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MARK SCHEME

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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 descriptors 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.

Section A

Question	Answer	Marks
1	<p>‘The delusion that Purusha both acts and experiences the effects of action is the only real obstacle to liberation’. Discuss this claim with reference to Samkhya.</p> <p>Responses might include some of the following material:</p> <p>Purusha is one of the two fundamental principles through which the universe evolves, the other is prakriti. In the context of Samkhya philosophy this constitutes a dualism between the masculine, passive, conscious purusha and the feminine, active but unconscious prakriti. They might be loosely translated as being energy and matter. When unmanifest prakriti is constituted by the perfect equilibrium of the three gunas (sattva, rajas and tamas), it becomes manifest at the material universe when disturbed by the presence of Purusha, which unbalances the gunas. This is a basic summary of how Samkhya explains material existence; this material existence traps purusha so that liberation must be sought.</p> <p>Liberation is dependent on achieving the understanding that in reality purusha and prakriti are separate. The stimulus is focused on the way prakriti evolves first into buddhi (intellect) and then into ahamkara (making of self/ego or I-maker). Ahamkara mistakenly identifies the self with purusha by regarding the self as being ultimately real rather than only apparently so. Ahamkara accepts the delusions of maya as truth and so purusha remains entangled with prakriti. This delusion is grounded in ahamkara and informed by its other evolutes – manas (mind/thoughts and impressions), buddhindriya (physical senses), karmendriya (organs of action – tongues, feet, hands etc) tanmatras (subtle elements) and mahabhuta (great elements – ether, air, fire, water and earth). The experience of these things, for example the sensory experience of sound, is an evolutionary product of the ego; it creates the belief that there is an actual ‘I’ that truly exists and is able to hear things so that sound appears to be an encounter between purusha and an external reality. This is the delusion that purusha acts within the world and directly experiences the results of that action – karma.</p> <p>The reality is very different. Purusha does not act itself, although it is the trigger for activity in volatile prakriti. Purusha is in the state of kaivalya (isolation), utterly distinct from everything else. When the delusion that the self which acts is overcome it is possible to distinguish between the actual state of the purusha – kaivalya – and its apparent state. This realisation results in freedom from karma and so puts an end to the process of rebirth. Viewed in this way it seems true to say that only ignorance of the reality stands in the way of liberation, but there are many things which might prevent an individual overcoming this ignorance. Other paths to liberation focus on overcoming different obstacles, e.g. removing the karmic burden, or surrendering oneself wholly to the grace of a personal deity.</p>	20

Question	Answer	Marks
2	<p>Assess the claim that the eight limbs of yoga are philosophical rather than practical.</p> <p>Responses might include some of the following material:</p> <p>The Eightfold Yoga outlined by Patanjali consists of eight parts which, practised together, eventually result in the achievement of a state where mental activity ceases. This is known as citta-vritti-nirodha (mind-activity-cessation). In this state all the different activities the human might engage in are shut down, the ego is silenced and no longer actively constructs the delusion that the 'I' experiencing the world is the same as purusha. By restraining mental modifications such as cognition, misconception, memory and conceptualisation the practice of yoga silences the constant distractions from the truth, enabling liberation. These complex, abstract ideas must be grasped to some degree if a person is even to realise a need or desire to practise yoga, and to that extent it might be argued that Patanjali's yoga requires some philosophical knowledge.</p> <p>The eight limbs of Patanjali's yoga encompass ethical behaviour, mental attitudes and physical practices. They are yama (discipline), niyama (conduct), asana (posture), pranayama (breath), pratyahara (withdrawal of senses), dharana (concentration), dhyana (meditation) and samadhi (absorption). These limbs are practical instructions on how to strive for a specific goal and they are drawn from texts that are focused almost entirely on practice. The ontological foundation on which they rest appears to be entirely consistent with Samkhya philosophy. It is often suggested that Patanjali's intention was to provide a practical application of Samkhya that did not depend on understanding the philosophy in a more abstract form, this would make his yoga a practical complement to a philosophical system rather than a philosophical approach in itself.</p> <p>The eight limbs are generally understood to be interdependent rather than successive steps along a path. Although scholars sometimes separate them into inner and outer, as a means of distinguishing those concerned with the physical/material from those concerned with the mental, this is not generally intended to suggest that the practices can or should be engaged in separately. All are required together to create the harmonious state between physical and non-physical aspects of being in which citta-vritti-nirodha can be attained. This kind of holistic approach could be used to suggest that the idea of sharp division between philosophical or metaphysical position and practical applications of that is somewhat artificial; Patanjali's yoga is both philosophical and practical because understanding the one aspect of it necessarily entails the other.</p>	20

