

Examiners' Report

June 2018

GCE Religious Studies 8RS0 4C

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Introduction

This is the second year of this examination. Last year there were some very good quality scripts and it is pleasing to report that this high standard is maintained in 2018 by a fair number of candidates.

The paper is divided into Part A and Part B and candidates must answer ALL questions.

Part A consists of three questions:

Question 1 has 8 marks for AO1

Question 2 has 9 marks with 3 for AO1 and 6 for AO2

Question 3 has 9 marks with 3 for AO1 and 6 for AO2

Part B consists of one two part question:

Question 4(a) has 8 marks for AO1

Question 4(b) has 20 marks with 5 for AO1 and 15 for AO2

Centres and candidates are reminded to check the meanings of the 3 command words used in the AS papers found in Appendix 1 of the AS Spec. The weightings of AO1 and AO2 are equally weighted across the whole of the paper: 50% for AO1 and 50% for AO2

Question 1

The focus was on the key beliefs associated with Shakti.

Good practice was to emphasize her creative power and her relationship with Shiva. Shakti is believed to be the Mother Goddess and interpreted as the good mother and symbolized fertility and worshipped as a deity in her own right. She was associated with many names and consequently with diversity of beliefs and practices as seen in Shaktism.

Candidates could have improved their standard of work with a more systematic focus on Shakti and not to roam across material on other deities without linking to Shakti.

1 Explore key beliefs associated with Shakti.

A belief of Shakti is men are powerless without her - Shakti is the observation ^{energy} and Shiva is the observer, without her Shiva-like men are nothing as she is the energy and controller of cosmos and nature. Another belief is Shakti takes on different forms for example Kali and Durga and allows us to manipulate her from being domestic to being Durga and she is "mother's goddess". Shakti is all feminine power and represents power within nature. ~~Shakti is~~ Durga the belief that she takes this form when men exploit her.

Shakti is associated with Shiva and she is associated with RTA with the belief of due to Shiva men being ~~are~~ powerless without her, Shiva and Shakti are often syncretised as being half and half each, not as there is both female and male power within Samsara.

Shakti is also believed to have elements such as pleasure, love, money and other desirable qualities of small traditional Lakshmi in beauty.

(Total for Question 1 = 8 marks)

1 Explore key beliefs associated with Shakti.

Shakti is "the female power in the universe" as said by Jamieson. She is the "mother Goddess" and wife or co-part of Shiva, God of destruction.

Shakti means 'Strength' and this is what is commonly associated with Shakti. Shakti empowers 'Durga' who is the warrior Goddess and "Kali" who is the Goddess of time and space.

Shakti Shaktites believe that Shakti the power in the universe is female. They use Shakti as a channel for worship of Brahman.

Shakti ~~can~~ often is depicted as half Shiva and half Shakti to show the balance of the universe. Though she is not of the trimurti, she is the counterpart to Shiva.

~~Durga~~ Shakti is worshipped in different parts of India ~~and~~ as are her counterparts such as Durga and Parvati. In myth, Shakti Parvati is considered the mother of Ganesha.

Shakti ~~can~~ may promote the idea of 'Ahimsa' which is the practice of non-violence.



These two scripts represent the highest levels.
These answers were both awarded 8 marks

They are good because:

- they focused on key beliefs throughout their answers
- they highlighted the significance of information where relevant
- candidates balanced breadth and detail
- they incorporated closely related material.

Question 2

This combines AO1 with AO2 and AO1 underpins the candidates' assessment of the importance of maintaining cosmic order. The question refers to beliefs and practices and if a candidate examined one of these only they could not normally proceed beyond Level 2. It was good practice to amplify the expression 'cosmic order' which typically candidates did by reference to *ṛta* as being the basis of dharma. Candidates considered order in nature and in the cosmos coupled with the significance of the role of deities especially Varuna with implications for ethical and social order drawing on some Vedic texts. Some candidates referred to *varnashrama-dharma* as exemplifying social order. Rituals performed by priests including fire sacrifices to Agni were seen as good exemplars. Karma was stressed to be critically important in this context. Candidates commented that some of these beliefs and practices were no longer as important as they were.

