



Cambridge Assessment  
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## Glossary

# Cambridge International AS & A Level Hinduism 9487

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## Paper 1 Concepts in Hinduism

	Term/word	Definition	Notes
1.1.1	dharma	'Duty'. Can also be translated as 'order' or 'righteousness'. Occasionally 'teaching' as in 'Sanatana Dharma'.	No direct English equivalent. Meaning can change slightly with context.
1.1.1	artha	One of the four purusharthas. Material wealth or prosperity.	
1.1.1	kama	One of the four purusharthas. Literally 'desire', it includes all sensory pleasures.	
1.1.1	moksha	Liberation from the cycle of samsara (rebirth). The last of the four purusharthas.	
1.1.1	Sanatana Dharma	'Eternal Dharma'. A term used by some as an alternative to Hinduism.	
1.1.1	Sadharana Dharma	Universal dharma, a term used to describe ethical principles which always apply to every person. This is distinct from the particular ethics and duties associated with varna and ashrama.	
1.1.1	adharma	Unrighteousness. Behaviour that goes against one's dharma.	
1.1.1	Yug Dharma	The aspects of dharma that are specific to the current yuga (era or age) and so subject to change.	
1.1.1	Mahayuga	One cycle through the four yugas that make up the life of the universe before its dissolution to be created anew.	
1.1.1	Satya Yuga	'The yuga of truth'. The first yuga (age) in the mahayuga when there is almost perfect righteousness. Sometimes called the 'Golden Age', Dharma (symbolised by a cow) stands on four legs.	
1.1.1	Treta Yuga	The second yuga (age) in the mahayuga when dharma has diminished and stands on three legs rather than four. It is characterised by three avatars of Vishnu.	
1.1.1	Dvapara Yuga	The third yuga (age) in the mahayuga when dharma is further diminished and stands on two legs: compassion and truthfulness.	
1.1.1	Kali Yuga	The final and current yuga (age) of the mahayuga when almost all virtue has vanished from the world and dharma stands on one leg only. It is characterised by strife and conflict.	

	Term/word	Definition	Notes
1.1.2	varnashramadharmā	One's dharma according to their varna and ashrama.	
1.1.2	varna	Classification of members of the society. There are four varnas.	
	brahmin	Varna of priests, scholars, teachers.	Not listed in the syllabus but required knowledge for this topic.
	kshatriya	Varna of warriors.	Not listed in the syllabus but required knowledge for this topic.
	vaishya	Varna of merchants and traders.	Not listed in the syllabus but required knowledge for this topic.
	shudra	Varna of labourers or service providers.	Not listed in the syllabus but required knowledge for this topic.
1.1.2	ashrama	One's stage in life.	
	brahmacharya	One of the ashramas; student stage of life.	Not listed in the syllabus but required knowledge for this topic.
	grihastha	One of the ashramas; householder stage of life.	Not listed in the syllabus but required knowledge for this topic.
	vanaprastha	One of the ashramas; forest-dweller/retirement stage of life.	Not listed in the syllabus but required knowledge for this topic.
	sannyasa	One of the ashramas; renunciate stage of life.	Not listed in the syllabus but required knowledge for this topic.
	guru	Literally 'elder', a title given to a teacher of a specific religious tradition.	Not listed in the syllabus but this is a useful term for this topic.
	tri rinas	The debts a person owes to the gods (dev rina), to their ancestors (pitri rina) and to gurus/sages (rishi rina).	Not listed in the syllabus but this is a useful term for this topic.
1.1.2	jati	One's position in society according to birth. Sometimes translated as 'caste'.	
1.1.3	svadharma	One's personal dharma. This may change over time and is determined by varna, ashrama and personal conscience.	
1.1.4	sthri dharma	The dharma that is appropriate to women.	
1.2.1	samsara	The cycle of birth, death and rebirth.	

	Term/word	Definition	Notes
1.2.1	karma	The consequences of one's actions.	
1.2.2	maya	'Illusion', 'deceit' or 'delusion'. Often applied to the material world, which some Hindu traditions regard as unreal.	
	avidya	'Ignorance'. The term is usually applied to ignorance of one's true nature and relationship to the world.	Not listed in the syllabus but this is a useful term for this topic.
	adhyasa	'Superimposition', attributing qualities to something which it does not truly have.	Not listed in the syllabus but this is a useful term for this topic.
1.2.2	Brahman	The Ultimate or Absolute reality or the Absolute Divine. Usually understood as unknowable.	
1.2.3	vikarma	Usually translated as 'wrong action' that leads to rebirth, although Vinoba Bhave, an associate of Gandhi, interprets it as the intention that underlies an action. The benefit of a dharmic action is only realised if the intention behind it is also good.	
1.2.3	akarma	Literally 'inaction' but it is used in the Bhagavad Gita to describe actions which create no consequences and which do not bind the atman to samsara.	
1.2.3	sakama karma	Selfish or self-interested action. Actions that are carried out with attachment to their consequences, in expectation of receiving a reward.	
1.2.3	nishkama karma	Selfless or desireless action. Actions that are carried out with no attachment to their consequences, with no expectation of receiving a reward.	
1.2.3	sanchita karma	The sum of all karma amassed in previous lives.	
1.2.3	prarabdha karma	The portion of past karma that is responsible for the circumstances of the present birth, and which will be experienced, for good or bad, in the present life.	
1.2.3	agami karma	New karma created by the actions of this life that will form the circumstances and experiences of future births.	
1.2.4	deity/deities	Gods and goddesses.	
1.2.4	jivan mukti	Moksha (liberation) attained during lifetime.	