Question	Answer	Marks
3	<p>‘Bhakti has no place in Sankara’s Advaita Vedanta.’ Assess this claim.</p> <p>Responses might include some of the following material:</p> <p>The philosophy of Advaita Vedanta proposed by Sankara takes a monist position on the nature of reality. The central point is that there is only one truly real thing – Brahman. Although there appear to be many different things that exist within a material world, these things only have apparent reality; while the appearance is of many different and distinct substances the reality is that they are all Brahman. Brahman is the substance of the universe.</p> <p>It is fairly common to equate Brahman with the English term ‘God’, but this association is imperfect. In the English language the term ‘God’ is weighted with Christian understandings which do not fit the concept of Brahman proposed by Advaita, at least not entirely. While Brahman could be said to be the first cause of all things this does not presuppose a deliberate or conscious creation. Further, the perception of that individual being as purposefully created to be distinct from Brahman could be said to promote and sustain maya. While defining Brahman as God might seem to open to the way for bhakti, devotion to Brahman recognises that Christianised understandings of God are inadequate and misleading in relation to Sankara’s conceptualisation of Brahman.</p> <p>For Sankara, Brahman is not a personal deity in any sense; Brahman in Advaita philosophy is nirguna, without attributes or qualities of any kind, beyond names and even beyond taking form. Indeed, it is the superimposition of name and form on the formless reality that is Brahman that creates the world of appearances. Breaking this delusion and overcoming avidya (ignorance) is the way to achieve liberation from Sankara’s perspective; this is the way of jnana (knowledge) rather than of bhakti (devotion).</p> <p>However, Sankara does recognise that Brahman can be perceived within the material world as saguna (with attributes) although he distinguishes this from the reality that is nirguna Brahman. Brahman is given name and form as a personal deity (Isvara) as a result of ignorance. These deities are manifestations with maya, so are not ultimately real. But they are still Brahman, as the atman is still Brahman. Bhakti involves the total surrender of oneself to Ishvara, and this requires at least some rejection of the ego. Since it is ego or belief in a real ‘I’ that stands apart from Brahman which sustains maya even, the surrender of some part of this is a step in the right direction. The devotee must begin their journey to liberation from where they are, and it might well be easier or more comprehensible to surrender oneself to a higher being in a personal form. In this way it can be said Advaita Vedanta does not so much reject bhakti as it sees it as an earlier stage on the journey to liberation than jnana.</p>	20