2 Assess the importance of the beliefs and practices associated with maintaining cosmic order.

Such beliefs and practices that are associated with maintaining cosmic order is the Vedic God Varuna, who is the God of the rain and ocean and is believed to govern *rita* which is the belief originating from the Vedas of eternal order and keeping things in order, such as the seasons. Also associated is the Vedic sacrifice, in which offerings were made in order to protect *rita* and sustain the universe.

Firstly, the Vedic sacrifice ~~asa~~, called *Yajna*, associated with maintaining cosmic order is important to an extent as *Yajna* is still practised by Hindus today through a ceremony called a *Havan* - worship through the use of a fire. Therefore, offerings are still made to the Gods by Hindus today, which therefore consequently, govern *rita* and maintain the cosmic order. Furthermore, there is a book that is part of the Vedas (the words of God) - the *Yajur Veda Samhita* which gives instructions that are chanted by priests to maintain cosmic orders. This is important as the Vedas are the words of God and of the highest authority and cannot be undermined.

However, having said this, it is possible to argue that these beliefs are no longer important as the *Yajur Veda* is not well read by Hindus. Furthermore, only the priests could carry out ceremonies to maintain cosmic order and not all Hindus can take part, only those belonging

to the Brahmin varna and studying the Vedas can maintain cosmic order. The yajna ceremony can be seen as archaic as it is based on ancient traditions and therefore not important. Furthermore belief in the Vedic God varuna can be seen as outdated, however he is still prayed to widely by Hindus as he provides rain and therefore can be seen as very important.

In conclusion, on the whole beliefs and practices associated with maintaining cosmic order are generally ~~to~~ not important to Hindus today. The Vedic sacrifices, while still practised through a Havan are not as elaborate as before, thus are not important. The beliefs are mostly archaic thus are not important. Hindus tend to focus on their dharma and society rather than maintaining cosmic order.

2 Assess the importance of the beliefs and practices associated with maintaining cosmic order.

Maintaining the cosmic order relates to the idea of fulfilling a person's dharma. Rta is balance in the universe, this is maintained by Agni, the god of fire, ^{interceded} delivering ~~sacrif~~ to the gods from Hindus, which ~~genera~~ energises the gods. Once the gods have been energised, this performs Yajna, the Hindu Ceremony. The act of Yajna protects Rta, therefore keeping the cosmic order in fact. Agni is the keeper and protector of Rta. Rta literally means 'order'. This idea is reflected in the Vedas.

This is important to Hindus as they believed if they did not make offerings to the gods, the cosmic order would fail and the world would no longer function, ~~because~~ as Agni could no longer protect Rta, as the gods would not be energised.

However, to modern Hindus, these rituals have lost their meaning, and importance and Yajna is no longer a crucial ceremony to modern day Hindus. They still believe that Rta keeps the cosmic order however the idea that this is due to the energising of the gods, lacks significance. Rituals have become less significant to modern Hindus as they are harder to ^{concepts} grasp in the modern day, and less crucial to be performed. ³ ~~represents~~ more to ancient beliefs and understandings which ^{have developed} ^{turn over} over decades and have been

perlokod.

Yajna is seen as an important thing to Hindus as Agni is the preserver, therefore holds great significance to their religion. If the Gods were not energised due to no offerings then there would be no order in the world, as the Gods will not be pleased, therefore breaking Rta. This to some means that they will no longer have a purpose if Rta no longer functions as the world will have no order, as they believe in dharma, and that they are duties that must be followed, thus maintaining order in the universe, and that this is their prime goal in life, without being able to fulfil their dharma, they will not achieve Moksha.

(Total for Question 2 = 9 marks)



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

These two answers are from the highest levels.
These answers were both awarded 9 marks.

They are good because:

- candidates focused on the key ideas in the question
- they selected their material so that it was all relevant to the question
- candidates made sensible use of important text and thinkers
- there was critical discussion about the importance or otherwise of some practices linked to this topic.

Question 3

This combines AO1 and AO2 assessing the claim that the ideal destiny is moksha. Candidates presented some interpretations of moksha and those who scored higher marks drew distinctions between liberation from samsara and union with Brahman. An assessment of karma was a popular and relevant feature of these answers. It was good practice for candidates to refer to other parts of the AS Spec including bhakti yoga and its aims. Candidates made evaluative comments about the significance of the expression 'ideal' in the question. For example, some argued that moksha was not ideal, given the significance of duty to others, or that it was an unrealistic aim. It was not required at AS but candidates were credited with a range of knowledge when they produced relevant material on Advaita Vedanta and Vishishatvaida.

