

Cambridge International AS & A Level

HINDUISM**9487/04**

Paper 4 Hinduism in Contemporary Society

May/June 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.

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

Cambridge International is publishing the mark schemes for the May/June 2024 series for most Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge International A and AS Level and Cambridge Pre-U components, and some Cambridge O Level components.

This document consists of **17** printed pages.

PUBLISHED**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.

PUBLISHED**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

Level	AO1 Knowledge and understanding	Marks
Level 4	Accurate knowledge with good understanding • Uses a range of detailed, accurate and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates understanding through a well-developed response. • Fully addresses the question. • Good understanding of the wider context, if relevant.	10–12
Level 3	Mostly accurate knowledge with some understanding • 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 • 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 • 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

Level	AO2 Analysis and evaluation	Marks
Level 5	Thorough discussion supported with evidence - Analyses the importance and/or strength of different arguments/points of view. - Uses accurate evidence to support a well-structured discussion. - Coherent conclusion to the question which evaluates knowledge and points of view and assesses alternative conclusions.	16–18
Level 4	Coherent discussion supported with evidence - Discusses different arguments/points of view in some detail. - Uses accurate evidence to support a structured discussion. - Coherent conclusion to the question which evaluates knowledge and points of view.	12–15
Level 3	Clear discussion with some support - Recognises different arguments/points of view and discusses at least one in some detail. - Uses some evidence to support discussion. - Clear conclusion to the question which is linked to a range of knowledge and points of view.	8–11
Level 2	Attempts a discussion with limited support - Outlines one or more argument/point of view. - Uses supporting evidence for one or more relevant point. The support may not be wholly relevant or accurate. - Attempts a conclusion to the question which is linked to knowledge and/or a point of view.	4–7
Level 1	Basic response with a point of view - States a point of view. - Little or no supporting evidence. - May attempt a basic conclusion, which may not directly address the question.	1–3
Level 0	No relevant material to credit.	0

Section B Essay Marking grid

Level	AO1 Knowledge and Understanding	Marks	Level	AO2 Analysis and Evaluation	Marks
Level 4	Accurate knowledge with good understanding • Uses a range of detailed, accurate and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates understanding through a well-developed response. • Fully addresses the question. • Good understanding of the wider context, if relevant.	10–12	Level 5	Thorough discussion supported with evidence • Analyses the importance and/or strength of different arguments/points of view. • Uses accurate evidence to support a well-structured discussion. • Coherent conclusion to the question which evaluates knowledge and points of view and assesses alternative conclusions.	16–18
Level 3	Mostly accurate knowledge with some understanding • 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 4	Coherent discussion supported with evidence • Discusses different arguments/points of view in some detail. • Uses accurate evidence to support a structured discussion. • Coherent conclusion to the question which evaluates knowledge and points of view.	12–15
Level 2	Partially accurate knowledge with limited understanding • Uses a range of knowledge which may be partially accurate. • Demonstrates limited understanding through a partially developed response. • Addresses some aspects of the question. • Attempts to engage with the wider context, if relevant.	4–6	Level 3	Clear discussion with some support • Recognises different arguments/points of view and discusses at least one in some detail. • Uses some evidence to support discussion. • Clear conclusion to the question which is linked to a range of knowledge and points of view.	8–11

PUBLISHED

Level	AO1 Knowledge and Understanding	Marks
Level 1	Basic knowledge and basic understanding - Identifies a limited range of knowledge which may not be accurate. - Demonstrates basic understanding through a limited response. - Response is relevant to the topic, but does not directly address the question. - Little or no reference to the wider context, if relevant.	1–3
Level 0	No relevant material to credit.	0

Level	AO2 Analysis and Evaluation	Marks
Level 2	Attempts a discussion with limited support - Outlines one or more argument/point of view. - Uses supporting evidence for one or more relevant point. The support may not be wholly relevant or accurate. - Attempts a conclusion to the question which is linked to knowledge and/or a point of view.	4–7
Level 1	Basic response with a point of view - States a point of view. - Little or no supporting evidence. - May attempt a basic conclusion, which may not directly address the question.	1–3
Level 0	No relevant material to credit.	0

