

Religious Studies Spec A

Answers and commentaries

GCSE (8062)

Paper 1: Hinduism

Marked answers from students from the June 2022 exams.
Supporting commentary is provided to help you understand how marks are awarded and how students can improve performance.

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Answers and commentaries

Please note that these responses have been reproduced exactly as they were written by the students.

4 mark question

Question 2.3

Explain two contrasting ways in which gurus are important in Hinduism.

[4 marks]

Mark scheme

Target: AO1:2 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including similarities and differences within and/or between religions and beliefs.

First contrasting way

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate contrast – 1 mark

Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate contrast – 2 marks

Second contrasting way

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate contrast – 1 mark

Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate contrast – 2 marks

Contrasting may mean opposing or may mean different views.

If similar beliefs are given, only **one** of them may be credited up to 2 marks max.

Students may include some of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:

- As teachers / for those who are focused on their spiritual journey / there is a very ancient tradition of gurus within the religion / many are considered saints/rishis / their writings are still used today / their sects still exist.
- They help to explain the scriptures / which they have greater understanding of / because of longer study / they are experts with a higher level of religious understanding than ordinary Hindus.
- Hinduism encourages every Hindu to use a teacher / 'guru' means 'the one who dispels darkness and takes towards the light' / thus the guru helps a student to see the truth of the scriptures.
- All Hindus have a teacher |(guru) as they learn their religion / those who wish to focus or dedicate themselves to understanding the scriptures need a guru.

- It is easier to learn from a guru / as they have already moved closer to attaining, if not already attained moksha / they know the path, so know what to do/not do / their experience and knowledge can be used by the student.
- Following a guru demands obedience to them / this means the decision to follow a guru is a great undertaking / gurus represent a deliberate focus on and dedication to a wholly spiritual path / the guru is their focus of worship, so very important.
- Gurus are highly respected / for example, at Kumbh Mela, the gurus are the first to be allowed into the water at sunrise / many people attend Kumbh Mela primarily to find a guru (for long or short periods of time).
- Gurus can be seen as role models / as they may have attained moksha / so know how to.
- They have traditional importance / i.e., historically gurus were revered / which gives them status today.
- The goal of life for Hindus is moksha / anything that can help that is important / gurus help their students attain moksha, so must be important.
- Gurus preserve the faith/religion / because they teach others the correct understanding and ways of practicing it, etc.

Student responses

Response A

One way is that they teach Hindus a sacred way of life and act as role models.

However, they also act as leaders.

Three ideas given, none of which are developed. First two credited at a simple level.

2 marks

Response B

Hindus believe gurus are wise men who reached moksha. Therefore they believe gurus are good teachers to help other Hindus find inner peace and attain moksha. Gurus also set amazing examples of Hindus. This allows other Hindus to also give up worldly pleasure and sit on the path of moksha.

Two detailed explanations. The use of 'also' shows the idea of the example being set and provides a link via example to the explanation in the second sentence.

4 marks

5 mark question

Question 1.4

Explain two Hindu teachings about free will.

Refer to sacred writings or another source of Hindu belief and teaching in your answer.

[5 marks]

Mark scheme

Target: AO1:3 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including beliefs, practices and sources of authority.

First teaching

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate teaching – 1 mark

Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate teaching – 2 marks

Second teaching

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate teaching – 1 mark

Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate teaching – 2 marks

Relevant and accurate reference to sacred writing or another source of Hindu belief and teaching – 1 mark

Students may include some of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:

- Free will is the ability to choose one's actions / those choices generate good and bad karma (punya and pa'apa) / which karma is expressed through this and future lifetimes.
- Free will is the ability to choose within the religion / i.e., one's dharma / sanatana dharma or varnashramadharm / ability to choose one's yoga / i.e., bhakti, jnana, karma, astanga/raja.
- Hinduism teaches that free will is not complete freedom / it is like travelling on the road / free will has chosen the route and mode of travel / however karma impacts on free will / as do events and people along the way.
- A person can use free will to help others / to look for/recognise need and then respond positively to it / this brings good karma / reflects the virtues (compassion, humility etc).
- A person can use free will to hurt others / by ignoring need / by being selfish / this brings negative karma.
- Using free will to help others is a way of helping oneself / as it generates good karma / which helps bring a better rebirth / or to achieve moksha (goal of life for Hindus).
- Hinduism also teaches that free will is an illusion / humans think they have free will / but only the atman has free will, and it is deluded by being in a material body in this world (prakriti).

- Sri Ramakrishna taught that only God has free will / 'the world is his play' / as long as a person has not realised his true nature and that of God, that person cannot have true free will / all that person's thoughts and actions are affected by maya (illusion), etc.

Religious teachings might include:

'If one clings to his attachments, refusing to let go, sorrows will not let go their grip on him' – Tirukkural 45.347-8.