3 Assess the view that the ideal destiny for Hindus, beyond death, is moksha.

There are two views of moksha, a moksha taught by advaita vedanta as a moksha with Brahman saguna and described by Eckhart Tolle as "a void beyond God". There is another view, taught by vishishadvaita vedanta which is a ~~as a~~ time with Brahman saguna.

A weakness with ^{the view of} moksha taught by Ramana in vishishadvaita vedanta is that ^{as a} ~~it is a~~ paradox; they want time with God but outside in the transcendent.

Another weakness of ~~a~~ dualist moksha ^{view} is they believe it is time with Brahman saguna, therefore it is anthropocentric as they are giving Brahman qualities.

A strength of moksha the view that moksha is the ideal destiny beyond death is that it has been divinely ordained. Krishna in the Gita states "let him

bring aid unto us", this suggests the liberation of the atman which is taught in Shankara's *advaita vedanta*.

Another strength of the view that *moksha* is the ideal destiny after death is that Hindus believe doing their *dharma* can help them achieve *moksha*, which is stated in the *Gita* by Krishna who says "do your *dharma* and fight".

3 Assess the view that the ideal destiny for Hindus, beyond death, is moksha.

The majority of Hindu beliefs and practices all aim towards moksha and liberation from samsara. This is shown in the 4 purusharthas, kama (sensual pleasure), artha (lawful money making), dharma (duty) and moksha. There are the 4 aims of a Hindu's life, and by following kama, artha and dharma, you are heading in the right path towards moksha.

It is also shown in the 4 types of yoga, which are believed to be individual paths to Moksha. Karma yoga is selfless good actions, bhakti yoga is loving devotion, jnana yoga is knowledge/renunciation, and raja yoga is self control. Through any of these 4 paths, alongside following the 4 purusharthas it is believed you are closer to getting your soul released from samsara, and therefore reaching Moksha.

Moksha is the ideal destination for Hindus, as throughout their lives they aim towards good karma, which adds up in their sanchita karma and determines whether they'll get a 'holiday' in a heavenly realm, or they'll be reborn into an animal, insect, bird etc. However these outcomes are not ideal for a Hindu, because ideally Hindus want to escape samsara and become one

karma yoga.
bhakti
jnana
raja.

purusharthas.

kama, artha, dharma
moksha
atman + Brahman

with Brahman.

The 4 purnaharas and the 4 gargas, along with the importance of following their varnashramadharma and their santanadharma, all lead towards Moksha, which confirms the belief that Moksha is the ideal destination for Hindus, as they live their life accordingly.

(Total for Question 3 = 9 marks)

TOTAL FOR SECTION A = 26 MARKS

$$\begin{array}{r} 135 \\ 235 \\ 317 \\ \hline 87 \end{array}$$

$$\frac{162}{87}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 14 \\ 54 \\ 54 \\ 54 \\ \hline 162 \end{array}$$



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

These two scripts represent standards at the highest levels. These answers were both awarded 9 marks. They are good because:

- there was a clear exposition of the meaning of key terms
- they were well-structured
- they incorporated an appropriate range of ideas and beliefs
- there was explicit evidence of A02 work.

Question 4

Question 4(a)

This AO1 part required a candidate's understanding of the differences between shruti and smriti texts. Candidates were knowledgeable about the revealed texts such as the Vedas and Upanishads compared to the indirect form of revelation and human source of scriptures such as the Epics including the Mahabharata.

Question 4(b)

This question has the highest marks across the whole paper with 20 marks including 5 for AO1 and 15 for AO2. The cumulative score includes both AOs and does not differentiate between them. Candidates focused on the expression, 'significance' and in this context the Upanishads as shruti is important. Although not a requirement, candidates were credited when they referred to various examples of teachings used in the Upanishads. Candidates displayed good practice in their analysis of key terms such as atman, Brahman, karma, dharma and reincarnation. Most candidates developed their understanding of significance with reference to the influence of the Upanishads across a range of traditions, including both monistic and theistic schools. Evaluative discussions about the significance of the Upanishads included reference to the Bhagavad Gita as a supreme text.