Section A

Question	Answer	Marks
1(a)	Compare the teachings of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness and the Sathya Sai International Organisation on the equality of women. AO1 – Knowledge and understanding. Responses will be marked according to the 12 mark level descriptors (AO1). Candidates might refer to some of the following: Equality is commonly used in a social/political context to summarise the idea that every person has the same rights, including access to facilities and opportunities, regardless of who they are. The equality of women is a specific strand of this area of concern because of historical inequalities in the rights and opportunities of women and men and many contemporary religious movements explicitly seek to address this. The International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) makes a distinction between the spiritual and the physical natures of human beings. All people have equal access to bhakti and can perform it fully because the soul has no gender. However, ISKCON founder Swami Prabupadha did see differences between men and women in a practical sense believing, that they were made with different dispositions, and naturally inclined towards different roles. This is not considered to be a matter of discrimination, or of one gender being worth more or less than the other, but rather one of allowing people to be as they are made or meant to be. This kind of ‘equal but different’ view can become a means of enforcing stereotyped gender roles and therefore not actually supporting equality. Swami Prabupadha often described the importance of women in terms of their role and duties as wives, mothers, and nurturers. Emphasising these roles can be seen as promoting the view that women can be nothing else, which restricts their choices in ways that the choices of men are not restricted. Even within ISKCON there are concerns about women being regarded as inferior, less capable, or less intelligent than men. It is an ISKCON convention to address male devotees as ‘prabuji’ (master) and female devotees as ‘mataji’ (mother); this is intended as respect but does imply a restriction on female roles and it can be seen as indicating inequality. While Swami Prabupadha taught that any role which spread Krishna Consciousness was appropriate for women to do, he also said that women needed men to protect them and compared them to children in that they could be easily misled. Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO) emphasises the feminine aspects of divinity as indicative of women having high status and deserving respect. However, SSIO founder Sai Baba also put this in terms of the traditional female roles as wife and mother, appearing to support the idea that women are primarily important for their fulfilment of these roles. The SSIO celebration of Ladies Day also arguably emphasises this, with the various discourses given by Sai Baba on the	12

Question	Answer	Marks
	meaning of the celebration explaining the importance of women in the education of children or emphasising a woman's duty to promote and exemplify purity – a value not generally associated with men, and one which arguably puts unfair expectations on women's behaviour. However, Sai Baba also confirmed the importance of women for society, saying they are capable of leadership if they choose to exercise their strength in that way. While much seva (service) done by women in the SSIO takes the form of the kind of domestic work traditionally done by women Sai Baba also stated that no sacred text restricts women to this kind of work alone and that women have the same responsibility for self-development that men do. In summary both organisations reject the idea that women are inherently inferior to men, but both could also be said to accept that there are intrinsic differences between genders.	
1(b)	‘Traditional forms of Hinduism deny women equal rights and status.’ Discuss. AO2 – Analysis and evaluation. Responses will be marked according to the 18 mark level descriptors (AO2). Candidates might refer to some of the following: The idea that men and women are made to take on different responsibilities, with women being best suited to take care of the home and children, is often described as the traditional view, regardless of the wider context of the discussion. However, difference does not necessarily equate to inequality. It is also the case that cultural traditions and social norms are often assumed to have a clear religious under-pinning, so that ‘the traditional view’ becomes a religious one in popular discourses. In the case of Hinduism there is certainly a traditional view which holds that women belong in the home and have a duty both to support their husband and to bear him children. Religious support can be found for this, with sthri dharma (women's dharma) being set out in some detail in the Manusmriti. This text not only affirms that the role of women is in the domestic sphere, but that it is one of subservience to her husband. Her rights are less important than his and she should be obedient and respectful even if he is abusive. This duty extends beyond his death and impacts on both her social status and her rights to equal treatment – widows have traditionally been regarded as unlucky and even basic choices such as what to wear have been restricted for them. It might also be noted that there are no equivalents for widowed men. Similarly, while there is a cultural tradition in India of paying a dowry for a bride, which some argue highlights the high status and value given to women, there is no equivalent for men. It is also condemned by many modern sources as offering a justification for abuse and restrictions on the rights of the women who have been paid for in this way.	18

