

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

GCE Religious Studies
6RS04_1E
Hinduism

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1E Hinduism

Congratulations are due to many candidates who achieved success in their thorough understanding of the selected passage and for their commendable examination techniques. It is essential for candidates to examine the passage on the exam paper. Candidates must relate what they have learned and apply it to the extract. What is essential is an explicit focus on the text, whatever method is used to examine it. There was evidence of some candidates inserting several paragraphs of material not linked to the question.

The division on the paper into the two assessment objectives is intended to assist candidates to structure their answers and to enable them to make sensible use of their time in the allocation of material. In most cases candidates had the required examination technique to make effective use of their material. There is no necessary requirement to follow the structured division as seen in the question. However, for candidates creating a holistic answer, there is a tendency to pay inadequate attention to AO2, especially in relation to the implications aspect of part (b).

Assessment Objective 1: This attracted some high quality answers with an abundance of material coupled with good exam technique of presenting a balanced answer across both assessment objectives. A few candidates focused too much on AO1 and thus failed to present an evaluation. Some provided a basic account of reincarnation and moksha with little reference to the demands of the passage. Answers at the lower levels tended to be brief, descriptive and generalised.

Successful candidates focused on the passage and presented a comprehensive understanding of the text. Some linked the content of this passage with their related studies such as the set texts in 6RS03 and beliefs in 6RS01. For example, some examined different beliefs about reincarnation using the Upanishads, Bhagavad-Gita, Vedas and different schools of thought. In addition, some highlighted important stories within the set texts to investigate the realms of reincarnation. A few candidates mentioned different ideas concerning the relationships with Brahman and atman and the significance of these for Hindus. There was critical analysis of the importance of karma across different Hindu schools of thought and traditions. A few candidates selected key teachings on life after death from other religions as a comparison, such as Christianity and Islam, when examining this passage.

Assessment Objective 2: There were a number of interesting debates with the most able including analysis of alternative views. Less successful responses failed to justify their points of view by simply saying they agreed or disagreed giving little or no explanation. They did not draw out the implications for understanding religion and human experience.

The best responses were from candidates who fully explored the implications for belief in karma, reincarnation and freewill. A number of candidates discussed Shankara and Ramanuja's notions on reincarnation. Some compared the idea of

freewill in Christianity with the notion of karma. Links were often made with a commendable range of scholars such as Plato, Hume and Kant. Some evaluated possible implications of karma with the caste system and others discussed why some Hindus converted to Buddhism and Christianity during the British Raj. A number of candidates explored the idea of the atman losing its identity and compared this to Islamic and Christian beliefs. The better quality responses were those that expressed viewpoints with confidence and authority, supported by reason and evidence.

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