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HINDUISM **9487/02**

Paper 2 Development of 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.

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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.

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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.
	Level one
	Level two
	Level three
	Level four
	Level five
	Indicates that the point has been noted, but no credit has been given.
	Evaluation

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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.

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5 mark questions

Level	AO1 Knowledge and understanding	Marks
Level 3	**Accurate knowledge with good understanding** • 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	**Partially accurate knowledge with limited understanding** • 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	**Basic knowledge and basic understanding** • 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**

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10 mark questions

Level	AO1 Knowledge and understanding	Marks
Level 4	**Accurate knowledge with good understanding** • 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	**Mostly accurate knowledge with some understanding** • Uses a range of mostly accurate and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates understanding though a developed response. • Addresses most aspects of the question. • Some engagement with the wider context, if relevant.	**6–8**
Level 2	**Partially accurate knowledge with limited understanding** • 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	**Basic knowledge and basic understanding** • 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**

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15 mark questions

Level	AO2 Analysis and evaluation	Marks
Level 5	**Thorough discussion supported with evidence** • 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	**Coherent discussion supported with evidence** • 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	**Clear discussion with some support** • 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	**Attempts a discussion with limited support** • 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	**Basic response with a point of view** • 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**

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Question	Answer	Marks
1(a)	**Outline what is meant by the term 'the epics'.** AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. Response will be marked according to the 5-mark level descriptors (AO1). Candidates might refer to some of the following: Epics is a term used to describe the Mahabharata and the Ramayana; it is a term which implies both length and substantial narrative content and both these Hindu texts take the form of long narrative poems. The epics are smriti (remembered) texts. Whether or not the stories are considered true in a historical sense they do communicate religious truths which many Hindus consider universal and eternal. This is implicit in the Sanskrit term often used for them itihasa (lit: so it was) which implies both the historical account and the truth contained in such an account. They are also sometimes referred to as the Mahakavya, or Great Compositions. The epics can be said to teach Hindus about Sanatana(eternal) dharma. The characters in the stories exemplify the challenges of human life and the ways they might be responded to, providing either a role model to follow or a warning to avoid.	**5**

Question	Answer	Marks
1(b)	**Explain why the Ramayana might be significant to Hindu theistic traditions.** AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. Response will be marked according to the 10-mark level descriptors (AO1). Candidates might refer to some of the following: Hinduism encompasses many different theistic traditions; they are often called sampradayas, which means a spiritual lineage for maintaining and sharing a particular form of teachings about dharma. Texts such as the Ramayana are one source of such teachings. Ramayana means the journey or progress of Rama and the story is primarily concerned with the journey he undertook during his years of exile from Ayodhya and his quest to rescue his wife, Sita. Devotees might make pilgrimages to some of the significant sites in this story. Rama is an avatar of Vishnu and Sita is an avatar of Lakshmi, Vishnu's consort; consequently this text holds particular significance for Vaishnavas. Rama is one of the most widely worshipped of Vishnu's avatars, often considered by devotees to be the supreme form of God. He is also considered the embodiment of dharma. The importance of avatars as upholders of dharma seem as increasing as the mahayuga progresses and dharma decreases. The Ramayana is the earliest known form of Rama 's story and has informed later accounts such as the Ramcharitmanas, which is more explicit in its identification of Rama as divine. It is also more focused on the practice of bhakti, which is the marga most commonly followed by devotees of Rama. The accounts of Rama in the text inform the attributes he is shown with in murtis, so knowledge of the story might be seen as making him more accessible to a devotee. The Ramayana is probably the better-known version of the story outside India and details of the two are sometimes conflated. Which account contributes most to practice is unclear: some scholars argue that the annual Ramalila performances, which take place across India are more closely aligned with the one than the other and regional variations make an overall consensus hard to reach. However, references to the Ramayana is often taken in popular discourse to be a general reference to any Hindu version of the story of Rama (his story also exists in Buddhist, Jain and Sikh versions) rather than exclusively referring to Valmiki's specific text, and this emphasises the importance of the story and its overall messages for devotees. The story is more than just a tale of the adventures of one person; it contains important teachings about how to live a dharmic life, illustrating ideals of relationship and behaviour.	**10**

