS03
- Some made helpful references the Gita and to some Upanishads.

Good practice in AO2:

- The best answers in part (b) struck a balance between insightful personal engagement with a critical analysis of the implications for understanding religion and human experience.
- There were some excellent answers with sound arguments and thoughtful discussions on this example of a phenomenological approach to the study of religion.
- There were interesting discussions based on Smart's ideas about issues regarding definitions of religion.

Areas for improvement for AO1:

- A number of candidates paid scant attention to the passage. An examination of the passage is essential, noting that there are various different methods of achieving this. However, to evade the passage is very poor practice.
- Some presented a mere comprehension of the passage with little, if any, analysis or comments on significant points.
- Some mentioned a few scholars but at this level there was limited understanding of their contributions.

Areas for improvements for AO2:

- Some answers did little more than express an opinion, making sweeping claims, without supporting justifications with the ideas of scholars.
- More attention could have been given to alternative views of a topic and this is one of the criteria of Level 4.
- There was a limited ability to comprehend the implications for religion and human experience.

The two scripts below received full marks:

- the first one was a fine example of a well-structured analysis of the passage. The candidate made effective use of a range of scholars and various Hindu schools/traditions, coupled with a very good understanding of terms and concepts. AO2 displayed very good levels of debate and argument, using Hindu texts and drawing on a range of traditions.

- the second displayed a very good understanding of the Smart source with a focus on ritual. There was excellent material on yoga related to the question using a synoptic approach. The evaluative part was well controlled in its focus on ritual with commendable breadth and ability to argue for a point of view.

The passage begins by stating that the 'purpose of religious buildings' are for 'ritual or ceremonial purposes' and that ~~ritual~~ religion 'expresses itself through such rituals'. We can understand religious buildings as churches, synagogues and mosques that act as establishments with the purpose of worshipping God, in this case. ^{via a plethora of means} However one ^{which} may translate the word religious as ~~deen~~ ^{we will examine} (Arabic) which means 'way of life' and thus religious buildings ~~bear a much more to~~ ~~stressful~~ ~~sim.~~ play a significant role for religious people in their development.

Islam is derived from the root word peace and ~~also means~~ submission. One can critically analyse this to state that to attain peace within oneself one must submit themselves to God, which is the essence of Islam as is mentioned in the Quran "I have created jinn and mankind only to worship me." From this we may infer that ~~to~~ the purpose of 'such rituals' is to attain closeness to God, to develop God consciousness (taqwa) through, as the article suggests practices (amal). One may thus deduce that the higher morals

behind ritualism play a significant role when discussing the ritual dimensions of religion. Hamza Yusuf writes in his book that Islam aims for Muslims to attain a sound heart (qalb-un-saleem) and a "sound heart is seen to be free from character defects and spiritual blemishes". To achieve a sound heart Muslims actions (amal) must be 'co-ordinated with pure 'inner intentions' as the article puts forward. Without intent for righteous intention (niyyah) before beginning a ritual, the ritual becomes 'merely an empty shell' and may be described as 'ritualistic'.

One can further analyse this by analysing the most significant ritual of Muslims which according to Islamic teachings should dominate their lives (hayyat), this is the ritual of organised prayer (salah) which is obligatory (wajib) for Muslims five times a day. In which certain actions are carried out such as prostration (sujood) whilst reciting words of praise to God 'Glory be to Allah' (Subhan Allah)

as well as Quranic chapters 'Say: There is one God' (112:1). It may be communicated that ~~Islam~~ Allah command Muslims to perform such rituals as a source of discipline because 'God is the ultimate concern, if one remains his concern, he will ~~substitute it with~~ need to^a substitution. This is the nature (Fitra) of man' (Alchemy of Happiness - Hamza Yusuf) which depicts that Muslims aim to make God the most significant factor in their lives so much so that their 'extra' religious activities are focused around the five daily prayers. This highlights the impotence of Ta'need (neediness of God) and how the ritual dimension aims to remind Muslims of their duty because Allah says 'Remember me and I will remember you'.

