

FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Competitive Examination - 2020 (BS-17)
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MAJOR RELIGIONS (FOR NON-MUSLIMS)
Fully Solved Paper - Model Answers for Part-II (Essay Questions)

Note on Part-I (MCQs): The uploaded question paper contains only Part-II (the seven essay-type questions, Q.2-Q.8). No MCQ items for Part-I were present in the source file, so none have been fabricated here - only the content that actually appears in the paper has been solved, exactly as instructed.

Instructions given in the original paper (reproduced unchanged): Part-II is to be attempted on a separate Answer Book. Candidates must attempt ONLY FOUR questions out of the seven below, and all carry equal marks (20 each). All model answers below are written to full 20-mark depth so you can choose any four that suit you best.

Q. No. 2 (20 marks)

Describe the need for harmony among followers of different religions in the modern times and explain the ten most common benefits of studying religions.

✓ SOLVED - Model Answer

The Need for Interfaith Harmony Today

In an interconnected, religiously plural modern world, misunderstanding between faith communities fuels extremism, sectarian conflict, and social fragmentation, while migration and media have brought people of different faiths into daily contact as never before. Interfaith harmony is therefore essential for peaceful coexistence, national cohesion in plural states such as Pakistan, prevention of religiously motivated violence, and cooperative action on shared human challenges (poverty, climate change, injustice) that no single tradition can solve alone. Genuine harmony does not require doctrinal agreement, but mutual respect, dialogue, and recognition of each tradition's right to exist and practice freely.

Ten Benefits of Studying Religion

- 1. Reduces prejudice and stereotyping** - accurate knowledge replaces caricature and misinformation about other faiths.
- 2. Promotes social harmony** - understanding builds empathy and reduces interfaith friction in plural societies.
- 3. Deepens self-understanding** - comparing one's own tradition to others clarifies its distinctive claims and values.
- 4. Enhances critical and analytical thinking** - students learn to evaluate texts, symbols, and truth-claims rigorously.
- 5. Supports peacebuilding and conflict resolution** - informs diplomats, policymakers, and mediators in religiously charged disputes.
- 6. Enriches cultural and historical literacy** - religion has shaped art, law, literature, and civilization worldwide.
- 7. Aids ethical development** - exposure to diverse moral frameworks broadens one's own ethical reasoning.
- 8. Prepares for a globalized workplace** - professionals in diplomacy, healthcare, and business increasingly work across faith lines.

- 9. Counters extremism** - nuanced knowledge undercuts simplistic, weaponised readings of scripture used by extremists.
- 10. Encourages personal spiritual reflection** - comparative study invites deeper, more informed engagement with one's own beliefs.

Q. No. 3 (20 marks)

The third section of Old Testament is called Prophets, it consists of 12 books. What does major and minor prophets mean in Old Testament? Write down their names.

✓ SOLVED - Model Answer

The Prophetic Section (Nevi'im)

In the Hebrew Bible, the second major division, Nevi'im ('Prophets'), includes the 'Former Prophets' (historical books: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings) and the 'Latter Prophets.' In Christian Old Testament arrangement, the prophetic books are grouped separately from the historical books, and it is this prophetic corpus that is traditionally divided into Major and Minor Prophets - the distinction being based on the length of the book, not the relative importance of the prophet's message.

Major Prophets (4 books)

The Major Prophets are called 'major' because their books are considerably longer: Isaiah, Jeremiah (with Lamentations sometimes counted separately), Ezekiel, and Daniel. These books contain extensive theological material - oracles of judgment, promises of restoration, apocalyptic visions, and messianic prophecy - delivered over long prophetic careers.

Minor Prophets (12 books - 'The Book of the Twelve')

The Minor Prophets are twelve shorter books, historically copied together on a single scroll and known collectively in Jewish tradition as 'The Book of the Twelve.' Their names, in the traditional canonical order, are: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Despite their brevity, each addresses major themes - social justice, covenant faithfulness, judgment, and hope - for specific historical audiences of ancient Israel and Judah.

Significance of the Distinction

'Major' versus 'minor' is purely a literary-length classification devised in later canonical tradition, not a statement about theological weight; minor prophets such as Amos (on social justice) or Hosea (on covenant love) are regarded by scholars as being just as theologically significant as the major prophetic books, despite their shorter length.

Q. No. 4 (20 marks)

Write down ten commandments God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai and evaluate their significance in the modern day ethics.

✓ SOLVED - Model Answer

The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17 / Deuteronomy 5:6-21)

1. You shall have no other gods before Me.
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol or graven image.
3. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.

