

Cambridge International AS & A Level

HINDUISM

9487/03

Paper 3 Hinduism: Philosophy and Religion

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 **16** 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.

Section A AO1 12 mark questions
Section B Essay Marking grid AO1

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. 	10–12
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. 	7–9
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. 	4–6
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. 	1–3
Level 0	No relevant material to credit.	0

Section A AO2 18 mark questions
Section B Essay Marking grid AO2

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. 	16–18
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. 	12–15
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. 	8–11
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. 	4–7
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>Explain the impact of M K Gandhi on the way Hinduism is understood as a world religion.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and understanding.</p> <p>Responses will be marked according to the 12-mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>‘World religions’ is an academic concept, used as a framework for studying religious activities and behaviours as distinct from non-religious ones. To do this it regards religion as existing in discrete units or traditions which are essentially the same wherever they are found in the world. Traditions placed within this category generally exist on a large scale with practitioners in many countries. While this approach is subject to criticism, it remains a dominant one across the multi-disciplinary study of religion and so fitting traditions into it can be seen as a means of ensuring they are respected or taken seriously by those outside that tradition. For Gandhi, presenting Hinduism to the non-Hindu world outside India as a ‘proper’ religion was arguably an important part of his campaign for independence. The concept was largely developed in a Christian context and using Christianity as a paradigmatic example of religion which could be said to have resulted in a range of distortions or misconceptions about Hinduism.</p> <p>Gandhi was born into a Vaishnava Hindu family. His mother was a Pranami Vaishnava, a form of the religion that includes the Qur’an among its sacred texts, and which has strong Jain influences in its ethical attitudes. This seems likely to have influenced Gandhi’s understanding of Hinduism as a religion: He believed in Sanatana (eternal) dharma in the form of certain central principles – satya (truth) and ahimsa (harmlessness) prominent among them. But he rejected dogmatic approaches to religion, saying that anything that contradicts these fundamental moral principles could not truly be part of Hinduism. His emphasis on ahimsa and practices arising from it, such as vegetarianism, are well known to non-Hindus and are widely assumed to be universal.</p> <p>Gandhi used key Hindu texts, including the Vedas and the Bhagavad Gita, to explain his understanding of Hinduism as a religion, regarding those texts as part of the roots of Hinduism. He is often described as a pluralist, accepting that truths can be found within many different religious traditions, and this is another element commonly assumed to be essential to Hinduism as a religion.</p> <p>While Gandhi undoubtedly presented a particular form of Hinduism through his writing and teaching it was not only non-Hindus who engaged with this. Many Hindus accepted his ideas and teachings, and thus contributed to a process called Sanskritisation, whereby features that had once been restricted to brahmins, such as pacifism and vegetarianism, became much more widespread. Gandhi’s impact is therefore not limited to non-Hindu perspectives; common Hindu practices did change, at least for some people, as a result of his work and therefore it could be said that understandings of their own religion changed too.</p>	12

