



Cambridge International AS & A Level

HINDUISM

9487/02

Paper 2 Written Paper

October/November 2022

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.

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This document consists of **19** 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 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.

Generic marking grids

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 the specified topics and texts

AO2: Analysis and evaluation

Analyse and evaluate the specified topics and texts

Generic marking principles

- 1 Examiners should start at the lowest descriptor, 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 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.
- 2 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.
- 3 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.

5 mark questions

Level	AO1 Knowledge and understanding	Marks
Level 3	Explains significance of knowledge • Uses a range of detailed, accurate and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates understanding through a well-developed response. • Addresses the question. • Some engagement with the wider context, if relevant.	5
Level 2	Range of knowledge partly addressing the question • Uses a range of knowledge with some accuracy. • Demonstrates understanding through use of appropriate knowledge, may be less well developed. • Partially addresses the question. • Uneven engagement with the wider context, if relevant.	3–4
Level 1	Limited answer to question with limited knowledge/understanding • Identifies a limited range of knowledge which may not be accurate. • Demonstrates basic understanding. • Response is relevant to the topic, but does not directly address the question. • Little reference to the wider context, if relevant.	1–2
Level 0	No relevant material to credit.	0

10 mark questions

Level	AO1 Knowledge and understanding	Marks
Level 4	Explorative with detailed significant knowledge • Uses a range of detailed and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates understanding through well-developed connected discussion. • Addresses all aspects of the question. • Good understanding of the wider context if relevant.	9–10
Level 3	Explains significance of knowledge • Uses a range of mostly accurate and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates understanding through developed discussion. • Addresses most aspects of the question. • Some engagement with the wider context, if relevant.	6–8
Level 2	Range of knowledge partly addressing the question • Uses a range of knowledge with some accuracy. • Demonstrates understanding through use of appropriate knowledge, may be less well developed. • Partially addresses the question. • Uneven engagement with the wider context, if relevant.	3–5
Level 1	Limited answer to question with limited knowledge/understanding • Identifies a limited range of knowledge some of which may not be accurate. • Demonstrates basic understanding. • Response is relevant to the topic, but does not directly address the question. • Little reference to the wider context, if relevant.	1–2
Level 0	No relevant material to credit.	0

15 mark questions

Level	AO2 Analysis and evaluation	Marks
Level 5	Assesses alternative conclusions with analysis of points view - Analyses the importance and/or strength of different points of view. - Uses accurate evidence to support a coherent and well-structured discussion. - Addresses all aspects of the question. - Coherent conclusion which evaluates knowledge and points of view and assesses alternative conclusions.	13–15
Level 4	Coherent conclusion supported by evidenced points of view - Discusses different points of view in some detail. - Uses accurate evidence to support a well-structured discussion. - Addresses most aspects of the question. - Coherent conclusion to the question which evaluates knowledge and points of view.	10–12
Level 3	Clear conclusion with different points of view - Recognises different points of view and discusses at least one in some detail. - Uses accurate evidence to support discussion. - Partially addresses the question. - Clear conclusion to the question which is linked to a range of knowledge and points of view.	7–9
Level 2	Attempts conclusion with a supported point of view - Discusses one point of view - Uses supporting evidence for one or more relevant point. The support may not be wholly relevant or accurate. - Partially addresses the question in a limited way. - Attempts a conclusion to the question which is linked to knowledge and/or a point of view.	4–6
Level 1	Basic conclusion with a point of view - States a point of view. - Little or no supporting evidence. - Response is relevant to the topic, but does not directly address the question. - Attempts a basic conclusion.	1–3
Level 0	No relevant material to credit.	0

Question	Answer	marks
1(a)	Summarise the difference between astika and nastika traditions within Hinduism. AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. Response will be marked according to the 5 mark level descriptors (AO1). Candidates might refer to some of the following: ‘Astika’ literally refers to affirming the existence of something. It is used to mean ‘orthodox’, a term which indicates, in the context of religion, conformity to the traditional or most widely accepted tenets of practice and belief associated with that religion. In the specific context of Hinduism, it is therefore used to describe those schools which regard the Vedas as the foundational source of the religion and as being of divine origin. Astika schools of Hinduism are therefore those which accept the Vedas as authoritative. ‘Nastika’ means ‘heterodox’, or a position not in accordance with the orthodox view within a religion. In the context of Hinduism, it is most commonly applied to those schools which do not accept the Vedas as authoritative. The terms can also be used in the context of the acceptance or rejection of specific beliefs; either belief in Brahman or God or belief in the atman.	5