Other rituals include fasting in the month of Ramadhan which according to Imam Anazeli constitutes of 3 levels; ordinary, special and extra special all aiming to become embraced with the feeling of knowing Allah.

When one undertakes such rituals the
critic suggests that they are connecting
with an 'invisible world' which Muslims
would refer to as the 'Unseen' that
comprises of Heaven (Jannah), Hell
(Jahannam) and the world of the
Angels (Maujikat) and Jinns (souls
like us). It is this connection with
the invisible world that sects such
as Sufis heighten, ~~they~~ Sufis
Sufis embrace 'Theosophy' and integrate
spirituality with philosophy to reach a
close state (haal) to God. They
do this through rituals such as the
'Whirling dance' that they believe
~~takes them~~ progresses them on the
spiritual levels (maqam) the penultimate
maqam being 'fana' which is being
at one with God. This could lead to
problems arising for main stream
Muslims as it may be associated
with Shirk an unforgivable sin. However
well remain scholars such as Iman
Ghazali states that 'The best den
(way of life) is Sufism. Their ~~uses~~
medicines are sources of

methodologies' which supports the idea that Sufi rituals 'involve both an inner and outer aspect'. The outer aspect being that they are meticulous in their teachings and gaining of knowledge (ilm) so that they follow an authentic chain of transmission (sanaid) whilst retaining the more significant ~~out~~ inner aspect of rituals.

Another example of Islamic rituals is the lamentation ceremony of the minority Shia Muslims. Shia Muslims take part in processions all around the world especially in Kербal, Iraq, commemorating the murder of the grandson of Imam Hussain. The rituals contain the ~~beat~~ rhythmic beating of the chest (self flagellation) in remembrance of the ~~me~~ pain of Imam Hussain suffered. Kербala is the centre of the 'elaborate rituals' where plays (taziyah) re-enact what happened on the 10th of

Muharram (Ashura). The significance of such rituals may be depicted by Imam Khomeini (first spiritual leader of Iran) who states "Westerners call us a nation of tears but with those tears we have overcome an nation" which coincides with the comment the article makes about the inner and outer aspects of rituals however rather than the act degenerating the ritual, the act amplifies the call to religion according to the conservative government of Iran.

In conclusion one may critically analyse that rituals are paramount to religion and religious building, one central to such rituals. ~~however~~ is n. Also we can conclude that ~~the~~ 'ritualism' is increasingly becoming a problem for Modern day countries.

(b) The text quotes that 'religious buildings 'one used for 'ritual or ceremonial purposes' which one must agree is true however if we further evaluate this one must not be misled in believing that places of worship are any 'ritualistic' room for Muslims the masjid is also a place of socialising between brother and sisters of the Ummah (community) with the aim of creating a strong bond between Muslims because they see each other as a family unit. The Prophet states that 'The Ummah is like one body if one part is hurt, the whole body is hurt' thus the masjid is a centre for social gatherings such as Aid.

Also when may argue against the article that places of worship are seen as political centres where current affairs are discussed and the Ummah discusses the needs of the community. This may be exemplified through the Khutba (sermon) given at the end of the Friday prayer

(Salactus Jamma) that aims to raise social and political awareness among Muslims. Philosophers such as Al Farabi (Early 9th century) also implemented this as he harmonised Philosophy of religion and Philosophy of Politics in order to create a successful Islamic state. A modern example of how 'religious buildings' are being used for political means may be depicted in Iran where the Friday sermon ends with the controversial statement 'Death to America, Death to -Israel' which some may say demeans the ritual aspect of the Friday prayer. Some people Muslims and non Muslims alike are against the Theocratic state of Iran because they believe that politics and religion should not be intertwined because complications arise and religious rituals become 'instrumental' in accordance to the article suggestion. This has caused a major divide in Iran between the reformists (who

mainly constituents of the yand popu
in Iran ($\frac{2}{3}$ of population) who are
conservative who aim to hold firmly
onto the roots of their religion
(Shi'ism). Rituals such as the Tablet
ceremony where girls as young as
9 are forced to wear the chadeh
(veil) and perform Islamic rituals
have given rise to implications as
there is a lack of 'intention and
sentiment'. A young Iranian writer
Marjan Pertrapi mocks Iranian rituals
through a comic book where she
depicts the schools lining kids ~~up~~
girls up in chadeh beating their
chest monotonously. ~~It~~ She concludes that
~~the~~ the government degenerates Islamic
rituals 'into a mechanical process'
when freedom is not an option.

