

Cambridge International AS & A Level

HINDUISM

9487/01

Paper 1 Concepts in Hinduism

October/November 2025

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 60

Published

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and candidates, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which Examiners were instructed to award marks. It does not indicate the details of the discussions that took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking began, which would have considered the acceptability of alternative answers.

Mark schemes should be read in conjunction with the question paper and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

Cambridge International will not enter into discussions about these mark schemes.

Cambridge International is publishing the mark schemes for the October/November 2025 series for most Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge International A and AS Level components, and some Cambridge O Level components.

This document consists of **20** printed pages.

Generic Marking Principles

These general marking principles must be applied by all examiners when marking candidate answers. They should be applied alongside the specific content of the mark scheme or generic level descriptions for a question. Each question paper and mark scheme will also comply with these marking principles.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 1:

Marks must be awarded in line with:

- the specific content of the mark scheme or the generic level descriptors for the question
- the specific skills defined in the mark scheme or in the generic level descriptors for the question
- the standard of response required by a candidate as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 2:

Marks awarded are always **whole marks** (not half marks, or other fractions).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 3:

Marks must be awarded **positively**:

- marks are awarded for correct/valid answers, as defined in the mark scheme. However, credit is given for valid answers which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme, referring to your Team Leader as appropriate
- marks are awarded when candidates clearly demonstrate what they know and can do
- marks are not deducted for errors
- marks are not deducted for omissions
- answers should only be judged on the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar when these features are specifically assessed by the question as indicated by the mark scheme. The meaning, however, should be unambiguous.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 4:

Rules must be applied consistently, e.g. in situations where candidates have not followed instructions or in the application of generic level descriptors.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 5:

Marks should be awarded using the full range of marks defined in the mark scheme for the question (however; the use of the full mark range may be limited according to the quality of the candidate responses seen).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 6:

Marks awarded are based solely on the requirements as defined in the mark scheme. Marks should not be awarded with grade thresholds or grade descriptors in mind.

Annotations guidance for centres

Examiners use a system of annotations as a shorthand for communicating their marking decisions to one another. Examiners are trained during the standardisation process on how and when to use annotations. The purpose of annotations is to inform the standardisation and monitoring processes and guide the supervising examiners when they are checking the work of examiners within their team. The meaning of annotations and how they are used is specific to each component and is understood by all examiners who mark the component.

We publish annotations in our mark schemes to help centres understand the annotations they may see on copies of scripts. Note that there may not be a direct correlation between the number of annotations on a script and the mark awarded. Similarly, the use of an annotation may not be an indication of the quality of the response.

The annotations listed below were available to examiners marking this component in this series.

Annotations

Annotation	Meaning
N/A	Highlighting areas of text
N/A	Allows comments to be entered in speech bubbles on the candidate response.
N/A	Allows comments to be entered at the bottom of the RM marking window and then displayed when the associated question item is navigated to.
L1	Level one
L2	Level two
L3	Level three
L4	Level four
L5	Level five
SEEN	Indicates that the point has been noted, but no credit has been given.
EVAL	Evaluation

Generic Levels of response descriptions

These level descriptors address Assessment Objectives (AOs) 1 and 2 and should be used in conjunction with the indicative content for each question in the mark scheme.

Assessment Objectives

AO1: Knowledge and understanding

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of teachings, beliefs and practices, including relevance for individual Hindus and communities.

AO2: Analysis and evaluation

Analyse, evaluate and discuss evidence, points of view and issues in Hinduism.

Generic marking principles

- a) Examiners should use the performance summary statements at the top of the descriptors to help to identify a level which matches the candidate's response. However, the final decision on the band and the mark within the band should be made on the basis of **all** the descriptors in the level and not primarily using the performance summary statement.
- b) Examiners should start at the lowest level, if the answer meets all the criteria they should then move to the next level and so on. The Examiner should repeat this process until there is a match between the overall answer and the level descriptor. Examiners should use a best-fit approach when deciding upon the level, it is possible for a different level to be chosen for each AO.
- c) If the Examiner identifies all aspects of the level descriptor within the answer then the highest mark for the level should be given. Examiners should also make reference to the indicative content when deciding on the mark within a level to ensure that there is sufficient relevant content evident within the answer for the level and mark. Examiners should be prepared to credit material in answers which is not contained in the indicative content.
- d) The Examiner may need to make a judgement within a level or between two or more level statements. Once a 'best-fit' level statement has been identified, use the following guidance to decide on a specific mark:
 - Where the candidate's work **convincingly** meets the level statement, you should award the highest mark.
 - Where the candidate's work **adequately** meets the level statement, you should award the most appropriate mark in the middle of the range.
 - Where the candidate's work **just** meets the level statement, you should award the lowest mark.