Question	Answer	Marks
4	<p>To what extent is Vishista Advaita Vedanta a dualist philosophy?</p> <p>Responses might include some of the following material:</p> <p>Vishista Advaita means ‘qualified non-dualism’. This philosophical position, proposed by Ramanuja, is a qualification of the monism of Sankara’s Advaita Vedanta. Advaita argues that there is nothing which is absolutely real other than Brahman and any appearance of plurality or change is only that, an appearance. In contrast to Sankara’s stance of satkaryavada (the effect pre-exists in the cause) and vivartavada (manifestation through appearance), Ramanuja takes a position of parinamavada (real transformation). His view is that change is more than just apparent or a product of maya; instead he argues that Brahman continually transforms its substance into the world of plurality.</p> <p>This is not a rejection of the idea that Brahman is one, which is why Ramanuja named his theory as qualified non-dualism. His argument is that within the oneness of Brahman is a relationship between Brahman as Lord (Ishvara) and the individual devotees. This gives a firmer place to devotion than Advaita Vedanta is usually felt to do, but it could also be said to qualify the oneness of Brahman – if there is to be a real relationship that implies the real existence of all parties and if individual selves share in Brahman’s reality then it looks as if there is more than one real thing. Ramanuja himself does not present it in this way however, using the analogy of a rose and redness to make his point. The argument is that as redness (or, more generally, colour) is an intrinsic aspect of a rose, in that the two things cannot exist separately or independently, so Brahman cannot exist without individual selves. This qualification of Brahman’s oneness is an intrinsic aspect of Brahman’s nature. It is this which leads Ramanuja to consider his philosophy a qualification of monism rather than a dualism.</p> <p>This qualification must be understood in light of Ramanuja’s wider concept of Brahman. He does not accept the existence of a quality-less (nirguna) Brahman but sees Brahman as wholly and entirely with qualities. It is these qualities that manifest as real transformations in the empirical world. This allows him to maintain a monist stance because these manifest pluralities are all ontologically the same substance – Brahman – but it is modified in that they are true transformations, which means 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. Brahman really is compassionate, rather than human minds projecting an idea of compassion onto the nirguna reality.</p> <p>Because the transformation of Brahman is real the plurality of individual selves and material world which result are also absolutely real. They are made of Brahman, and in their creation Brahman has manifested an absolute and ultimately real change. Again, this might look like dualism, and could be argued to be so if the idea that individual selves dissolve wholly back into Brahman when liberation is achieved is rejected. However, 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</p>	20

Question	Answer	Marks
	understanding of that term when it is compared to the Sankara'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 Sankara and Ramanuja because it posits an absolute distinction between the world and Brahman.	

Section B

Question	Answer	Marks
5	<p>Evaluate the claim that Jain teachings about the nature of the human person are the same as Hindu teachings.</p> <p>Responses might include some of the following material:</p> <p>In Jainism, all living things (which obviously includes human beings) are jivas (embodied souls) and Jains do not distinguish between the jivas of different kinds/forms of life. It is this which drives the great significance Jains give to ahimsa, extending the same care and consideration for other life forms that most people give only to fellow human beings. This implies a view of the nature of humanity that does not distinguish it from other life in terms of value, although it does perhaps see a difference in terms of responsibility and ethical duty.</p> <p>Another commonly used term which refers to the soul/spirit/self is atman. The concept of atman as being the essence of the individual self which is connected to or somehow part of a Supreme Being developed from Hindu Brahminical teachings, which Jainism rejects for the most part. However, Hindus and Jains may well use both terms and they are sometimes used interchangeably or even together with the phrase 'Jivan-atman'. The important difference is in the perceived relationship between jivan-atman and paramatman. In Jainism, the paramatman is the soul in its pure state. All such souls have the same four qualities – knowledge (jnana), perception (darsana), bliss (sukha) and power/energy (virya) – and there are as many souls as there are living beings. In this sense for Jains a human soul is no different to an animal soul.</p> <p>While Jains see all souls as sharing the same fundamental nature it is only human rebirths that can result in liberation. Hindus share this view, but they differ in teaching about how this is achieved. Jainism is non-theistic and for Jains karma, rebirth and liberation all take place without the involvement of any kind of deity. This occurs because birth in samsara obscures the essential nature of the jiva. When jiva comes into contact with ajiva (matter) change occurs, in response to the stimuli of those changes the jiva experiences passions and these create a particular form of ajiva which 'sticks' to the jiva. This is karmic matter. It is the karmic matter already attached to the jiva that shapes the new experiences to which the soul responds. For Jains, a siddha is a person without any of this matter attached. Hindu understandings of karma and its operation within samsara are not as materialist as this. They also differ in that Jains free themselves of karma by controlling the passions in order to prevent or inhibit the influx of more karma, a practice that only human beings are capable of. The practice of remaining calm in the presence of both joy and sorrow (samayika) is similar to the idea of detaching oneself from the fruits of action (nishkam karma) found in the Bhagavad Gita but Jains regard samayika as preventing the creation of karmic fruit altogether.</p>	20