Question	Answer	Marks
	The Manusmriti was influential on the development of Hinduism as it is understood today, and it gives a very detailed account of what is and is not considered a good life for Hindus of different statuses and at different stages in their lives. Most of this variety is presented as applicable only to men, due to the restrictions the text places upon women. Well known concepts such as varnashramadharma and the purusharthas are the concern of men, while women have their own sthri dharma. Contemporary feminist perspectives are likely to view this as demonstrating a lack of equality between women and men, and to reject the idea that this is based on inherent or fundamental differences between the two. However, it could also be argued that a lack of equality can also be an indicator of status, with the high status of women meaning they need to be protected from hardships. The division of the world that is implied in sthri dharma makes the home and family the sphere of women and everything else for men. If viewed as a requirement of the religion this might be understood as an example of being 'equal but different', with men and women of equal social, spiritual, and personal value but suited to different roles and duties. Many people argue that being a wife and mother is as important, if not more so, than any other job a woman might do and that women deserve the greatest respect for being able to fulfil these roles. However, it could be argued that such respect is meaningless if it does not extend to respecting a woman's right to choose whether or not she takes on that role. In addition, even where the right to choose is ostensibly supported it may be restricted in practice: there is no religious ban on women becoming gurus or sadhvis, but it is clear that far fewer women do so than men, perhaps because of social or cultural restrictions on their right to choose. The text of the Manusmriti does not constitute the complete picture of Hindu attitudes to women. Hinduism recognises many sources of authority and the Manusmriti may not be accepted as authoritative by all Hindus, especially now when the world is in the Kali Yuga. It can be argued that Hinduism gives a higher status to women because of the importance of the divine feminine, both in the sense of the ultimate creative power of Shakti and in the existence of individual goddesses. However, women gaining status from association with the divine feminine does not mean they have equal rights. They might be held to a higher standard of virtue and denied choices on that basis. Performing sati was meant to be a gesture worthy of the greatest respect, but without a comparable expectation that a widowed man would cleanse his wife's soul in such a way this cannot be said to demonstrate equality. And the lack of choice many women seem to have had in the matter argues against these highly respected women being entitled to their own lives.	

Question	Answer	Marks
2(a)	Explain what religious issues might face Hindus leaving India to live abroad. AO1 – Knowledge and understanding. Responses will be marked according to the 12 mark level descriptors (AO1). Candidates might refer to some of the following: It is estimated that around 90% of the world's Hindus live in South Asia and two of the three countries with a majority Hindu population – India and Nepal – are also in that region. This means that, although there are Hindu communities all over the world, there are few places where the religion is widely practised and the cultures within which those communities live are likely to have been more strongly influenced by other religions. In general terms this may mean a lack of understanding among the non-Hindu population, prejudice and discrimination against Hindus, fewer places for communal worship, difficulty meeting the requirements for some rituals (such as funerals) and possibly other restrictions on some forms of religious practice. In some cases, these are legal restrictions, for example open funeral pyres are functionally illegal in the UK. Hinduism has the advantage of a strong tradition of worship in the home and flexibility around what can be offered as prasad. However, some occasions might traditionally involve specific offerings, such as bel leaves on Maha Shivaratri, which could be challenging to obtain. Similarly, festivals with a large communal element, such as Holi or Ganesh Chaturthi, would be difficult to observe where there are only a few Hindus living. It might also be harder to pay the rinas (dharmic debts) in a society which is not Hindu in nature: deva rina (debt to deities) is traditionally fulfilled through Vedic forms of worship, which require an appropriate temple and a priest, and rishi rina is often associated with giving food or alms to sadhus, which is likely to be difficult in a country which does not have them. It might also be difficult to find a guru to study with for Hindus following jnana marga. Some virtuous actions are understood to be necessary for Hindu practice, and traditionally these would be blessed by a priest. The absence of priests outside India therefore complicates fulfilment of these. Since Hindus do manage to practise their religion fully outside India, it is clear none of these obstacles are insurmountable. However, being able to accept the need for flexibility, adaptation and change in the context of religion is, in itself, a challenge. It is possible that migrants might find it harder to let go of traditions, not because they are essential to the religion but because they give some familiarity and continuity in a new place. For example, the question of caste might become more significant for a Hindu outside of the society in which the system arose. It might also be that the form of Hinduism with which someone is most familiar is restricted by situational concerns, but this is not the same as being unable to practise the religion at all.	12