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Question	Answer	Marks
1(c)	**Evaluate the claim that the epics are the foundation of contemporary Hinduism.** AO2 – Analysis and Evaluation. Response will be marked according to the 15-mark level descriptors (AO2). Candidates might refer to some of the following: The epics are probably the most widely known of the Hindu scriptures. The narrative form makes the epics accessible in comparison to more densely philosophical texts, and they have also been translated into many languages. Dramatisations of them are very popular and the story of the Ramayana is performed on a regular basis in many parts of India in the form of Ramalila (the play of Rama); this performance is an act of worship in its own right, as is watching it. Although clearly important, whether they are foundational to the religion of Hinduism is less clear. If the stories are considered accounts of historical events on which contemporary practices are then based, they might be described as foundational. But for many Hindus whether the story has any basis in historical fact is less important than the story itself and the messages contained within it. Mythical stories can be recognised as such and still be considered to tell or illustrate important truths, transcending the time or setting of the story. In this sense the epics might be considered foundational by Hindus who believe they illustrate Sanatana (eternal) dharma. Although the epics are undoubtedly influential and popular they are also on the younger side of Hindu scriptures. If foundational is taken to mean original they cannot really be so, because other texts, most significantly the Vedas, contain many of the ideas the epics explore and also predate them. The epics are also classified as smriti, meaning they are considered to be remembered rather than heard (shruti), while the Vedas are shruti texts, directly revealed and beyond human ability to conceive (apauruṣeya). Smriti texts are sometimes considered authoritative in that they expand upon or clarify the principles contained in shruti texts. The epics use storytelling to demonstrate timeless religious concepts like the operation of karma and dharma and, in this way, they have a didactic purpose. The concepts they illustrate originate in other texts but the idea of being 'foundational' can be understood more broadly than being the original source for something; if it is taken to refer to the actual practices of contemporary Hindus then it is arguably more applicable to the epics, which are more accessible for many people than the older texts. Hindus with no access to the original shruti texts are able to learn about how philosophical concepts work in practice, in human lives, through the events depicted in the epics and so, for those Hindus at least, the epics could be considered more of a foundation to their practice than the Vedas.	**15**

Question	Answer	Marks
2(a)	'**Smritis applied to everyone all of the time and had universal significance in all life situations. Since Orthodox Hinduism consisted mainly of a minute ordering of life those texts relating to this ordering were of the utmost importance. It is not without deeper significance that the author of the most respected of such works, the Manusmriti, is described as both the father of humankind and its first lawgiver.**' **Summarise what the passage says about the importance of the Manusmriti.** AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. Response will be marked according to the 5-mark level descriptors (AO1). Candidates might refer to some of the following: The Manusmriti are important because they contribute to the ordering of all aspects of life which is required by Orthodox Hinduism. The detailed rules contained in smriti texts apply to all people, in all contexts and walks of life. Rules which are universal are also likely to be considered extremely significant and the Manusmriti is described as the most respected source of such rules. The author of the Manusmriti, is given two titles which illustrate the importance of his work: he is both the father of humanity and humanity 's first law giver.	**5**

Question	Answer	Marks
2(b)	**Explain why there are different views about the status of the Manusmriti.** AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. Response will be marked according to the 10-mark level descriptors (AO1). Candidates might refer to some of the following: The Manusmriti, also called the Laws of Manu, is a collection of rules about dharma, svadharma, social structures and roles, samskaras, rituals, purity and pollution and civil and criminal law. It is, as implied by the name, generally considered a smriti text. This classification is usually described as being less authoritative than shruti texts, however the influence of the Manusmriti on understandings of Hinduism has been significant. The text opens with the sage Manu being asked by some other sages to explain dharma as it applies to all classes of society; the text that follows is therefore an expansion on concepts that can be identified in other texts, but which were, arguably, in need of clearer explanation. The Manusmriti might therefore be considered to carry some of the status of those texts regardless of its classification as smriti. The Manusmriti is probably one of the best known smriti texts in the contemporary world. It was the first of the Dharmashastras to be translated into English during British colonial rule in India, and it was then used as a basis for creating a codified Hindu Law. The Manusmriti is concerned with delineating the social structures and principles of Brahminical Hinduism, with its emphasis on varnashramadharma, influencing non-Hindu understanding of the religion both within and outside India. This can be seen as a distortion or oversimplification of the complex reality of Hinduism. In addition, some scholars consider it a description of ideals rather than a practical code of laws and ethics and others suggest it cannot be intended to apply outside the Satya Yuga (age of truth). In either case its relevance for Hindus today becomes less clear. Hindus might recognise the historic influence of the Manusmriti, while having different views about the relevance and importance of the text their own lives and/or in the contemporary world. The Manusmriti has been critiqued on the basis that the values which inform it do not accord with contemporary values. It has been argued that it supports oppression and discrimination by justifying the caste system and the concept of being outcaste or untouchable, making it irrelevant and/or immoral in a world that values equality. It was for this reason that Dr Ambedkar publicly burned a copy of it as a protest in 1927. It also contains some rules for women that are seen as discriminatory in the contemporary world. While the text itself says that it is merely explaining what is in the Vedas many Hindus see equality as an essential aspect of the religion and therefore anything supporting inequality must be mistaken or distorted in some way.	**10**

