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Introduction

These exemplar answers have been chosen from the summer 2018 examination series.

OCR is open to a wide variety of approaches and all answers are considered on their merits. These exemplars, therefore, should not be seen as the only way to answer questions but do illustrate how the mark scheme has been applied.

Please always refer to the specification [http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/242913-specification-accredited-a-level-gce-religious-studies-h573.pdf](http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/242913-specification-accredited-a-level-gce-religious-studies-h573.pdf) for full details of the assessment for this qualification. These exemplar answers should also be read in conjunction with the sample assessment materials and the June 2018 Examiners’ report or Report to Centres available from Interchange [https://interchange.ocr.org.uk/Home.mvc/Index](https://interchange.ocr.org.uk/Home.mvc/Index)

The question paper, mark scheme and any resource booklet(s) will be available on the OCR website from summer 2019. Until then, they are available on OCR Interchange (school exams officers will have a login for this and are able to set up teachers with specific logins – see the following link for further information [http://www.ocr.org.uk/administration/support-and-tools/interchange/managing-user-accounts/](http://www.ocr.org.uk/administration/support-and-tools/interchange/managing-user-accounts/).

It is important to note that approaches to question setting and marking will remain consistent. At the same time OCR reviews all its qualifications annually and may make small adjustments to improve the performance of its assessments. We will let you know of any substantive changes.
Question 1

1* ‘It is not possible to practise Hinduism outside India.’ Discuss.

Exemplar 1  AO1 Level 6, 16 marks  AO2 Level 6, 21 marks

Total 37 marks

Hinduism has been described by many scholars, including Wendy Doniger and V. Raman, as a set of diverse guidelines broadly interpreted and followed by “children from a common holy land” embedded with different rituals and traditions. This essay is going to argue that as to an extent, simply implausible to state that “it is not possible to practice Hinduism outside India” because through migration and factors such as the British Raj, many Hindus including Viśeṣa viṣeṣa have travelled outside India to spread the universal aspects of Hinduism.

Despite some aspects unique that once you step outside India—also prominently described as the “sacred land” you soon become spiritually impure and tainted; however, this is perhaps a very primitive approach because it is based on ancient traditional beliefs regarding the “sacred land” because what does it really mean when one discusses about being spiritually unique is mentioned? Bringing A means drawing further away from Vishnu, then perhaps many Hindus including Viśeṣa viṣeṣa would argue that it is by further understanding the four adharma (social duties) to Moksha and hence we can embark that all beings are on a pathway, their adharma and adharma by performing their required duties. It’s safe to assume that they are practicing Hinduism with the intent to reach the ultimate goal Moksha.

There is a lack of empirical evidence to suggest that radically Hinduism is practiced outside India, and an example of this is the organization ISKCON which through the
primary concepts of the Bhagavad Gita, Hindus involved in ISKCON across the globe participate in Hindu traditions and doctrines including bhakti and learn yoga by

to believe that all that they are doing is "selfless" and is part of their complete devotion to their guru or teacher which they never call Vishnu. There are thousands of Hindus involved in ISKCON and help aid with disaster relief and hospitals and perhaps it's assured to state that these thousands of people are not proselytising Hinduism because the bases of all their events and programmes are based on Hindu doctrines even though they are outside India.

The concept of Hinduism to an extent would agree that it is not possible to practise Hinduism outside India because Hinduism is all about being proud to be Hindu and claiming the word "Hinduism" back to its people rather than what colonisers referred to as non-Muslims and Christians. For right accused Hinduism of which the political party is a involved in and defined Hinduism as its majority there's a sense of Hinduism as the only right way and so perhaps extreme Hindus would argue that without outside India, Hinduism cannot be practiced because it's a homogeneous religion embedded with "caste, rituals and customs"; however it could be argued that this is a narrow-minded approach as by taking up this faith, we are essentially invalidating all Hinduism based movement outside India including work and organisations primarily built by Hindus reforms such as "Vidya bharti and Caucus Krishna"

Hindus believe that there are many paths to attaining moksha, whereby the atman is entangled from the force of maya and achieves liberation—this is arguably the ultimate goal for all Hindus. Based on this because it can be safely assumed that possibly a path that one might take towards Hinduism is by practising outside India and
As truly believed that there are many ‘murges’ into
attaining Moksha, then certainly practicing Hinduism
outside India is a very abstract concept.