5 mark questions

Level	AO1 Knowledge and understanding	Marks
Level 3	<p>Accurate knowledge with good understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a range of detailed, accurate and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates understanding through a well-developed response. • Fully addresses the question. • Good understanding of the wider context, if relevant. 	5
Level 2	<p>Partially accurate knowledge with limited understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a range of knowledge which may be partially accurate. • Demonstrates limited understanding through a partially developed response. • Addresses some aspects of the question. • Attempts to engage with the wider context, if relevant. 	3–4
Level 1	<p>Basic knowledge and basic understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies a limited range of knowledge which may not be accurate. • Demonstrates basic understanding through a limited response. • Response is relevant to the topic but does not directly address the question. • Little or no reference to the wider context, if relevant. 	1–2
Level 0	No relevant material to credit.	0

10 mark questions

Level	AO1 Knowledge and understanding	Marks
Level 4	<p>Accurate knowledge with good understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a range of detailed, accurate and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates understanding through a well-developed response. • Fully addresses the question. • Good understanding of the wider context, if relevant. 	9–10
Level 3	<p>Mostly accurate knowledge with some understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a range of mostly accurate and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates understanding through a developed response. • Addresses most aspects of the question. • Some engagement with the wider context, if relevant. 	6–8
Level 2	<p>Partially accurate knowledge with limited understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a range of knowledge which may be partially accurate. • Demonstrates limited understanding through a partially developed response. • Addresses some aspects of the question. • Attempts to engage with the wider context, if relevant. 	3–5
Level 1	<p>Basic knowledge and basic understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies a limited range of knowledge which may not be accurate. • Demonstrates basic understanding through a limited response. • Response is relevant to the topic but does not directly address the question. • Little or no reference to the wider context, if relevant. 	1–2
Level 0	No relevant material to credit.	0

15 mark questions

Level	AO2 Analysis and evaluation	Marks
Level 5	<p>Thorough discussion supported with evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyses the importance and/or strength of different arguments/points of view. Uses accurate evidence to support a well-structured discussion. Coherent conclusion to the question which evaluates knowledge and points of view and assesses alternative conclusions. 	13–15
Level 4	<p>Coherent discussion supported with evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discusses different arguments/points of view in some detail. Uses accurate evidence to support a structured discussion. Coherent conclusion to the question which evaluates knowledge and points of view. 	10–12
Level 3	<p>Clear discussion with some support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognises different arguments/points of view and discusses at least one in some detail. Uses some evidence to support discussion. Clear conclusion to the question which is linked to a range of knowledge and points of view. 	7–9
Level 2	<p>Attempts a discussion with limited support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outlines one or more argument/point of view. Uses supporting evidence for one or more relevant point. The support may not be wholly relevant or accurate. Attempts a conclusion to the question which is linked to knowledge and/or a point of view. 	4–6
Level 1	<p>Basic response with a point of view</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> States a point of view. Little or no supporting evidence. May attempt a basic conclusion, which may not directly address the question. 	1–3
Level 0	No relevant material to credit.	0

Question	Answer	Marks
1(a)	<p>‘One person being considered superior to any other is a sin against god and man. Thus caste, in so far as it indicates a distinction of status, is an evil. I do, however, believe in varna which is based on hereditary occupations. The varnas are four because they mark four universal occupations: imparting knowledge, defending the defenceless, carrying on agriculture and commerce, and performing service through physical labour. When Hindus were lazy, they abused the varna system, creating many castes, with unnecessary and harmful restrictions such as on sharing food. The law of varna has nothing to do with these restrictions. When varna is properly practised it is the best way to ensure happiness.’</p> <p>Summarise what the passage says about the concept of varna.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 5 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>It is evil/sinful for one person to assume that they are inherently better than any other person and, when caste is used to do this, that makes caste an evil thing as well.</p> <p>Varna is different, even when it is based on inherited employment. There are four universal categories of work into which everyone fits: teaching, safeguarding, trading and serving others. It is laziness that corrupts varna into castes and unnecessarily restricts how those castes can interact.</p> <p>Varna, practised as it should be, creates happiness and allows people to properly focus on their religion.</p>	5