This one may agree with the
point the article makes about the
'outer aspect' dominating the 'inner
aspect' of such rituals which is the
most significant. This inner aspect
is 'directed to a divine being' God
as the article states. Islam ~~is~~

We may evaluate that Islam uses revelation (wahy) to communicate the importance of the divine being which Muslims perceive to be God. Islam does this through the last messenger (Khatam-un-Nabiy) who was sent 'to perfect moral character' by establishing Islam as the final religion. "Today I have completed my favor upon you and let Islam be your religion". However this gives rise to implications because some Muslims take Revelation (Tanzeel) literally and misinterpret key ethical precepts such as Jihad (the struggle) which is a well known Islamic ritual. The notion of Jihad may be separated into Greater and Lesser the Greater being the ritual of struggling against oneself whilst the latter is the militant struggle which is more dominant for some Muslims as they take 'KHI' verses such as 'Kill the disbelievers wherever they are' and 'fight them an eye for an eye' literally. This is in agreement with the article I may

evaluate that revelation can be taken out of context which degrades the ~~ritual~~ ritual and thus contrary to the article we can say that ritualism in this bad sense is important because it is affecting the world greatly today with the emergence of groups such as ISIS.

In conclusion one can critically evaluate that the article possesses ~~good~~ ^{valid} points that depicts the importance of rituals in religion specifically Islam however it has not emphasized enough on the implications of such rituals for understand ~~Isl~~ religion and human it does not evaluate the human experience that ~~is part of~~ that is related to the rituals.

a) Ninian Smart uses the phenomenological approach on the quest to explore what defines a religion. He looks at the similar features of religions and categorises them into seven dimensions of religion which constitute to the formation of a world religion. In this extract Ninian Smart specifically talks about the ritual dimension.

In the opening of the paragraph Smart asks us the question that when we think about what 'religious buildings' such as Churches and Mosques exist for, we would come to realise that they exist for the purpose of religious rituals. A ritual is something which is repeated over and over in an orderly disciplined manner, and these buildings are used for rituals which are linked to God or an 'invisible world' as he describes it. A mosque is the arabic for prostrate, which literally conveys the purpose of it which is to perform Salah or prayer. Salah is considered as a ritual because muslims are ordered to perform the prayer five times a day, everyday. The ritual dimension of religion is therefore a public or partially private.

aspect of religion. It is public as when someone goes to mosque to pray, it is observable by others, but yet the spiritual state or what the person is praying is unknown which makes it partially ~~pub~~ private.

A mosque is clearly for the purpose of performing rituals such as worship or the jummah prayer. But this doesn't however mean the purpose is restricted to praying. This links to the social dimension of religion where Smart describes it as religion becoming 'institutionalised'. This is clearly seen in the example of a mosque in London where it contains a cafe, a library which takes the role of a traditional mosque a step further. Modernists would say this is a positive advancement as it allows Muslims to gather at a mosque in a much ordinary or less elaborate way and become one cohesive society. This develops social bonds between individuals as they pray in congregation and strengthens the worldwide muslim community or the Ummah.

Talking about rituals being informal and casual, Smart says that a ritual doesn't have

to be something 'elaborate' or very 'formal'. It can be as simple as greeting someone with a Hello or a goodbye. Sometimes however when Muslims say 'Allah Hafiz' or may God protect you, takes this informal greeting on step further and involves a blessing upon that person. This shows that rituals do not always have to be directed towards God but to other people as well, yet they may become linked in some way.