Swami Vivekananda would completely disagree that
it is impossible to practice Hinduism outside of India.
The reason for this is that throughout the 19th Century,
was a member of the Indian renaissance; it was a way
to redevelop Hinduism without the “sacred evils” of
tradition that came along with it. Candia simply stated
that “Swami Vivekananda’s was left Hinduism in practice
by cutting down the dead woods of tradition.” Swami
Vivekananda, evidently very influenced by the West, had so
much that Hinduism would be understood and accepted
by the West by spreading his ideas on Vedanta, the
Vedanta theory and hence creating New Hinduism.
Most of his accredited works, including his famous speech
at the “parliament of religions,” he felt was a part of
his personal dharna and he detailed this with the
fundamental principles of Hinduism: modernizing Hinduism outside India.

To conclude, perhaps it is an insult to conclude that
Hinduism cannot be practiced outside India. Through
migration and technology, the world many Hindus
are traveling outside India in search for a better
quality of life. Many of these migrated hindus practice
murti puja; perform their bhakti yoga with devotion and in hope itself. All through all their efforts of
following their dharna, they will all get closer to Lord Mahesh and perhaps the practices of
Hinduism are no different, that they can be practiced
across the globe, because Hinduism isn’t a religion
structured on rigid guidelines but rather flexible
and broad principles and hence can be practiced— even
outside India.
Examiner commentary

The response has achieved almost full marks - 16/16 for AO1 and 21/24 for AO2. As set out in the Levels of Response, in the top mark range the candidate fully comprehends the demands of the question and deploys relevant, selected knowledge to address and discuss the issue. This example is not only full of knowledge about Hinduism beyond its place of origin but has evident selection and application of that knowledge to the specific question asked.

The essay is clearly structured; at the beginning the candidate clearly identifies the connection between the idea of Hinduism and the land of India and juxtaposes this with the historical fact of travel to and from that land and contact between its people and the rest of the world. This establishes their understanding of the question and sets the foundation for a discursive essay. This writing style, entwining knowledge with analytic and discursive interpretation is maintained throughout the response with the candidate explicitly identifying material that might support the view proposed by the question and also material which could support views against it.

Where there is scope for improvement it is in relation to AO2, and the analysis/evaluation of the material the candidate has chosen to use. There is sufficient clear and successful argument and analysis to achieve the bottom of Level 6, however there are places where the discussion and evaluation of material identified and used by the candidate stopped short of the “insightful critical analysis and detailed evaluation” required to achieve full marks within Level 6. One example is the consideration of ISKCON, where the candidate does observe the scale and impact of ISKCON outside India and offers a thoughtful judgement on why this supports opposition to the position of the question; but they do not then mention ways in which ISKCON is distinct to other forms of Hinduism or reflect on whether the same material they have used on one side of the question could be interpreted differently and so support the other side.

One of the most striking things about this response is its reliance on specific knowledge of Hinduism and their study of it. The question was open to the use of generic ideas and ‘common sense’ observations - such as the existence of self-described Hindu communities outside India - but, while such material is relevant and can contribute to a response it can also be used to the exclusion of more specific, focussed material. The question refers explicitly to religious practices and this candidate has recognised that, relating their common sense observations to their specific knowledge of Hindu religious practices.

Exemplar 2

AO1 Level 4, 10 marks  AO2 Level 4, 16 marks

Total 26 marks

<table>
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<tr>
<td>In the modern world, particularly during the 20th century, Hinduism has become more and more popular across the globe. Many consider India to be the birthplace of Hinduism, and so only place it can be properly practised. This essay will consider the arguments for and against this and come to the conclusion that Hinduism cannot be practised outside India.</td>
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<tr>
<td>During the late 18th and 19th century, the British empire ruled most of the world, which involved India. In the 20th century, this included Britain, in which the influence from the British. The British Empire</td>
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contributed to the spread of Hinduism, and therefore to the Indian and English economy. The East India Company and later the British Government employed Muslim scholars to work on ship crews that were known as "Asiatic Tastes." By 1874, there were 10,000 lasses living in Britain. Of course, this number grew dramatically and now in modern Britain, there is a large Hindu population. As well as, London hosts one of the largest Hindu temples in the world. This shows that Hinduism is capable of being practiced outside of India, as it has a huge following within developed countries coming from India.

