

Teacher Resource Bank

GCSE Religious Studies Specification A

Unit 13 *Hinduism*

Exemplar Scripts and Commentaries



Script 1

PART A

A1 Birth Ceremonies

- (a) Name the symbol written on a baby's tongue at birth. (1 mark)

The Om symbol

Commentary

Correct answer

(1 mark)

- (b) Explain the main features of a naming ceremony. (4 marks)

The om symbol is written on a baby's tongue at birth. Then, a brahmīn (priest) uses the baby's date and time of birth, the stars and the baby's sex determine what letter the baby's name should begin with. Sometimes, the Brahmin names the baby for the parents, other times the parents are given a list of names to choose from. Afterwards, there is a party with lots of prayers and bhjās being chanted and prasād being handed out. Black strings are tied to the baby's hands to protect it from the evil eye (niyer) – a black dot is placed behind its ear for the same reason. Money is given to charity. The baby is dressed up- usually in green.

Commentary

Exemplary answer for AO1 assessment objective, clear knowledge and understanding with some development. Mark scheme indicates several specific actions for this naming ceremony and the candidate has included: symbol written on baby's tongue/use of astrology by brahmīn priest to decide name/use of black string and havan ceremony. The more general aspects of chanting and party are not so important.

(4 marks)

- (c) 'Hindu birth ceremonies are just an excuse for a family party.'

Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer, showing that you have thought about more than one point of view. (6 marks)

I do agree, as there is no real religious element to this celebration, it is more central as a celebration of the new arrival. The ceremony is not really necessary it is first a tradition to ask the family priest for advice when naming a child. It is all superstition, there is no fact or reasons behind it. It is not really useful or productive and is forcing parents to give a child a certain name. It is taking away the mother's right to name her child. It is all festivities and no real prayer or anything religious, there is no real reason to have it it is the finest tradition.

Commentary

This answer falls short of a fully developed evaluation of the reasons why Hindu birth ceremonies 'are just an excuse for a party.' It is an opinion supported with several simple reasons, e.g. that it is just a tradition, it is superstition, not really productive, taking away mothers' rights, and no real prayers. There is no consideration of other views such as it is one of the samskaras necessary to fulfilment of dharma.

(3 marks)

A2 Justice and Equality

- (a) Explain Hindu teachings about wealth and poverty. (4 marks)

Hindus believe that their wealth is based on either negative or positive Karma from previous lives. Therefore if people are poor, it's their own fault and if people are rich they earned it by being good in previous lives. The caste system is in place because of this, with different castes having different amounts of wealth due to the karmic debts of their previous lives (brahmins –lead the best, shidras –worst)Dahtis are supposed to have gone on a tangent and have leat their previous lives in the worst way possible- they are not to be helped, whereas other should be due to seva and karmayoga.

Commentary

This is a level 2 answer as it is elementary knowledge and understanding, e.g. two simple points. The answer is not focused on teachings about wealth but more about why some people are poor and related to the teaching on karma. A more developed answer requires attention to such points as the following:

Hindu law encourages Hindus to earn money / a man has to provide for his wife, children and extended family – Grihastha stage / artha is the gaining of wealth by honest means.

(2 marks)

- (b) 'Wealthy Hindus should not feel obliged to help the poor'

What do you think? Explain your opinion. (3 marks)

I disagree with this as one of the main parts of Sanataradharma is seva – selfless service. This includes charity and helping the poor. Also, one of the main duties of a Grihasa (householder) is to help the poor by giving charity. Hindu's are taught to be kind to each other due to Karmic debt – charity leads to good karma. Part of Karma yoga – are of the paths to enlightenment is to help the poor in order to receive good karma.

Commentary

This is a level 3 answer. It is exemplary and goes beyond the expectations for 3 marks. It is an opinion supported by several well expressed reasons using technical vocabulary effectively and links to key concepts such as santanadharma, karma, karma yoga and seva.

(3 marks)

- (c) Explain the role that women are expected to play in Hinduism. (6 marks)

Women are meant to play a more passive role in Hinduism, they are meant to stay and home to cook and clean and look after children. They are expected to have arranged marriages and to remain virgins until their wedding night. They are meant to have children and to submit to their husband and to do as he says. They have very little rights politically yet are respected. They have to respect and obey the wishes of their mother in laws and to dress decently. A woman is not meant to marry after her first marriage or divorce – after her husband dies a woman must wear simple white clothes and no sindoor as her forehead. When married, a woman must put red powder (sindoor) on her forehead everyday and wear a special black and gold necklace (mangasutra) as symbols of belonging to her husband. Women are not expected to have jobs.