Question	Answer	Marks
1(b)	<p>Assess the claim that Hinduism and Jainism have more similarities than differences.</p> <p>AO2 – Analysis and evaluation.</p> <p>Responses will be marked according to the 18-mark level descriptors (AO2).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Jainism is one of the Sramana traditions; a phrase which originated as the name of an ascetic movement that developed within Hinduism alongside Vedic practices, and these contributed in turn to the development of yogic practices. This means that Jainism certainly has historical connections with Hinduism and shares concepts with it, albeit sometimes with distinct interpretations. Contemporary views of Hinduism are strongly influenced by the work of M K Gandhi, who in turn was strongly influenced by Jainism.</p> <p>Jainism is traditionally understood as having developed through a succession of 24 tirthankaras (literally ‘ford-makers’) who were spiritual teachers. This lineage ended with Mahavira, who taught that vows of ahimsa (non-violence), satya (truth), asteya (non-stealing), brahmacharya (chastity) and aparigraha (non-attachment) are essential for liberation. Hinduism does not recognise a single founder or even a line of them. However, the idea of a guru-pupil lineage is common across Hindu sampradayas suggesting a degree of similarity in the idea that wisdom can be passed along by spiritual teachers. The tirthankaras are more than ordinary gurus though; they have conquered samsara and established a path for others to do the same. Some Hindu schools include a similar idea through the concept of jivan mukti (being liberated while alive), a status which might be attributed to gurus within their tradition. However, this is not a universal view across all traditions.</p> <p>Jainism is often described as atheist because Jain teachings reject the concept of all powerful deity, but Hinduism encompasses many different understandings of the nature of deity, including ones that could be described as non-theist.eg. Samkhya. Concepts such as karma, samsara and jiva (soul) are found in all Hindu traditions; they are complex and subject to different understandings, at least some of which are shared by Jain teachings. Jainism also rejects some concepts common in non-dharmic religions, such as eternal damnation or divine judgement, but so do most forms of Hinduism. And, while Jainism is strongly associated with extreme forms of asceticism, such as rejecting possessions to the point of going sky-clad (digambara), these practices can be found within Hindu traditions as well. Overall, the similarities are sufficient for some lists of Hindu darshanas to include Jainism as a nastika school.</p>	18

Question	Answer	Marks
1(b)	<p>However, not all such lists do so. While historical connections and similar metaphysical and philosophical elements are hard to deny it does not necessitate regarding them as strands of the same single religion. While many aspects of Jainism are found within Hindu traditions as well, they are often less well known or shared by a minority. There are also some philosophical ideas within Jainism that are not found in Hindu schools. For example, while it incorporates a variety of beliefs about the nature of the soul Hindu schools generally agree that it is both eternal and unchanging; by contrast in Jainism the soul is eternal and constantly changing as it takes on the dimensions of the individual it inhabits in each rebirth. Jainism also differs from Hinduism in its understanding of karma, which Jains believe to be a material substance made of particles that 'stick' to the jiva and must be cleaned away.</p> <p>For some, Hinduism is defined by an acceptance of the Vedas as authoritative, and this is considered the unifying element which renders the diversity of Hindu traditions a single religion. If this is agreed with then Jainism cannot be a part of Hinduism, as it rejects the authority of the Vedas. However, this might not be considered a conclusive argument as the category of nastika (heterodox) darshanas exists within Hinduism, with one possible basis for such categorisation being not accepting the Vedas.</p> <p>It is undoubtedly true that Jainism shares both a geographical place of origin and many concepts, beliefs and practices with at least some forms of Hinduism. While this can support the view that Jainism is a form of Hinduism, it might also be looked at from the opposite perspective by identifying concepts which are clearly part of contemporary Hinduism, but which either originated within Jainism or were influenced by it. Jainism is certainly of ancient origin, with the dates during which the earliest of its lineage of tirthankaras lived being unknown; Hinduism is also ancient and dating of its earliest sources is not universally agreed upon. Which is older is therefore uncertain and a case could be made for either being the foundation of the other. It might also be argued that the issue only matters from the perspective of the world religions paradigm and that this perspective necessarily distorts complex realities. People who identify themselves with one particular tradition may nonetheless have an overlap in their practices or values with one or more of the others.</p>	