On the other hand, much of its spreading is due to Hinduism coming about the 1960s and 70s due to the influence of the Beatles. In the late 1960s, the band travelled to India and were greatly influenced, with it shown in their image in their style and music. They began to record, for example, their 1967 album "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," was hugely popular across the globe and much of it was influenced by India's Hindu culture. Furthermore, George Harrison, one of the Beatles, returned to Britain and set up the "ISHION" headquarters by donating a mansion he had bought near Witley. This represents a different kind of spreading of Hinduism because it came as a result of people who were not originally connected to the culture of Hinduism but have made it popular due to their own influence. The way in which the globalization story is told in the English led to Hinduism spreading was not...
Flood describes Hinduism to have followed the trend of the "pizza effect" with India to explain why the role of the Ottawa Hoque is an idea that Hinduism can't be pushed outside India. Flood describes the "pizza effect" to be how fast when Italian moved to New York they took pizza with them. The Americans then developed the pizza until it was almost inseparable compared to the original Italian pizza. Hinduism has undergone a similar trend because many aspects of Hinduism have been "westernized" for example ideas like the meaning of certain words has been changed. Hinduism is a religion that has two parts, the dharma and Artha. Everyone is equal and more important than they are in English which is wrong as Diana and Malika should be more important.

Finally, the idea of "Varna" certain jobs and aspects of Hinduism cannot be coherent with western society for example Varna. Varna is the idea of a caste system and that some castes such as the Brahmins are more important than the others and the way you are born into your caste and you cannot move caste within your current life. Equality is a huge aspect of Western society which promotes people from lower backgrounds to have the opportunity to become well educated and live a more equal life style in the future. This shows a clear difference between how Hindu beliefs are and western society which makes it hard for...
Examiner commentary

This response engages directly with the question from the outset, offering an introductory paragraph which sets out both the issue and the conclusion for which the candidate intends to argue. This paragraph offers a useful contrast with the introductory paragraph to the high level response in Exemplar 1: while both candidates have taken the same structural approach to the essay this introduction is less reflective and does not deploy explicit knowledge in establishing the question and responses. This response simply observes firstly that Hinduism is “popular across the globe” and secondly that it is widely believed to have originated in India which is connected to a belief that it can only be practised in that country without any exemplary detail or explanation of why this might be so. This introduction establishes a broad foundation rather than indicating a thoughtful, critical understanding of the issue. It is neither incorrect nor irrelevant, but it is not targeted to the specifics of the question in a way that indicates careful selection of material and a focus on the precise question throughout.

The essay continues in this general and descriptive vein, demonstrating some relevant knowledge (such as the connection between the British Raj and migration) but without the focus on practising Hinduism that is required by the question. The response overall offers a descriptive account of how Hinduism, in some form, did spread beyond India with some reflective commentary that ties the knowledge deployed more clearly to the question asked. It does therefore both address the question directly and include some successful and clear argument, ensuring placement in Level 4 for both AO1 and AO2, but the generally historical focus and limited material on practise prevents AO1 meeting the Level 5 criteria of focus on the precise question.

Reflection on the selected material is offered throughout, but the level of discussion and critique is variable and often lacking scholarly input/insight. The discussion overall is based in general knowledge, history and sociology rather than critically focussed on Hinduism in those contexts.
Question 2

2* Critically consider the claim that building good *karma* helps a person to achieve liberation. [40]

Exemplar 1

**AO1 Level 6, 14 marks AO2 Level 6, 21 marks**

Total 35 marks

The claim that building good *karma* helps a person to achieve liberation causes us to assess the meaning behind the word *liberation*. By the traditional sense, we are able to infer that *liberation* means the path to *nirvana*—or ultimate peace and enlightenment. As Hinduism is so large and diverse it is difficult to firmly state what is true and what is not, however, twice born knowledge and philosophy (that of the Brahmin and Kshatriya study of the Vedas) seem to form a general consensus that liberation (*Moksha*) is found from renouncing rather than by good *karma*, yet this is still a debatable topic.

One famous case of reaching *Moksha* by what was arguably ‘good karma’ is that of King *Janaka*; bound to his kingdom by his dharma.

*Janaka* was unable to renounce in order to fulfill his cosmic duty in the world and prevent adharma in his kingdom. Despite remaining king until his death, *Janaka* was still able to reach *Moksha* due to his altruism and abnegation that assured him to be removed from the cycle of *samsara*. While the story of *Janaka* is inspiring and supports the idea that good *karma* helps a person to achieve liberation, scriptures state that Hindus are more likely to get to *Moksha* through a variety of other ways, concluding that due to his *varna* and *karma* of *Janaka* was a special case in reaching *Moksha* without completing the hindu two ashrams in his life.
Some Hindu scholars have suggested that
the only reason that Janaka was able to reach
Moksha (liberation) was due to the purity of his
atman and his separation from his ego. Analysis
of the four karmas in Hinduism allows us to
know that good accumulated karma is only useful
in the samsara cycle in deciding upon rebirth of
jivatman (nikram karma); if this is the literal
revealed truth as the Vedas suggest as a mysti-
source of authority, then good karma is more
harmful as it keeps you bound to the material
rather than the spiritual world of liberation and
peace - a far cry from what the claimant would
wish to prove. Rather than good karma aiding an
individual to liberation, they must instead forget
their ego and focus on only the simplicity of the
universe. Krishna himself says in the Bhagavad
gita that even the purest nectar poisons the soul,
from which we can infer that karma does more
harm than good on the path to liberation.

