

Cambridge International AS & A Level

HINDUISM**9487/04**

Paper 4 Hinduism in Contemporary Society

October/November 2024**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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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.

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	Accurate knowledge with good understanding <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	Mostly accurate knowledge with some understanding <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	Partially accurate knowledge with limited understanding <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	Basic knowledge and basic understanding <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	Thorough discussion supported with evidence <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	Coherent discussion supported with evidence <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	Clear discussion with some support <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	Attempts a discussion with limited support <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	Basic response with a point of view <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

Section A

Question	Answer	Marks
1(a)	<p>Compare the work of the Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj on the ‘caste’ system.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and understanding. Responses will be marked according to the 12 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>The caste system is the generic name given to the organisation of society into castes, or classes. It is usually understood to be a hierarchical system with membership of a high caste signifying greater status and privilege than lower caste. India is often used as an example of such a system, with the Hindu varnas being considered to be the origins of the many modern castes. This is a disputed claim though, with many arguing that caste, which is a position assigned by birth, is better translated as jati; varna is better translated as ‘class’ and, according to many Hindus, is a status bestowed by aptitude or personal qualities rather than birth.</p> <p>The Arya Samaj (Noble Society) was founded in 1875 by Dayananda Saraswati with the aim of encouraging a return to the teachings of the Vedas, removing what he saw as the distortions created by reliance on later texts. Religious conversions away from Hinduism were often a result of caste discrimination and the Arya Samaj’s rejection of traditional caste divisions and untouchability was rooted in a desire to achieve a unified Hinduism, able to resist the threat posed to it by proselytising religions.</p> <p>The Brahmo Samaj (Society of Brahman) was the first Hindu reform movement of the modern era, founded in 1828 by Ram Mohan Roy. It rejected a range of beliefs and practices that it considered non-Hindu, including both caste and untouchability. Roy based his understanding of Hinduism on reading Vedic texts, which do support an idealised varna system although they do not make any reference to untouchability/avarna status or to varna being determined by birth. The reliance on the Vedas as wholly authoritative was later rejected by Debendranath Tagore, who followed Roy as the leader of the society. Tagore realised, in light of criticism from both Hindus and non-Hindus, that only a very selective reading of the Vedas could offer unambiguous support for all the views promoted by the society; if these views were to be maintained the Vedas could not be regarded as the ultimate authority.</p> <p>The two movements had many of the same aims in terms of social reform and the ideal of a pure form of Hinduism. The list of practices they rejected as non-Hindu is also similar with both rejecting the idea of caste and untouchability and campaigning to educate people about the abuses inherent in this system.</p> <p>Study of the Vedas was regarded as a duty by the Arya Samaj, and such study would contribute to understandings of the ideal system of varna that is described in the Purusha Sukta. Understanding what is and is not in the Vedas enables individuals to recognise and challenge abuses of the system when they see them.</p>	12

Question	Answer	Marks
1(a)	<p>Both the Arya and the Brahmo Samaj regarded good education as the best foundation for society and the organisations supported access to education for all groups. This enabled members of avarna groups to better make their own voices heard as well as teaching the wider population about the non-Hindu elements of the system,</p> <p>Ram Mohan Roy was influenced by cultures and traditions from outside India whereas Dayananda Saraswati rejected such influences and challenged their impact on Indian society. However, in seeking reform and promoting values that are very much in accord with contemporary ideas of equality and human rights, it could be argued that these different starting points did not lead to significant differences in approach or desired outcomes. It is also the case that caste remains a matter of significant concern in contemporary India, suggesting that while these organisations might have contributed to raising awareness of the issue more practical work was, and is, needed to achieve real and lasting change.</p>	