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Question	Answer	Marks
2(c)	'**Smriti texts do much more than just explain the teachings of the Vedas.**' **Discuss.** AO2 – Analysis and Evaluation. Response will be marked according to the 15-mark level descriptors (AO2). Candidates might refer to some of the following: Smriti is the classification for Hindu religious texts considered to be remembered rather than heard (shruti). The Vedas, which are shruti, are often described as the core religious texts of Hinduism; their origins are ancient and the texts as they exist today were compiled over a long period of time. They have a complex and diverse structure and the texts themselves also show changes in both understanding and practice. All of this could be said to support the idea that further clarification or expansion is needed in the form of smriti texts. It might also be noted that the Vedas as a whole are not written as discourses, but the Upanishads are, this could imply a recognition of a need to reflect and expand upon the contents of the earlier Vedic writings. Philosophical ideas found throughout contemporary Hinduism are first mentioned in the Vedas, with the earlier texts giving concepts a more limited meaning that is then is expanded and developed in the later ones. In this way the Vedic texts could be said to explain themselves, with the Upanishads ultimately providing the philosophical basis for the astika darshanas. Smriti texts might be seen as further expansion still or considered to be intended to address more practical or everyday concerns. Smriti texts often expand and clarify on ideas that originate in the Vedas, and they might well do so in clearer language or in a more accessible form which better illustrates the real-world application of ideas. This arguably expands them beyond a reflection on philosophy, moving them from the abstract to the real. It is likely that many more Hindus are familiar with the epics than have detailed knowledge of the original text of the Vedas; both their popularity and the fact that the teachings within them can be understood without any reference to the Vedas speaks to them being more to those who engage with them than commentary on another text. It might also be noted that the popularity of the epics speaks to their enjoyability as entertaining stories, again implying that there is more to be said about them than simply that they explain the Vedas. It might be argued that Vedas, since they contain revealed truths, are not meant to be understood in conventional ways and so the explanations given in smriti texts are irrelevant; those individuals who are spiritually ready to do so will be able to grasp the truths of the Vedas without such assistance.	**15**

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Question	Answer	Marks
3(a)	**Summarise the distinct characteristics of Vaisnavism.** AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. Response will be marked according to the 5-mark level descriptors (AO1). Candidates might refer to some of the following: Vaisnavism is the name given to Bhakti traditions of Hinduism that consider Vishnu to be the Supreme deity. It also includes traditions which have an avatar of Vishnu, such as Rama or Krishna, at their centre and the significance of the concept of avatars and the role of Vishnu as the preserver of dharma is one of the things which distinguishes Vaisnavism from other traditions. While it is possible to live a monastic life as a Vaisnava, the emphasis is more commonly on the grihastha ashrama. Varnashramadharma and ritual purity are central ideas in Vaisnavism and, as result, vegetarianism is an important practice. Vishnu is sometimes represented by a Shaligram: an ammonite fossil which is believed to be imbued with Vishnu in the same way a murti is. He is also associated with the tulsi (basil) plant.	**5**