4 (a) Explore the differences between smriti and shruti texts.

(8)

Shruti texts are those which are heard, whereas smriti texts are those which are memorised or remembered. Shruti texts are believed to be of a higher authority than those of smriti as shruti are the words of God, they have no errors and they are truth. They are of the highest authority and cannot be undermined. An example of shruti is the vedas, meaning that shruti texts are not available to all. Only the Brahmin varna can study and teach the vedas. Shruti texts are also examples of experiences of the Gods. The truths that shruti texts contain are eternal and timeless and it is believed no one invented or created them.

Smriti texts, in contrast to shruti which were not made, are man-made, therefore unlike shruti they may be fallible and have errors. Smriti texts are less important than shruti and are to be ignored completely if they contradict shruti.

Smriti texts did not originate from a divine power like shruti so are not as important. Whereas shruti texts are not accessible to all, smriti texts present moral lessons and philosophical teachings in a narrative format, which means that it is easier to understand Hindu philosophical concepts. Examples of smriti texts are the laws books, which provides Hindus with a code of conduct to follow and the Ramayana, which is the story of Rama which can be presented through plays and TV news. Smriti texts are a lot more flexible than shruti and easy to understand.

The Upanishads is the last section ~~and~~ of the Vedas (ancient Hindu scriptures) therefore the Upanishads are ~~smriti~~ ^{shruti} texts - they are heard as they are the words of God. The Upanishads focuses on the universal soul, known as Brahman and the personal and eternal soul, known as the Atman.

The focus on the nature of Brahman and Atman can be seen as significant (consequently highlighting the importance of the Upanishads) because the union of Brahman and Atman leads to liberation from the cycle of Samsara - ~~Monsa~~ ^{Moksha}, which is the ultimate aim of a Hindu's life. Therefore it can be argued that a study of the Upanishads enables liberation to occur as this can only be done when a Hindu realises the identical nature of Atman and Brahman. Given that the Upanishads focuses on this concept, it enables ~~peol~~ ^{real} Hindus to gain an insight into the relationship between the universal and personal soul, making it ~~easier~~ ^{more} understandable for Hindus so they can achieve Moksha. Therefore the Upanishads can be seen as significant as, in effect, reading and understanding them can help Hindus to attain Moksha.

Furthermore, the Upanishads are significant because they are a ~~a~~ ^{shruti} texts and part of the Vedas, which are the words of God. Thus this makes the Upanishads highly

significant as they are of the highest authority and cannot be questioned. In addition, the truths contained in God's words and the Upanishads are eternal and timeless - no one invented or created them. They simply have no errors, therefore it can be argued that the Upanishads are of the highest significance.

Moreover, the Upanishads contain the Vedanta Sutras, which is the last part of the Vedas. These are widely used and studied in Hindu Vedanta philosophical schools, therefore the Upanishads are widely regarded by Hindus and can be seen as significant.

However, given that the Upanishads are Shrutis texts they can only be read and studied by the Brahmin Varna; therefore they are not accessible to all and can only be interpreted by the help of a Guru. Therefore, given that they are not accessible to all, the Upanishads are not significant to all Hindus. In fact, many modern Hindus do not read the Vedas, thus do not read the Upanishads, therefore they cannot be significant to them.

Also, some ~~modern~~ non-Hindu scholars have questioned the authenticity of the Vedas as being the words of God, they believe this not to be true.

and believed their meaning was changed overtime

as they were written down, therefore the Upanishads

may not be genuine and cannot be regarded as

significant.

4 (a) Explore the differences between smriti and shruti texts.

(8)

Shruti texts are texts 'that which can be heard', and are believed to be the most important texts as they are not of human origin but have been passed down by the rishis who heard the texts directly from the gods themselves. Whereas smriti texts are 'that which is remembered' and are made of human origin, thus making them fallible in comparison and must be ignored if they contradict shruti texts as shruti texts are the words of God.

Shruti texts ~~are~~ ^{can only} be studied by those high up in the varna system, or known only by Brahmins, as they ~~need~~ ^{need} the assistance of a guru to understand which is not possible to gain by every Hindu. Whereas for smriti texts, their narrative form makes them very easy to understand and accessible to all as they have even been made into cartoon form in order to be taught to kids.