Question	Answer	Marks
1(b)	<p>Assess the claim that the varnas create a better society.</p> <p>AO2 – Analysis and evaluation. Responses will be marked according to the 18 mark level descriptors (AO2).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Varna literally means 'colour'. It is sometimes translated as 'caste' but 'class' is usually considered a better translation since 'caste' has become a negatively loaded term, associated with discrimination and status being fixed at birth. The distinction between varna and caste is complex; there are those who regard the varnas as inextricable from historic associations with caste and an oppressive social hierarchy, even if those elements were not inherent in the original system. There are also those who consider caste to be a corruption of an ideal system, which could potentially be removed so that the system could flourish as intended.</p> <p>Four varnas are described in the Purusha Sukta, which is part of the Rig Veda, the oldest Hindu text. It is a means of organising people according to their social functions or occupations: brahmins (priests), kshatriyas (warriors), vaishyas (traders) and sudras (servants). In theory this gives every individual within a society a role to fulfil and, if each member of each varna fulfils their dharma properly, that society should function well. The ideal is further supported by the four ashramas (stages of life), each of which has its part to play in social functioning; the grihasthas (householders) are the active, economic foundation, allowing the other ashramas to pursue their particular dharma, and creating the contexts in which each varna can fulfil its role properly.</p> <p>It might be noted that the purpose of this structure according to the Rig Veda is the maintenance of rita (cosmic order). This promotion of harmony on a cosmic scale should also produce social harmony. The Rig Veda is an ancient text, and it could be argued that the society (and idea of harmony) that it promotes is suitable for the Satya Yuga (age of truth) when humanity has the best potential for spirituality and dharma is most strongly present in the world. Since we are now in the Kali Yuga the situation is fundamentally different and what was appropriate for the Satya Yuga may not be either appropriate or even possible here.</p> <p>Any complex society requires a range of roles and services to be performed in order to function properly. The four varnas arguably offer a foundation for this need, dividing people into broad groups relating to necessary social functions and by valuing these functions equally. While the four over-arching groups do not cover every possible need of a society they prescribe general areas of interest, within which sub-groups can be identified enabling everyone to find work that both benefits society and suits the abilities of the individual. This view of the varna system relies on it not being considered a hierarchy, with no single group having higher status or value than another. It also presumes that varna is determined by aptitude. It can be argued that these are ideals which have not been realised, and perhaps cannot truly be realised.</p>	18

Question	Answer	Marks
1(b)	<p>The nature of the different roles associated with each varna cannot avoid apparent differences in status, even if their overall worth to society as a whole is judged equal; it would be hard to argue that a servant is the equal to a king in terms of their everyday experiences, even if they both perform their roles perfectly within a system that regards them as equal in the abstract. However, the system does undoubtedly create order, with everyone being aware of their place in society, the role they need to fulfil and their status relative to one another.</p> <p>The varna system is a potentially controversial concept because the practical realities of the societies that developed from this kind of organisation have been less than ideal for some. A substantial underclass, considered wholly outside the varna system, was – and many argue still is – subject to deprivation and discrimination. This was exacerbated by the common belief that social status is created by birth and cannot be altered. It also has connections with ideas of ritual purity and pollution, which led to the idea that members of this fifth group are quite literally ‘untouchable’, being so impure (in the ritual sense) that physical contact with them would pollute the spiritual purity of the toucher. From the perspective of those outside this group their existence, and status, are necessary so that the more polluting tasks necessary for the functioning of the community will be done. Unpleasant and/or dirty tasks do need to be done – a society where they are not, seems inarguably to be a worse society than one where they are, in terms of the experience of living in it. However, it is equally hard to argue that a society which systemically disadvantages in such ways is better than one which does not. If the existence of avarna groups is an inevitable part of the varna system, then it is hard to argue that a society based on it is unequivocally better than a society based on equality and social mobility.</p> <p>The argument that these outcaste or avarna groups are not an inevitable part of the varna system can be made, because there is a lack of scriptural support for the necessity of them. When the idea of a connection between birth and varna is rejected and the theoretical possibility of being able to improve one’s position created thereby it may also come to seem less unfair in the abstract. However, the jobs which are their traditional responsibility remain necessary to society and it is hard to imagine many people freely choosing to do them. In addition, the associations of spiritual pollution and those roles is well-established and such cultural attitudes are hard to alter. Overall, the varna system might be considered as an ideal way to organise a society. The caste system is not unequivocally synonymous with the varna system but there are clear connections between them. Real-world experiences often differ from theoretical ideals, and it may be that the ideal proposed by varna has never existed. The general inequity and discrimination associated with caste structures can be used to challenge the contention that a society organised by social role is better than a society organised in other ways.</p> <p>Candidates can argue for or against the view as long as their discussion is focused on the question.</p>	