Question	Answer	Marks
6	<p>‘The Four Noble Truths are the only teaching necessary to guide Buddhists to nirvana’. Discuss.</p> <p>Responses might include some of the following material:</p> <p>The Four Noble Truths are the substance of the Buddha’s first teaching, made after he achieved enlightenment. As recorded in the Dhammacakkappavattana (Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion) Sutta these Four Truths are: the truth of suffering (dukkha), the truth of the origins of suffering (samudaya), the truth of the cessation of suffering (nirodha), and the truth of the way leading to cessation of suffering (magga). In summary the teaching contained in these four principles is that life within the material world is full of suffering, which is caused by craving (tanha). If craving can be avoided suffering will not be renewed and striving to live life according to the eight principles of right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration offers a way to avoid craving.</p> <p>This teaching is at the heart of Buddhism, and no Buddhist is likely to say that the Four Noble Truths are unimportant or unhelpful. However, that is not the same thing as saying they are the only necessary tool to achieve nirvana. It could be argued that they provide an epistemological foundation on which the rest of Buddhist philosophy and practice is built rather than a detailed guide in themselves. It can also be argued that the Four Noble Truths are more central to Theravada Buddhists than to Mahayana Buddhists, because the latter emphasise the bodhisattva path and sunyata (insight into nothingness) as being of the greatest importance.</p> <p>The Four Noble Truths do give an overview of the insights the Buddha’s state of enlightenment gave him. But for them to be the only thing necessary for all Buddhists could be said to require more detailed instruction on ethical matters and practical matters than is given in the relatively short text of the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta. The existence of other concepts like the Three Jewels and the Three Poisons, or the Five (or Ten) Precepts and the Six Paramhitas (perfections) speak to a felt need for additional guidance and, since they offer more specific guidance, a case could be made for any of these being the most important teaching. It is also possible to argue that for most Buddhists their personal practices, such as meditation, have greater significance than abstract consideration of the Buddha’s teaching, if the goal is to achieve liberation.</p>	20

Question	Answer	Marks
7	<p>‘The only thing separating Buddhism from Hinduism is the concept of anatta.’ Assess this claim.</p> <p>Responses might include some of the following material:</p> <p>Anatta (no permanent self) is one of the core teachings of all Buddhist schools, including Theravada. Anatta is a direct contrast to the Hindu concept of atman. Although different Hindu schools teach different things about the precise nature of the atman and its relationship to Brahman its existence is a widely shared belief across Hindu traditions. The concept of atman as an eternal and unchanging essence of self, connected in some way with a Supreme Being, and trapped within a cycle of death and rebirth and seeking liberation from it, is precisely what the concept of anatta rejects, so that this single issue can offer a very clear distinction between Buddhism and Hinduism. However, it should be noted that some forms of Hinduism do support the idea of there being no individual self. In addition, while the teachings of the Buddha clearly include anatta, in practical terms there are forms of Buddhism which appear to accept the possibility of some kind of soul.</p> <p>The fact that Buddhism retains a belief in rebirth shaped by karma alongside the rejection of an unchanging atman might lead to a blurring of that distinction, and this philosophical problem has been the subject of much Buddhist thought on the nature of karma. To support the view in the stimulus Buddhist understandings of karma and the processes of its transmission across lifetimes would have to be the same as those of Hinduism. This is not, or not necessarily, the case. As with atman, Hindus might well understand the intricacies of karma in different ways but would usually consider it as attaching in some way to the atman in order for it to shape the future births of that particular atman. By contrast Buddhist thought views karma more as a matter of action/cause and consequence: a person forms an intention, and acts upon it; that act causes other acts, which cause yet more acts to occur. Thus, a chain of consequence is created which carries karmic fruit. The chain of dependent origination is often used to explain how karmaphala (karmic results) can carry across lifetimes without requiring the existence of an atman.</p> <p>Other areas of potential similarity and difference which might be explored in relation to the statement could include the Vedas and the existence of Shruti scripture in Hinduism. This links with the role and importance of deity and/or of Brahman. These elements of Hinduism are largely absent from Buddhism, which has no requirement to believe in any kind of deity and no concept of divinely revealed scripture. Instead the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path offer Buddhists guidance on how to achieve freedom from suffering and so become liberated.</p>	20