Question	Answer	Marks
1(b)	<p>Explain the importance of 'caste' for understanding svadharma.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 10 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Svadharma is the personal dharma of an individual. Unlike Sadharana Dharma, which is universal and unchanging, svadharma is relational, conditional and can change over time. It is closely related to varnashramadharmā, which depends on a person's gender, varna (class) and ashrama or stage of life.</p> <p>Since varna and caste are sometimes considered interchangeable terms, it might seem that caste is a central element of svadharma, dictating what occupations are dharmic and the place a person holds in society. This is however a simplified view of the two concepts. Varna is central to svadharma, but it also describes a broader concept than occupation, which is what caste describes.</p> <p>Many Hindus regard the caste system as a corruption of the varna system; only four varnas are identified in the Vedas and no mention is made of people being outcaste or avarna. For some, understanding the differences between caste and varna might feel like an important duty to prevent a distorted and often negative, view of Hinduism being shared with the world.</p> <p>The association of caste with discriminatory and oppressive practices also connects with understanding dharma as entailing ethical obligations.</p> <p>Hindus seeking to live a dharmic life are likely to be concerned with virtuous or morally correct actions, and challenging abuses linked with caste status might therefore be judged an aspect of their svadharma. It is also possible that caste might be considered a more secular concept, particularly with its use in legal contexts such as the legal measures supporting scheduled castes in contemporary India. It is possible to understand the caste system without any religious understanding of dharma at all, and it is often seen as applying to non-Hindus as well; this could mean it is seen as having no direct relevance for svadharma at all.</p>	10

Question	Answer	Marks
1(c)	<p>Assess the claim that varna and ‘caste’ are entirely different concepts.</p> <p>AO2 – Analysis and Evaluation.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 15 mark level descriptors (AO2).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Varna is a Hindu term, originating within religious and philosophical texts and describing a concept of social roles in terms of religious duty. Caste is a term used by sociologists to describe the divisions or sections of a rigidly structured society, with each identified section being one caste.</p> <p>Indian society as observed during British rule is commonly presented as the clearest representation of a caste system in modern history, contributing to a common assumption that caste is a literal translation of varna; it is not; and whether caste or class are a best-fit translation in terms of meaning and context is contested. An uncritical conflation of the sociological idea of caste with the Hindu concept of varna is problematic; it would be hard to argue that there is no overlap at all since varna does divide society into groups but regarding the two terms as synonymous could be argued to be an over-simplification of both concepts.</p> <p>Castes are usually structured around a single thing, which might be wealth, occupation, inherited names/titles or ethnicity. Caste systems, where society as a whole is structured around such distinctions, are usually hierarchical, with some castes having higher status and more privileges than others. An individual person’s caste is usually determined by the caste of the family they are born into, and it cannot subsequently be changed. Level of education, access to social institutions, form of employment, marriage and other social interactions might all be determined by caste and a strict enforcing of such distinctions is usually an element of a caste system. All of these things mean that the concept of caste is often associated with inequality and oppression, and this might form the basis of an argument against it being considered a synonym for varna.</p> <p>Varna is a concept identified in Hinduism’s oldest scripture, the Rig Veda. The Purusha Sukta describes the four varnas as originating from the body of the Primal Man, and the responsibilities each group was given contribute to the smooth running of an ordered and healthy society. The Rig Veda also presents the author of one of the verses explaining that ‘I am a poet, my father is a doctor and my mother is grinder of corn; being of the same family we have different occupations’, which certainly implies that occupation was not intended to be determined by birth, but rather by natural inclination and personal qualities, thus distinguishing it from caste.</p>	15

