

Unit 6 - Religion and Life based on a study of Hinduism

Guidance for Teachers

Bullet point 3 of Section 6.1 of the specification introduces some terms and ideas that have not been covered in the GCSE Religious Studies specification before. To help centres with their teaching of this bullet point we have put together some guidance for teachers.

Further guidance on Section 6.1: Believing in God, Bullet point 3

- **Mahadevan and Vedanta, and how they may, or may not lead to belief in God.**

This bullet point is focussed on the ideas of the personal God and the impersonal God and how these different concepts may or may not lead to belief in God.

In this bullet point Mahadevan is taken to mean 'Great God' and this term is usually used to refer to Lord Shiva, who is also referred to as Mahayogi ('Great Yogin').

Therefore Shiva is considered in this context to be a personal God as in Ishvara. He is a God who involved Himself in the world of time and space and can be approached via prayer and ritual by worshippers (bhakti yoga). He is the God of mythology and the epics, the father of Ganesh and husband of Parvati.

This view of 'God' is in contrast to that of the impersonal concept of Brahm as the transcendent 'power' behind the universe. Here, Brahman has no anthropic characteristics and does not respond to prayer and intercession. The true nature of Brahman can really only be known through correct knowledge (jnana yoga). This view is classically explored/developed in the Advaita Vedanta of Shankara, which is very monistic.

It is true that other schools of Vedanta did accept the personal God as real and important so it is simplistic to say that Vedanta only applies to ideas about the impersonal Brahman. However, over the years it has become more common to use the term Vedanta to refer to this one narrow view about the impersonal God.

It is this contrast between the personal, involved God and the impersonal, transcendent God that this bullet point is asking students to understand.