Section C

Question	Answer	Marks
8	<p>Assess the claim that Vishnu himself is <u>less</u> significant for Hindus than his avatars.</p> <p>Responses might include some of the following material:</p> <p>Vishnu is the deity with whom avatars, that is the physical manifestation of the deity in the material world, are most commonly associated. The most common lists of Vishnu's avatars identify ten – Matsya (fish), Kuma (tortoise), Varaha (boar), Narasimha (Man-Lion), Vamana (dwarf), Parasurama (Rama with the Battle-axe), Rama, Krishna, the Buddha and Kalki. Rama and Krishna are widely worshipped as deities in their own right, and for some Hindus they are the supreme manifestation of deity. It is unlikely that they would be seen as wholly unconnected with Vishnu, even if a specific avatar is worshipped as Ishvara, but whether the avatar of Vishnu is more significant will vary; for some Hindu schools the avatar is considered the supreme Godhead with Vishnu being seen as one expression of it.</p> <p>For many Vaishnavite Hindus, Vishnu is identical with Brahman and everything is therefore connected with him regardless of appearances. Since the avatars could not exist without Vishnu – and neither could anything else – the suggestion that they might be more important is nonsensical. However, they might be viewed as more accessible to limited human perceptions and understanding than the entirety of Vishnu would be.</p> <p>Vishnu's role in the Hindu pantheon, and particularly within the Trimurti, is as the preserver. It is his responsibility to maintain dharma and the stories of his avatars reflect that role. Even Kalki, whose appearance marks the end of the Kaliyuga and therefore the end of the current world, is understood in these terms, as destroying the adharmic world creates the space for a new dharmic one to begin. It could therefore be argued that avatars are particular instances of Vishnu taking form in order to achieve his overall aim so any significance they have is also attributed to Vishnu.</p> <p>Similarly, it is possible to take the view that devotion offered to an avatar is, in reality, devotion to Vishnu, so the claim made in the question is not really a meaningful one. However, Vishnu is worshipped directly in the same ways his avatars might be, such as through murti puja or the recitation of mantra etc. That means that devotion to Vishnu and his avatars can be expressed in the same ways, and therefore a decision to worship one or the other seems likely to have been made. However, this need not be an indicator of relative importance, or even of a belief that these are distinct beings. It might rather be because a given avatar is more associated with a particular circumstance when help is being sought or has a particular quality the devotee is seeking. The choice to devote oneself to a particular deity or deities within Hinduism is rarely a decision based on believing one deity to be supreme over others, but rather a recognition of the particular personal relevance that deity has to the individual making the choice.</p>	20