	<b>Term/word</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Notes</b>
1.2.4	videha mukti	Moksha (liberation) after death.	
1.2.4	Jnana marga	The path (marga) to moksha through mystical knowledge, study and wisdom.	
1.2.4	Karma marga	The path (marga) to moksha through actions in the world.	
1.2.4	Bhakti marga	The path (marga) to moksha through personal love and devotion to a deity.	
1.2.4	Raja marga	The path (marga) to moksha through the practice of meditation and self-discipline.	

## Paper 2 Development of Hinduism

	Term/word	Definition	Notes
2.1.1	Vedas	The core sacred texts of Hinduism. There are four Vedas each with its own collection of texts attached.	
2.1.1	Samhitas	These are the earliest Vedic texts. They are concerned with hymns and prayers to the Vedic deities.	
2.1.1	Aranyakas	The next layer of Vedic writings, also known as forest treatise – philosophical discussions.	
2.1.1	Brahmanas	The next layer of the Vedic writings incorporating commentaries on the Vedic hymns and discussions on Vedic rituals: yajnas.	
2.1.1	Upanishads	The final layer of the Vedas comprising philosophical and metaphysical discussion on the nature of the atman and its relationship to the Absolute (Brahman).	
2.1.1	shruti	'That which is heard and revealed'. A category of scriptures comprised mostly of the Vedas, which is attributed to divine authorship, or to be without author. It is considered uniquely authoritative.	
2.1.1	smriti	'That which is remembered'. A category of scripture attributed to human authors, which includes epics, puranas and shastras.	
2.1.1	astika	Often translated as 'orthodox' Hindu traditions, usually those that accept the authority of the Vedas.	
2.1.1	nastika	Literally 'one who says it is not' and often translated as 'heterodox' or 'non-conformist'. Commonly used to describe traditions that do not accept the authority of the Vedas.	
2.2.1	atman	Usually translated as 'self' or 'soul'. The eternal, unchanging essence that is bound to the material world.	
(2.2.1, 2.2.2), 4.2	avatar	Literally 'to descend'. The incarnation of a divine being into a physical form in order to accomplish a purpose.	
2.2.1	nirguna Brahman	Brahman without attributes or qualities (often described as 'Sat, chit, ananda' (Truth, consciousness and bliss)).	



	Term/word	Definition	Notes
2.2.1	saguna Brahman	Brahman with attributes. Deity in a specific form which can be related to as a person as distinct from an impersonal concept like 'the Absolute'.	
2.2.1	sat	Truth.	
2.2.1	chit	Consciousness.	
2.2.1	ananda	Bliss.	
2.2.1	neti-neti	'Not this, not that', a way of describing the divine in terms of what it is not, derived from the Upanishads.	
2.2.1	murti	An image (picture or statue) of a deity or spiritual leader used as a focus for worship.	
2.2.1	ishvara	A personal deity adopted by an individual, family or community. Often regarded as an expression of saguna Brahman.	
2.2.1	Devi/Shakti	Feminine divine energy; can be used to refer to the female consort of a god or to the Goddess as supreme divinity. The word literally means 'power' so can also indicate the active power of a male deity, personified as his consort.	
2.2.1	puja	Worship.	
2.2.2	theistic traditions	Religious traditions that posit the existence of a divine being.	
2.2.2	Vaishnavism	The Hindu tradition that regards Vishnu as the highest expression of divinity or as the absolute divine.	
2.2.2	Shaivism	The Hindu tradition that regards Shiva as the highest expression of divinity or as the absolute divine.	
2.2.2	Shaktism	The Hindu tradition that regards Shakti or the Goddess as the highest expression of divinity or as the absolute divine.	
2.2.2	Smartism	A Hindu tradition based on the smriti writings. It is based on the worship of five deities (Vishnu, Shiva, Ganesh, Surya and Devi/Shakti) in household shrines. A sixth, impersonal deity is often included.	
2.2.3	henotheism	The worship of a single god, while not denying the existence of others.	
2.2.3	monism	Any theory that rejects dualism and accepts oneness.	