Question	Answer	Marks
2(b)	‘Accepting religious diversity is an essential part of Hinduism.’ Discuss. AO2 – Analysis and evaluation. Responses will be marked according to the 18 mark level descriptors (AO2). Candidates might refer to some of the following: The term ‘Hinduism’ encompasses a great diversity of beliefs and practices, and it is therefore not surprising that many Hindus consider tolerance of difference to be a virtue. The idea that the truth is one but can be expressed in many ways or called by many names goes back to the Vedas and is often used to support the view that there is no single, universally correct path for all people. This not quite the same as saying all religions are the same – that would defeat the purpose of different paths. It is rather the view that all religions are good and appropriate for some people, which is certainly a position of accepting diversity. Claiming that all religious paths lead, eventually, to the same truth however could be seen from outside Hinduism as a rejection of the teachings of religions which regard themselves as having the only truth or teaching the only right way to reach it. Similarly, the idea of Sanatana (Eternal) Dharma enables Hinduism to accept a great diversity of belief and practice but could seem to other religious groups to be contradicting or challenging their specific beliefs. Other Hindu beliefs which support diversity include the concept of karma, which means that every action will result in appropriate consequences in due course, and the belief that everyone’s soul is the same. Beliefs like these make it less defensible to judge others, because everyone is of equal worth, and every debt created will ultimately be paid. Hindu beliefs about the nature of the soul generally mean that no person can be considered inherently or inevitably evil, and what appear to be wrong choices in this lifetime can and will be corrected in later births. Believing the divine is everywhere and/or in everyone arguably makes hatred and bigotry harder to sustain and removes any need to push other people to think the same way. However, this ideal of acceptance is not always lived up to and contemporary political divides often use religious identity in intolerant and destructive ways. Violent clashes between Hindus and Muslims in India are not unheard of, and the connection between Christian proselytization and colonial rule may lead many Hindus to be less accepting of evangelical religions. Hinduism is not generally concerned with seeking converts, which supports the view that it is accepting of different religious paths. Other religions of Indian origin, such as Jainism and Buddhism, are sometimes classed as traditions within Hinduism rather than distinct religions. This could be seen as an expression of religious tolerance, but it might also be regarded as oppressive or inappropriate by members of those religions.	18

Section B

Question	Answer	Marks
3	Assess the claim that the Sathya Sai International Organisation is not Hindu. AO1 – Knowledge and understanding AO2 – Analysis and evaluation Responses will be marked according to the level descriptors. Candidates might refer to some of the following: Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO) is a movement based on the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba. It generally describes itself as a spiritual and humanitarian organisation, although Sai Baba commonly spoke in religious terms, declaring that there is only one religion – the religion of love – and that following it means loving and serving all. The validity of all religious traditions was a foundational principle of Sai Baba’s teachings; he said explicitly that no one was required to give up their existing religion in order to follow his teachings and that his mission was one of making every one a better practitioner of their own religion, whatever that religion might be. The SSIO today declares itself as encompassing all religions. The main aims of SSIO are to enable people to become aware of the divine within themselves, to live in accordance with that recognition and to promote the principles of dharma, satya (truth), shanti (peace), prema (love) and ahimsa (harmlessness) in and through human relationships. Sai Baba referred to this as Sanatana Dharma, or universal religion, making a clear connection with at least some forms of Hinduism which prefer this name. The realisation that the Divine is One and present in all people renders differences of religion, colour, social status etc. irrelevant and the metaphysics underlying this belief can be considered to be rooted in Hindu perspectives of Brahman as the Absolute. Other concepts and terminology used by Sai Baba to explain his understanding of Sanatana Dharma are likewise found within Hindu traditions and the devotional practices shared by devotees include dhyanaam (meditation), namasmarana (remembering the name of God) and singing bhajan (hymns), which are common bhakti practices within Hindu traditions. However, most of these concepts are found in some form in all the religions which originated in India and so are not exclusively Hindu. While many scholars do consider SSIO to be fundamentally a Hindu movement it could be argued that this is no more appropriate than claiming any other religion of Indian origin as Hindu when it considers itself distinct. It is also the case that both Jainism and Buddhism are sometimes considered nastika forms of Hinduism, and so this argument can be used to support either view.	30