Question	Answer	Marks
1(c)	<p>However, as practised, varna might be considered to have more in common with caste than with the scriptural ideal. At least in recent history there has been a substantial avarna group of people who are wholly outside of the varna system and, traditionally, considered ritually impure as a result. It is this ritual impurity that is the source of restrictions such as those on sharing food and/or cooking utensils, since the impurity is considered transferrable to others. It is this outcaste group who have been, and remain, subject to discrimination and abuse. For some Hindus this is evidence of the corruption of the ideal of varna and it would cease to be a problem if varna were properly understood; while for others it might be considered an inevitable result of dividing people up in any rigidly defined way, at least now that the world is in the kali yuga where adharma outweighs dharma.</p> <p>It is certainly clear that both terms deal with social structures and organisation, but which is best applied to a given real-world example varies with the interpretations and understanding of the observer, making it hard to say they are always synonyms. It seems likely that many people would not see any significant difference between them in terms of the practical, lived realities within a society, but differences certainly exist from a scholarly perspective.</p>	

Question	Answer	Marks
2(a)	<p>Outline <u>one</u> example of a situation where different dharmic obligations appear to contradict each other.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 5 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>General examples of situations where there is a need to reconcile different moral imperatives might be given or candidates might choose to refer to scriptural examples, including that of Rama and of Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita.</p> <p>Rama is commonly referred to as an embodiment of dharma and throughout the Ramayana he is shown striving to balance his dharma as a son, a husband and a king. The most obvious conflict is when his dharma as a husband required him to support Sita over the accusations of impurity but his dharma as a king required him to listen to his subjects.</p> <p>Arjuna is a kshatriya and so his dharma includes the need to fight when a war is just. However, he is confused by the dharmic obligations to respect his relatives and teachers, who are on the opposing side in the war.</p>	5

Question	Answer	Marks
2(b)	<p>Explain how a Hindu might try to achieve a better understanding of their own svadharma.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 10 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Svadharma means personal dharma. It includes elements of dharma that are considered universal, such as virtues and moral values, but it is also specific to the individual, related in general terms to their varna (class) and ashrama (stage of life) and gender as well as to their own particular circumstances. This can make it challenging to determine what is dharmic for a particular individual, but it is important to be able to do so. In the Bhagavad Gita Krishna teaches that it is better to practise one's own dharma poorly than another person's well and by that he means svadharma.</p> <p>Svadharma is generally understood as being rooted in varna and ashrama. Much of what someone learns about both of these things will be absorbed through what they see around them and friends and relatives can be consulted about experiences that are relevant to the individual seeking to learn more. However, the brahmacharya ashrama is a period in which an individual Hindu is dedicated to learning about the religion and so about dharma. Traditionally the ashramas were only relevant to the higher, or twice-born varnas, from which it might be concluded that the other varnas only need concern themselves with their current situation, about which they can learn from observation and experience.</p> <p>The Dharmashastras are smriti texts concerned with the nature of dharma and its relationship to different varnas and ashramas, consulting them is therefore one possible source of in depth understanding of dharma and its application in different contexts. While some of these texts go into great detail, their general applicability and accessibility is open to debate; for example, the Manusmriti gives far more detail on the duties of the higher varnas and is also considered by some to be impossible to follow properly in the Kali yuga. However, Hindus might still read and reflect upon their contents as a starting point for exploring a specific question and popular texts like the epics might include relevant examples for human lives.</p> <p>Svadharma can be further divided into common (samanya) and special (vishesha) duties. Samanya dharma includes the yamas (disciplines) and niyamas (restraints) of virtuous living, which are set out in various source, as well as a duty to discriminate between right and wrong. Vishesha dharma is unique to the individual and to determine it fully requires taking into account their nature, aptitudes, physical characteristics, place in their community, location in time and space and the sum of their past karmas; this is where varna (and ashrama) are likely to be important considerations but other things such as the inherent temperament of the person matter as well. In short, svadharma can be more complex than it might initially appear, requiring a degree of contemplation and even study to determine.</p>	10