	<b>Term/word</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Notes</b>
2.2.3	monotheism	The belief in a single personal God.	
2.2.3	pantheism	The belief that everything in existence comprises the divine. Everything is God, or rather, God is comprised of everything.	
2.2.3	polytheism	The belief in many gods and goddesses.	

## Paper 3 Hinduism: Philosophy and Religion

	Term/word	Definition	Notes
3.1	Darshanas	Philosophical schools.	
3.1	Samkhya	A philosophical tradition within Hinduism. Its basic belief is that there are two eternally distinct kinds of substance, Purusha or 'self' and Prakriti or matter.	
3.1	Yoga	Literally means to 'bind' or to 'yoke'. Sometimes interpreted as to unite. It is usually associated with a philosophical and practical system related to Samkhya, although it can also be used to describe a system of physical postures or different methods or paths to the attainment of liberation.	
3.1	Ashtanga Yoga	'Eight-limbed' yoga, a system for achieving citta-vritti-nirodha (cessation of mental modifications) outlined in Patanjali's Yoga Sutra.	
3.1	Purusha	The Self. Pure consciousness.	
3.1	purushas	Individual selves.	
3.1	Prakriti	The physical or material aspects of the world.	
3.1	kaivalya	'Isolation' or 'aloneness'. A term used within Samkhya to mean 'liberation'.	
3.1	gunas	The three gunas are the constituents of Prakriti and the basic elements out of which the material universe is composed: sattva, (lightness and spirituality), rajas (energy and motion, passion) and tamas (lethargy or inertia).	
	sattva	One of the three gunas, lightness and spirituality.	Not listed in the syllabus but this is a useful term for this topic.
	rajas	One of the three gunas, energy and motion, passion.	Not listed in the syllabus but this is a useful term for this topic.
	tamas	One of the three gunas, lethargy or inertia.	Not listed in the syllabus but this is a useful term for this topic.
	non-theistic traditions	Traditions that reject the existence of a divine being/beings.	Not listed in the syllabus but this is a useful term for this topic.

	Term/word	Definition	Notes
3.2	Advaita	Non-dualism.	Rejecting the idea that reality is not composed of a single being or substance.
3.2	Vedanta	Literally 'The end of the Vedas'. Usually interpreted as knowledge or understanding. Vedanta traditions concern themselves with the relationship between Brahman, atman and the material or apparent world.	
3.2	jagat	The physical world. Also used to describe the subjective experience of being in the world.	
3.2	jiva atman	An individual self.	
3.2	jnana	Spiritual knowledge and understanding.	
3.3	Vishistadvaita	Qualified non-dualism.	The Hindu tradition that states that the atman and Brahman are the same substance but eternally distinct.
3.3	paramatman	The absolute or supreme atman.	
3.3	acit	Non-consciousness.	
3.3	jiva-jagat	The self in the world.	
3.4	Dvaita	Dualism.	The belief that the atman and Brahman are essentially different.
3.6.	pluralistic	Pluralistic religions accept the truth of all traditions as being different paths to the same goal.	
3.6	Shramana	Shramana traditions reject the authority of the Vedas. Examples include Buddhism and Jainism and the term might also be used to refer to ascetics within those traditions.	
	tirthankaras	Literally 'ford makers', also called jinas (conquerors). They are the spiritual teachers of Jainism, creating a path to liberation that others can follow.	Not listed in the syllabus but this is a useful term for this topic.
3.7	ahimsa	Non violence.	
3.7	Satyagraha	'Truth-force', using non violent methods in order to effect change.	
3.7	world religion	A religious system perceived as a distinct and separate tradition which exists on a global scale. Usually an umbrella term covering a range of different branches or forms of practice.	

## Paper 4 Hinduism in Contemporary Society

	Term/word	Definition	Notes
4.1	new religious movements	A religious or spiritual group of relatively recent origin. It may be completely new or derived from an older tradition.	
4.1	multiculturalism	A society that includes and incorporates different cultures.	
4.2	proselytisation	The act of attempting to recruit others to one's religion or world view.	
4.3	Hindutva	Meaning 'Hinduness'. Hindu nationalism.	
4.3	secular	Not connected to or bound by religion.	
4.3	secularism	The disassociation of religion from the state or political life.	
4.4	dalits	'Oppressed'. The self-chosen name for those who are outside the varna system and as such traditionally have no place in ritual life. Once referred to as 'untouchable'.	
4.4	Caste	The system by which people's status and occupation is determined by birth. Often equated with jati.	
4.5	sati	The archaic practice where the widow of a dead man dies on his funeral pyre. It became illegal in India in 1829.	
4.5	dowry	Payment made by a bride's family to the bridegroom's family on the occasion of the marriage.	

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