

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

GCE Religious Studies 6RS04

Paper 1E

Hinduism

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Paper Introduction

General introduction

1. It was fundamentally important to examine the passage itself. All the level descriptors in the indicative mark scheme for AO1 begin with reference to the passage. There are a variety of ways this may be done. Some candidates presented a detailed exposition of the passage. This has much to commend it, including those who used this technique to explore the context of the wider source. One possible drawback was that this could become a simple comprehension exercise. This can be overcome by placing the passage in a context and showing an understanding of a detailed analysis of the more important terms and ideas. Another popular method was to present an overview of the whole source from which the passage was derived in order to examine the key points from within the passage. This method was useful in enabling candidates to show their understanding of the ethos of the passage. However, a potential weakness was that such an overview may be completed without sufficient focus on the passage itself.

2. Similarly, it was essential to answer the full demands of the AO2 part of the question:
 - do you agree with the idea(s) expressed
 - justify your point of view
 - discuss its implications for understanding religion
 - discuss its implications for understanding human experience.

It was important that these demands were addressed in an explicit manner rather than implicitly.

3. This unit is the synoptic part of the GCE RS course. In that respect candidates are expected to link their answers to related parts of their studies. Sometimes this may be achieved by relating work to one or more of the other sources in the anthology and also by drawing on material from any of the other three units. This enabled some candidates to compare and contrast a variety of possible responses.

Question Introduction

AO1 features of good quality

Candidates:

- presented well-informed answers focused on the passage. Those candidates who referred to the source as a whole or to related ideas managed their answers in such a way as to demonstrate their understanding of the passage. There was effective use of scholarship.
- structured their answers in a coherent manner, with evidence of analytical thought across the answer.
- were clear about the synoptic features of this unit relating their answers to other sources and related material in other units.

AO2 features of good quality

Candidates:

- displayed effective use of argument
- referred to scholarly opinion
- displayed a thoughtful evaluation of alternative views
- were explicit in their material on implications for understanding of religion and human experience
- constructed well-justified arguments leading to a coherent conclusion.

AO1 features that require improvement

Candidates:

- tended to present a basic examination of some ideas but the answers were not well-focused on the passage. Some treated the passage like a simple comprehension exercise.

- sometimes had a problem with unsatisfactory allocation of time, related to the two parts of the question. For example, some candidates spent too much time on part (b) in spite of the mark allocation. There were a few candidates who combined (a) and (b) but with those who did there was a tendency to have insufficient material given the range of demands in AO2.
- presented a generic account of the whole source from the anthology or a general account of related teachings at the expense of a focus on the selected passage.

AO2 features that require improvement

Candidates:

- presented basic points of view with limited use of argument.
- displayed limited explicit focus on implications.

Observations from scripts:

There was some exceedingly good work from candidates. They were excellent in their analysis of important terms. Candidates displayed high level of understanding in their discrimination of focusing on selected terms and ideas, including rita and dharma. A distinguishing feature of the higher level answers was in their use of the set texts from unit 3 and related material from the other anthologies in this unit. These types of answers were intelligently written in terms of their understanding of various scholars. Candidates enhanced their essays by their synoptic links. This related to incorporating material from various Hindu schools, traditions and thinkers. Some linked Hindu ethical ideas to Western ethical theories.

There were some well-structured answers in part (b) built around the demands of AO2. This part involves implications and candidates considered a range of topics such as pluralism, caste, moral/social order and Gandhi.

Exemplar

This is an example of a script gaining full marks. The candidate places the passage in context and is excellent in terms of focusing on key ideas. There is very good use of technical terms and an ability to show a detailed understanding of the passage. The candidate related their analysis to a broader perspective. In particular, the candidate used the set texts from unit 3 to excellent effect.

The very high standards were maintained into part (b) with commendable use of arguments and debates.

a) In Bclimoria's 'A Companion to Ethics' he tries to assess whether or not Hinduism can be called an ethical religion. He does so by examining various aspects of the religion and exploring aspects which may be deemed ethical or unethical. However, as Bclimoria points out, it is very difficult to examine ethics as ethics is a very subjective idea and could even be described as "a western invention". In the west we see ethics in a very different way to Hinduism and the east. The complexity and diversity of Hinduism as "a many headed animal" (ling) only contributes further to the difficulty of examining ethics.

In this extract, Bclimoria explores the fundamental concept of dharma within classical Hinduism in order

to ascertain whether or not it is an ethical concept. Within this extract it is clear that dharma has a large impact in Hinduism and has great implications for understanding religion and human experience.