Question	Answer	Marks
2(a)	<p>Explain what is meant by the ‘unity of all religions’ in the teachings of Sathya Sai International Organisation.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and understanding. Responses will be marked according to the 12 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>The Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO) describes itself as a ‘spiritual and humanitarian organisation’ rather than a religion, but Sathya Sai Baba (the movement’s founder) did establish teachings that should be accepted by his followers. The unity of religions, and/or of Divinity, is a core element of these teachings. He frequently declared that there is only one religion, which he called the religion of love, and he called on his devotees to follow that religion by loving all and serving all.</p> <p>In practice this means that all religious traditions are considered valid by the SSIO. Sai Baba explicitly said that no-one needed to give up an existing religious affiliation to follow his teachings. He also described his own mission as one of enabling everyone to become a better practitioner of their own religion. However, it is also the case that there are required devotional activities for members of the SSIO. People who come from more exclusivist religious traditions might struggle to reconcile those with the more inclusivist/pluralist approach of the SSIO but from an internal SSIO perspective there should be no difficulty.</p> <p>SSIO can describe itself as encompassing all religions because Sai Baba held the view that all religions, however apparently distinct, teach a common truth – that the Divine is one and accessible to all people. This exists alongside the belief in an indwelling divine spirit which he called the atman, and it is this which is ultimately important. The mistake humanity makes, which Sai Baba claimed was the mistake all religion was trying to counter, is to regard the body as the important part of the self, when the truth is that it is actually the soul. This is reminiscent of the Advaita position of there being no distinction between the self and Brahman, however Sai Baba often spoke of God in personal terms and a belief in the unity of all religions would seem to require this as it is arguably a more common belief than the alternatives.</p> <p>While the existence of alternative understandings of the Divine might seem to argue against the principle of religious unity it should be noted that Sai Baba is generally understood to be talking about a deeper level of truth than is immediately apparent. The intention of his teaching and the purpose of the movement he founded was to help people realise their own divine nature at which point they would understand the truths which can only be approximated by words.</p>	12

Question	Answer	Marks
2(b)	<p>Assess the claim that the Sathya Sai International Organisation considers charity work more important than religious worship.</p> <p>AO2 – Analysis and evaluation. Responses will be marked according to the 18 mark level descriptors (AO2).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>The Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO) describes itself as a non-denominational voluntary organisation, whose members all share the goal of realising the divine within themselves. Sathya Sai Baba, the founder of the organisation, summarised his teachings as 'love all, serve all', which certainly seems to suggest that helping others should be at the forefront of devotees' concerns.</p> <p>The main aim of the organisation is to help individuals become aware of their inherent divinity and to live in ways appropriate to that. This appropriate living is based around several core ethical principles, which should govern all human relationships. These are satya (truth), dharma, shanti (peace), prema (love) and ahimsa (non-violence). Sathya Sai Baba also explicitly encouraged the performance of seva (service) as a spiritual discipline, done with no expectation of thanks or other reward; this is comparable to the concept of nishkama karma. Sadhana (spiritual discipline) is part of the code of conduct for devotees, which emphasises the importance of such work for the group overall.</p> <p>The SSIO centres are used to facilitate the voluntary and charitable work of the organisation. These include on-the-spot charity work such as food distribution, free education, and medical services, as well as larger scale or more remote projects like the Drinking Water Project, providing clean drinking water to villages in India. SSIO also runs schools, hospitals, and ashrams in various places around the world. Grama Seva (Village Service) is an important project for the organisation; during the Navaratri festival members of the organisation deliver donations of sweets (ladoos), rice and items of clothing to every household in a number of selected villages. The items given are considered prasad, which could be said to imply that the distinction between seva and religious worship is not an absolute one for SSIO devotees.</p> <p>SSIO centres are also places where devotees can worship and study the teachings of Sai Baba. Attendance at group events and regular (weekly) devotional practice is a part of the Code of Conduct of the organisation, and this could be used to argue for the importance of worship. A weekly commitment to worship may well be a more substantial commitment of time for an individual than their personal contribution to the charitable work of the organisation. Nevertheless, the inclusion of seva as a spiritual discipline in the teachings of Sai Baba imply its importance to the individual while the number and diversity of charitable projects supported by the organisation are evidence of its overarching importance.</p> <p>Members are encouraged to consider all service as being offered to God, which suggests that seva is in itself a form of devotional worship.</p>	18

