

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q4(b)

What are the basic tenets of Hindu religion? Is Hinduism based on monotheism or polytheism?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · Sociology GS 2 · 15 marks · Perspectives on the study of Indian society

Perspectives on the study of Indian society: Indology (G.S. Ghurye); Structural functionalism (M.N. Srinivas); Marxist sociology (A.R. Desai).

Core demand of the question

- What are the basic tenets of Hindu religion? Is Hinduism based on monotheism or polytheism?
- Keep a sociological, not a missionary, answer

Revision summary

Lived Hindu tenets centre **dharma**, karma, rebirth, and release, plus puja.

Texts and village practice both matter; neither is the whole.

Polytheism describes the pantheon; monism describes some elite theology.

Sanskritization moves toward Sanskritic gods without erasing local ones.

Sociology should refuse a yes-or-no missionary binary.

Introduction

Hindu religion, sociologically, is a family of practices around **dharma**, karma, samsara, and varied gods, not a single church creed. Monotheism versus polytheism is the wrong forced choice; both languages exist inside a ranked social world.

Body

Basic tenets as lived

- **Dharma** as duty by status and stage, karma and rebirth as moral accounting, and moksha as release, sit with puja, festival, and caste duty.
- Ghurye and Indology stressed textual continuity. Srinivas's field view showed **village deities** and dominant-caste temples as the working religion.
- Dumont tied purity to the sacred. Bhakti and reform recast the same stock toward devotion and, sometimes, equality.

Mono and poly

- Many gods and local deities look polytheist. Smarta and Vedantic talk of one **Brahman** looks monotheist or monist.
- M. N. Srinivas noted **Sanskritization** as a shift toward Sanskritic deities without dropping the local pantheon.
- Hindu nationalism may stress one people and one God-talk; household practice often remains many-godded.

Sociological close

- **The system is henotheistic in use:** one god at a time, many in the year, ranked like society.

Flow diagram

Dharma karma samsara -> Puja many deities

Vedanta one Brahman -> Monist language

Field village gods -> Puja many deities

Conclusion

Hindu tenets are **dharma**, karma, rebirth, and a porous sacred cosmos. Hinduism is neither simply monotheist nor simply polytheist; it is a hierarchical pluralism that politics sometimes tries to flatten into one God, one people.

Facts & figures

Dharma

Duty ordered by caste, gender, and life-stage more than a universal commandment list.

Brahman

Philosophical one-without-a-second that can sit beside many temple gods.

Village deities

Field-view gods of disease, boundary, and caste that Indology underplays.

Sanskritization

Ritual mobility that often adds Sanskritic worship rather than deleting the local.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. · <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/sociology-gs-2/2015/what-are-the-basic-tenets-of-hindu-religion-is-hinduism-based-on-monotheism-or-polytheism/> · ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com