Smart also mentions that ritual religions tend to express themselves through these rituals.

He is almost saying that the rituals of a religion define what the religion believes and forms the foundations on which the religion comes into practice for others to observe. Rituals are almost the beliefs put into actions. Prime example of this is the five pillars of Islam which summarise what Islam is all about. This includes Salah, fasting, Hajj, Shohadah and Zakah.

Whilst Salah and Fasting as well as Hajj are directed towards God, Zakah is the one which is for the people and once again encompasses the social

dimension of religion. Zakah is payed at end of every financial year, 2.5% of total savings to the poor and needy in the Society. It was first introduced by the prophet Muhammed at a time where in pre-Islamic Arabia the society was divided in rich and poor. The fortunate accumulated all the wealth whilst the poor lived very limited and restricted lives. The prophet made it compulsory for everyone to pay Zakah which ensured even distribution of wealth and made sure that those in need such as widows and orphans were not neglected. Whilst paying Zakah with the intention that Allah will reward a person, it also develops empathy for each other and a need to put humanity first.

In the second paragraph Ninian Smart tells us about his phenomenological approach to study of religion. Here he mentions that he is not concerned about whether an 'invisible world' exists or not, or whether the Buddhists achieve Nirvana or whether Hindus are re-incarnated, but what he is primarily concerned with is that these beliefs and

practices are followed by billions of people around the world. So using the 'bracketing' approach he puts aside his personal beliefs and studies how these rituals and practices play an important role in religion without criticising it or evaluating the truths behind it. This can be seen as a positive approach to study of religion because if we were to criticise everything at every point then we will not be able to study it. Also it allows us to study rituals of other religions without bias, without having to believe in them and have a much better understanding of it.

Ninian Smart also makes another critical analysis of rituals and identifies that they have two aspects - inner and outer.

The outer is the actions that are involved whilst the inner are the intentions in the mind. He suggests that it is very often that the outer dominates the inner aspect which to some extent makes the rituals less significant or pointless as he describes it as an 'empty shell.'

To illustrate this we can see that when someone performs Wudhu (washes themselves) they may be carrying out the physical actions of washing their hands but their mind may be diverted to other things such as what happened at college today. This is wrong as the intentions whilst doing wudhu should be that I am purifying myself to get ready to worship Allah and may he purify me so that I can do it correctly. Smart says that without the inner, the outer becomes not meaningful as it doesn't create any feelings for the person. A critical point to mention here is that Ninian Smart says as mentioned before religions have become 'institutionalized'. This means that religions are almost like organizations or groups, to which people identify themselves. Therefore a Muslim may perform prayer not because he wants to, but because he wants to remain part of his community and identify himself as a Muslim. This can be seen as a strength of Durkheim's argument who made a sociological critique of religion giving religion a purely secular purpose.

He said that religion exist as a cohesive force between individuals bringing them together which is evident from the muslims Ummah.

Sufis however are also Muslims who aimed out on a mission to stop Islam from being overly influenced by rituals and legalism. They emphasise the need to embark on a journey to seek the love of God and nourish our relationship with him, as Imam Ghazali said "Know that happiest of you are those who are strongest in their love with God." This clearly illustrates that the inner dimension of rituals is essential as it makes one more aware and spiritually enlightened of what he is doing.

Sufis' ritual dimension interlinks not just with social dimension but also with the doctrinal and mythical and experiential also. Sufis who perform the whirling dance is a ritual which allows them to attain *halé-hena* where they pass into the love of God - a strong mystical experience where they feel close to God. Also rituals are usually derived from the stories of prophets

which have been recorded in the doctrines of specific religions i.e Quran. The Quran consists of and tells Muslims the story of prophet Ibrahim when for the sake of God he was prepared to sacrifice his son Ismael. But his actions were based on true and sincere 'inner' intention that he is doing it for the sake of Allah. This is why the ritual of eid 'ul Adha is celebrated as it is in the Quran based on the myth or story of the prophet. Muslims here-for sacrifice an animal in commemoration, with intention to please Allah.