Question	Answer	Marks
2(c)	<p>'It is easy to know what the dharmic choice is in any situation.' Discuss.</p> <p>AO2 – Analysis and Evaluation.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 15 mark level descriptors (AO2).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>An agreement with the statement would arguably be a position of moral absolutism, where some things are inherently and universally wrong, while disagreeing might indicate a more relativist view, taking context and consequences into account. The concept of karma implies that Hinduism recognises that consequences have a role in decision making, although Hindus seeking liberation on the karma marga should not be motivated by the expectation of reward for correct choices. What is dharmic is also likely to be considered by most Hindus to be a broader question than asking what is moral, and the complexity of the concept itself could be used to argue against the statement.</p> <p>The concept of dharma implies that there is a right way to live and that, if a person fulfils their dharma, they will ultimately gain moksha. The statement also implies that adharmic choices are possible, supporting the idea of free will and the possibility of rejecting or ignoring one's dharma, even if it is entirely clear what it is. However, it is not in fact as simple a binary choice as it might appear, because there are different ways in which dharma might be understood and different dharmic guidelines which might be applicable at any one time. Sometimes different requirements of dharma might directly conflict, and that makes knowing the right course of action challenging. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata both deal specifically with some of the difficulties caused by the conflicting demands of dharma, and the ways in which the characters have negotiated these. The epic scope of these stories could be said to indicate the inherent difficulty in making dharmic choices.</p> <p>Sadharana Dharma is seen as universal, and it is broadly concerned with ethical principles and virtues such as non-violence, hospitality, honesty and piety. But even where a value is considered universal there are situations where it cannot be unequivocally accepted as the right choice: The Bhagavad Gita centres around Arjuna's difficulty reconciling the importance of practising ahimsa with his varna dharma as a kshatriya.</p> <p>The fact that Krishna was needed to explain how to deal with this difficulty is an argument against the choice being a simple one to make. However, Hindus now have both Arjuna's example and the teachings he was given by Krishna to help them in similar circumstances, so it could also be argued that it is easier than it might have been: Krishna clearly tells Arjuna to act according to his varna dharma. Similarly, the Ramayana seems to suggest that Rama's varna dharma (specifically his Raja dharma, as a king) is more important than his dharma as Sita's husband, perhaps because it has implications for the well-being of many people.</p>	15

Question	Answer	Marks
2(c)	<p>Svadharmā, or personal dharma, is the dharma of an individual. It does include varnashramadharmā, but it is also affected by the context and circumstances in which that individual finds themselves. This could include a need to consider secular laws and whether they impact on a choice. Arguably, this could make the examples of Rama and Arjuna relevant only to Hindus in exactly the same situation as those characters, but it could also be argued that more general principles can be extrapolated from their lives on the basis of their character and the personal qualities they demonstrate. For many people it is likely that their choice as to a course of action will be determined by conscience, which is in turn informed by their moral values, which in some cases and for some people might be considered obvious while others might judge the same case as needing greater reflection.</p>	

Question	Answer	Marks
3(a)	<p>‘For Hindus the very fact of our existence in these particular bodies proves the existence of karma and the law of rebirth. Why else would we be different from each other? Why else would we be on earth? We come into the world at birth with a load of karma produced by our actions in previous lives. Actions inexorably produce effects; good deeds result in good karma, which produces good fortune; evil deeds result in bad karma, which sooner or later results in punishment. To leave the cycle of births and deaths the chain that binds actions to karma must be cut through.’</p> <p>Summarise what the passage says about the role of karma in samsara.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 5 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>It is certain that karma exists because the fact that people are born into different bodies, with different characteristics and circumstances demonstrates it. The passage implies that no other reason could make sense of such differences.</p> <p>People are born with a karmic load from the lives they have lived previously. The positive karma brings good consequences and the negative, eventually, brings punishment. This is inevitable as all actions produce effects. If samsara is to be escaped it is this link which must be severed.</p>	5

Question	Answer	Marks
3(b)	<p>Explain why nishkama karma is considered a path to moksha.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 10 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>The karma marga recognises sakama karma and nishkama karma. Sakama karma means selfish action, or action motivated by desire and nishkama karma, which is selfless or desireless action. It is nishkama karma that should be cultivated if the goal is liberation because acting without desire will not result in the creation of new karma.</p> <p>Sakama karma is not selfish in the sense of acting in one’s own self-interest and seeking personal gain or pleasure at the potential expense of others; it is selfish in the sense that it considers the potential karmic consequences of an action and is attached to the particular fruits of an action. It is concerned with the state into which the atman will be reborn rather than with achieving freedom from that state altogether. The motivation is the desire for positive karma, and therefore more karma is created. The rebirth that results might be a positive or pleasant one, but it is still rebirth.</p> <p>Nishkama karma, by contrast, is acting according to the detached knowledge of what the right thing is. There is no desire for, or attachment to, the fruits of actions. It is sometimes described as doing duty for duty’s sake and it is characterised by a mental equanimity which allows a person to experience any result, whether pleasant or painful, without being disturbed or unbalanced by it.</p> <p>It is emphasised in the Bhagavad Gita that nishkama karma is not about not acting; the importance of doing necessary work is repeated multiple times by Krishna. The point is to do the necessary work in a state of detached involvement, realising its necessity, but not concerned with motives or outcomes. In this way the atman removes any attachment to samsara and actions no longer create the karma that binds it to rebirth.</p>	10