Question	Answer	Marks
9	<p>Compare the significance of Lakshmi and Durga in the everyday lives of Hindus.</p> <p>Responses might include some of the following material:</p> <p>Both Lakshmi and Durga are Hindu goddesses who are worshipped regularly by some Hindus and occasionally by others. Obviously for Hindus who are devotees of one particular deity the importance of that deity in their everyday life is very great, with a relationship existing between deity and devotee. Puja might be performed daily, and other offerings of time, service or charitable donations made; the deity will be a living presence in the devotee's life and, probably, in their home as well. So, to compare an ordinary Hindu devotee of Lakshmi to an ordinary devotee of Durga might well produce little difference – every personal deity is of great significance to their devotees. It is also the case that Hindus might worship both deities at different times in their lives. Other goddesses might also be regarded as incarnations of these deities.</p> <p>Goddesses might also have significance to devotees of Vishnu or Shiva as they are the consorts of these gods. Philosophers and scholars often regard differently named deities as different manifestations of the same divine being and this complicates the relationship between the goddesses named in the question and the gods who are the devotional focus for many Hindus. The role and importance of female deities, and the feminine principle may be seen differently by Vaishnavite and Shaivite thinkers.</p> <p>Both Lakshmi and Durga can be seen as manifestations of Mahadevi, the Great Goddess who some Hindus worship as the Supreme Being. Both goddesses might be given the title Ma (mother) as a reflection of this connection. The feminine principle of Sakti, personified by goddesses, is the active, energetic, immanent power which combines with the masculine principle Siva to create movement and change. In short, without the Goddess nothing can live. Her significance is therefore great from a philosophical/theological perspective and, although it might be less so from an everyday perspective, goddess worship is certainly a widespread element of Hinduism.</p> <p>Durga is a fierce warrior aspect of the Goddess, and as such may appear terrible and difficult to approach – her very name means 'unattainable'. By contrast Lakshmi is a benevolent aspect of the Goddess and her areas of concern – wealth and prosperity – make her an especially popular goddess. It could therefore be argued that Hindus might be more likely to worship Lakshmi on a regular basis and Durga occasionally, giving Lakshmi's more everyday significance. However, although she is fierce, Durga is not cruel or a lover of violence for its own sake; she is prepared to commit violence if it is necessary in the cause of goodness and protection for her devotees. She is also known as Durgatinasini (She who removes obstacles) and obstacles can be personal as well as global in scope. Even Hindus who do not worship Durga on a daily basis may celebrate Durgapuja, a ten-day festival commemorating her battle with Mahishasura. However, Diwali, which is connected with Lakshmi, is also widely celebrated and may be better known by non-Hindus.</p>	20

Question	Answer	Marks
	<p>Some Sakti thinkers recognise a concept of Tridevi, similar to the more widely known Trimurti this is a group of 3 deities who between them represent the power of Mahadevi. The three goddesses who form the Tridevi are Saraswati, Lakshmi and Kali and their significance for Saktas is comparable to that of the Trimurti for other forms of Hinduism. On the face of it this seems to give Lakshmi greater significance than Durga, but many Hindus regard Kali and Durga as different names for the same manifestation of the Divine.</p>	

Question	Answer	Marks
10	<p>‘Puja allows the living presence within the murti to communicate with the worshipper.’ Evaluate this claim.</p> <p>Responses might include some of the following material:</p> <p>Murti puja is the ritual worship of a deity in the form of a physical image of said deity. This image is called the murti, and it can take different forms from a flat picture to a detailed three-dimensional image. The murti usually has a number of features associated particularly with the specific deity, such as Ganesha’s elephant head and broken tusk, or Shiva’s tiger skin and matted hair. These elements help the devotee understand the nature of the deity better than they might otherwise. So, the mere presence of a murti, and the symbolism associated with it, could be considered a form of non-verbal communication.</p> <p>Murtis are not merely lifeless images though, they house the living presence of the deity they represent as an in-dweller. This presence must be awoken within the image as part of its installation in a shrine, so it would be possible to perform puja to an image without this presence. Mainly, murti puja takes place in the living and conscious presence of the deity. Murti are thus honoured guests, and are not only formally worshipped but bathed, dressed, offered refreshment, woken in the morning and put to rest at night; all these are actions performed by the devotee as service to their deity, and therefore offering an interaction between murtis and worshippers.</p> <p>Murti puja itself offers several possibilities for communication. Typically, offerings are made to the deity, and these are then returned as prasad. Prasad literally means favour or grace, and things which spend time in close proximity to the deity are imbued with this; eating food previously made as offerings or wearing items that have been offered to the deity carries the blessings of the deity to their devotees. Prasad is shared amongst everyone present during the puja, ensuring that the deity bestows their grace upon everyone equally. Another form of communication between human and divine that murti puja makes possible is darshan. This means both looking at the deity and being looked at by them, a two-way exchange of glances. The easiest way to understand this is as the meeting of murtis’ and devotees’ eyes, but it can still take place in the presence of murtis which don’t have eyes. As with prasad this is a mutual exchange through which the worshipper can offer devotion and the deity bestow their blessings.</p> <p>Although murti puja offers definite opportunity for communication between worshipper and deity that is not to say that it happens every time puja is performed. It is also true that some Hindu groups reject murti puja as the worship of idols, arguing that it is not Vedic in origin and/or that God is one while murtis create the impression of many gods. Hindus with this view would refute the claim made in the question entirely, since they would reject the special status of the murti as a living presence.</p>	20

