

Examiners' Report
June 2016

GCE Religious Studies 6RS04 1E

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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.

Puan:

line of argument:

without reference to the gods. → I disagree

agree: Sankhya, Mimamsa

disagree: shankh,
jnana
yoga

(→ action in
ritu

Key ideas:

Smart's extract 'The Religious Experience of mankind'

looks at Hinduism from the perspective of six

dimensions: These are the ritual dimension, social

dimension, ethical dimension, experiential dimension,

doctrinal dimension and mythological dimension. Thus,

Smart attempts to categorise Hinduism as it is

'staggeringly diverse' (Tanison). The key ideas expressed

are that the aim is attainment of higher states of

consciousness, it involves self-worship and can

be classified as pragmatic.

Firstly, a key idea of the passage is that "the

ultimate aim of such methods is the attainment of

higher states of consciousness". This can link to

Hinduism through the jnana yoga prescribed in

the Upanishads. Jnana yoga is "self, sense

and mind united" (Katha Upanishad) as it

seeks to gain knowledge of the "Brahman Atman

synthesis" (Zaehner). Thus, ~~the~~ the ambiguity of the Upanishads will become clearer upon reaching the jnana, or knowledge, of the ~~relation~~ "profound and mystical relationship" (Janard) between Brahman and Atman. Hence, ~~the~~ jnana yoga can involve closing ^{the} of the eyes or sitting in a specific position in order to attain a "higher level of consciousness", which is the knowledge. Hence, the aim of jnana yoga is to attain a higher state of awareness. This also links to the Advaita Vedanta school which is "pure monism" (Zaehner) as they seek to reach jnana of the nature of Brahman and existence of Maya. This school was supposed by Gandhi, ~~as~~ as he advocated a Nirguna Brahman. Hence, both jnana yoga and the Advaita Vedantist school can be seen as being with Smart's key idea, as both seek to attain higher states of consciousness.

This can be compared to ~~some~~ some Islam through Sufi monks. They seek to gain a higher awareness of God through reciting poetry or inflicting pain on themselves. However, this can also be linked to Dan Brown's 'The Da Vinci Code' where Jesus inflicts pain in order to attain a

greater connection with God.

Secondly, Smart argues "the techniques of self-training have an analogy to ritual". This can be supported by Ashtanga yoga, a method of controlling the senses which is primarily mindless. Moreover, the mindless nature of Ashtanga yoga is emphasised through it having four specific pillars. Hence, whilst attempting to "self-train" there is a ^{allusion} recognition of ritual.

This can also be seen in Hinduism through the practice of daily puja or "love and devotion" (Jainisms) to God. Thus, puja can be seen as self-training because Hindus seek to focus solely on God and offer worship to God. For example, in the Hare Krishna sect of Hinduism their various chanting 'Hare Krishna' or dressing are rituals. Yet this can be seen as ritualistic because it involves waking up at early times, preparing food and following a set pattern of worship. Thus, daily puja and Ashtanga yoga both seek to self-train and enhance personal development yet they both can be seen as alluding to ritual.

This also can be linked to other religions such as Islam and Ramadan. Ramadan ~~is~~ can be

seen as self-training because it is dedicating devotion and thoughts to God. Yet it alludes to ritual as it involves set eating at specific times, as well as the ritual of prayer several times throughout the day. Moreover, in Christianity the period of Lent and custom of giving something up can be seen as self-training because it involves dedication and renouncing. Yet this too is ritualistic.

Thirdly, Marx presents the key idea of the ritual dimension as being "classified as pragmatic... in distinction from sacred ritual" hence, this can be supported through the reformer Ramakrishna (1836-1886) who practiced mysticism. Hence, he was seen as "pragmatic" because he sought to experience God in several different ways rather than focus on a sacred ritual. This is supported by his ~~as a~~ ~~pr~~ worshipping of Buddha and Jesus as "a sort of avatar" (Vishnu). Hence, his pragmatism can be seen as he believed there are "so many faiths - so many paths" (Ramakrishna), seeking to focus on attaining experiences, rather than directed towards a holy being. This can also be supported through Pashan. Whilst Pashan is offering to

both directly its universal pragmatism through the resources used in rural India. In many small villages of north India, this is offered to the gods, showing the pragmatism and variety of worship. Therefore, worship can be 'pragmatic' and seen as distinct from 'sacred worship' because of the mythic and universalistic elements of practice, as well as the use of resources for worship in rural India.

