



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

Religious Studies A (4050)

Unit 13: Hinduism

405013

Report on the Examination

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Unit 13: Hinduism

General Comments

The question paper was accessible to all candidates and the scripts revealed a very wide range of ability, with some very pleasing scripts at the upper end of the mark range. Sound knowledge and understanding were shown by most candidates in the AO1 questions, but some candidates performed less well in the AO2 questions. These questions require candidates to use evidence and reasoned argument to support personal opinions and evaluate differing points of view. This was often well done, with genuine and sometimes passionate opinions expressed, but marks were missed by some candidates who wrote fluently, with conviction and at length, but who ignored the important instruction to refer to Hinduism in their answers. Without this specifically religious content it is not possible to achieve more than Level 3.

Part A

Question A1 Personal Duties and Family Relationships

Most candidates had a sound knowledge of the AO1 questions, i.e. parts (a) (b) and (d), but tended to perform less well on the AO2 questions. In part (c) they tended to assert and repeat what they had written in part (b) rather than refer to the importance of other rites of passage. The best candidates were able to explain their reasons for believing marriage the most important rite or not, and were able to compare its importance with that of, for example, the sacred thread ceremony. Others took the view that all rites of passage were important and were able to argue effectively in support of this opinion. In part (e) many did not appreciate that the Hindu way of life also includes the stage of renunciation in order to evaluate the place of family life within the Hindu way of life. Candidates may find it helpful to discuss the stages of life, and particularly the significance of the stage of renunciation.

Question A2 Worship

Both parts (a) and (b) were answered very well by most candidates, with considerable details presented in part (a) and a good awareness of the role of temples in worship as well as the particular value of worship in the home in part (b). Candidates were able to use their knowledge of worship at home to underline its importance for daily life and the family routine while at the same time demonstrating an understanding of the benefits of worship in temples and the role of priests in temple worship.

Question A3 Festivals

Most candidates were able to gain some credit for their answers to part (a). Answers to part (b) revealed a wide range of levels of response, with some candidates giving vague generalised descriptions and others giving accurate details and clear descriptions of the specific events associated with the festival of Holi. Part (c) elicited mostly very good Level 4 or 5 answers with a balanced evaluation of the social and religious aspects of festivals and clearly argued conclusions in support or refutation of the statement.

Question A4 Wealth and Poverty

This was the least well answered question in Part A as few candidates knew of specific Hindu organisations which helped the poor. Examples which could have been used in part (a) include International Sai Satya Organisation, Bhoodan movement, ISKON and Hindu Aid. The specification requires candidates, under Section 5 Justice and Equality, with reference to wealth and poverty, to study 'the work of a well-known Hindu organisation'.

Examiners saw some excellent answers to part (b), where candidates had a full and clear understanding of the ethics of wealth and the appropriate use of wealth linked to dharma duties and caste issues as well as the concept of karma.

In response to part (c) some answers did not grasp the central issue about the most important duties for Hindus and why they are so. Although some recognised the duties in the householder stage of life to support those in need, others failed to refer to the issue of responsibility and the implication that misfortune could be self caused in the context of a belief in the law of karma.

Part B

Question B5 Beliefs and Sources of Authority

Most candidates scored between Level 3 and Level 5 in part (a), being able to explain a Hindu understanding of Brahman and atman. Some included too much information on reincarnation; this was related to the question but not central to it.

There were some excellent answers were presented to part (b), in which the psychology of needing human and personal characteristics to relate to God was very well expressed as well as a recognition of the abstract and complex nature of the Hindu concept of Brahman.

Part (c) was exceptionally well answered by most candidates. They showed a thorough and detailed knowledge of the nature of shruti and smriti and gave plenty of appropriate examples of each kind of scripture.

Part (d) proved to be a more challenging question for some candidates as not all grasped the issue that faith in God could be independent from, or entirely dependent on, knowledge of scripture. They tended to write generally about the importance of faith.

Question B6 Respect for Life

Answers to part (a) tended to be too brief. Further expansion and illustration of the concept of ahimsa was needed. The best answers included reference to harm being emotional or mental as well as physical, to a commitment to vegetarianism and to maintaining natural resources, to harming others being harming oneself, to the importance of maintaining peace and harmony to avoid war, or to ahimsa being the highest dharma.

The issue of euthanasia was well understood as a general idea in part (b), but not all candidates referred to Hindu perspective on this. The question explicitly required candidates to refer to Hinduism in their answers.

Answers to part (c) varied widely. Many candidates made very general comments about not harming the world, others focused on the Hindu understanding of the living spirit in all forms of nature or on God as a life-giving force. Both of these inform Hindu attitudes to the environment. Some also knew of Hindu movements and organisations which protect the environment and used their knowledge to good effect.

Part (d) was the least well answered question in B6, as many candidates failed to recognise the issue that religious beliefs do not always inspire action in the world, or that experience of suffering or more secular philosophies can have more influence on people's attempts to protect the world.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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