Section D

Question	Answer	Marks
11	<p>Assess the claim that the varna system is vital to Hinduism.</p> <p>Responses might include some of the following material:</p> <p>The varnas are part of the idealised varnashramadharma system proposed by Brahminical Hinduism. They are the four sub-sets or classes into which the ideal society is divided: brahmins (priests), kshatriyas (warriors), vaishyas (commerce/business), shudras (servants). The Purusha Sukta is regarded as giving an account of the creation of this system and it is therefore of Vedic origin. For those Hindus who regard the Vedas as the source of Hinduism, varna might therefore be considered a vital component of Hinduism. However, the details of how the system should work are not primarily found in the Vedas but in other sources which may be considered less authoritative.</p> <p>For many Hindus the varna system is understood as being dependent on merit and suitability, so that it is possible to be a brahmin without being born into a brahmin family. However, other Hindus believe that the system has become corrupted, with jati (caste) being confused with varna and placement within a particular group has come to be conferred by birth. This could lead modern Hindus to reject the concept of varna entirely as being unimportant to their religion, or it could mean that they wish to remove the corruption but still value the system as an important component of Hindu life.</p> <p>Varna and ashrama together offer individual Hindus insight into their svadharma (personal dharma) and are therefore a guide to behaving in an appropriate way. The varna system links with karma in the same way other guides for Hindu living do. Put simply a person's actions during their lifetime create karmic consequences that will shape their future births. Therefore, if one is born with the appropriate qualities to be a kshatriya but rejects that and tries to be something else, negative karmic consequence will be the result. This is the central dilemma of the Bhagavad Gita; Arjuna struggles with the tension between what he sees as the virtue in not fighting people he knows and cares for and his duty as a kshatriya, which requires him to do so. He is told in no uncertain terms by Krishna that as a kshatriya his duty is to fight when there is war, and all other virtues are less important than that dharmic action. It is clear from this that the varna system is one way in which karmic consequences are created. The corresponding assumption would be that these consequences can also be expressed through varna, with negative karma resulting in birth in a lower varna and positive karma in a higher.</p> <p>To say that the system is vital to Hinduism could be said to imply that Hindus living in societies which are either non-Hindu or non-traditional in their observance/recognition of varna, are unable to practice their religion properly. Alternatively, it could be said that Hinduism is so diverse in form and practice that no single concept can be considered absolutely vital.</p>	20