Sankara, the founder of Hindu philosophy
Advaita Vedanta, stresses the non-dualism of the
world and states that empiricism and verses are
shrouded by the deceptive nature of the maya of
the universe; in order to achieve liberation by Moksha
people must renounce and focus on the ultimate
truth of Brahma (truth-consciousness-bliss), neti-neti (not this, not this), tat-tvam-ai
(thou art) and sat-chit-achit (god conscious
no consciousness). Sankara proposes that by doing
this, individuals are able to break free from
karmic ego and samsara and achieve liberation
in Moksha by becoming sanyasins (monks).

To conclude, the claim that good karma

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Examiner commentary

The question required detailed Hindu-specific knowledge, balanced with critical and careful consideration of that knowledge. There was no place for generic material or generalised understandings of karma in an adequate answer to this question: candidates had to focus with precision on their understanding of a specific issue (karma) and its complexities in the context of Hinduism and this candidate does so very well. They not only recognise the key terms used in the question but understand that the issue is more complex than it might appear to a more limited understanding of Hinduism - a poor response would take the question as a truism.

This response does not begin by restating the question in the candidate’s own terms but rather with a consideration of one of the key terms in the question, using this the candidate is able to open their discussion by explaining that Hinduism is diverse and complex and that exploration of any issue within it requires recognising their own starting point. They begin with the concept of moksha and use the story of King Janaka achieving it both to introduce the concept of karma and to establish different interpretations of it. This combines material relevant for AO1 with skills relevant for AO2 in a very fluent way.

The response achieves the top level for both AO1 and AO2, although not the top mark within those levels. It is full of relevant, correct and carefully selected knowledge that is skilfully used and, while it is short, it is all to the point and focussed on the specific question. There are places however where the candidate’s brevity has prevented them demonstrating the high level of detail, nuance and reflective critical insight that would meet all the level criteria for full marks.

Exemplar 2

AO1 Level 5, 11 marks  AO2 Level 4, 13 marks

Total 24 marks
Exemplar Candidate Work

Exemplar Candidate Work

A Level Religious Studies

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Conclude that building good karma can help a person achieve liberation, however, there may be other paths that appear more suitable.

Karma, regards to the laws of action and consequence. If you do a good thing, good rewards shall follow. The concept of karma in that one must commit to fulfilling selfless actions in order to achieve self-realisation and unity with Brahman. Traditionally, the Sa Kapil Kata sect in Saivism pursued good karma through a method of exchange. They would give boiled gestures towards women, acting in humane ways, believing that these acts would exchange their bad karma with the good karma others passed by them.

Ironically, this method completely contradicts the ways of the orthodox Brahmins. However, it is thought that building ‘good’ karma through exchanging good karma helps to achieve moksha.

However, drawing authority upon the Bhavagad Gita, Krishna in conversation with Arjuna states that the act of selflessness and fulfillment to one’s duty allows a human to unify with Brahman. Thus, achieving moksha/Dharma is defined as duty. Duty in Hinduism is considered as a moral obligation originating from the Rig Veda, dharma is considered to uphold society through its morals, allowing for
Social order to be maintained. Because of its source of authority, it is often argued that dharma is essential in regards to achieving moksha. As one of the precepts of dharma, correct dharma a liberates the manas (mind) encouraging liberation. Therefore, referring that rather than building good karma, fulfillment of dharma is more effective in allowing a person to achieve moksha. Take, for example, the householder. The householder has a duty to feed and supply for his family. Therefore, it is his duty to aim for artha and kama (pleasures). However, those who are apart of the lower caste, such as the dalits (outcastes) have the duty to accept their poor state. Only through this acceptance can they achieve liberation. Thus, by assessing that building good karma for these can help to some extent to achieve liberation, however, as dharma is subject to have higher authority. It is necessary to fulfill your dharma as dharma dharma to live in accordance to duty, which would thus enable a hindu to unify with brahman and achieve moksha.

In conclusion, the claim that building good karma helps a person to achieve liberation is to some extent considered the truth. The significance of karma...
Examiner commentary

This response is a good example of the way in which an average candidate dealt with this question. It recognises, defines and uses all the relevant Hindu terms - karma, moksha, dharma and so on - and then offers a broad-brush account of karma within samsara based largely on the English translation the candidate has for these terms. In this example that means explaining that karma is the consequences of actions played out over a succession of lifetimes, and that good karma brings rewards. This is correct, as far as it goes, but it is also limited and overly-simplistic without additional detail which is never really given. Further, the response appears to assume that it must be the case that good karma will assist with liberation and neither alternative views nor different ways of understanding what help might mean in that context are engaged with.