Question	Answer	Marks
2(b)	<p>Charity work is a broader concept than any single religious perspective might define it and it is engaged in (or avoided) by many people for different reasons. Some forms of charity are just not available to people because of their personal circumstances for example, and other forms of charity have associations with a 'saviour' mindset that is considered patronising and inappropriate in the modern world. It could also be argued that engaging in charity work with the primary motivation being obedience to an instruction from someone else, rather than a desire to help, somehow devalues the action.</p> <p>The SSIO interpretation of their teachings and practices is not the only view which is relevant to a discussion and alternative ways of understanding concepts such as sewa should be credited.</p> <p>Candidates can argue for or against the view as long as their discussion is focused on the question.</p>	

Section B

Question	Answer	Marks
3	<p>Assess the claim that Hinduism can be practised anywhere.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and understanding AO2 – Analysis and evaluation Responses will be marked according to the level descriptors.</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Hinduism originated in India and India has many of the most important sites of pilgrimage as well as being home to the majority of the world's Hindus. However, there are active Hindu communities all over the world; their very existence argues for the possibility of practising Hinduism in a variety of social and cultural contexts. Santana dharma (eternal dharma) is sometimes used as a preferable term to Hinduism; the existence of a universal dharma could be said to imply that it must be possible to practise the religion anywhere.</p> <p>Some traditional practices, such as living as a sannyasin (renunciate), may be more challenging in different climates, and in non-Hindu communities that do not have an established tradition of supporting such individuals. Other customs, like open air cremation, might be illegal or very different from the norms of the surrounding culture. These are common elements of Hinduism as practised in India, but most people would be unlikely to argue that not doing them would constitute not practising the religion. Traditions, even ancient ones, and the cultural expectations which arise from them are not the same as religious requirements. Nevertheless, as Hinduism originated in India many aspects of the religion are connected with the geography and environment of that country.</p> <p>It could be argued that there is a scriptural ban on Hindus leaving India and crossing 'the black water'. This could mean that anyone who does so is no longer regarded as a Hindu, although it is more likely to be interpreted in the contemporary world as creating a ritual impurity which the individual must work to cleanse on their return. This is not a universally shared view however and, even when more commonly held, only applied to brahmins. It is also clear that there are many practising Hindus living outside India, with countries like the UK, Bali and Mauritius being home to large communities and temples.</p> <p>'Anywhere' could also refer to more specific locations, giving rise to a consideration of whether a Mandir is a necessary part of the practice of Hinduism. The fact that many Hindu communities outside India have chosen to build temples certainly argues for their being desired by many, but whether they are essential is less clear. Murti puja is the best known and probably the most common form of Hindu religious practice. While many Hindu communities have a communal shrine or a mandir a public or shared sacred space is not a requirement for puja. Most Hindus have shrines in their home, even if there is a temple nearby. The same ceremonies can be performed before a home shrine, and a priest is not a necessary part of this form of worship.</p>	30

Question	Answer	Marks
3	<p>By contrast homa, in which offerings are made to a sacred fire, does have more specific requirements which would be harder to meet without access to a temple and priests. There is an obligation for a grihastha (householder) to maintain a sacred fire, which is most often met by donations to a temple for the services of a priest. For many contemporary Hindus fire ceremonies are most likely to be encountered as part of rites of passage, such as weddings, which would require the presence of a priest but not necessarily a permanent temple since an appropriate altar can be temporary.</p> <p>Priests are important in traditional Hinduism in more ways than their role in formal worship; strictly speaking, their blessing is required for sewa (service) and dana (giving) to 'count' as virtuous or dharmic actions. Outside India untrained people may take on priestly roles, which might not be considered sufficient by some. It could be argued that difficulties of this kind contribute to the rise of new religious movements, which have fewer rigid requirements. The teachings of movements such as ISKCON might also be considered as influencing the practices and views of people who still consider themselves as traditional Hindus. Some practices might also be restricted by law in some countries – open air cremation is a traditional practice subject to legal restrictions in many countries, as are rituals which involve casting materials into waterways.</p> <p>Hinduism is an extremely diverse religion which includes many different paths and forms of practice and has no single 'right' way to practise it. Hindu practices may be wholly personal, family focused or involving a wider Hindu community, so the extent to which location is considered important is likely to vary from person to person. It is also true that some aspects of Hinduism, such as yoga, have been of interest to non-Hindus which is likely to make access to facilities/means of pursuing them more widely available. It might also be noted that difficulties in practicing a religion might come from the surrounding culture rather than from Hinduism itself, a community with a strong commitment to an exclusivist form of religion is likely to be a less welcoming environment for practitioners of another tradition.</p> <p>Candidates should provide a justified discussion which addresses the claim and comes to a conclusion.</p>	