~~This can be linked to the case of pragmatism in politics can be linked to UK politics. This is because parties campaign based on resources available and the trends at that time. For example, David Cameron in the 2015 election promised to return free TV licenses and winter fuel payments for the elderly in order to appeal to the 'grey vote'. This, this can be compared because he wasn't pursuing this policy at the whole electorate, or "he" ^{of} ^{what's} ^{is} ^{not} ^{being} ^{accepted} to ^{out} ^{but} ^{being} ^{pragmatic}.~~

Lastly, Smart presents a key idea of seeking to "withdraw senses from their usual immersion in the flow of empirical experience". This can be seen in Hinduism through Gandhi's *aparigraha* as he sought to remove himself from "empirical experience".

of materialism and instead practice self-sufficiency. This was also had the intention of focusing one mind on God and not be bound to worldly concerns.

This can be linked to other religions such as Christianity and Judaism who have a large one in charity. This also had the purpose of detachment from "empirical experiences" in order to do good deeds and enter heaven.

b) Smart also proposes that a line of argument that religion can be "purged without reference to God or gods". I disagree with this line of argument because Hinduism is predominantly monotheistic, henotheistic & polytheistic.

For this argument can be agreed with because of the Jambhaya school of philosophy. This school is atheistic and hence, doesn't refer to God or the gods. Instead, it suggests there are two entities, Purusha, the unchanging spirit and Prakriti, matter, which changes. However, Maya convinces us and exists and "sues in one way or another become entangled in it and their salvation comes in realising they're different from it" (Basham). Thus, the Jambhaya school

offers an escape from samsara and path to moksha through yoga, yet this doesn't refer to the gods or God.

This can be compared to Buddhism, which is atheistic, yet Nirvana, escape from rebirth, is still available and obtainable.

However, the line of argument can be disagreed with because of the popularity of the Bhagavad Gita. This is described by Zaehner as "the new testament of Hinduism" and is read by the majority of Hindus. Yet it prescribes Bhakti and direct involvement with a Jagatma Brahman. For that reason, Krishna advises Arjuna to "cast all my works on me" (BVG), and regards Bhakti as a path to liberation. Hence, this text which is so popular and widely read prescribes Bhakti as a means of liberation, which is direct action to the gods or God.

This can be compared to Mead's 'primal world' theory, where he has believed primitive societies worshipped a totem as a sign of religious presence. Thus, this is a further example of direct action worship to a figure.

On the other hand, the line of argument can be disagreed with by using the Mimamsa school of thought. This school is particularly concerned with ritual and has little concern about God or the effects of their practices. An implication of this is that Hindus have another path to liberation which doesn't refer to God or Gods. Secondly, Hinduism is a "vibrant way of life" (Vaidya) and consequently, several practices of yoga or self-control aren't just directed to the Gods or God.

This can be compared to Jewish festivals such as Sukkot. Whilst this was a ~~sort~~ festival centred on worshipping God, the community unpert and all of the synagogue is arguably ~~represented~~ more significant. Hence, the focus on the children building the sukkah comes to announce the festival, linking to Hinduism being a way of life.

Conversely, the line of argument can be disagreed with because of Jnana yoga, as this is directed towards a "supreme impersonal force" (Samisra). Thus, the focus of this type of yoga is to realise the nature of the divine and it's relationship with the Atman. This is intrinsically

linked to the doctrine of *Samvara* and *niwaha* as *hindas* are also attempting to gain knowledge of the "profoundly impersonal" (Jainism) *Brahman* and escape *niwaha*, to unite with *Brahman*. Hence, the focus of this practice is to achieve *niwaha* as well as realize the nature of *God*.

This can be compared to the secular example of A-levels and examinations. Most students do these in order to gain knowledge and pass to the next rite of passage, possibly university or employment.

A final reason as to why one line of argument can be disagreed with is the self-training of *Karma*. The *and* *dhama*. Whilst these include good actions and bad actions, as well as types of *dhama* such as *Ashrada dhama* and *Vamashrama dhama*, where all seek to focus on *God*. This is because accumulating *karma* or adhering to *dhama* all have the aim of *and* *niwaha*, which is linked to *God*.