Shruti texts reveal the values of the Hindu religion and the major principles that should guide a Hindu's life, whereas for smriti texts they provide virtues, character traits and ideas that should be followed by Hindus for daily life guidance, as their stories such as the Ramayana teach Hindu ~~teach~~ ^{teach} morals that they should abide to.

provide many of the different
scholarly viewpoints on Hinduism
e.g. Sankhya, Ramayana

may be further
systematized by Vedanta

R

Sign. Vedic - most of text is fallible
collaborative explanation of principles and story.
(b) Analyse the significance of the Upanishads.

Sign. Vedic - most of text is fallible
added later, story telling
too philosophical
(20) Vedanta

As the Upanishads are short texts they can be seen as very significant as they are not of human origin but have been revealed to the rishis by Brahman himself, thus making them significant as they are infallible and hold eternal truths that cannot be denied. The Upanishads are the philosophical sections of the Vedas which provide principles and stories to help Hindus understand and guide their lives in accordance to God's wishes, thus making them significant as they must be followed by every Hindu and play an important role in determining how a Hindu should live their life.

The Upanishads are also significant as they lead to provide Hindus with different scholarly views as they led to the Vedanta, with Sankhya and Ramayana providing different points of views of how Hindus should view the world, on the basis of what is said in the Upanishads therefore making them significant as they are still highly relevant today.

However, they are limited in their significance due to the fact that some Hindus view the Upanishads as too philosophical due to its story telling and claim it adds little value to a Hindu's life as they are

unable to use it within their conduct as they are able to with the Samhitas and Brahmanas which provides chants and ritualistic teachings that Hindus can actually physically follow. Furthermore, as the Upanishads are short texts their significance is further limited as they can not be accessed by all Hindus as they require the help of a Guru to understand their philosophical nature, thus making them insignificant in comparison to philosophical Smriti texts as they cannot be used or studied by all.

Another issue with the significance of the Upanishads is the fact that due to their philosophical nature, they had to be further systemised to help understanding through scholarly commentaries at the end of the Upanishads known as Vedantas. The fact that the Upanishads could not be understood on their own demonstrates its limited significance as it shows that its work may be too philosophical to have been used. Furthermore, as there are several different scholarly commentaries such as the differing thoughts of Shankara, Medha and Ramana, it demonstrates that the Upanishads can be interpreted differently. Thus limiting its significance as the texts are clearly not concise enough to be understood in one way and could lead to viewpoints being followed that were not

The intention of the Gods.

Finally, the significance of the Upanishads is limited in the fact that the Upanishads were written in the Sanskrit language, which is known to be a dying language and has not yet been translated into English like Smriti texts have been, therefore demonstrating the weakness of the Upanishads' significance as there is the suggestion that the Upanishads will eventually be unusable as no one will be able to read the language. Furthermore, the fact that Smriti texts have been translated and not the Upanishads could suggest that the Upanishads are simply not as relevant to modern day Hinduism.

In conclusion, although the Upanishads are automatically significant as they are Smriti texts, making them the words of God that must be followed, the Upanishads have a significance that is limited by the fact that it's philosophical nature must be further explained for understanding, can be interpreted in very different ways and is not accessible to every Hindu, thus making it seemingly insignificant as it can't be followed by ~~Hindus~~ ~~all~~ ~~Hindus~~ most Hindus as one third of Hindus in India belong to the Shudra varna which are unable to gain

allies to the upanishads.



These two scripts represent standards at the highest levels.

These answers were both awarded 28 marks each in total:

Q4(a) 8 marks

Q4(b) 20 marks

They are good because:

- they clarified the meaning of key terms
- they highlighted important distinctions
- there was effective use of significant themes and beliefs
- candidates selected specific examples from the texts to illustrate their points
- a range of scholarly views were employed and there was evidence of critical appraisal.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Focus on the precise wording of the questions.
- Some questions include details about 2 or more topics. Question 1 for example refers to 'beliefs and practices'. The mark scheme states that if candidates explore only one of these topics they cannot normally proceed beyond level 2.
- Candidates are encouraged to link across other AS boxes in this component where there is relevant material. For example question 2 refers to cosmic order and this comes from box 3.1 (a) and in addition box 1.3 (a) refers to karma.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