Commentary

Elementary knowledge and understanding as rather general points are made about the subservience of women but the role of women as mothers and educators of children and creators of the Hindu home with puja is not recognised.

(2 marks)

A3 Hindu Attitudes to Death

- (a) Explain Hindu death rites. (4 marks)

Prayers are chanted by the Brahmin and the immediate family is dressed in white. The corpse is put on a funeral pyre and the eldest son or father sets the pyre alight. The ashes are then put into the Ganges or other holy river. This ceremony takes place outside. The coffin is carried on the shoulders of the sons, brothers and the father. The family stays in mourning for 28 days – no visitors and the shrine must be closed. After that, everyone must bathe before opening the temple. If it is a husband who died, the wife must wear white with no sari for the rest of her life.

Commentary

An exemplary answer with full and detailed account for well selected and relevant points about Hindu death rites.

(4 marks)

- (b) 'Death can never bring freedom from suffering.'

Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer, showing that you have thought about more than one point of view. Refer to Hinduism in your answer. (6 marks)

I do not agree with this statement as in Hinduism, after death if you have lived your life well you will obtain moksha (freedom from samsara – the life death circle). This is the ultimate bliss and reincarnation with God – there is no more suffering. However, you may also come back reincarnated as another person and have to deal with your karmic debts from previous lifetimes – this will be a lot if you commit suicide – meaning that you will suffer and that death cannot relieve suffering as you have to reincarnate and deal with your karmic debt in your next lifetime.

Commentary

This is a well balanced and thoughtful answer which clearly recognises the philosophical issue in the question. The candidate explains how moksha can bring the complete freedom from suffering and the renewal of suffering which can occur through reincarnation. These two key concepts are well understood and used to provide good reasons. So this is clearly level 5 which has 'Evidence of reasoned consideration of two different points of view. Showing informed insights and knowledge and understanding of religion.'

(5 marks)

A4 Puja and Festivals

(a) Name **three** items on the puja tray. (3 marks)

1. Silver spoon (for water)
2. Bell
3. Cup for holding water

Commentary

Two accurate details. The silver spoon and the cup are both connected with water and are regarded as part of the same item.

(2 marks)

(b) Explain how a Hindu family performs puja in the home. (4 marks)

A cotton bud which has been shaped and is soaked in ghee (melted butter) and set alight in the diva holder (diveli). Food known as prasad is offered to the gods as well as water, this may include fruits, nuts and indian sweets. Various prayers and bhajans (devotional songs) may be chanted and sung such as the Gayatari mantra. Incense sticks known as agarbhati will be burnt to purify the atmosphere and to intensify the vibrations. A dot of kumkum will be placed on each family members forehead. An arti ceremony (offerings of light) will be performed at the end and then the prasad will be eaten. Deity's such as Shiva (the shive lingum) may be washed with water and milk. Chanting whilst using a japmala may also be performed.

Commentary

This is an exemplary answer as a full detailed explanation of the puja rituals presented with a variety of accurate points and clear understanding of technical terms such as diveli, gayatri mantra, prasad, japmala and shiva lingum.

(4 marks)

(c) 'Hindus have shrines in their homes, so they do not need temples.'

Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer, showing that you have thought about more than one point of view. (6 marks)

I disagree with this statement as although worshipping at home is more convenient, allows you to quickly worship whenever you feel the need and allows you to perform the puja's rather than the priest, temples have nothing for you to become distracted with unlike a home (e.g telephones, tv), provide a social gathering point for Hindus, especially the elderly allow cultures and traditions to be passed down generations – this is particularly important for children whose parents do not know much about their religion and provide a venue for cultural activities , such as Indian dance and music lessons.

Commentary

This is an evaluation question in which the candidate has presented three reasons why temples are important and necessary for worship i.e. there are no distractions, it allows culture and traditions to be carried through generations and is a cultural meeting point. There is one small reference to the benefits of worship in the home. It is opinion supported by two developed reasons with reference to religion. Thus it is level 4.

(4 marks)

- (d) 'Holi is not an important festival at all.'

What do you think? Explain your opinion. (3 marks)

I disagree, as holi is a time to give thanks for the bountiful harvest and the fact that Pralad did not die in the pyre- it is a time to give thanks for what you have and to appreciate it. It is also fun, it gives people a chance to lose their inhibitions and to let loose. It gives people a chance to celebrate and to be happy- what's wrong with that? I think that enjoying yourself is very important.