Question	Answer	Marks
1(b)	Compare the nature and concerns of the epics with the nature and concerns of the Manusmriti. AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. Response will be marked according to the 10 mark level descriptors (AO1). Candidates might refer to some of the following: Both the epics and the Manusmriti are generally accepted as having human authors and are considered smriti, although there is sometimes debate about this. In particular the Bhagavad Gita (part of the Mahabharata) is sometimes regarded as shruti because it is the words of Krishna. All these texts form part of the large and diverse collection of texts which can be considered Hindu scripture; the importance and popularity of specific texts varies a great deal but it is probably true to say that the epics are more widely read than most other Hindu texts, including the Manusmriti. However, the Manusmriti has strongly influenced scholarly understandings of Hinduism. Epics is the English name most commonly given collectively to the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. The term implies both length and substantial narrative content. In English is also often carries connotations of a fictional or, more accurately, mythological nature to these stories. For most Hindus the stories may or may not be true in the historical sense but they communicate truths which are universal for all times. The Sanskrit term often used for them – itihasa (lit: ‘so it was’) – implies not only an historical account of events in the past but also the truth contained in such an account. The epics can therefore be said to teach Hindus about Sanatana (eternal) dharma. Since they communicate such teachings through stories of human beings or deities in incarnate human form these are aspects of dharma concerned with human life and how to live it. The characters in the stories exemplify the challenges of human life and the ways they might be responded to, providing either a role model to follow or a warning to avoid. The Manusmriti is also known as the Laws of Manu, but the text includes material on cosmology, karma and rebirth and principles relating to purification and pollution as well the rules and responsibilities for the different roles within society. It is not written in a narrative form but is a collection of instructions and principles to be applied by specific people according to their varna, ashrama and other factors. This could be used to suggest that the Manusmriti is more concerned with svadharma (personal dharma) since any given rule within it will not be equally applicable to every person.	10

Question	Answer	Marks
1(c)	Assess the claim that the epics are just enjoyable stories. AO2 – Analysis and Evaluation. Response will be marked according to the 15 mark level descriptors (AO2). Candidates might refer to some of the following: The epics are probably the most widely known of the Hindu scriptures. They do undoubtedly tell stories of adventure and adversity, with heroes and villains, battles, challenges to be overcome and people to be saved. Some Hindus believe the stories are based in historical fact, recounting events which happened in the material world some time in the past; other Hindus do not. For many the difference is not particularly important as it is the story being told that matters. However, viewing them as history can have resonance in the contemporary world. For example, there has been ongoing political debate and even violence in Ayodhya, over a mosque built on the site of Rama's birthplace. This suggests for some Hindus at least the Epics are more than enjoyable stories. Story is widely used both within and outside explicitly religious contexts as a means of sharing ideas. It is useful because a story does not require any prior knowledge, academic ability or particular skillset to access and understand. The Hindu epics can be understood within this framework, serving as an introduction to religious ideas through the actions and events in the story. The narrative form makes these texts more accessible than many others, and the fact that they are stories means they can be told through other media as well. The popularity of dramatisations of these stories for film and television suggests that their ability to entertain is at least part of their appeal. However, mythical stories can also be considered as telling or illustrating important truths which transcend the time or setting of the story. The accessible and entertaining nature of stories means that these messages are less likely to get lost or distorted over time and their popularity ensures that ordinary people still know about them, even if they are not inclined to study other, less enjoyable, texts or consider scholarly interpretations of their contents. It is also the case that the scope and scale of these stories means they deal with tragic and challenging events as well as uplifting or entertaining ones, and this may impact on the individuals enjoyment of a given epic or section. The epics are not stories about ordinary people but about avatars and people with important responsibilities and roles in society. They are also set in very different worlds than the contemporary one. This could suggest that they only have entertainment value for Hindus today, since they are unlikely to find themselves in comparable situations. However, the argument can also be made that the principles underlying the specific events in the stories are true at a deeper level than those specifics. Rama (the central character of the Ramayana) is a king but he is also considered the Maryada Puroshattam, the perfect man. He and Sita together are thought of by many Hindus as the epitome of dharma and their example of living according to their own dharma may still inspire Hindus to pursue a dharmic life.	15

Question	Answer	Marks
1(c)	It is also possible for contemporary Hindus to make pilgrimages to places important in the epics, which lift their experience of the epics out of the realms of story or myth. The Mahabharata similarly contains stories of individuals who are exemplary in different ways, and guides Hindus to think about longer term karmic as well as immediate practical consequences of their actions and choices. It also contains the Bhagavad Gita, which is both part of the story being told in the broader text and also an explicit guide towards achieving moksha. The Bhagavad Gita is considered by some to be the most significant and/or influential scripture for contemporary Hinduism; its connection with the epic narrative told in the Mahabharata has helped to spread its influence but the significance of the religious teachings it contains is not dependent on its status as a popular text.	

