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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Religious Studies (8RS0)
Paper 4C Hinduism

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Report 8RS0/4C Hinduism 2017

Question 1 on the role of Agni.

This topic is selected from the Spec on the emergence of Hindu traditions. Those candidates who scored higher marks focused upon the themes of sacrifice and fire. Questions with 8 AO1 marks and with one page allocated for an answer, require skills involving careful selection of content, in order to focus upon the role of Agni. A few candidates mentioned Agni in the context of Aryan gods and their role as mediators between gods and humanity. More specific reference was made to Agni and cow worship and its on-going significance in contemporary ceremonies.

Question 2 about beliefs and practices associated with bhakti yoga.

This topic is selected from section 3 of the Spec concerning practices that shape and express religious identity. Four types of yoga are mentioned, including bhakti yoga. Question 2 has a mixture of AO1 and AO2 marks (3+6 respectively). The AO2 requirements involve candidates targeting the term 'importance' in their answer.

Candidates used AO1 material to show bhakti yoga as a way to enlightenment. Some linked this type of yoga with Shaitive and Vaishnavite traditions with an emphasis upon loving devotion.

Those candidates who scored higher marks highlighted the importance of bhakti yoga in gaining liberation independent of varnashramadharma. Candidates emphasised the importance of Krishna leading to moksha in return for love. Candidates displayed the range of types of devotion and those gaining the higher marks emphasised loving devotion as seen for example in ISKCON. Some weaker responses tended to display too much narrative material on Krishna at the expense of the key terms in the question.

Question 3 on ahimsa as a key moral principle.

As with question 2 this question combines AO1 and AO2 (3+ 6 marks respectively). Ahimsa is one of the key moral principles within Hinduism. Candidates selected some basic illustrations about ahimsa such as respect due to cows. Some extended this information with reference to figures such as Gandhi.

Candidates assessed ahimsa based on a belief of reverence for all life with examples from vegetarianism. Good quality answers assessed the role of karma within Hinduism. There was good quality material on the significance of non-violence and its international links with figures such as Martin Luther King.

Questions 4a and 4b on varna and jati.

4a is AO1 only. Some candidates referred to caste and concepts of duty. Most candidates identified the four varnas of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra.

Answers to 4b attracted some of the weakest answers from this exam paper. 4b has the highest allocated marks on this paper (AO1 5 and AO2 15 marks.) Lower quality marks were vague about the key ideas associated with jati. This limited knowledge and understanding resulted in candidates attracting lower marks. The better-quality answers focused on jati as defining a person's position based on ancestral occupation.

Evaluative debates included beliefs about purity and pollution with implications for Dalits. Some candidates discussed this 'oppressed' grouping as raising significant issues within Indian society.

ARG 11/8