The first important key idea in this passage is "the total harmony of the cosmic or natural order, characterized as *rita*". *Rita* is "a fundamental concept in Hinduism" (Jamison) as it is believed to be the natural order or force which underpins the universe as a whole. Hindus believe that, when or if this natural order fails or is destroyed then ~~shiva~~ the universe will be destroyed. This idea is clear within the *Rg Veda* during the Vedic period.

During the Vedic period between 1500 and 500 BCE the Aryans performed sacrifice in order to uphold the universe and please the gods - "strength to the gods on whose activities depended the maintenance of the world" (Klostermaier).

It is for this reason that, when their sacrifices appeared no longer to be working that they changed their belief to ~~heno~~ henotheism - "one god at a timeism" (Smart) - because they feared their polytheistic beliefs had been incorrect. However, this monism was tentative lest they were wrong and offended the gods.

This idea of a "total harmony of the cosmic or

natural order" and performing a ritual in order to uphold this can be compared to modern Hinduism and daily puja during which the women of the household will attend to the murti in the household shrine. Puja is ~~an important~~ a fundamental practice within Hinduism which Hindus carry out in order to please and show respect to the gods. It is believed that this domestic worship ~~would~~ stems directly from the Aryans and their sacrifices.

The concept of rita as 'total harmony' can be ~~seen in~~ compared to other religions or groups. For example, the Ancient Greeks believed in some sort of natural order upheld by the gods which had to be adhered to. It is for this reason that the Greeks would perform sacrifices to please the gods and goddesses and this is seen throughout Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*.

A further important key idea in this passage is "one therefore does that which is consistent with, or which promotes, the god so perceived". This is the idea that there are right and wrong actions prescribed within Hinduism. Good acts help to maintain dharma and the balance or rita of the universe whilst ~~other~~ ^{an act} acts that ~~are~~ ^{is} wrong "contravenes it". This idea can be seen in the key Hindu texts - the *Upanishads* and the

Bhagavad Gita. In the Upanishads, written around 600 BCE, it is taught that one must follow the path of Jnana Yoga and withdraw one's senses in order to reach Moksha. The Katha Upanishad uses the dull and wise man in order to demonstrate this concept that the wise man follows the right path which adheres to the principles of the universe and will eventually result in Moksha or "everlasting joy". On the other hand, the dull man does not follow the set path of Jnana Yoga in order to come to the realisation of the "atman-brahman synthesis" (Zaehner). The dull man does not control his senses like a charioteer, his senses are untamed - "like vicious steeds" - therefore he contravenes what is right and will be subject, once again, to samsara - "the snares of widespread death".

Similarly, in the later text of the Bhagavad Gita, written around 300 BCE, there is also a right path and a wrong path and the good upholds the natural order and leads to Moksha. However, in the Gita, the Gita prescribes the concept of dharma in the form which most are familiar with, in the form of caste duty done for God as bhakti. In the Grand Theophany Krishna

Explains to Prince Arjuna that he must fight as a warrior because he is a member of the warrior caste and that is his duty. He must perform his caste duty for God and not for the fruits - "It is better to ~~do one's own~~ do one's own duty than to do another's however well". It is this dharma and bhakti which is the good which will uphold the right order of the universe.

This concept of there being right actions and wrong actions can be seen in most world religions. For example, in the Bible and the Torah there are the 10 commandments prescribing what one must or must not do. Similarly, in Jainism there is the threefold path and in Buddhism the five or ten precepts. Even within society, we must follow secular law in order to maintain a sense of order and rightness.

Lastly, another significant idea found in this passage is dharma as an "all-embracing concept". It is often thought that dharma is not significant in all aspects of Hinduism and in all Hindu texts. It could be said that it is only found in the Gita in the most familiar form of caste duty, but this is not the case. Dharma most certainly is an "all-embracing concept" and it has many meanings - "there is no easy way

to translate dharma into English" (Curzell Smith).
Dharma can be seen in the form of Santanadharmā
which is the eternal law or eternal faith, often
linked with Rīta. Santanadharmā can be found
in the Upanishads with the concept of samsara
as the natural order of things - "like corn a man
grows up, like corn he's born again!". Similarly, the
idea of every living being being inhabited by a
Soul or Atman is part of this order or
Santana dharma - "deep hidden in all beings".
Whilst the ideas of caste duty or
varṇashramadharmā is often associated predominantly
with men, women have their own form of dharma
called strīdharmā. This therefore shows dharma
to be "all-embracing" as it affects every Hindu
in some way. Although it may not have been
made concrete before the Gīta, the idea of
dharma is also seen in texts contemporary to
the Upanishads such as the Gṛhya Sūtra or
Sāma Sūtras. In the Gṛhya Sūtra, a set order of
ritual is prescribed which can be seen as some
sort of dharma - "household or domestic
ritual" (Curzell Smith).