There are places where the response hints at awareness of complexity - for example there is an early reference to selfless action, which might indicate the idea of nishkam karma - but in the absence of any development that understanding remains unclear. Areas such as attachment and delusion, the connection with Rta and the functions of karma within samsara - are touched upon in passing but not really discussed. The complexity and interrelationship of different concepts remains unclear and means the response overall reads as more of a summary of one view of karma within one form of Hinduism than a critical engagement with different understandings of the contribution of karma to liberation.

The knowledge selected and used is good, relevant to the question as used with sufficient facility to achieve the bottom of Level 5. However, this could have been a much better essay with the explicit recognition that there are different ways to understand karma. The AO2 mark remains at the bottom of Level 4 because, while views are offered and justified in support of one clear argument, the analysis and evaluation elements are much more limited.
Question 3

3* Assess the importance of holy persons in modern Hinduism.

Exemplar 1

AO1 Level 5, 13 marks  AO2 Level 5, 20 marks

Total 33 marks

Holy persons have a long, rich history within Hinduism and have been referenced continually throughout sacred texts. They come in a variety of forms, each with differing levels of importance. My thesis is that for the majority of Hindus, holy men are still important in modern Hinduism for the insight and wisdom they offer to the uniquely bring.

One may argue that they are of no importance as the religion has moved away from its traditional roots and towards a focus on personal experience. This is the basis of Neo-Vedanta, as put forward by Swami Vivekananda. Vivekananda was a highly influential philosopher who sought to update Hinduism and bring it to the wider Western world. He thought that the ancient traditions would hold the religion back from spreading outside of India. To rely on a guru for guidance would seem childish to the highly educated European elites that valued individualism highly. Thus Vivekananda changed the perspective to accommodate this, believing anyone could read the Upanishads or Mahabharata and take from it as they pleased. In turn this would essentially lead to holy men being made redundant, as everyone would become able to discover spiritual truths for
Hindus. However, the main flaw is in Vivekananda's approach in that although it might have suited him, it would be highly ineffective for everyday Hindus. The elite education and knowledge he possessed is too far beyond an everyday working Hindu that does not have the ability or time to comprehend such endless knowledge. This is where holy men come into play, as they do in your have the ability and time to dwell on such matters. Guru are masters on these subjects and can unlock and decode texts which are esoteric and done without this help or guidance.

Secondly, I would feel left out on the deep philosophical history of their own religion. While undoubtedly acting with the best intentions, Vivekananda's rejection of holy men ends up making Hinduism a rather exotic, exclusive belief, even to today's settings.

Another argument one may make is that holy men represent the backwoods aspect of Hinduism. With Yajis performing seemingly absurd tasks that have no bearing in the modern world, Ram Mohan Roy et al. argued that many elements of Hinduism were rather outdated and needed updating to keep itself in line with modern day morality. He highlighted examples such as such or child marriage but would also be critical of certain behaviours like holy men to hold one's head above one's head for years. In end is what causes people to turn away from Hinduism to monotheistic practices such as Christianity.
Modern, Hindu, this is not something that happens spiritually. This is not for Raja, it would be best to move away from holy men and not seek to emphasise the positive inclusive divine truth that makes Hinduism attractive in the first place. On the other hand, Raja runs the risk of accepting a colonialist view of holy men and he imposes aetic if views from a few Majority of holy men do no such activities, and are mainly spiritual teachers as we have seen with Guru. More, one must question what is so odd putting aside the sincerely deviant nature of a) the Raja truly putting into practice their beliefs. It might actually be the case that modern Hindu are so proud and celebrate holy men now more than they ever have. This by all means should rightly their continued importance. 

In conclusion, despite being opposed, the main purpose of this essay, is probably stem from being so high up within society that they cannot relate to an ordinary believing Hindu. The main thread throughout these critics of holy men is their their interaction with the new way and seeming desire to approve them. Too long they have holy men been defined from an outsider looking in, or to be judged by standards that are not their own. If one is to escape reject the fundamental nature of any imposed ethic discourse, one realises that holy men had a great impact on the lives of many people, today as much...
Examiner commentary

This was not a popular question and it was also commonly a weaker area for a majority of candidates. The term ‘holy persons’ used in the question is found on the specification but did not appear to be familiar to candidates since it did not lead them to relevant information; an average answer dealt more with anthropomorphic deities than any human form or expression of holiness. This is an interesting exemplar response in that it demonstrates how a narrower range of topic-specific knowledge can be constructed into a good essay by using the specifically relevant knowledge with both skill and critical insight in a focussed response to the question.