Question	Answer	Marks
3(c)	<p>Assess the claim that karma is an important part of all possible paths to moksha.</p> <p>AO2 – Analysis and Evaluation.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 15 mark level descriptors (AO2).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Karma is a concept that is found across all Hindu traditions. In fact, it is common to all the religions of Indic origin, which suggests it is important regardless of any particular cosmology or theology.</p> <p>Karma means action but it more commonly refers to the consequences of action over multiple lifetimes, with positive or well-intentioned actions creating positive karma that will result in an auspicious rebirth and wrong or sinful actions creating negative karma that will lead to inauspicious rebirth. While there is a common assumption that good karma will eventually result in moksha most Hindu traditions do not teach this. Rather it is generally accepted that karma, accumulated from actions in this and previous lives, is what keeps the atman tied to samsara. Whilst a person has karma that needs to be used up, they will continue to be reborn.</p> <p>Understanding karma is therefore important in understanding why things happen as they do. It might be considered less important for liberation as karma might be removed or used up without conscious knowledge.</p> <p>Any path to liberation has to be followed by a person who has been born into samsara. Karma is important, at least in part, because it determines the nature and circumstances of that birth. A positive rebirth arguably makes it easier to attain liberation at the end of that lifetime while a negative one makes it harder.</p> <p>Hinduism includes many different margas, or paths, to moksha. Karma is obviously of central concern in the karma marga, which focuses on nishkama karma (desireless action) but it is not irrelevant to other paths; for example, bhakti marga centres on devotion to an ishvara who can remove karma from their devotees. It might also be the case that a Hindu is both offering bhakti and practising nishkama karma, in that they are not attached to the possibility of reward for their actions. However, it might also be noted that the ability to liberate an individual is always within the power of the gods and they may do so for their own reasons, regardless of the karma or actions of a devotee. Even philosophies that promote jnana marga (the path of wisdom) do not disregard karma; as the true nature of reality is understood, the bonds of karma on the atman are loosened and eventually disappear. Therefore, it could certainly be argued that karma is always an element of seeking liberation, but it is not necessarily the primary concern.</p>	15

Question	Answer	Marks
4(a)	<p>Outline the differences between the bhakti marga and the karma marga.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 5 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>The difference is in the primary focus of each path to liberation. While many important aspects of practice are likely to overlap, the paths are distinguished on the basis of what is considered the foundation of effective practising of that path.</p> <p>The bhakti marga is the path of devotion and it emphasises the need for God and the importance of self-surrender (prapatti).</p> <p>The karma marga is the path of action, or more specifically of desireless or selfless action (nishkama karma). A person following this path should strive to act without being attached to the consequences of their actions, meaning no new karma is created.</p> <p>Bhakti is more clearly related to worship of a deity than karma, although acts of sewa (service) are considered acts of worship by some Hindus and might be performed by followers of either path.</p>	5

