



**General Certificate of Secondary Education  
June 2012**

**Religious Studies 4050**

**Unit 13: Hinduism**

**405013**

***Report on the Examination***

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## Unit 13: Hinduism

### General Comments

There was a wide range of ability entered for this examination with some really excellent scripts at the top end, showing detailed knowledge and thorough understanding in response to the Assessment Objective 1 (AO1) questions, together with reasoned argument and independent thinking in response to the Assessment Objective 2 (AO2) questions.

### Part A

#### A1: Beliefs and sources of Authority

Most students knew the roles of Brahman and Vishnu (a) and (b) but were less clear on the powers of Shiva (c) which included not just powers of destruction but also regeneration and renewal of life which was not mentioned by most students.

A1(d) was very well answered by most students who showed a very good understanding of the notion that, although there is one supreme source of life giving energy (Brahman), the various powers and aspects of this ultimate being are manifested and expressed in various forms which are worshipped. Some students explained this as being due to the limitations of human understanding, which was a very good argument. In support of the statement that Hindus worship many gods, they referred to the evidence of the many and varied images of deities in temples and shrines all over India.

#### A2: Worship

A2 (a) was explained well by most students.

A2 (b) Those who were aware of other important symbols in Hinduism such as the swastika as well as the importance of symbols connected with particular deities, were well placed to gain full marks for this question. Most gained 2 out of 3 marks.

Three separate points were needed for A2(c) in describing how the arti lamp is used in worship. Most students knew about the lighting of the lamp and the circular motion made in front of the murtis but not many referred to the action of placing the palms of the hands over the lights then over the eyes and forehead.

The responses to A2(d) were very good as most students were able to give reasoned consideration to two different points of view. One view referred to the essential role of symbols and images in enabling the worshipper to relate directly to the chosen deity and appreciate the powers and qualities of the deity expressed in the symbols. The other view referred to the understanding of God as existing in every living thing and in the powers of nature, so symbols are not essential and may even distract from the true nature of God.

### **A3: Justice and Equality**

A3(a) was well answered by students who referred to the moral principle of ahimsa. Many referred to the fact the existence of the caste system showed that Hindus did believe in a certain form of discrimination but that, in modern times, these discriminations were against the law.

The role and status of women was usually well understood but the better answers referred to the particular role of the mother in bringing new life into the world and as the nurturer of children in the traditions of Hinduism as well as the notion of the goddess in Hinduism which provides the role model and status for women. Some also did refer to past practices of sutī (widow burning) and dowries, which lower the status of women. In A3(c) no one gained more than two marks for a reference to the tolerance within Hinduism for other religions. However those that were aware of the conflicts between Hindus and Muslims and / or knew about Gandhi's efforts to encourage greater tolerance gained full marks.

### **A4: Respect for life**

A4 (a) was well answered but less so in (b) which elicited rather vague answers. Those who referred to the Hindu belief in the indwelling spirit in all forms of life and worship of sources life such as river and trees, as well as the duties of the householder to care for the environment, gained the higher marks.

A4(c) This was the least well answered question on this section of the paper. Most students were able to refer to the Hindu belief in the sacredness of the cow but could not explain why it is considered wrong to kill animals and also reasons why not all Hindus are vegetarians. The reasons for vegetarianism lie in the belief that animals are on a par with humans in Hinduism as they contain an indwelling soul or spirit, so killing them is considered to be a harmful act. The higher castes are forbidden by their dharma duty from eating meat as it is seen as polluting and adversely affects the human personality. The other points of view could assert that Hindus were free to follow their own choice and the necessity for some, due to poverty or other circumstances, to eat meat. Strict vegetarianism is only for the orthodox, high caste and holy men in Hinduism, so not all Hindus are vegetarian.

## **Part B**

### **B5: Key Beliefs and Personal Deities.**

B5(a) was well answered by most students and they referred to both dharma and artha and aims in life for Hindus. The better answers gave good examples of how dharma was an aim in life as the fulfilment of duties for caste and stage in life.

B5(b) was well answered by most students as they presented some good arguments against the assertion, 'moksha should be the main goal for all Hindus' by saying that the goal of moksha is unrealistic and even impossible for most Hindus as it requires complete dedication and renunciation of worldly life and family ties. Also the goal of reincarnation can be seen as a more realistic aim.

B5(c) was very well answered by most students who had a detailed and thorough knowledge of the performance of death rites. However, not all mentioned the shraddha ceremony which is an annual homage to departed ancestors.

Students responded well to B5(d) by recognising the importance of death duties as affecting the future destiny of the departed family member but also the importance of other rites of passage within Hinduism for maintaining the family and the personal and spiritual development of the individual.

### **B6: Pilgrimage and festivals**

The quality of answers to B6(a) were variable, ranging from full and detailed descriptions of the variety of events at the Kumbh Mela to rather vague and inaccurate accounts.

Some very good responses were offered in response to B6(b) in which students argued the case very convincingly for the importance of pilgrimages as a unique and possibly life changing experience but also the equal importance of festivals which are celebrated regularly throughout the year by all Hindus and are an integral part of their lives.

The answers to B6(c) were generally good and students showed an understanding of the importance of the River Ganges and Varanasi as sources of gaining good karma by the performance of certain rituals there. The association of both these places with stories of the gods especially Shiva and the view of the River Ganges and as living deity were the points which gave students higher level marks.

The answers to B6(d) were mostly very good as students recognised the power and inspiration that sacred places can give but also referred to the Hindu way of life being rooted in moral duties and worship in the home so that there is no need to visit sacred places, although they can enrich and strengthen the faith.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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