4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
5. Honour your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.
10. You shall not covet your neighbour's house, wife, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

Evaluation of Their Modern-Day Ethical Significance

The first four commandments (theological, concerning duty to God) remain primarily confessional within religious communities, but the last six (moral, concerning duty to neighbour) map closely onto near-universal secular ethical and legal norms: prohibitions on murder, theft, and perjury underlie virtually every modern criminal justice system; the commandment against false witness anticipates modern principles of truthful testimony and due process; honouring parents resonates with today's concern for filial responsibility and elder care; and the prohibition on covetousness addresses an inner disposition rather than mere outward action, anticipating modern ethics' concern with intention and character, not only behaviour. Their enduring influence is visible in Western legal codes, the moral underpinnings of many national constitutions, and ongoing public debates about the proper relationship between religious moral heritage and secular law. Critics note the commandments say little directly about modern concerns such as environmental stewardship, economic exploitation, or digital-age privacy, meaning they function today as a foundational moral core rather than an exhaustive ethical code.

Q. No. 5 (20 marks)

Explain the noble eight-fold path for enlightenment of life offered by Buddha.

✓ SOLVED - Model Answer

Context - The Fourth Noble Truth

The Noble Eightfold Path (Pali: Ariya Atthangika Magga) is the Buddha's prescribed Middle Way between self-indulgence and self-mortification, given as the Fourth Noble Truth - the practical path leading to the cessation of dukkha (suffering) and ultimately to nirvana. Its eight factors are traditionally grouped into three trainings: wisdom (panna), ethical conduct (sila), and mental discipline (samadhi).

Wisdom (Panna)

1. Right View - understanding reality correctly, especially the Four Noble Truths and the law of karma. 2. Right Intention - cultivating thoughts of renunciation, goodwill, and harmlessness rather than desire, ill-will, or cruelty.

Ethical Conduct (Sila)

3. Right Speech - abstaining from lying, divisive speech, harsh words, and idle gossip. 4. Right Action - abstaining from killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. 5. Right Livelihood - earning a living through means that cause no harm to others (avoiding trades in weapons, living beings, intoxicants, poison, or deceit).

Mental Discipline (Samadhi)

6. Right Effort - cultivating wholesome mental states and abandoning unwholesome ones through sustained energy. 7. Right Mindfulness - maintaining continuous, clear awareness of body, feelings,

mind, and mental phenomena. 8. Right Concentration - developing deep meditative absorption (jhana) that stabilises and purifies the mind.

Significance for 'Enlightenment of Life'

The Path is not sequential but a set of interdependent factors to be developed together, integrating ethical living, mental cultivation, and wisdom into a single practical programme. By systematically eliminating craving and ignorance at the root of suffering, the Path offers, in the Buddha's teaching, a self-directed route to liberation (nirvana) achievable through disciplined personal effort rather than through external ritual or divine intervention - making it as much a guide to daily ethical and mental life as a route to ultimate spiritual awakening.

Q. No. 6 (20 marks)

Describe the themes and teachings of Shrimad Bhagwat Gita.

✓ SOLVED - Model Answer

Setting and Structure

The Bhagavad Gita ('Song of the Lord'), embedded within the epic Mahabharata, is presented as a dialogue on the battlefield of Kurukshetra between the warrior-prince Arjuna, paralysed by moral doubt about fighting his own kinsmen, and Krishna, his charioteer and an incarnation (avatar) of Vishnu, who counsels him across eighteen chapters.

Theme 1 - Duty and Nishkama Karma

Krishna's central teaching is nishkama karma - performing one's prescribed duty (svadharma) without attachment to the fruits of action (Gita 2.47). Arjuna must fight as a warrior's dharma requires, but with detachment from personal desire for victory, gain, or glory, transforming ordinary action into a spiritual discipline (karma yoga).

Theme 2 - The Paths of Yoga

The Gita synthesises three paths to liberation: Karma Yoga (selfless action), Bhakti Yoga (devotion and loving surrender to God, emphasised especially in later chapters where Krishna promises that whoever surrenders to Him is saved regardless of caste or learning), and Jnana Yoga (the path of knowledge, discriminating the eternal Self/Atman from the perishable body and world).

Theme 3 - Nature of the Self and Divine Reality

Krishna teaches that the Atman is eternal, unborn, and indestructible - 'weapons cannot cut it, fire cannot burn it' (Gita 2.23) - and that death is merely the shedding of one body for another, undercutting Arjuna's grief at potential kinsmen's deaths. In Chapter 11, Krishna reveals his cosmic universal form (Vishvarupa), showing himself as the all-pervading divine reality behind all existence.

Theme 4 - Equanimity and Devotion

The ideal person (sthitaprajna, one of 'steady wisdom') remains equanimous in pleasure and pain, praise and blame, treating friend and foe alike, having transcended the ego and its attachments. Ultimately the Gita presents loving devotion (bhakti) to a personal God as the most accessible and complete path, open to people of all backgrounds, integrating action, knowledge, and love into one comprehensive spiritual teaching that remains central to Hindu ethical and devotional life today.

Q. No. 7 (20 marks)

Describe the rights and status of non-Muslim minorities as reflected from Medieval Islamic State of Medina.