Like Smart says that, though rituals are usually blindly followed, they still remain significant and important dimension of religions because at some levels they are truly sincere and meaningful to those who do them with right state of mind such as Muslim sūfīs.

b) Ninian Smart's phenomenological approach to study rituals, I think is a good and positive attitude. This is because in modern multi-cultural societies many cultures exist in the same classrooms,

and learning from the perspective of each believer allows us to study it without biased interpretations. Also if we were to question the truth behind each religion then the implication of that would be is that there will be ~~at~~ unrest and arguments in classrooms. Whilst it is agreed that students must develop skills to criticize ~~but~~ aspects and question the validity of religious rituals for example, I think at an early stage we need to be more informed about each ritual, religion and then with all the knowledge we can make our own opinions and judgments.

I do agree with Smart that very often the inner dimension or aspect of a ritual is omitted and the outer or the actions are blindly followed. This not only makes the ritual meaningless but also implies that people are becoming distanced from their religion and are unaware of it. A more radical implication of this results in extremist groups such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda who believe in the mass killing of non-muslims. Whilst this is a misinterpretation

of Islam, it is also due to the fact that they are blindly following Islam in the wrong way. Islam literally means peacefully submitting to the will of Allah, and Allah in the Quran says 'if you save one person you've saved the whole of humanity and if you kill one person, it is as if you've killed the whole of the humanity.' This results in unrest between religions and societies of different backgrounds. It is therefore important as earliest philosophers who suggested that we should use our intellect to study the Quran and really feel what Allah says. The sunnah and hadith is also a prime example of how a muslim should live his life. It is therefore not permitted to kill anyone on the basis of religion as in the treaty of Hudaibiah the prophet constituted rights of children, women, disabled during war. Also if someone surrenders then one must not kill.

More significantly the fight against Nafs or ego is considered the greater and most important Jihad. It is therefore agreed with Smart that we must spiritually correct ourselves and not follow rituals

without realizing their significance. The implication of this will be that there will be less extremist and blind views of religion which are far from reality. Combined with the phenomenological approach it will allow others to learn about each others religion, and consequently breaking the barriers and stereotypes, i.e. that all Muslims are terrorists as stated by Donald Trump or portrayed in the modern media. This negative portraying has many negative implications for those living in multicultural societies as they may face discrimination. For example a woman in Donald Trumps rally was forced out merely because of her faith.

Ninian Smart also suggested that rituals may be secular and informal. However I disagree because in states like Pakistan religion is combined with the state and previously Shariah law was enforced, i.e. only a muslim can be the president. This results in discrimination against the minorities such as hindis and shias. Furthermore whilst rituals may be a cohesive force, they may be a point for conflict.

and division. Implications of this can be seen from the story or myth of Smart would say of Ahdar-Al-Khom. Different interpretations of who should've been the successor of Muhammed led to the historical split of the Muslim Ummah. Therefore Durkheim's point that religion acts as a cohesive force can be disagreed to.

I do agree with Smart in the first paragraph where he says that rituals are not always directed towards God. For example Buddhism or Yoga is done in India which merely is done to achieve a higher level of consciousness. The implication of this is that not all religions or their rituals are the same, and vary from person to person and the 'environment' or place which they are carried out as ritual influences how it is executed.

Implications - explore understand
religions - terrorists
peace Islam

Paper Summary

This paper was first examined in 2010. It has been a significant and worthwhile feature of the current Specification, enabling candidates to study, in detail, sources and to develop synoptic links.

In 2018 the new A level Specification will be first examined (with AS in 2017). The new A level develops the opportunity to study sources. All A level components will have anthologies, normally with four sources and these will have a compulsory question on all A level papers. The new anthology includes the current Bilimoria on ethics. In addition, there is a text on Gandhi. The comparative studies between the beliefs of Shankara and Ramanuja are found in the current Specification's work by Smart's on Hindu philosophy plus Brockington.

It can be noted that the ideas in the current anthologies can continue to be used in various ways across the new Specification.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

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