The specification identifies four titles which might be given to Hindu holy people - sadhu/sadhvi, yogi/yogini, Guru (or Swami) and sannyasi. This response directly addresses only two of these, but the nature of positive marking, using Levels of Response, means that a narrower scope explored in depth is as able to achieve as high a mark as a response that reflects the specification content more completely. Since the question asks for an analysis of importance within Hinduism the focus of a high level answer should be clearly on the ways in which whatever categories of holy person identified contribute to or impact on the religion overall. This response maintains that focus clearly, considering first they had historical importance but that the world has changed and then asking whether practices associated with them are wholly irrelevant in a contemporary world. Neither perspective is taken as an absolute but instead different responses to each are considered.

The conclusion demonstrates a high level of knowledge about the academic study of religion and the impact of choosing either an outsider or an insider perspective on a given issue. It places the importance of holy people in the context of ordinary Hindu lives, as distinct from the interpretations of scholars rooted in a Westernised understanding of religion. This also demonstrates the candidate has achieved a holistic understanding of Hinduism using material from different sections of the specification to support their evaluation of the issue in the question.

Exemplar 2

AO1 Level 5, 11 marks  AO2 Level 4, 13 marks

Total 24 marks
More "spiritual" paths, and guidance towards a relationship for God. In India and the East, this is still a common practice, with over 500,000 Hindu temples and leaders available in India today (Klostermann). However, arguably, this practice has become less commonplace following the Hindu diaspora to the West over the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries. This may be a result of an emphasis on home worship developing due to a lack of facilities in the West for temple worship and spiritual guidance. While this has undergone a huge change in the late Twentieth and Twenty-First centuries, with most large cities having at least one or two multi-flour mandirs available (Jones), it can be seen that over time there has been an emergence of the importance of home worship as a culture. In the East and West, many families often have shrines to a personal deity, family God, to whom they devote their worship. Arguably, this form of worship without the strict guidelines and ritual of a religious leader allows for a more personal relationship with God, which many Hindus value. Arguably, this lessens the importance of gurus and mandir leaders, as they do not provide a personalised worship — arguably a more valuable sham of devotion. Omitting the use of liturgy.

Additionally, throughout the social reforms of the Modern era, for example, the abolition of castes as a class, the traditional structure of the Brahmin caste as holy people has lessened in importance. For
Many in India, the caste system plays little relevance in the modern world (News Channel Four News published findings), hence the traditional religious caste norms are in decline. For example, for many Brahmin boys in the student stage of their Asrama, they would be expected to partake in a period of study with a guru. However, this avenue has become increasingly unpopular (Jacob)

with the rise of modern alternatives, such as secular schools and universities, which many feel are a more significant form of knowledge. Furthermore, the religious renunciation of Sannyasis is a typical route as a path for the Brahmin caste. However, with the decline of the caste system this is no longer the case. Arguably, however, the opportunity for many people to undertake the role of religious ascetics has worked to increase the importance, as it has led to a wider, more diverse group to devote themselves to God. However, it cannot be ignored that the number of religious ascetics is still a vast minority (McGee), and so their diversity does not pose a significant importance.

Overall, the focus on home worship and the decline in the caste system is pushing for the neglect of holy places has led to a relegation of the importance of holy figures in Hinduism. However, their role in both Western and Eastern societies is still highly revered, as seen through the national Indian congregation of ascetics which attracts thousands of Sannyasis.
Examiner commentary

This response is representative of the average approach to this question. It does not engage with any specific roles and types of Hindu holy person; instead tending to group them all together as 'holy leaders'. While terms like 'ascetic' are used occasionally, they do not signal any clear understanding of the specifics associated with that term, or explicitly distinguish it from the general category.

The material offered about the development of contemporary Hinduism and a shift towards personal puja, at least in the West, is all correct; however, the connection of such material to the question is attached at the end of a descriptive paragraph rather than used as a focus for the descriptive material. This approach works through a number of examples, beginning with the assumption that temples and therefore priests are hard to find in the modern world and especially outside India and collapsing religious and secular forms of education into a single issue concept. The spectacle of large events like Kumbh Mela offered as proof that there is still a role for sadhus, but that role is not explored in any real depth, nor are the distinct characteristics of sadhus in this context considered.