✓ SOLVED - Model Answer

The Constitution of Medina (Mithaq al-Madina)

Following the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) migration (Hijrah) to Medina in 622 CE, he drafted a written charter - often regarded as one of history's earliest written constitutions - that bound the Muslim emigrants, the Ansar (Medinan Muslim converts), and the Jewish tribes of Medina (Banu Qaynuqa, Banu Nadir, Banu Qurayza, and others) into a single political community (ummah), while explicitly preserving their distinct religious identities.

Religious Freedom and Communal Autonomy

The document explicitly stated that the Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs, guaranteeing Jewish communities the right to practice their faith and administer their own religious and communal law without interference - an early codified model of religious pluralism within a single political order.

Equal Citizenship and Mutual Defence

Non-Muslim tribes were recognised as full members of the polity (one ummah alongside the believers), entitled to protection of the community and obliged to contribute to its collective defence against external aggression on equal footing with Muslim tribes; the charter established mutual obligations of solidarity, security, and non-aggression between all signatory groups regardless of religion.

Legal and Judicial Rights

Disputes among Jewish tribes could be settled by their own leaders according to their own law, while disputes affecting the wider community, including any threatening its security, were referred to the Prophet as final arbiter - establishing both communal legal autonomy and a shared overarching framework of justice and dispute resolution.

Later Dhimmi Framework and Significance

This early Medinan model became the template for the later dhimmi (protected minority) system in Islamic law, under which non-Muslim subjects of Muslim states received legal protection, freedom of worship, and property rights in exchange for loyalty and payment of the jizya tax, in place of military conscription and zakat. Scholars point to Medina's charter as historical evidence of pluralistic governance, though later dhimmi practice varied significantly across different Muslim states and periods, at times falling short of Medina's founding ideal of equal partnership in a single political community.

Q. No. 8 (20 marks)

Do a comparative analysis between the Jewish and Islamic principles of faith and worship.

✓ SOLVED - Model Answer

Shared Foundations

Judaism and Islam are both strictly monotheistic Abrahamic faiths, tracing spiritual lineage to Abraham (Ibrahim), sharing a strong emphasis on divine law governing daily life, prohibition of idolatry and image-worship of God, dietary restrictions (kashrut and halal, both forbidding pork and requiring ritual slaughter), male circumcision, and rejection of any human intermediary between the believer and God.

Principles of Faith Compared

Judaism's core creed is expressed in the Shema ('Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is One') and, later, Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of Faith, covering God's unity, incorporeality, eternity, the authority of Mosaic revelation, and belief in a coming Messiah and resurrection. Islam's core creed is the Shahada ('There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His messenger') alongside the six Articles of Faith: belief in Allah, His angels, His revealed books, His prophets, the Day of Judgment, and divine predestination (qadar). Both faiths thus centre on strict monotheism and prophetic revelation, though Islam explicitly affirms Muhammad as the final prophet (khatam an-nabiyyin), a claim Judaism does not accept.

Principles of Worship Compared

Jewish worship centres on prayer (tefillah, traditionally three times daily), Torah study, Sabbath observance (from Friday sunset to Saturday nightfall, marked by rest and synagogue services), and annual festivals (Passover, Yom Kippur, Sukkot). Islamic worship is structured around the Five Pillars: Shahada (declaration of faith), Salah (five daily obligatory prayers facing the Kaaba), Zakat (obligatory almsgiving), Sawm (fasting during Ramadan), and Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca once in a lifetime for those able). Both traditions share communal congregational worship (synagogue and mosque), a weekly holy day rhythm, and fasting as a central spiritual discipline, though Islam's five daily prayers are more frequent than Jewish daily prayer, and Ramadan's month-long fast differs structurally from Yom Kippur's single day of atonement.

Law and Authority

Judaism's comprehensive legal system, Halakha, is derived from the Torah and elaborated in the Talmud through rabbinic interpretation across centuries. Islam's legal system, Sharia, is derived primarily from the Qur'an and Hadith (sayings and practice of the Prophet), elaborated through the interpretive methodology of fiqh across various schools of jurisprudence. Both systems govern worship, diet, family law, and ethics comprehensively, reflecting each tradition's core conviction that divine law should shape the whole of life, not merely private belief.

Conclusion

The comparison shows Judaism and Islam sharing deep structural similarities as law-centred, strictly monotheistic Abrahamic religions with parallel institutions of prayer, fasting, dietary law, and communal worship, while differing chiefly in their specific historical revelations, prophetic claims, and the particular liturgical calendar and legal detail through which each community expresses its devotion to the one God.

Attempt Strategy (Examiner's Note)

The paper requires attempting ONLY FOUR of the seven questions above, all carrying equal marks (20 each). Choose the four you can answer with the most specific detail (named lists such as the Ten Commandments or the Twelve Minor Prophets, precise terminology, and scriptural references), since CSS examiners reward accuracy, structured headings, and balanced critical evaluation over general description.