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Question	Answer	Marks
3(b)	**Explain why there are different theistic traditions within Hinduism.** AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. Response will be marked according to the 10-mark level descriptors (AO1). Candidates might refer to some of the following: The concept of a religion is often understood as meaning a unified set of beliefs and practices, fully accepted by everyone who associates themselves with that religion. The lived reality is often not quite so straightforward. Hinduism as a whole has no single central authority or doctrine and most forms of it do not make absolute claims to have the only ultimate truth. Since many important Hindu scriptures explicitly recognise diverse ways to reach liberation it is perhaps not surprising that different traditions have developed from them. A theistic tradition is one that is centred around belief in and/or worship of the divine, usually in a personal form and Hinduism has many traditions that fit this definition. Some scholars suggest that different historical contexts gave rise to different theistic traditions over time. Each of the theistic traditions has a different deity or deities named as the Supreme Godhead and each of these deities has different attributes and characteristics. Since a personal relationship with the divine is important in bhakti it makes sense that different people would be drawn to the worship of different forms of divinity. These are known as Ishvara. The earliest Hindu texts are ancient and, while they do contain reference to many of the concepts important in contemporary Hinduism, they are not always fully developed or clear and consistent in their usage. Over the centuries different interpretations have been made and different sampradayas have developed around them. Sampradaya generally refers to an initiatory tradition in which the teachings are passed from guru to pupil and such a lineage continues as long as there are both pupils and gurus. The ancient origins of Hinduism mean that there has been time for many such lineages to become established. However, for most Hindus adherence to one tradition does not amount to an outright rejection of the validity of others, nor is the reality of deities other than the central one generally a matter of dispute. There are also many Hindus who practise their religion without connecting themselves explicitly to any named tradition at all. It could be suggested that the theistic traditions are more a way for outsiders to organise and understand the complexity of Hinduism than a significant form of categorisation for Hindus themselves.	**10**

Question	Answer	Marks
3(c)	**Assess the claim that murti puja is the most important practice for Hindus devoted to Shiva.** AO2 – Analysis and Evaluation. Response will be marked according to the 15-mark level descriptors (AO2). Candidates might refer to some of the following: Puja means worship or veneration, and it can be used as a general term for any ritualised devotion; it is therefore an important element of bhakti. Murti puja refers more specifically to the veneration of a deity in the form of an image which can be an anthropomorphic statue with specific iconography, a more abstract representation such as the Shiva Linga, or a natural object considered to be a manifestation of the deity or an aspect of their power. The murti is a vessel for the living presence of the deity it represents, and so the worshipper is literally in the physical presence of the deity during puja. The iconography of the murti gives the devotee a visual representation of the qualities of the deity. All this supports the view that murti puja is important for those Hindus to worship in this way, and there are certainly murti of Shiva receiving puja in temples, homes and shrines all over the world. Religious practice can take many forms, including making offerings in the form of murti puja and other activities associated with such images, for example bathing the Shiva Linga in milk. Other practices include meditation, repeating mantra, reading sacred texts and recounting (or dramatising) stories about the gods. Shiva is also associated with the arts and so music and, more particularly, dance might be important acts of worship. Everyday activities can be done in a devotional spirit – Sewa (service) might take the form of cleaning a temple or shrine for example or of cooking for one's guru. Naming children after a god might also be considered a religious practice. The scope and diversity of religious practice could be used to argue that identifying a single one as the most important for any group would be impossible.	**15**

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Question	Answer	Marks
3(c)	During any act of worship, a devotee might have a personal experience which brings them a more complete, experiential understanding of that deity. Darshan, the mutual beholding of deity and devotee, is an important part of murti puja; it is not a passive process with the devotee being seen and the deity doing the seeing but an active exchange in which the devotee beholds the deity and receives the blessing of being seen by them in return. This could be said to give the practice of murti puja a significance for the worshiper that other forms of worship might not have. Shaivism is often associated with asceticism and austerity, sometimes in forms that might be considered extreme, such as vowing not to sit or lie down, or to hold an arm above the head for a year or longer. Not everyone is capable of sustaining such practices, nor would they necessarily want to. Whether this means those who can are accorded greater respect is debatable, but it might be used to support the view that Murti Puja is the most important form of worship because of its accessibility in comparison to these kinds of practice. Murti puja can also be performed throughout all the Ashramas and regardless of social status, physical appearance etc. However, it might also be noted that fasting for a specific period of time, such as during Shivaratri, is more accessible and is therefore a common practice. However, there are Hindu philosophies and traditions, such as the Shaivite Lingayats, which reject murti puja as superstition or as a bar to truly understanding the nature of the divine in which case it is likely to be considered as unimportant, or perhaps as a preliminary stage for the less spiritually advanced to begin their journey.	