Karma is also present in ^{Jainism} ~~Buddhism~~, yet this in contrast, isn't linked to *God* or *God*. It instead determines the form of rebirth.

To conclude, Jain's line of argument concerning

It can be agreed with because of the Jambhva school of philosophy, the Mimamsa school and the fact Hinduism is "a way of life" (Udler). Yet it can be disagreed with because of Bhakti, which is solely directed to God and Jnana yoga, both of which are extremely popular within the religious movement of karma, dharma, samasara and moksha, "the glue that holds Hinduism together" (Smith) are intrinsically linked to God. The implications of this is that Hinduism is "a jungle of tropical confusion" (Wangh) or "an umbrella term for all these residing in the sub-continent" (Shutack).

(a) Astanga yoga & hatha yoga ✓

6 schools - no card ✓

Rituals → moksha

atman & brahman.

(a)

In this chapter of the dimensions of religion, by Miriam Smart he explains the 6 different religion dimensions from which he constitutes a religion is made. These are the ritual dimension, where a religion must advocate a series of tasks relating to a higher consciousness, doctrinal dimension, where the religion must have a set of rules and specific beliefs that it follows, the social dimension which state how it has adapted to society, the ethical dimension (a set of codes of conduct & moral code) the mythological dimension where the religion must have some sort of narrative text, and the experiential dimension, highlighting the religion's personal nature and its transcendental experiences.

Smart here talks about 'yoga' and 'analogous techniques of self training'. Here Smart is referring to Yoga Darshana, one of the six Astik Darshanas (six orthodox schools of philosophy). Here Yoga Darshana states that in order to achieve moksha, as smart states 'the invisible world' one must perform eight

steps, called Ashtang Yoga. There are, yama (restraints from worldly desires), niyam (following certain rules) asan (after performing different poses) pranayam (controlling one's breath) dhyam (meditation on God) dharna (contemplating God) pratyahar (restricting one's self) and samadhi (a mystical experience). In order to achieve samadhi one must complete the seven previous steps, after which through samadhi God can then be attained. Yoga Darshana also advocates Hath Yoga. This is the more popular form of yoga darshana as it is popularly advocated by western culture and media as well as the likes of Ramdev bapu. It is the 'asana' part of ashtang yoga and is focused primarily on controlling one's own body in order to be free from maya (worldly desires) and samsara (the law of rebirth and death).

As well as Yoga Darshana, there are five other orthodox schools of thought which are Sankhya, Nyaya, Mimamsa, ~~Uttar~~ Varoheshika, Uttar Mimamsa and Purva Mimamsa. Both Nyaya & Varoheshika and Purva Mimamsa are fundamentally based on logic and revert to the Vedas in order to understand the world. They are lean towards a more metaphysical interpretation of

Hinduism suggesting that the three eternal entities are atoms, Atman (the soul) and Brahman (the ultimate reality).

So Just as Nyaya, Vaisheshika and Purva Mimamsa are grouped together, Samkhya, Samkhya and Yoga are also grouped together. There is a key difference between them which Smart points out which is that it is 'pursued without references to God'. Samkhya ~~is~~ does not advocate a belief in a divine reality and therefore only has 25 elements. Yoga on the other hand does advocate belief in Ishwar (God) and therefore is made up of 26 elements. Both Samkhya and Yoga are symbiotic in the sense that they ~~are~~ are both needed, samkhya as the thought and yoga as the practice in order for one to attain 'the invisible world'. Samkhya is described ~~as~~ by Dasgupta as 'atheistic' and therefore cannot be employed on its own to attain moksha and therefore Yoga is also required.