'It is said that great personalities almost always accept voluntary suffering because of the suffering of people in general. This is considered the highest method of worshipping the Supreme Lord, who is present in everyone's heart' – Bhagavat Purana 8.7.44.

'People who have realized God are aware that free will is a mere appearance. In reality man is the machine and God is the Operator, man is the carriage and God its Driver.' – Sri Ramakrishna.

'These actions which can cause hurt and suffering to any other living beings are to be considered pa'apa (sin); and punya (virtue) is defined by those actions which bring joy and happiness to others' - Mahabharata.

'The two paths lie in front of the man, pondering them the wise man chooses the path of joy...' Upanishads

Student responses

Response A

Hindus do not give free will to women as they must have their shakti protected.

Hindus believe all should have free will as everyone is equal and has an atman. This shows equality.

The first point made does not answer the question. The second point ('all should have free will as everyone is equal') is vague, but has just enough to be awarded the level of the simple explanation. There is no source of authority named.

1 mark

Response B

One belief is that Hindus have free will, but would be bound by certain principles and virtues in order to live their life fully. An example is ahimsa or non-violence and so Hindus would use their free will to be kind as, after all, “ahimsa is the highest dharma” [Mahabharata]. Another belief about free will is that it helps them to attain moksha. This is as they can make explicit choices and decisions to get closer to God and to see through maya (illusion) of the world.

Two clear detailed explanations given. Source of authority given with first point made (Mahabharata). The candidate structures the points by developing the belief with an example, and a source after the first point is credit worthy.

5 marks

12 mark question

Question 1.5

'For Hindus, the most important aim of life is moksha (liberation from the cycle of rebirth).'

Evaluate this statement.

In your answer you should:

- refer to Hindu teaching
- give reasoned arguments to support this statement
- give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

[12 marks]

Mark scheme

Target: AO2 Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including significance and influence.

Level	Criteria	Marks
4	A well-argued response, reasoned consideration of different points of view. Logical chains of reasoning leading to judgement(s) supported by knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. References to religion applied to the issue.	10-12
3	Reasoned consideration of different points of view. Logical chains of reasoning that draw on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. Clear reference to religion.	7-9
2	Reasoned consideration of a point of view. A logical chain of reasoning drawing on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. OR Recognition of different points of view, each supported by relevant reasons / evidence. Maximum of Level 2 if there is no reference to religion.	4-6
1	Point of view with reason(s) stated in support.	1-3
0	Nothing worthy of credit.	0

Students may include some of the following evidence and arguments, but all relevant evidence and arguments must be credited:

Arguments in support

- Since moksha is liberation from rebirth / being free of the barriers of maya (illusion) / knowing one's true self and God / 'Liberation is not possible without knowledge' – shruti scripture / then this must be the highest priority / as that liberation is the greatest achievement / with the most to gain.
- Moksha means to be freed of all the suffering of this world / any sane person would make that their highest goal / as no one wishes to suffer / 'By realising God, one is released from all fetters' - Vedas / also to be freed from the struggle with/against karma / which is part of the reason for the suffering.
- The scriptures discuss moksha at length / always discussed as the purest of aims in life / other aims are presented as less than this.
- Other aims can become barriers / e.g. kama (seeking pleasure) can become addictive / so a person never has enough material comfort/sensory pleasure / they then become more entrapped in maya and rebirth / 'When all desires stationed in the heart are dispensed with one becomes liberated undoubtedly, even while living' – Garuda Purana.
- Depends what is meant by 'most important' / if this means 'highest/most noble', gurus and scriptures would place moksha as highest, etc.

Arguments in support of other views

- Other aims are all important because they are stepping stones to moksha / they are important in their own way / a Hindu will focus on what is most pertinent to them / so their idea of importance will change with circumstance.
- Not everyone is at the stage where they can focus on this aim / e.g. a young person is still learning the dharma / so it is not their most important / it is one of several / not everyone is focused on their religion / so to them material aims might be more important.
- Kama (seeking pleasure) is more important / as it is to have sufficient to be able to live a comfortable life (not excess) / this satisfaction allows other goals to then be pursued.
- Arta (material prosperity) is more important / e.g. for those with a family / as they need to ensure their family has everything they need / in order to fulfil their duty to them / in Hindu culture, marriage and family are expected of all.
- Dharma (living ethically) is more important / by keeping the three elements of dharma, a Hindu can make spiritual progress, even achieve moksha / dharma becomes the means to attaining moksha / i.e. the foundation of moksha / 'The desire for liberation arises in all human beings at the end of many births through the opening of their past virtuous conduct' – Upanishads.
- Sanatana-dharma (doing one's duty by following eternal law) / allows you to live the right way / e.g. by keeping the Hindu virtues / which leads to moksha anyway / 'better to do one's duty ill, than another's duty well' – Bhagavad Gita / this is a more pure form of attaining moksha, because of being focused on what is necessary now.