Question	Answer	Marks
2(a)	‘Although the role of the correct performance of religious rituals is firmly based on scriptures, the physical presence of the scripture in the form of written words is very often non-existent. The worshipper or the priest learns the procedure and the mantras from the written texts, and recites them at the appropriate time in the ritual to accompany the action.’ Summarise what the above passage says about the use and significance of religious texts in Hinduism. AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. Response will be marked according to the 5 mark level descriptors (AO1). Candidates might refer to some of the following: The passage says that while the form rituals are meant to take is set out in textual form those texts are not a necessary part of performing such rituals. The text can be a source which is used to learn how to perform the ritual correctly, the passage does not suggest that texts are the only possible source for such knowledge although it does imply that it is the most common one. The text provides information on any actions which must be undertaken and any words which must be spoken. The individual learns this and reproduces it correctly during the course of the ritual. The correct performance of actions and words is independent of the presence of or reference to religious texts.	5

Question	Answer	Marks
2(b)	Explain why the Vedas remain important to contemporary Hinduism. AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. Response will be marked according to the 10 mark level descriptors (AO1). Candidates might refer to some of the following: For many people, both scholars of religion and Hindus themselves, acceptance of the Vedas as authoritative and/or of divine origin is the essential criteria for being considered a Hindu. This belief also commonly underpins the division of Hinduism into astika and nastika traditions. Atheist perspectives and rejection of the concept of karma might also be described as nastika in themselves, but since both deity and karma are mentioned in the Vedas rejection of these things is also at least a partial rejection of the Vedas. The Vedas are the oldest known Hindu texts, so their foundational role is hard to dispute. However, the deities named in them are not the deities commonly worshipped today and many Hindus worship through murti puja and other personal forms of worship rather than the rituals and sacrifices with which the Vedas are concerned. But while they may be of less importance to individual Hindus they remain important to the religion as a whole, not simply as its foundational texts but because priests still exist and Vedic rituals are still performed. These may be understood to have cosmic rather than individual significance, making them important for all Hindus whether they recognise that importance or not. In addition the Vedic texts include the Upanishads, which provide the philosophical and metaphysical underpinning of most contemporary forms of Hinduism. Even more recent texts draw on and interpret ideas developed in the Upanishads.	10

Question	Answer	Marks
2(c)	'It is important for all Hindus to read the Vedas for themselves.' Discuss. AO2 – Analysis and Evaluation. Response will be marked according to the 15 mark level descriptors (AO2). Candidates might refer to some of the following: As the foundational texts of the religion of Hinduism it could be argued that any truly devout Hindu should be familiar with them. However, there are many different Hindu texts with differing emphases placed on them by different schools. For some, the Vedas may only have historical importance. From a religious perspective, other texts like the Bhagavad Gita might be considered more significant. The Vedas themselves are not a single text but a collection of many. Each Veda is different, although some verses appear in more than one, and each collection is built broadly around a different area of concern. The Upanishads, which are generally considered Vedic texts, are the most likely to have been widely read but even these vary greatly in the attention which has been paid to them. In addition, not all, probably not even most, Vedic texts have been translated beyond the language they were originally written in. A desire or duty to study the Vedas carries with it a need to learn Sanskrit – and in a form which differs substantially from the modern language – a fact which limits the numbers of people who can access the texts directly. It could also be argued that, even if one has a full command of the language, the content of the texts is hard to grasp – using metaphor, allegory and terms which have multiple possible meanings. Studying scripture is arguably one of the key duties of the brahmacharya stage of life, although this could also be interpreted as study with a guru rather than direct study of texts. The fact that the ashramas are not equally applicable to all Hindus supports the argument that textual study is not of universal importance. The Vedas were transmitted orally before they were collected into textual form and these oral transmissions included associated practices and rituals. It could be argued that engaging with the Vedas in this, original form is far more important than reading them as texts, but it is also the case that oral transmission and carrying out the associated rituals, was the primary concern of priests rather than something any Hindu might do. This may still be considered the case, with the ashramas – including the brahmacharya ashrama – being considered necessary for the brahmin varna but not for all other Hindus. Hinduism is known for its considerable diversity and there are many different paths to liberation on which an individual can choose to focus. The jnana marga (path of wisdom) is the most likely to involve extended study of texts but this does not necessarily mean direct study of the Vedas. Even within this one marga there are different ways to progress.	15