The other school of thought is the Uttar Mimamsa, also known as Vedanta. Here beliefs regarding the atman and Brahman are discussed. There are three main advocates of Vedanta, Madhvacharya, Ramanujacharya and Shankaracharya. Madhvacharya believed in Dravida Vedanta (dualism) suggesting that

The atman was a 'mirror image of Brahman' and yet it was completely distinct. Thus Madhvacarya believed in attaining moksha through the worship of the ultimate reality (Brahman) where moksha is characterised as the communion between the atman and Brahman. Ramanujacharya believed in Vishva Advait (Qualified Non-Dualism) where despite there being an ontological divide between atman and Brahman they are still linked. He characterised this through the analogy of a fire suggesting the atman was a spark from the fire that is Brahman. Shankaracharya on the other hand believed in Advait (Non-Dualism) where the atman and Brahman are same eternal interchangeable entities. While Ramanujacharya and Madhvacarya believed in attaining moksha through after death, Shankaracharya believed in 'jivan mukti' where the soul can achieve moksha in samsara if it attains a transcendental experience and believes itself to be Brahman. Thus for Shankaracharya there was no distinction between souls however with Ramanujacharya and Madhvacarya believed in 3 types of souls, Mukti Souls (where they can achieve moksha), Nitya Samsarins (souls that forever remain in samsara) and Tama Yogis (souls

that are eternally condemned to Hell). Thus all 6 schools of ~~the~~ philosophy have concepts of atman and brahman as well as advocating some sort of attainment of Smart's 'invisible world'.

Smart also talks about the invisible world here in this chapter which is characterized by Floodism as monsha which ^{the} Mundaka Upanishad believes to be the 'destruction of desires'. The Brhadaranyaka Upanishad advocates Moksha as 'aham brahmasmi' and 'tat tvam asi' (I am the Brahman) then referring to Shankara's jivan Mukti in stating that ~~that~~ monsha is merely an experience. However all Upanishads have a leitmotif that monsha is in its simplest form a communion of the atman and brahman, whether it may be in a literal or metaphorical sense.

Smart also mentions 'rituals' which are crucial to achieve 'the invisible world'. Here the conception of the 'rites' can be seen as upholding rita which is the natural cosmic order of the universe which ~~so must~~ be ~~dis~~procured through completing rites and performing dharma (righteousness). Rites can be characterised as the 16 sankaras

which R.S. Dandekar describes as 'milestones' in one's 'spiritual journey'. The Samskaras, such as the marriage ceremony are ritual that are completed, not necessarily towards God, in order to preserve ita and attain moksha.

These rites also coincide with one's varsha varnashram dharma, and are ^{extremely} subjective. For example the Vedas expound on four ashrams (stages of life). Brahmacharya (Student's stage) Grihastha (Householder stage) Van Prastha (literal meaning is a forest dweller and it is when one begins to contemplate on moksha) Sannyasa and finally Sanyashta (where one performs religious deeds and waits for moksha).

Different Samskaras are performed at different stages, at the Brahmacharya stage there is a janoi ceremony where a Holy string is tied around a student's chest in order to initiate him into the student fold. In the grihastha ashram one completes the marriage ritual holding fire (agni) as witness and circling it 'pradikshana' (circumambulating it). These rites are subjective to one's ashram. They are also subjective to one's varna (the caste

system) which are: Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors),
Vaishyas (merchants) and Shudras (menial servants).
These rites are also subjective to one's own caste,
for example a Brahmin would take a part
in a jnani ritual to become a scholar of the
Vedas, however a Shudra would not as they
would not need to. Thus rites too are
extremely subjective within Hinduism.

Thus it can be concluded that in the Ritual
Dimension Smart recalls the concept of Yoga Darshana
and Ashang yoga which is one of the 6 orthodox
schools of Hinduism. Sri Sri Theerthore also sheds
light on the characteristics of Atman (soul) and
Brahman (the ultimate reality) and how they
interact in order for one to attain the
'invisible world' (moksha). Smart also expounds on
'rites' which are performed to uphold Rita and are
characterized as samshars which one must perform
according to their varnashram dharma.

(b) → What is moksha?

- is yoga a ritual? path to moksha :: philosophy
- the contradiction between how to achieve (iW)
- the ritual affected neo vedanta - andh bhavadah 'Gods'

(b) In this the ritual domain - Smart advocates ^{that the} ~~the~~ Yoga philosophy ~~be~~ is a pathway to the 'invisible world' as well as being a ritual, thus causing a contradiction of its definition. Moreover the term 'rituals' is highly subjective ~~more's~~ ~~in~~ Hinduism as it depends entirely on your ~~to~~ varnashram dharma thus causing confusion on what 'rituals' are. In addition to this Smart also identifies how 'sacred ritual' ~~etc~~ can characterise a religion, which gave rise to neo-vedanta in India. As well as this Smart expounds on the invisible world as being achieved through 'rituals' however there are many ways to achieve it. ~~as ego~~