Question	Answer	Marks
2(a)	<p>Explain why Ramanuja rejected the philosophy of Advaita.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and understanding.</p> <p>Responses will be marked according to the 12-mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Ramanuja’s Vishishtadvaita Vedanta is a qualified form of non-dualism while Shankara’s Advaita Vedanta is completely non-dualist or monist. This is, broadly speaking, a disagreement as to the nature of Brahman. Both philosophies start from a belief that Brahman is absolutely real and one, but Shankara built on this with the idea that nothing else truly exists and that the atman was not different from Brahman, while Ramanuja argued that Brahman could not exist without individual selves also existing. Because such individual selves are qualifications to the oneness of Brahman, Shankara’s philosophy rejects the concept, but in Ramanuja’s view this qualification is an intrinsic part of Brahman’s nature.</p> <p>Shankara’s monism specifies that any plurality or change is only apparent, taking the position that the effect pre-exists in the cause (satkaryavada) and manifests through appearance (vivartavada). Ramanuja disagreed with this, because he believed that Brahman is continually transforming its substance into the world of plurality, a philosophical position that posits real transformation (parinamavada). Ramanuja also believed Shankara was mistaken in the importance he placed on superimposition (adhyasa), on maya as the cause of ignorance (avidya) and on the relationship between karma and the Divine.</p> <p>Ramanuja did not disagree that Brahman is one. Instead, he argues that within that oneness is relationship between Brahman as Lord (Ishvara) and individual devotees. This gives a place to devotion that is missing from Advaita Vedanta, which emphasises jnana. Ramanuja uses the analogy of a rose and its redness to argue that a qualification of oneness is an intrinsic aspect of Brahman’s nature: as a rose cannot exist without its redness (or whatever other colour it may be) Brahman cannot exist without individual selves. These aspects to Brahman’s nature are both distinct and inseparable.</p>	12

Question	Answer	Marks
2(a)	<p>Crucial to understanding this qualification is that for Ramanuja there is no qualityless (nirguna) Brahman, Brahman is wholly with qualities, which manifest as real transformations in the empirical world. These manifest pluralities are all ontologically the same substance - Brahman - but they are true transformations, meaning Brahman is active and able to have a relationship with individuals. The qualities which Brahman has are real in the Absolute sense, rather than imposed by ignorance - Brahman really is compassionate, rather than human minds projecting an idea of compassion onto the nirguna reality.</p> <p>Consciousness is a central part of Ramanuja's argument; he believed that consciousness is itself a quality that both Brahman and individual jivas have and that the concept of ignorance itself entails an individual entity capable of being ignorant. Therefore, if all jivas were illusory Brahman would be ignorant of, or actively deceiving itself, about its own nature. He considered this nonsensical. According to Ramanuja, Brahman is differentiated consciousness, rather than the undifferentiated consciousness Advaita posits.</p> <p>Since both Ramanuja's Vishistadvaita and the Advaita philosophy he critiqued are Vedanta philosophies they are based on interpretation of the Vedas. Ultimately then Ramanuja rejected Advaita because he believed the interpretations on which it was based were flawed. In his specific criticisms of Shankara he identified what he considered to be mistaken ideas about the nature of Brahman but also about the cause of avidya (ignorance) and the role of maya.</p>	

Question	Answer	Marks
2(b)	<p>‘Vishistadvaita Vedanta <u>cannot</u> be described as non-dualism.’ Discuss.</p> <p>AO2 – Analysis and evaluation.</p> <p>Responses will be marked according to the 18-mark level descriptors (AO2).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Ramanuja’s Vishishtadvaita Vedanta can certainly be called a non-dualist philosophy; the name literally means ‘qualified non-dualism’. But it is equally true to observe that within the philosophy more than one thing is said to be absolutely real and this is not normally the case with a non-dualist position. While these two facts seem contradictory Ramanuja believed they could be reconciled by understanding the nature of the qualification he was applying to a monist understanding of Brahman as the only absolutely real substance.</p> <p>Ramanuja did not accept that Brahman is without attributes (nirguna). Instead, he saw Brahman as wholly and entirely with qualities which manifest as real transformations in the empirical world. He saw this as a monist stance, because these manifest pluralities are all ontologically the same substance - Brahman - but it is modified in that they are true transformations, meaning Brahman is active and able to have a relationship with individuals. The qualities which Brahman has are real in the absolute sense, rather than imposed by the ignorance of a perspective deluded by maya: while an Advaita perspective would see the idea of a compassionate God as a projection by human minds onto the nirguna reality in Vishistadvaita thinking Brahman really is compassionate.</p> <p>Because the transformation of Brahman is real, the plurality of individual selves and material world which result are also absolutely real. It is at this point that some might start to question whether Ramanuja is maintaining a non-dualist position since a multiplicity of real things is being identified. However, all the selves and the material world are made of the substance of Brahman and in their creation, Brahman has manifested an absolute and ultimately real change. The analogy of a spider, constructing a web out of its own body, illustrates this idea.</p> <p>Ramanuja asserts that no one thing out of the three - Brahman, individual selves, the material world - can be reduced to any of the others, and neither can any of them exist without the others. It is their absolute interdependence which, for Ramanuja, places his philosophy in the category of non-dualism, with a qualified understanding of that term when it is compared to Shankara’s usage of it. This perspective might be supported when more than a passing glance is made at Dvaita (dualism): the Dvaita Vedanta of Madhva is distinct from the work of both Shankara and Ramanuja because it posits an absolute distinction between the world and Brahman, which is not present in Vishistadvaita.</p>	18