Question	Answer	Marks
3(a)	Summarise what is unique about Shaktism. AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. Response will be marked according to the 5 mark level descriptors (AO1). Candidates might refer to some of the following: Shaktism is a branch of Hinduism whose followers worship the Goddess (Shakti or Devi) as the ultimate creative power. While many forms of Hinduism recognise the divine feminine Shaktism is unique in focussing on Devi as the supreme godhead. Shakti, which means energy or power, can be understood as manifest in any female deity and in many forms of Hinduism these goddesses are the consorts of masculine ones and the representation of their active, immanent power. By contrast Devi (also called Mahadevi) represents an independent and absolute feminine divinity. Unlike the schools of Hinduism which understand shakti as existing in a dualistic, interdependent relationship with shiva, Shaktism is non-dualistic. It does not reject the masculine per se but rather the idea that the Absolute contains two distinct natures. Instead the masculine and feminine energies exist in an inseparable synthesis. This could be understood as the belief that, at the level of ultimate reality, Shiva is Shakti. Shaktism is strongly associated with tantra, a system of non-Vedic rituals, practices and philosophies. Tantra, in all its forms, is concerned with energy and its manipulation; since it is shakti which shapes everything that exists most tantric practices involve worshipping the Goddess in some form.	5

Question	Answer	Marks
3(b)	Explain how different theistic traditions can be understood as parts of a single religion called Hinduism. AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. Response will be marked according to the 10 mark level descriptors (AO1). Candidates might refer to some of the following: While the idea of ‘a religion’ is often presented as a unified set of beliefs and practices, which everyone who associates themselves with that religion accepts, the reality is very different. Every religious tradition has different forms, branches and schools within it, even where its teachings claim there is only a single path to salvation. Most forms of Hinduism make no such absolute claims as this, so the diversity within it may be less surprising. However, distinct the different schools of Hinduism may appear to be they do share at least some characteristics. What is considered an essential element of Hinduism is likely to vary depending on who makes the judgement but there is considerable overlap in metaphysical and philosophical concepts and central beliefs: concepts such as liberation, karma and dharma are shared across both astika and nastika schools of Hinduism, although the precise philosophy built around them may vary. With regard to the theistic traditions the similarities are often clearer than the differences. Although they are broadly divided by which deity is considered to be the supreme they are all primarily bhakti traditions with many similar devotional practices, implying shared origins. It is also true to say that a scholarly distinction does not necessarily translate into a clear practical one – many Hindus worship multiple deities, and might identify as Vaishnava while also honouring Shiva, or vice versa. The idea of the Absolute or Ultimate truth being Brahman is also relevant. This might be presented as the idea that all gods are really different aspects of Brahman or as the view that all religious practice ultimately leads to the single goal of liberation and it is this which characterises Hinduism. Hinduism has long encompassed different margas, with the implication that an individual is able to choose the path most suitable for them because it is the end of the path rather than the form of it that truly matters.	10

Question	Answer	Marks
3(c)	‘The concept of Brahman is the same for all Hindus.’ Discuss. AO2 – Analysis and Evaluation. Response will be marked according to the 15 mark level descriptors (AO2). Candidates might refer to some of the following: The term Brahman is found within most schools of Hindu philosophy. It does not have a clear English language equivalent and the etymology of the word itself is unclear. The term is present in the Vedas, which are certainly the foundation of astika schools of Hinduism and, in the sense that something must be known in order to be rejected, of foundational significance to nastika schools. As such it could be said that the idea there is something known as Brahman is a universal one. However, the way in which the term is understood is not necessarily universal. Some scholars argue that even its use in the single text of the Rig Veda suggests a variety of possible meanings, including as a chanted word through which priests made manifest the sacred power on which Vedic rituals were focussed. Through its usage in the Upanishads the idea of Brahman as the power which regulates all things developed; it is from some of these texts that non-dualist forms of Vedanta argue for a single ultimate reality. Upanishadic texts can also support the idea of Brahman as a first cause and/or an essential essence for all things. Other Upanishads present a more theistic or personal perspective of Brahman. Nirguna Brahman (without qualities) and saguna Brahman (with qualities) seem very different concepts and for non-dualists saguna Brahman is likely to be considered an illusion obscuring the ultimate truth. However, there are Hindus who accept both these ways of understanding Brahman, with saguna Brahman offering a more accessible path towards nirguna Brahman. Within the theistic traditions of Hinduism the term Brahman is not generally used, as Shiva or Vishnu is seen as the Supreme Godhead. Ideas generally associated with divinity, such as its true nature being fundamentally beyond human understanding may also contribute to individual Hindu’s ideas about the overall concept of Brahman.	15