Smart here advocates the concept of 'yoga' as a ritual. ~~It is~~ He believes it to be a certain rite performed in order to attain moksha. Although I agree in the sense that ~~it is~~ yoga does lead to ~~the~~ the achievement of the invisible world, it is ~~not~~ itself a 'darshana' a one of the six schools of philosophy and therefore I do not agree with Smart's classification of yoga as a ritual. Yoga however has been ~~and~~ misinterpreted by many, like Smart, as a ritual and through this may have been

popularised in ~~both~~ both India and the Western world as the self control techniques advocating stoicism.

Despite ~~the~~ in my opinion the ritualistic interpretation of yoga being wrong, it however has had a great impact in popularising Indian Culture and Hinduism among the west through the likes of Ramdev Babu Baba who specialised in Hatha Yoga.

I agree with Smart in the sense that he believes rituals take place in order to attain the 'invisible world'. They are ~~used~~ ^{conducted} to preserve ita and dharma, however this no longer has much of an impact or influence ~~of~~ over Hinduism. It can be suggested that modern Hindus no longer care about dharma and ita due to the fact that it is only advocated in the Tajavra and Bhavara Vedas, which due to the fact that they are written in Sanskrit have become outdated texts.

Despite having said this the marriage ceremony, has been completed for hundreds and thousands of years and has withstood the test of time, remaining unchanged and eternal ~~from~~ since the Vedic period throughout the ages. This thus suggests that Hindu

Smart's ritualistic dimension on Hinduism is still relevant to modern Hinduism.

Moreover the ritualistic dimension and the mythical ~~expi~~ nature of it has greatly influenced the rise of neo-vedanta. Due to the subjectivity of rituals to one's own varna (caste) Brahmins began to feel superior due to the fact that they were able to perform rituals that other castes could not, which led to a hierarchical system where lower castes were oppressed. ~~not~~ This also gave rise to ~~and~~ sadhaka (superstitions) such as sati pratha (where a widow was burnt ~~off~~ on the funeral pyre of her dead husband). Thus in order to abolish ~~this~~ these customs and warped ~~to~~ ritualistic customs, the likes of Dayananda Saraswati and Ramakrishna formed Neo-Vedanta movements which reverted the Hinduism back to Vedic rituals, which thus made Hinduism a ~~of~~ more popular and accepted in the west. ~~to~~ Therefore due to the negative ~~and~~ impact the ~~misinterpretation~~ misinterpretation of the rituals had, there was in turn a more positive impact on Hinduism.

There is however a question raised of what is ritual? Smart here only gives the example of 'yoga' which I have previously ruled out. The term Hinduism is in fact simply geographical and the varied Hindu religion (if it indeed could be called a religion) is too vast for one to create a ritual dimension for it. Although lengthy field work could be completed around India to follow the different sects of Hinduism to understand their rituals, this would be extremely difficult and complicated as no two people believe in the same things. Hinduism is in fact or ~~Sanatan~~ Sanatan Dharma (eternal religion) as it is otherwise referred to, far too vast for a western framework to be imposed upon it. Brian Smith raises the question of 'who will speak for Hinduism' suggesting that due to the lack of a sole Hindu leader and only one religious text, it is simply ~~extremely~~ impossible to characterise Hinduism like Smart does, as Gavin Flood suggests, it is merely an 'umbrella term'. I therefore disagree with Smart's enforcement of the ritual dimension upon Hinduism due to the fact that due to its variety he has failed to take it into account. Its vast

array of different and even contradicting beliefs.

Thus in conclusion I agree with Smart when he suggests that rites are performed in order to attain 'moksha', however the importance of rites no longer hold a significance in the Hinduism as and are simply considered monotonously. Moreover the negative impact of its misinterpretation leads to catastrophic impacts on Hinduism such as the hierarchical caste system. I also strongly disagree with Smart of enforcement of a moral dimension on Hinduism as it is far too diverse and vast (not to mention merely a geographical term) for him to do so. Due to its vast array of contradictions and beliefs from Varshanism to Shaktism to ~~the~~ Shaktism, a Western framework simply cannot be placed upon it.

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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