Question	Answer	Marks
3	<p>‘Scholarship of religion has resulted in a limited understanding of Hinduism.’ Discuss.</p> <p>AO1 - Knowledge and understanding AO2 - Analysis and evaluation</p> <p>Responses will be marked according to the level descriptors.</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>The term religion is most commonly used to refer to specific traditions of belief and practice such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam etc. While diversity within religious traditions is recognised there is a common assumption that all groups or sub-divisions within a named religious tradition share some essential elements, which is what makes them that religion rather than another.</p> <p>Put simply, religion is commonly understood to refer to sets of beliefs and practices, usually associated in some way with spiritual or metaphysical matters. Popular discourse presumes that the term itself and the things it is presumed to encompass are universal across all human societies but contemporary academic discussions around the concept often regard both the concept in itself, and the understanding of living traditions that it leads to, as over-simplified. The concept of religion and what constitutes it in popular discourse might distort or limit understandings of what Hinduism does and does not include for those who are not scholars of religion, or more particularly of Hinduism. Comparative understanding of religion might also be used to encourage conversion, which is viewed as problematic by many.</p> <p>Most definitions of religion in popular use place the idea of beliefs, usually in a God, gods or supernatural powers, at the centre. This is useful in some contexts but problematic in others; since Hinduism includes many different positions on the nature, multiplicity and even existence of the Divine it is not considered especially helpful as a defining characteristic by many scholars. Popular discourse on such issues often rests on assumptions about what the term must mean, which do not necessarily agree with Hindu understandings. For example, some forms of Hinduism recognise a kind of hierarchy of deities, with gods such as Shiva bearing the title ‘Mahadeva’ or Great God which is not given to others. The struggles between gods (devas) and demons (asuras), in which the gods are by no means always ascendent, also potentially raise questions about whether omnipotence is an essential part of the concept of god in Hinduism.</p>	30

Question	Answer	Marks
3	<p>The definitions of religion in common academic use have tended to come out of Western scholarship, which divides knowledge into different disciplines in ways that do not necessarily map onto the way knowledge is conceptualised in other parts of the world. Hindu religious scriptures include writings on areas Western scholarship would classify as mathematics, astrology, medicine and the arts. Classifying texts as religious could thus prevent recognition of the range and scope of their actual contents.</p> <p>Similarly, since these definitions of religion are rooted in Christianity (often specifically Protestant Christianity) they tend to value and emphasise concepts that are important within that context, on the assumption that these things are universal. The emphasis on belief is one such example; in many places action or participation in ritual activities, both public and private, may be far more central to the idea of religion. It could be argued that this is true of Hinduism which, as a dharmic religion, is more concerned with what people do than what people believe. Hinduism also applies specific meanings to concepts that might be categorised as beliefs, such as incarnation, that may not be in accord with the ways these are understood in other traditions.</p> <p>'Hinduism' itself is a term that might be said to illustrate the over-simplification identified in the question. Its use identifies as a single religion a vastly diverse collection of practices, traditions, beliefs etc originating (and still widely practised) in what is now called India. Such usage might be said to imply a shared essence that does not really exist. Although the diverse traditions certainly share social, cultural, theological, and historical links, it would be challenging to identify any single element universally agreed upon by every person within every tradition that can be included under the umbrella term of Hinduism. Some scholars prefer to use the term 'Hinduisms' to reflect this multiplicity.</p> <p>Given that Hinduism is so diverse, and its origins are both ancient and uncertain, even scholars of religion dedicated wholly to the study of Hinduism are unlikely to have a clear picture of every possible form it might take; therefore, many people would argue that it can only be taught about in a limited sense and that this is preferable to not teaching about it at all.</p>	