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Question	Answer	Marks
4(a)	'**As one and the same water is called by different names by different people, with some calling it water, some vari, some aqua and some pani, so the Absolute is invoked by some as God, by some as Allah, by some as Hari and by others as Brahman. In the potter's shop there are vessels of different shapes and forms – pots, jars, dishes and plates – but all are made of the same clay. Just so God is one, but worshipped in different ages and places under different names and forms.'** **Summarise what the passage says about the nature of the divine.** AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. Response will be marked according to the 5-mark level descriptors (AO1). Candidates might refer to some of the following: Different languages have different words for the thing that is called water in English, but whatever word is used the thing itself remains the same. This is also true of the divine. Similarly, while a potter makes many different things, with both different shapes and distinct forms, they are all made of the same, single substance. This is also true of the divine, which is given different names and understood in different ways by different religions, but which is always the same single truth. Both of these are metaphorical explanations of the fact that Hindus recognise many deities, with different names, forms and attributes but they are all still considered manifestations of Brahman.	**5**

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Question	Answer	Marks
4(b)	**Explain how the concept of ishvara might help Hindus achieve an understanding of the divine.** AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. Response will be marked according to the 10-mark level descriptors (AO1). Candidates might refer to some of the following: The word ishvara has various translations, depending on the context it is used in, but it is commonly translated as Lord and used to denote the concept of a personal deity. This is related to the concept of Saguna Brahman, that is Brahman with attributes or qualities. It is these divine attributes that are represented in a murti. Murti puja is often an act of devotion to a personal ishvara, and this enables human beings to relate to the divine in ways that would not otherwise be possible. Ishvara is often used to refer to a named deity worshipped as the supreme or primary form of God in bhakti yoga so all such individual deities can be understood as manifestations of Saguna Brahman, emphasising the qualities needed by that particular devotee. Ishvara can therefore be understood as a means by which an individual can achieve a personal relationship with the ultimate. Ishvara might also be used within some Hindu traditions, such as Brahmoism, to identify Brahman as God in the monotheistic sense – an entity that is both personal and impersonal, immanent and transcendent. Other concepts of Brahman separates these aspects, with Nirguna Brahman (without qualities or attributes) being generally understood as transcendent and impersonal and Saguna Brahman (with qualities or attributes) as a personal form of divinity, immanent in the material world. For some ishvara and Saguna Brahman are effectively synonymous, so that understanding one is understanding the other. For others this would be an incomplete understanding, with devotion to an ishvara being only a first step towards a proper realisation of the true nature of things.	**10**

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Question	Answer	Marks
4(c)	**Assess the claim that Brahman can only be understood through the concept of neti-neti.** AO2 – Analysis and Evaluation. Response will be marked according to the 15-mark level descriptors (AO2). Candidates might refer to some of the following: Neti-neti means not this, not this; it is a means to challenge preconceptions about the nature of reality which in turn should enable a better understanding of the divine. The concept is found in some of the Upanishads and is similar to the apophatic way/via negativa, a theological approach that uses statements about what God is not as a means of indicating the perfection of God's nature. It could be said to be helpful because it avoids limiting ideas about God's nature to what the human mind can understand; instead, it emphasises the idea that there is a fundamental difference between divinity and anything that can be observed in the material world. How far this could be said to be a process of understanding Brahman, rather than one of realising that Brahman cannot be understood, is open to debate. Neti-neti is an important part of both jnana yoga and Advaita Vedanta philosophy. By focusing on what is not Brahman (or not real) the illusion of being separate from Brahman can be overcome. In this context, it is the best way to understand Brahman because it results in realisation of Ultimate Truth and liberation from rebirth. From the Advaita perspective, this realisation is the only way to achieve liberation. However, jnana is not the only path and neti-neti might be considered less helpful in other paths. It could be argued that the bhakti marga doesn't require understanding Brahman, so whether neti-neti helps achieve that is largely irrelevant. However, it could also be argued that bhakti encourages different ways of reaching the necessary understanding. Devotion to Ishvara involves practices which may lead to experiences of connection with the divine, with the new levels of personal understanding that come from such experiences. While the neti-neti concept can be applied to ideas of Saguna Brahman it might be less likely to seem important to individuals who have a personal relationship with the divine. If God is immanent within the world, then the divine can be known through experience and analytic practices such as neti-neti are not needed. It can also be argued that defining things by negatives creates a limited understanding, even of simpler things than divinity. Or that what it constructs is, at best, a conceptual abstract understanding, which is very different to a living knowledge of divinity. Hinduism recognises different paths through which liberation can be attained because everyone has different spiritual aptitudes and abilities; understanding Brahman might not therefore be a concern with universal relevance.	**15**

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