Question	Answer	Marks
4(a)	‘Experience of the divine must be sought in the company of good people. It is an illusion to imagine that you can see God in some temple or shrine or in some kind of meditation. Only in the divine manifesting in a human form can you experience the divine. If one cannot experience the divine in a living human being, how can one experience it in an inanimate stone? It is only when one perceives with love that one realises one’s true nature.’ Outline what the above passage says about the knowability of the divine. AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. Response will be marked according to the 5 mark level descriptors (AO1). Candidates might refer to some of the following: The passage says that to experience the divine directly requires the presence of other people, who are good or righteous. This is because the divine manifests within human beings and, it suggests, that if this immediate form of knowledge is beyond an individual then there is no way they can achieve knowledge of God in a more challenging form. The passage also claims that having the idea one has encountered the divine directly in isolated ways such as feeling the presence in a holy place or meditating in an attempt to understand the nature of the divine, is illusory. Love is the most important aspect of knowing God, and love is best applied to one’s fellow human beings. In this way one can come to realise that one’s own nature is divine. The emphasis in the passage is on experiencing the divine directly rather than encountering divinity through specific senses. It could be interpreted as suggesting that it is more challenging to see divinity in physical forms than to experience it through encounter. The possibility of experiencing the divine through a murti is also mentioned; the passage could be interpreted as saying this is impossible, because of the reference to illusion, or as saying it is simply harder to achieve that connection through an inanimate object. Either interpretation is creditable, as is an explicit identification that the issue of presence within murti is left ambiguous by the passage.	5

Question	Answer	Marks
4(b)	Explain why some Hindus might describe the divine as unknowable. AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. Response will be marked according to the 10 mark level descriptors (AO1). Candidates might refer to some of the following: From a philosophical perspective, rather than a practical one, it can be argued that it is impossible to know the divine because of the contradictory nature of many attributes ascribed to it and because it is unlimited while human brains, demonstrably, are not. Hinduism also addresses the concept of maya, or delusion, which can be understood as a deliberate obscuring of the nature of ultimate reality and perhaps therefore of divinity. Maya can be understood as a reference to the power of the divine to manifest and/or as the means by which the true nature of Brahman is hidden from the rest of the manifest world. According to Advaita Vedanta maya is the specific delusion that reality is multiple rather than one. Overall, maya functions to veil the ultimate truth, rendering it unknowable until one is liberated. The distinction between saguna and nirguna Brahman can be used to imply that Brahman can be partly known through the manifestation of the universe and the qualities that indicates. However, the manifest world is only a part (commonly suggested to be a quarter) of the whole of what Brahman is, so the greater part of Brahman is necessarily unknowable or ungraspable by the human mind. Ideas such as ‘neti, neti’ and ‘sat, chit, ananda’ are not intended to give a true, complete picture of what the divine must be like but rather to enable a sufficient, partial understanding of it as fundamentally different to anything else. If the divine were truly knowable in other, more direct ways, such mental devices would not be necessary. However, the divine may choose to reveal itself, at least in part, to individuals, for example through dreams, or mystical encounters.	10

Question	Answer	Marks
4(c)	Assess the claim that it is easier for people to relate to the divine within the theistic traditions of Hinduism. AO2 – Analysis and Evaluation. Response will be marked according to the 15 mark level descriptors (AO2). Candidates might refer to some of the following: The theistic traditions within Hinduism all share the idea of a personal form of deity as the supreme godhead. It can be argued that they personify Brahman in this form, regardless of whether the named deity is Shiva, Vishnu or Shakti/Devi. By doing so they arguably make the inconceivable nature of the Ultimate accessible to ordinary people through a personal relationship with their Ishvara. Such a relationship means that the individual can talk directly to their Ishvara and believe themselves to be heard and understood, Even if, from a metaphysical perspective, it is believed that Brahman's true nature is vastly different to that which any personal form might encompass it remains the case that liberation can be achieved through devotion to Isvara. For a Hindu on the bhakti path their total devotion to Ishvara results in their receiving that deity's grace (anugraha) and becoming liberated thereby. This path is followed by all the major theistic traditions. However, some traditions, such as some forms of Shaivism and Shakti Tantra, involve ascetic practices at levels to which not everyone can aspire. Total renunciation of the norms of home and family is not possible, or desirable, for everyone and if extreme austerities are required for personal connection with the divine then this is not an accessible path.	15