Question	Answer	Marks
4	<p>‘Human experience disproves the Advaita view that there is only one reality.’ Discuss.</p> <p>AO1 - Knowledge and understanding AO2 - Analysis and evaluation</p> <p>Responses will be marked according to the level descriptors.</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>‘Human experience’ is a subject of interest to many philosophers, but it is also used in everyday discourse to refer collectively to the various elements – physical, mental, emotional etc – that together shape how human beings encounter and know about the world.</p> <p>The philosophy of Advaita Vedanta proposed by Shankara takes a monist position on the nature of reality: that there is only one truly real thing, and that is Brahman. Although there appear to be many different things, existing within a material world, all this has only apparent reality - the appearance is of many different and distinct substances, but this is an illusion, with the reality being that there is only Brahman. Brahman is the substance of the universe. This position appears to be explicitly constructed to reject the argument that human experience can be relied upon as a source of the truth about reality.</p> <p>Human beings believe they experience change, but it was Shankara’s view that this is only ever apparent. Ultimate reality does not truly change. This position is called satkaryavada, which means that the effect pre-exists in the cause, or that cause and effect are identical. This is certainly difficult to reconcile with human experience, however the argument depends upon the inherent unreliability of human experience, and so the fact that experience opposes the argument does not undermine it.</p> <p>While ultimately Advaita holds that there is only one reality it might be argued that the philosophy does recognise the possibility of different levels of experiencing that reality:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Unreality or prathibhasika is the lowest level, based in imagination. At this level rope may be seen as a snake when ignorance of its true nature creates superimposition. However, the realisation that it is in fact a rope is a recognition of its nature in pragmatic reality, not of ultimate reality. 2 Pragmatic reality (vyavaharika) is empirically true within a given context but not ultimately true. It is the waking, material world. 3 Supreme reality or (paramarthika) is ontologically accurate reality. It contains the other levels and cannot be assimilated into them. 	30

Question	Answer	Marks
4	<p>This does not wholly devalue human experience, as the lower two states are not entirely illusory. Seeing rope as a snake does not alter its true nature in either ultimate or pragmatic reality - the ultimate truth is still Brahman, and the practical truth is still that it is an inanimate rope. But, while the belief that it is a snake holds, the beholder will be affected by that belief, and their behaviour will be different before and after the mistake is realised. Human experience could therefore be said to support the idea of different levels of reality in one sense, even if only one of those levels has ultimate or absolute reality.</p> <p>In Advaita, liberation is achieved through the atman's realisation that it is not different from Brahman, and so not truly subject to change or death. This realisation is best reached through informed study of scripture and practising meditation with the aim of withdrawing the senses from the embodied person. Shankara believed that the Vedas were a major source of knowledge about the nature of reality and the relationship of the individual atman and Brahman, but he gave equal importance to the use of reason and logic and saw value in personal experience. The salt in water analogy in the Upanishads illustrates how all these things can work together to help one grasp the truth.</p> <p>Shankara also believed that living an ethical life according to the yamas and niyamas could purify a person in a way that would help them to realise the truth. In short, achieving wisdom (vidya) of the kind needed for liberation is not a matter of achieving a cognitive grasp of what is being said; it is experiential in nature. It could therefore be argued that human experience is actually what demonstrates the truth of Shankara's philosophy rather than the opposite.</p>	