- Varnashrama-dharma (caste and stage duty) / as you have to look after your family to be able to get good karma / this takes up all wealth and energy / also to process successfully through the stages of life / which leads to moksha / this is a more pure form of attaining moksha, because of being focused on what is necessary now, etc.

Student responses

Response A

Hindus may agree that the most important aim of life is moksha is because they want to join Brahman. This means that their atman will leave the earthly realm and become part of Brahman. Another reason why they may agree is because they want to be released from samsara. This means that they are no longer part of the birth, death and rebirth cycle.

Hindus may disagree with this because they believe that karma is more important. This means that they should enjoy life's pleasures so that they are whole. They cannot reach moksha without this. Another reason why Hindus may disagree is because they believe dharma is more important. This is because Hindus are taught to complete their dharmas so they can have good karma. Reaching moksha would be impossible without completing dharmas.

Overall, I agree with the statement because moksha is the main reason why Hindus do everything they do. Also gurus teach people how to get Moksha so it is the most important.

This is a Level 2 response

Two-sided but explanations are limited, failing to show why the justification of any point actually has effect, eg when mentioning Brahman as being important, why is Brahman important? Hence reasoning is at Level 2 rather than Level 3. The answer includes a range of reasons, which is why it *just* reaches into Level 3. The conclusion is just two new ideas with no explanation, rather than actual evaluation.

7 marks + 3 SPaG

Response B

The statement suggests that liberation from the cycle of samsara, is the most important aspect of life for Hindus.

Many Hindus would disagree with this as many of the core beliefs relate to moksha, for example, build up of good karma means you're more likely to reach moksha, as freedom from maya is ultimately so you can reach moksha, it's even a part of sanatana dharma to try and reach moksha. In Upanishads it says 'when all desires that rest in the heart are liberated shall a mortal man become immortal and attain Brahman' suggesting that moksha is so important that it even allows you to do the seemingly impossible and live forever in the presence of Brahman. However, you could argue that Brahman is always around as 'there is a spark of Brahman in everything' (Upanishads), so attaining moksha to be in his presence isn't necessary. Overall, I find the argument agreeing with the statement convincing as it is a very core belief that a Hindus aim is moksha and many other beliefs do link to the idea of moksha.

Other Hindus may disagree with the statement. They may argue that the other aims are just as important for example dharma. In the Bhagavad Gita it says 'it is far better to do one's duty ill, than another one's well' this highlights that dharma is so important that even if it's not done well, it should still be done, giving the impression you should always aim to follow your dharma despite anything. However, you could disagree and argue that the only reason you're carrying out your dharma is so that in the end you can achieve moksha, what's the point in doing your dharma if there's no reward at the end?

Overall I find the view disagreeing with the statement not entirely convincing – the other aims kama, artha and dharma are important but at the end of the day they're being done so that you can achieve moksha – moksha is the rewards for the aims.

All in all I agree with the statement, scripture makes it clear that moksha is the ultimate reward for almost all the beliefs and practices Hindus carry out.

This is a Level 4 response

Very good exposition of both sides of the argument, including a good use of teachings which are clearly applied and explained. The focus is always on the statement. Evaluation is attempted but could be stronger, and although the response is 'well argued' further judgements would have secured 12 marks.

11 marks + 3 SPaG

Response C

Personally I would disagree with this, as (from a Hindu perspective) the only way to reach moksha is by understanding Brahman, which can be achieved by more important aims of life such as completing one's dharma or generating positive karma. Some Hindus would agree with me as they would rather call Hinduism a 'way of life' rather than religion, as, they would say its true name is 'Sanatana dharma' supporting my opinion that dharma could be considered a more important aim, given that it is the name of the faith. Those who view Hinduism as a way of life often see moksha as simply an added benefit and believe that the true goal is to live a respectable and good life by trying to understand Brahman.

However, other Hindus may disagree with me as they view samsara as a very negative thing, their atman being trapped within maya, and so despite the journey it takes to achieve moksha, all they care about is the result of being freed from this, especially as Hindus believe we are in the yuga of most chaos right now. Pandits may also disagree with me as they believe dharma cannot be the main aim because it is determined by caste, an unjust system to the Dalits in a world where they believe all should be equal, meaning they would have less opportunity to complete dharma, and therefore would hope this is not the main aim of life.

In conclusion, I overall disagree with this statement and support my original thesis as, despite moksha being a core, end goal, the ideas of dharma and karma are more important aims of life for Hindus, as said in the Vedas 'above all else, love every being' and those who see Hinduism as a way of life will agree with this as karma is accessible to all and dharma is very personal, whereas moksha is just an eventual aim for everyone.

This is a Level 4 response

Eloquent, fluent response, which shows a very complex and holistic understanding of the ideas. Always focused on the statement. Good evaluation.

12 marks + 3 SPaG

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