Commentary

An exemplary answer to this evaluation question in which three well argued and expressed reasons are given why Holi is an important festival.

Level 3.

(3 marks)

PART B

B6 Hindu Gods and the Created World.

- (a) Brahma and Vishnu are two of the three gods of the Hindu Trimurti (triad). Explain the work and the powers of Brahma and Vishnu. (6 marks)

Vishnu is the preserver of the universe his consort is lahnmi goddess of wealth – he comes down in water form to protect mankind when righteousness and dharma and good are in severe moral decline. He has a conch to symbolise the om sound, the primeval sound of the universe. He has a mace and wears a crown to symbolise his power and ability to preserve and protect the universe. He has a chakara or discus to symbolise his power and strength and readiness to preserve the universe. He lies on a may headed snake (annata) to symbolise cosmic space and time. He is seen on a ocean of milk to symbolise bliss and oksha he can be seated on a lotus a symbol of purity. Brahma is the creator of the universe, his consort is saraswati, goddess of wisdom., he creates the universe . He has four heads looking in all 4 direction to symbolise his omnipresence and all seeing power. He carries a water pot and jupmala – two things used by holy men or renuciation to attain moksha. He carries the veda’s – the most holy and important of all Hindu scriptures. He looks like as old, wise sage and sits on a lotus – a symbol of purity.

Commentary

This is a full detailed comprehensive and accurate explanation of the work and powers of Brahman and Vishnu.

(6 marks)

- (b) ‘Hindus worship many gods, not one god’

Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer, showing that you have thought about more than one point of view. (6 marks)

I do not agree with this statement as Hinduism is actually monotheistic – God is seen as abstract and aloof (bahmars) and omnipresent, beyond human comprehension. So, in order to give people something to focus and think about, the multiple Gods were created, each encapsulating an attribute of God. However, some Hindus do believe that the multiple Gods are separate from each other and are not one. The idea of god is Hinduism is like having a jug full of water and pouring the water into lots of different glasses. The water takes different shapes but it is still the same water, just as the Gods are still the same universal lifeforce (Braham), they just differ in looks.

Commentary

This is a well expressed defence of the view that Hindus worship one god rather than many gods. Clear expression and sound understanding of such concepts as monotheistic, omnipresent and encapsulating give credence to these arguments. In order for the highest levels to be awarded candidates needed to develop further the evidence for worship of many gods in Hinduism and its importance in popular religion.

(5 marks)

- (c) Explain Hindu attitudes to the created world. (6 marks)

Hindus are taught to respect nature and animals as we were once one of them. Things which are of particular use to humans such as cows, rivers and food and mountains are worshipped especially. God is seen to be within everything, so the created world must be treated with respect. It is a sin to pollute the world by dumping rubbish in rivers, littering etc. Festivals like Holi are used to give thanks for the bounty of the created world. Most Hindus do not eat meats as it is not satvic (righteous) food as an animal has been killed to make it. Tikka's such as kunkuns are used to remind us of the created worlds beauty. Certain rivers and mountains such as the Ganges and Himalayas are very sacred. Hindus are meant to treat the world with respect. Certain types of Hindu's such as Jains wear masks in order not to swallow little bugs. Some reincarnate first as plants and animals and work up to humans – therefore Hindus are more inclined to be kind to animals, as they were once ones themselves.

Commentary

The explanation of Hindu attitudes towards the created world. This is quite thorough and presents several good explanations of the Hindu respect and protection of the created world in relation to central beliefs such as ahimsa and reincarnation and such practises as worship of natural phenomena, the sacred cow and Jain rituals. For the highest level a more clear reference to the notion of the indwelling spirit of atman in all living beings would have given more strength to the explanations.

(5 marks)

- (d) 'Following ahimsa is impossible today.'

Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer, showing that you have thought about more than one point of view. (6 marks)

I do not agree as ahimsha means non-violence, and there are lots of ways of being peaceful, such as walking away from confrontation, controlling anger and speaking softly and lovingly to everyone. Mahatra Ghandi is a prime example of this. However I can see why people may think that is impossible, due to the confrontational nature of our society, the fact that arguments are just part of human nature, rising levels of murder and violence and violent tv and video games which our children are exposed to.

Commentary

This is opinion supported by two developed reason with reference to religion and so level 4. One reason is the ease of being peaceful and non harming and the example set by those such as Ghandi, the other reason is the impossibility of ahimsa in our society due to its violent and confrontational nature.

(4 marks)