PUBLISHED

Question	Answer	Marks
	Sai Baba is often considered an avatar, most notably of Shirdi Sai Baba, from whom he takes his name. The concept of avatar might be considered a Hindu one but that is likely to be considered a distraction from the important thing, which is the truth he incarnated to share. ‘Baba’ is a title with a specific Hindu tradition associated with it; it is a title that inspires both respect and affection from devotees. By adopting this title Sai Baba could be said to have sited himself firmly within established Hindu traditions, and the perceptions of him that members of SSIO have appear to fit such a tradition. It is also significant that Shirdi Sai Baba cannot be clearly labelled as either a Hindu or a Muslim. He was a mystic and a guru who had both Hindu and Muslim devotees and who engaged in practices from both traditions. He was angered by people questioning him about his identity as a Hindu or a Muslim, asking if that was all that mattered. In a similar way many contemporary members of SSIO are likely to be indifferent as to whether or not they are described as Hindus. As a tradition with its roots in mysticism, and also one which supports practices that could be considered mystical, it could also be argued that SSIO is a religious path wholly outside the mainstream; concerned with the individual and their path to the divine. It might also be noted that the movement is a self-declared International one. This is a move away from traditional Hinduism, which is strongly associated with India. The acceptance of new members and active attempts to attract them could also be seen as a non-Hindu tradition. Hinduism does not commonly proselytise and is traditionally regarded as being an identity conferred by birth. Similarly, the term ‘organisation’ is a contemporary one, the meaning of which does not conform to the Hindu concept of sampradaya (lineage). It is debatable whether the implicit meaning(s) of ‘organisation’ could be used to question to Sai Baba’s status as a guru in the strictest Hindu sense of the term. While the movement may not be entirely or exclusively Hindu it is still possible for it to be an important part of contemporary understandings of Hinduism. Its roots in the same cultural background as Hinduism mean it is likely to affect how non-Hindus understand both that culture and the different religious traditions which emerged from it.	

Question	Answer	Marks
4	Evaluate the claim that a secular state is a challenge to traditional Hindu religious practices. AO1 – Knowledge and understanding AO2 – Analysis and evaluation Responses will be marked according to the level descriptors. Candidates might refer to some of the following: Both ‘religion’ and ‘a secular state’ are concepts subject to different definitions and the relationship between them is likely to differ depending on how each is understood. The relationship between the state and any social group or institution (including religion) is formed by legal definitions as well as by tradition and wider social attitudes. A secular state is generally understood as a one where the official attitude is one of neutrality towards religion. In such a state there is no state religion or state support given to a single religious group or organisation and religious interests should not be any part of law-making or government of the country. Neutrality also means, arguably, that the state does not promote anti-religious or irreligious stances either. Rather, religion is excluded from the work and functions of government as completely as possible. In practice this may prove challenging as a secular state is unlikely to be able to prevent people with a personal religious affiliation from holding office, and such affiliation may well affect their political attitudes even if they try to prevent or minimise that. Such personal views could mean some traditions are implicitly threatened and others supported, while the officially neutral position of the state makes it challenging to recognise and address that. Religion is often considered to be synonymous with faith in a God or gods, and to practise a religion is to carry out particular acts of worship devoted to them. However, it can be more broadly understood to encompass both personal and communal acts, systems of philosophy and ethical thought as well as cultural traditions and values. Ethical ideas are often a source of controversy in the context of law making and sometimes religious groups consider themselves threatened by a new law around a sensitive issue. The boundary between what is religious and what is cultural is also often blurred making it hard to state with certainty what is and is not a traditional religious practice. Traditional Hinduism is commonly understood to refer to Brahminical Hinduism, with its associations with the social structures of varna and strict interpretations of dharma. In a secular state, religion is viewed mainly as a private matter, for people to make their own decisions about. However, when an individual makes decisions or engages in practices which transgress other laws there is no exception to be made on the basis of religion; a practice which is criminalised remains criminal in the eyes of the law even if it is religious in nature for the individual performing it. Some practices which have been associated with Hindu traditions, such as sati, dowries, and child marriage, have been made illegal in India (and elsewhere) which could be seen as discriminatory if they are considered important aspects of Hindu religion. Similarly, discrimination on the basis of caste is illegal, but because of	30

PUBLISHED

Question	Answer	Marks
	the links between cross-caste contact and ritual purity, some Hindus might prefer to be able to maintain exclusive spaces for worship. Many secular states share values and/or ethical principles, and these might be expressed through international law, conventions, and declarations such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In general, a secular state in the contemporary world would be likely to support freedom of religious practice provided it does not restrict or interfere with anything considered to be a basic right or freedom within that society. This does mean that practices may be more likely to be subject to restriction than beliefs, as freedom of belief is itself generally considered a fundamental human right. There are also benefits to a secular state since it protects the rights of all on an equal basis. The constitution of India is secular specifically because of the vast diversity of religions practised by its population; secularism was seen as offering the best option for all those communities to live side-by-side and to practise their own religion as they chose. Of course, ideals are not always put into practice and people with political power can be swayed by personal ideology in their decision making. In other words, a secular state <i>should</i> protect all religions but does not always do so in reality. Regardless of classifications such as ‘secular’ or ‘religious’, much history suggests that people will continue to practise their traditions to the best of their ability, even when there are laws intended to restrict this.	