Question	Answer	Marks
12	<p>Discuss the view that all four ashramas are of equal importance in Hindu society.</p> <p>Responses might include some of the following material:</p> <p>The ashramas are stages along the path of a perfect life, according to the ideals of the Brahminical varnashramadharma system. The first stage is the brahmacharya (student) stage, during which a Hindu learns about the religion from a guru. This is followed by the grihastha (householder) stage in which marriage, procreation and all economic activity take place. The vanaprastha (forest dweller) stage is the first stage in withdrawing from the everyday and it is vanaprastha who become the gurus with whom the brahmacharya study. The final stage is the sannyasin (renunciate) stage involving the complete renunciation from the world prior to death. Each stage thus has its perceived and expected connection with wider society, with most of the burden of the everyday functioning of society resting on the grihastha ashrama.</p> <p>If society functioned on this idealised basis then the claim that all four ashramas are equally important could certainly be supported, since every twice-born Hindu should pass through each one at the proper time. Each ashrama has its own significance within the wider picture: the brahmacharya ashrama ensures that the religion is maintained and practised according to established traditions. The vanaprasthas provide education for the children of the grihasthas and are given the respect their age and experience deserve. The progress through the ashramas means that older people remain of value to society even when no longer economically active, while the existence of renunciates allows the rest of society to practise virtues, such as giving, in order to support the sannyasins quest for liberation. The result is an interconnected, interdependent system in which everyone does the appropriate part for their stage of life and reaps the appropriate rewards.</p> <p>This is the ideal. However, the practical reality might well be different. Not every Hindu is expected or allowed to pass through all the ashramas. Shudras traditionally cannot become twice-born and so the ashramas are not considered the ideal life path for them. This could be used to oppose the idea that all four ashramas have equal value; to say that it is grihasthas who keep society functioning may be true on one level but, within the same system of varnashramadharma, it is shudras who are likely to be responsible for the actual manual labour involved. Similarly, regarding the personal quest for enlightenment as a contributor to society requires a particular understanding of the nature of the world and the value of specific virtues which may well not be universal.</p> <p>The ultimate aim of all schools of Hinduism is liberation, and the value of the ashramas could be examined in light of this. Not all schools of Hinduism promote or teach varnashramadharma, so it seems likely many Hindus do not consider any of the ashramas to hold any significance for society, however important they may be for individual Hindus. It is also worth considering whether a smoothly functioning and comfortable society is considered as necessary for the promotion of dharma or whether striving to achieve this is actually or potentially a distraction from the quest for liberation.</p>	20

Question	Answer	Marks
13	<p>‘Nothing matters more than good karma’. Discuss this statement.</p> <p>Responses might include some of the following material:</p> <p>Karma is one of the central concepts of Hinduism, and indeed of several other religions that originated in the same geographic area. It literally means ‘action’ but in Hinduism the concept describes the consequences created by human action. All actions carry unavoidable consequences which can be either positive or negative in the effects they have on the future. These effects often occur in subsequent lifetimes and so the law of karma gives a means of understanding why a person’s life progresses as it does – why they experience the suffering and the pleasure that they have. Positive karma has positive consequences and so karma offers a means to regulate undesirable behaviour – those who wish to avoid future negative consequences will also avoid engaging in behaviours which create it.</p> <p>For people who are focused on life in samsara the claim made by the statement might seem to be correct. If a life of suffering is not desirable but is also the inevitable consequence of bad karma, then good karma must be the goal. However, good karma does not result in liberation from rebirth. At best it might lead to rebirth in a heavenly realm, which would mean a pleasant lifetime but potentially longer in samsara overall since such a lifetime removes the impetus of suffering which drives much of the desire for liberation. For a Hindu trying to achieve liberation, which many regard as the ultimate aim of the religion, it is the removal of or detachment from karma which is most desired. Although a being within samsara must act, there is no need to be attached to the consequences of that action, such attachment ensures rebirth. Even a desire to create positive karma (sakam karma), while it may result in good and virtuous action, means another rebirth within samsara. If liberation is the aim then it is undesirable action (niskam karma) that is needed, as it creates no karma at all. This idea of karma marga /karma yoga is set out in the Bhagavad Gita.</p> <p>Other paths are also described in the Bhagavad Gita, which could be argued to make the question of good karma or no karma irrelevant. The Bhakti marga/yoga (the path of devotion) is said by Krishna to be the highest path on which liberation is granted to a devotee by the grace of God. It could therefore be argued from a bhakti point of view that God is the only real actor in this case as the devotee has surrendered themselves totally (prapatti). Karma is therefore not an issue, as there is no one involved to whom it can attach. Another understanding might be that karma is consciously controlled by God, rather than being a cosmic principle which works unconsciously and independently. In either case it is not good karma, or karma of any kind, which is of primary importance to the devotee but their surrender to God.</p>	20