The overall result is a response that offers a discursive answer to the question, which is more of a generic consideration of 'religion today' than it is a recognition of an/or grappling with the specifically Hindu material relevant to the issue. Such an approach, done well, can achieve marks but it can't achieve the highest levels.
Exemplar 1

Whether Hinduism can be seen as one religion, or would be better described as a collection of separate religions is very much open to debate. The English word religion comes from the Latin word religio meaning respect for the sacred and reverence for the Gods, and although it may be simpler to groups all forms of Hinduism into one religion, it is much more appropriate to describe them as different religions with a shared origin, especially with the new branches that ‘neo-Hinduism’ continuing to develop and evolve.

Religion can be defined in a vast number of ways, with definitions believing those which show the complexity and diversity of the very matter, and although it may be easier to see Hinduism as one religion at first glance, it is much more complex than it may at first seem. For example, each major deity whether it be Shiva, Vishnu or Shakti, all have a variety of different beliefs, thoughts, traditions, rituals and worship attached to them depending on which of the Hindu gods is regarded as a supreme being. For example, Srimad Bhagavata Samhita Sen was a devotee of Kali in particular, after standing neck deep in the River Ganges singing devotional poems to her, claiming that, “knowing Kali is one with their greatest blessings”. The variety of Shakti worship, whether it be Bhuta-panca, Bhuta Kali, which fits in within the accepted norms in the ranks of Vaishnavas, or left hand tantric (which includes Kali worship) which goes against societal norms shows how diverse and varied different forms of...
Hinduism are, and suggests that it would be more suitable to call them a collection of different beliefs and religions rather than grouping them into one. The fact that different Hindus can see different gods as the supreme being, as opposed to other people of their beliefs, faiths like Christianity or Islam, surely go to show that Hinduism is more of an umbrella term for different religions all with interwining links.

Dandekar argues that Hinduism cannot be called a single religion under popularly accepted terms and understood terms. Hinduism has no specific starting point, founder or absolute, authoritative text (as opposed to the Bible for instance) like most other monothestic religions. It also makes no universal claims about the nature of God, the existence of a God isn't even absolutely essential to it. This goes suggests that within absolute beliefs, moral codes or doctrines which are said to be true for all Hindus, different Hindu communities have very little in common with regards to worship and beliefs, showing Hinduism can't be understood as one single religion. For instance, in rural villages in India, there may be local goddesses attached to trees or rivers, and although only worshipped by a few, they have profound significance in that area. This contrasts greatly to Hindu communities in the UK or in the west, who may attend the Mandir and not be familiar with the idea of local goddesses, showing how even though different group of Hindus share the same origins of a Hindu religion, in modern society it is much better to understand it as a collection of different religions as opposed to one, especially with the diverse range of beliefs and practices found across Hindu communities around the world.
Further, Neo-Hinduism is an umbrella term covering a range of beliefs and movements, from the Bengali Renaissance, ISKCON (Hare Krishna) and PAC (Abraham-S砂浆). The Neo-Hinduism is mostly prevalent outside of India, but ideas to still have Hindu beliefs, but the varying movements all with different ideas and beliefs on Hinduism continue to show how it cannot be understood as one single religion.

ISKCON is often referred to as a new religious movement and focuses on bhakti (love and devotion) to Krishna, in order to achieve Krishna consciousness. Unlike traditional religion, it seeks to convert others to join their movement, and with influences from around the world, including George Harrison buying the UK headquarters. Neo-Hindu movements may differ to that of traditional Hindu beliefs, with a focus on monothelism instead of polytheism, and rejection of sacred scripture, and avatars. When comparing Neo-Hinduism to traditional forms of Hinduism, it is hard to see them as one single religion. Instead, it would be much more suitable to see the different forms as different religions in order to understand these different beliefs and practices held by different Hindu groups better.

Hinduism is an etic term, meaning it comes from outside (like groups rather than within (emic)), it was first used by Muslim invaders (conquerors rather than Hindus).

Themselves. The British also used it to group all non-Muslim and non-christians together, referring to culture as opposed to religion. The fact that Hinduism, only later became associated with religion shows how it may be seen as a collection of different forms of religions, especially if it was not used by the people themselves. Hindus may prefer to use the term ‘Sanatana dharma’, meaning eternal dharma, to describe their faith, and as Wendy Doniger says, “Hindus didn’t develop a strong sense of belonging to a distinct religion until there were other...
Examiner commentary

This response begins with the important, but uncommon, recognition that the term and concept of ‘religion’ originated within a specific context. By recognising that this concept is itself more complex than it is often assumed to be, a way is opened to demonstrate why Hinduism might be classified as a single religion and also how a different conclusion might be reached. The approach is mature and insightful, and it demonstrates excellent knowledge of the way in which Hinduism interacts with scholarly approaches to studying religion.