Question	Answer	Marks
4	<p>'Social reform is <u>not</u> a concern for contemporary Hinduism.' Discuss</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and understanding AO2 – Analysis and evaluation Responses will be marked according to the level descriptors.</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Social reform is the name given to a process of actively working to change traditionally accepted cultural norms and laws which reflect them in the light of changing values or understandings. Put into a religious context it is likely to be seen as relating to the issue of how far cultural and social norms are supported by religious sources and authorities along with the related question of how far religious teachings should inform the law. Social reformers within Hindu societies have considered a range of issues including women's rights, child marriage, caste discrimination and untouchability. If contemporary Hinduism does not need to be concerned about such issues that would imply either that they have been solved entirely or that they have been separated from religion to a sufficient extent that they can be left to secular institutions to worry about and solve.</p> <p>Issues of equality and women's rights span a vast range of issues from cultural expectations in relation to marriage and family to access to education and equality before the law. There are also less obvious concerns, or matters which attract less public attention, such as access to places of worship (e.g., menstrual taboos) and receiving appropriate medical treatment for reported symptoms. It could be argued that these are always relevant for women wherever they are in the world and that, even in places where equality is protected by law, cultural attitudes often remain patriarchal. Hinduism is often presented as valuing women highly, and it is unusual in the centrality of the Divine feminine in many of its schools of thought; however, whether being valued and respected translates into practical equality in the day-to-day world is less clear.</p> <p>There are also specific areas of concern relating to women and Hinduism in the form of traditional practices such as dowry, sati and the status and rights of widows. For many Hindus all these things were founded in a distorted view of Hinduism and/or are cultural traditions with no justification in religious terms. Laws exist in India restricting practices seen as oppressive and establishing rights where they have historically been denied and, for many people, this might be seen as the end of the matter.</p> <p>Similarly, the issue of caste and its relationship to Hinduism is contested and laws exist to assert and protect the rights of members of historically oppressed castes. Untouchability, for example, is illegal but, in practice, attitudes informed by ideas of religious purity and supported by a long history of cultural support are hard to remove by such means.</p>	30

Question	Answer	Marks
4	<p>Overall, there is a need to educate people about the reasons for such laws and the history which underpins them. There are also likely to be challenges in enforcing and promoting them in places where such education is not present, has been unsuccessful or is opposed by a group or movement claiming spiritual authority on the issue. It is arguably more on this kind of social dialogue that contemporary social reformers need to focus. Earlier reformation campaigns have contributed to codifying values of equality and personal freedom; the laws exist but they must be understood and applied consistently in order to be valued and the Hindu social reformers have arguably been less successful here.</p> <p>Determining whether something is religious or cultural in nature is rarely a clear and simple process and many accepted religious practices have unclear origins. Differing interpretations of Hindu religious sources, the multiple forms of Hinduism and the important role of gurus mean that determining what is and is not Hindu is rarely, if ever, a case of simply demonstrating a lack of scriptural references to something. And, if that something is considered to be Hindu by some, then legislating against it without further engagement may create resentment and entrenchment rather than reform.</p> <p>Contemporary Hindus who share generally secular contemporary values are likely to apply their own interpretations to the sources which already exist, but they also need to be aware that this does not remove or invalidate older interpretations. If lasting social change is required, an ongoing dialogue is likely to be necessary. Alternatively, it could be argued that the degradation of dharma in the current Kali Yuga is both the cause of social problems and a substantial barrier to improving them.</p> <p>The increasing ease of communication and globalisation is likely to result, and arguably has already resulted, in a shifting of values across many communities. From this perspective social reform to conform with values held by a majority might be considered an inevitable event, not requiring the work of reformers. From a Hindu perspective, shifts in ideas of what constitutes a family could be argued to have already wrought such a change, with younger Hindus not necessarily following traditional family paths. This is arguably a fundamental change in the nature of the religion, which includes family roles and structures as an important part of svadharma.</p> <p>Candidates should provide a justified discussion which addresses the claim and comes to a conclusion.</p>	