The concept of there being an all-embracing
concept underlying a religion can be compared to
the idea of love or compassion in Christianity -

"god is law" or the concept of the coming messiah within Judaism.

b) Bilimoria's argument that dharma has become "more or less the Indian analogue for ethics" is a very convincing argument. Dharma imparts understanding of religion and human experience thus imparting Hindu ethics greatly.

Firstly, varnashrama dharma is a fundamental concept when it comes to Hindu ethics. Found in the Laws of Manu, this idea prescribes duty according to "his/her age, education, occupation or social position" (Cole). This is a very ethical concept because it ensures that each person in India has a set role within society helping to create a sense of community, equality and purpose. For example, there are four ashramas - bramacharya, gharastha, vanaprastha and sanniyasin - and there are prescribed roles at each stage. As a bramachryi or student one is expected to study the scripture, be obedient to their guru and live a simple, celibate life - "devotion to one's guru and celibacy" (Janis an). As a householder one is expected to raise a family and always be hospitable. This can be compared to the

traditional Chinese roles in society wherein the younger will always look after elderly relatives in order to maintain society and create an ethical way of life.

The concept of giving to charity as a role of the householder is evident in Christianity with charities such as Christian Aid and in Islam with the pillar of zakat. Therefore, varnashramadharma and the life cycle stages of ashrama support to dharma ~~as~~ as an ethical ~~aspect~~ analogue.

Another argument to support this assertion is that Gandhi lived according to dharma and lived an extremely ethical life as "a living sermon" (Fisher). Gandhi has often been described as the epitome of dharma as he followed the Gita and the principles in it.

Mahatma Gandhi was a great Hindu reformer and dharma inspired his work. For example, he taught satyagraha or truth force - "holding fast to the truth or satyagraha" (Flood) and taught that non-cooperation was the way to beat the British and achieve swaraj. Gandhi can also be seen as the epitome of dharma as he lived his life as a message by setting up ashrams, fasting and leading

movements such as the salt march of 1930.

In this way, it is clear that dharma and Gandhi's life lead according to dharma show it to be an Indian analogue for ethics.

Jesus also lived his life as a message according to his beliefs. ~~rooted in~~ Gandhi was influenced by ~~Gandhi's~~ Jesus' sermon on the mount and Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela ~~were~~ also went on to be influenced by Gandhi and his methods which were rooted in dharma ~~as~~ as an ethical framework.

Lastly, the Gita is the most widely read Hindu text therefore it supports dharma as an Indian analogue for ethics. It is the Gita which lays out dharma as caste duty and as bhakti for god. Caste duty shows dharma to be ethical by laying out different roles such as ksatriyas as white collar workers and vaishyas as blue collar workers. Division in order to help society run ethically and smoothly can be traced as far back as the vedic period - ("the basis for social divisions is Hinduism") (Babree). We all have distinct roles within society such as within schools we have teachers and prefects and year groups these designations and ordering.

On the other hand, it could be argued that ~~Hind~~ dharma is not ethical because of untouchability. ~~The~~ The unofficial 5th caste grouping means that the Dalits do not have equal rights showing caste duty not to be relevant for all in society. ~~Marxism~~ Marx described such concepts in religion as the "opiate of the people". *

Another reason why dharma as caste could be seen as unethical is due to sannyasis as they cut themselves off from society. However, "not many enter this stage" (Uovels) such inaction can be compared to the Jain teaching that says action attracts bad karma thus undermining teachings of dharma as the ethical framework.

To conclude, despite the aspects of dharma or varnashram dharma which show it to be more unethical, the ethical aspects are still more convincing. It is always going to be difficult to assess ethics due to the different paths which people take within Hinduism - " kaleidoscopic in its variety" (Finnelly and Sharpe) but it is undeniable that dharma does serve as an "Indian analogue for ethics" as it helps people by

guidelines by which to live your life. Social and moral duty will always be one of the most ethical aspects of Hinduism just as it is an ethical aspect of any society, and impacts human experience greatly.

⊛ Gandhi fought tirelessly for the Dalits to be welcomed into society but he was not successful. The great inequality is portrayed in the media in films such as 'Slumdog Millionaire'.

Paper Summary

There are four aims in the Religious Specification. This paper encourages students to:

- Develop their interest in a rigorous study of religion and relate it to the wider world. To succeed in this paper candidates must show evidence of a thorough study of the selected passage and fulfil the demands of A02.
- Treat the subject as an academic discipline and this paper requires specialist study, drawing on their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Adopt an enquiring and critical approach whereby they may reflect on all their previous units.
- Develop their own values and views in the light of their learning. A02 in particular enables candidates to engage in this creative process.

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