Question	Answer	Marks
4(b)	<p>Explain the significance of agami karma for a Hindu seeking liberation.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 10 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>All karma is created by human actions and choices, and all is played out across human rebirths within samsara. It is sometimes separated into three different strands – sanchita (accumulated), prarabdha (ripened) and agami (yet to come) – to explain how karma works; but these are not different forms of karma, they are different aspects of the same thing. As such they are interconnected and might all be considered of equal significance.</p> <p>Agami karma is the karma that is being created now, in the form of choices and actions in the current lifetime. This might give some Hindus the sense that it is of greater significance since this is the aspect of karma that they can affect and control. The karma that is being created now becomes part of the overall pool of sanchita karma, which is the sum of all past karmas, whether positive or negative, from all births prior to the current one. Since this pool is formed from successive additions of agami karma, focusing on the choices that face one now is arguably the best way to ensure that all karma that is accumulated is positive. This matters because it is this pool that creates the circumstances of a life when it is time for the atman to be born again. This is prarabdha karma, which creates both the things which happen and the body and situation within which those things are encountered. None of these things can be changed or avoided, they must be experienced and then the (agami) karma that created them is exhausted.</p> <p>The three kinds of karma relate to the relationship between action and time, and the extent to which a person is able to determine the outcome of those actions and therefore the effect they can have on their progress towards liberation. The metaphor of an archer (representing the person) and his arrows (representing the actions that lead to the karmic consequences) is often used with the arrows in the quiver representing sanchita karma and the arrow actually in the bow being the agami karma: present actions that are being carried out now. The person has control over this as he or she is able to decide which actions to take and so has control over their future karmic consequences. Only in the present life is it possible to change karma that is to be experienced in the future and so influence the store of sanchita karma, and so the prarabdha karma that will have to be experienced and dealt with in future lives.</p> <p>For Hindus following the karma marga the ultimate aim is nishkama karma, which means to act without any attachment to the consequences of that action. This will not create agami karma. By contrast, thinking about what kind of karma will be made by a choice or action creates karma and, even if that karma is positive, it cannot result in liberation.</p>	10

Question	Answer	Marks
4(c)	<p>'Attachment to the sensory world is the only thing that keeps people trapped in samsara.' Discuss.</p> <p>AO2 – Analysis and Evaluation.</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Attachment in this context of rebirth and liberation might be broadly defined as anything towards which one has feelings of either aversion or attraction; this can encompass events, relationships and even ideas. Attachments are the cause of behaviours and emotions and as such they contribute to aspects of life such as relationships, work, political affiliations, opinions and beliefs. The effect of attachments on a person's life might be either positive or negative and so might create either pleasant or unpleasant feelings and experiences, but attachment is generally considered to be inherently negative because it binds the atman within samsara.</p> <p>Ignorance of the true nature of the self, or atman, is one idea associated with attachment. This is generally explained in terms of the atman and Brahman being ultimately the same, but the atman is deluded by the distractions and experiences of the material world into believing that is not so; as long as the atman is attached to the idea that it is ultimately real, and/or ultimately distinct from Brahman, it will remain within samsara.</p> <p>Whether or not attachment to the self is considered the same as attachment to the sensory world is open to personal interpretation, but even if they are considered distinct, attachment to the idea that the sensory world is real in an absolute or ultimate sense might also be considered a reason why the atman remains trapped in samsara. This might not be described as attachment by all Hindus, but rather as being a matter of ignorance as to the true nature of things, which can be dispelled by gaining wisdom.</p> <p>Hindus following the jnana marga might be more likely to describe the causes of rebirth in these terms, implying that attachment is not the only thing one needs to understand in order to be liberated.</p> <p>It might also be noted that there are philosophies in which both the self and the material world can be considered real, with different relationships to Brahman. In these schools attachment might be understood differently but it is likely to still be considered problematic to be attached to the wrong things. For example, in traditions which emphasise bhakti, being overly attached to the sensory world might be seen as a distraction from the whole-hearted devotion that is necessary to the path. In this case it is not the attachment in and of itself which keeps the atman in samsara, because liberation can only be given by God, but removing it would certainly be considered a helpful step in the right direction. It might also be noted that loving God could be described as a form of attachment and it is one that is encouraged by bhakti texts, suggesting it is not a negative form.</p>	15

Question	Answer	Marks
4(c)	<p>Other Hindus might describe attachment in relation to karma, and the fruits of their actions. As long as there is attachment to outcomes the most that can be achieved is to create positive karma and an auspicious rebirth in samsara. This is certainly considered to be attachment keeping the atman in bondage, but it might not necessarily be considered attachment to the sensory world itself. Any fruits won't be enjoyed in the current birth, so the attachment is arguably more to the hope of a different existence than it is to experiences in the here and now.</p> <p>It might also be noted that physical senses are involved in different forms of worship and experiences of the divine. For example, in some traditions the sound of sacred instruments is the presence of God and darshan involves the meeting of eyes and the mutual beholding of deity and devotee. Similarly, the primal sound Aum is the means by which the material world was created. The senses are therefore involved in the relationship between humanity and divinity.</p>	