The organisation of the essay continues in this same clear vein by identifying elements commonly considered to be part of the broad concept of religion and examining whether Hinduism has one shared version of these or many distinct ones. As this is developed, the candidate demonstrates not only clear knowledge of diverse forms of Hinduism but also scholarly insight into the issue. Each section of the response is wholly focussed on the specific question that has been put to them, and each has its own partial conclusion.

The final, overall, conclusion is the weakest section of the response. While it presents the valid conclusion that the answer to the question depends on how you want to look at the evidence it doesn’t do much more than state this in general terms.
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<td><strong>Hinduism has a very complex history and much of its history is a hot topic. Its origins are hard to determine and the name Hinduism itself is controversial. Hence, it would make more sense to call the different groups of Hinduism were described as separate religions.</strong></td>
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<td>Firstly, Hinduism would be better described into a series of small beliefs because of countless ideologies and origins. It is difficult to trace Hinduism back to where it started. Many other Abrahamic religions have a clear beginning but Hinduism is diverse, and many have many origins. This already shows that different beginnings exist for different parts of the religion. Therefore, they should be different religions. Many trace Hinduism back to the Indus Valley Civilisation, which has clear links to early Hindu beliefs such as the idea of worship having spiritual cleansing properly. Water was key in the Indus Valley Civilisation, with good engineering and a ‘Great Bath’ found in Harappa, the largest settlement. However, some argue the Argue much the beginning of Hinduism as this are debated to have written the Upanishads. Dogma argues that this shows there is no clear beginning and hence there are differences determining the true beginning of Hinduism. This seems, all the different beginnings should be considered as different religions.</td>
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Saraswati opposes the idea of multiple religions and argues his case for Hinduism. He says Hinduism is one, and maintains the idea that Hindus should be proud to be called Hindus. He claims the source of Hinduism is found in the Upanishads and says Hindus should work together to end oppression and opposition to their religion. Saraswati tried to bring all Hindus together. It can be argue he has been successful with huge groups such as the BJP who encourage community work to help maintain Hinduism. However, Jayaswal says Hinduism and Saraswati aims to spread violence under their peace and unity. This is a sufficient argument showing that Hinduism should be split into smaller religions to avoid conflict.

Furthermore, many Hindu beliefs are contradictory. The Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, and the laws of Manu are some examples of sources of authority that conflict. They each focus on a different aspect, as society also shows divisions. For example, Hinduism often teaches love and respect through ahimsa, but they also allow acts such as Sati and mistreatment of lower caste members, such as the Dalits. Abuse towards Dalits and women is common.
Widows are re-married regard to as it as they lose their identity after their husband dies. This shows Hinduism is split and there are very contrary beliefs and customs. For this reason it makes sense to split the religion up.

Gandhi, on the other hand, supported Hinduism as a whole. He said you cannot compare Hinduism to the West and encourage the idea that Hinduism should remain one religion. He said that Hinduism is made up of many different ideas but maintaining a core idea of India being the holy land, which should be protected, a view supported by Socrates.

Furthermore, many Hindus are proud to be called Hindus and actually promote their religion, but the complexity makes this seem logical.

Lastly, Hinduism should be composed of many different religions because of the way it was known. During colonial times, before Indian independence, the British and Persians developed the name Hinduism. Some refer to the land of India as Hindustan and the British called anyone who wasn't either Christian, Muslim or British a Hindu. This meant many individual tribes and villages became known under the same identity, where they had very little knowledge of other beliefs. This shows that Hinduism should be split into individual religions because the British gave Hinduism its name. Also, Doginos
Examiner commentary

This example makes a useful contrast to the high example given in Exemplar 1, in that it has a range of relevant commentary about diversity and complexity in Hinduism, but this is made in general terms rather than focussed throughout on answering the precise question. Where points are explicitly connected to the question this is in a comment at the start or end of a paragraph rather than woven through the whole approach and structure of the response. In other words, the approach appears to separate the Assessment Objectives in the way it is written, with a summary of some relevant piece of knowledge being written separately to a consideration of how to attach an AO2 element to that.

In addition to this slightly less fluent approach to essay writing much of the knowledge demonstrated is slightly to one side of the actual question: for example, it describes how Hindus might be divided on moral issues or scriptural infallibility rather than asking whether such divisions could indicate that distinct phenomena have been wrongly classed as a single entity. This is a selection of relevant material that is mostly accurate and used “appropriately on the whole”, rather than the detailed and skilful use of selected material necessary for the higher levels.
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