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### Soul Conception in Hinduism and Islam

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#### Abstract

Atman and Ruh have found their place in two different religious formations, and these two terms show parallel features in terms of structure and appearance. Although Hinduism and Sufism are seen as two opposing belief systems, there are some points where they meet in

particular. If we look at the meanings and characteristics of the terms Atman and Ruh, it is invisible in the two terms, it is infinite and within every living being. With the creature stepping into the physical world, the soul settles into the body, moving together with the living being.

**Keywords:** Hinduism, Islam, Sufism, Atman, Ruh, Soul

#### 1. Introduction

For centuries, nations, cultures, and religions have been neighbours to each other and have been in long-lasting relationships. These neighborhood relations sometimes also caused interaction. It can be said that wars, migrations, and natural disasters play a major role in the interaction of societies and religions. The similarity or similarity between religions does not mean that the origins of their religions are the same. The similarity between religions is defined by the unique languages of religions. Islam and Hindu belief systems have been living together in the same geography for centuries. Especially the emergence of Hinduism took place in the years before Christ. The founder of Hinduism and the author of the holy books have not yet been found. The emergence of Islam is known as its holy book and prophet.

Hindu mythology is very rich in imagery, symbolism, and formalism. Almost every symbol in mythology has a symbol and sanctity. Hinduism claims that matter has energy. He claims that the Atman is present in living beings. "Atman, (Sanskrit: "self," "breath") is one of the most basic concepts in Hinduism, the universal self, identical to the eternal core of the personality that after death either transmigrates to a new life or attains release (moksha) from the bonds of existence".<sup>1</sup> Atman is defined as a living element in the bodies of all living things. "The term is often translated as soul but is better translated as "Self".<sup>2</sup> The concept of Atman has its counterpart in the holy books. "The concept of Atman as the true self is considered to be the first principle of Hindu philosophy, particularly according to the Vedanta tradition."<sup>3</sup> This term is accepted as the true 'Self' of people. Atman is the divine essence of man. According to the Upanishads, the Self (Atman) is not easily recognizable. Atman can only be grasped with great effort. "Atman is regarded as eternal and imperishable, distinct from the physical body, mind, and consciousness. It is believed to be found within every living being, though some individuals do not recognize this true self due to ignorance or illusion, known as Maya."<sup>4</sup> For this, it is necessary to completely give up all kinds of pleasure and the efforts made to obtain them. The true seeker of self must become an introvert, one who has completely turned his back on worldly goals. Only in this way can one realize Atman. Atman is the link that connects worlds and all objects. Atman, the eternal guide in man, is in all beings, but beings do not know him. All beings are his body. He rules all beings from the inside out. "In Hindu philosophy, especially in the Vedanta school of Hinduism, Atman is the first principle".<sup>5</sup> The idea of Atman in Hinduism has often been taken as the essence of the living thing. In addition, there are interpretations that the term Atman

<sup>1</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "atman". Encyclopedia Britannica, 25 Nov. 2014, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/atman>. Accessed 3 April 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Lorenzen, David, "Bhakti", in Mittal, Sushil; Thursby, Gene (eds.), The Hindu World, Routledge, ISBN 0-415215277, 2004, p.208-209.

<sup>3</sup> Atman, <https://www.yogapedia.com/definition/5245/atman>, July 16, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Atman, <https://www.yogapedia.com/definition/5245/atman>, July 16, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Deussen, Paul and Geden, A.S. The Philosophy of the Upanishads. Cosimo Classics (1 June 2010). p. 86. ISBN 1-61640-240-7.

completes itself by reaching Brahman in the system, which means Moksha, meaning the cycle of life or the liberation of the soul, which finds a wide place in Hinduism. "The true self of an individual beyond identification with phenomena, the essence of an individual. In order to attain liberation (moksha), a human being must acquire self-knowledge (atma jnana), which is to realize that one's true self (Ātman) is identical with the transcendent self-Brahman according to Advaita Vedanta."<sup>6</sup> The idea of diving among the schools of Hinduism established in the past is defined as a substance that is the essence or continuity of existence. "The six orthodox schools of Hinduism believe that there is Ātman (self, essence) in every being."<sup>7</sup> In Hinduism, life is considered as a cycle. Resurrection after death is a rule in Hinduism. "Atman is eternally recreated through rebirth again and again. Hinduism teaches the concept of reincarnation, that the soul is reborn in another form following the body's death. The essence of the reborn life is dependent upon a person's karma, the results of an individual's actions in the present and past lives. Karma can also represent a person's destiny or fate."<sup>8</sup> The impermanence of the world is often referred to in Hindu mythology. "The cycle of death and rebirth (samsara) is eternal according to some Hindus, but others say it persists only until the soul has attained karmic perfection, thus merging with the Absolute (brahman)".<sup>9</sup> Karma-Moksha-Samsara is a life cycle. In Hinduism, the continuity of life and a soul is ensured by this cycle. The body to which the soul will go is shaped according to the worldly life after the individual is in what kind of character he is in the world and how he is in the world. The concept of the liberation of the soul is called the liberation of this cycle and its integration with Brahman. "Atman is responsible for a person's faculties, organs, and activities, and it represents the true self as opposed to the ego. As such, Atman transmigrates upon death, following the individual to their new life after rebirth".<sup>10</sup>

Spirit is a subject that is most thought about and expressed in terms of both religion and philosophy. Because man has two sides. It is his body, which is the material aspect of his existence, and his spirit, which is the spiritual aspect. It is accepted that his soul is a reality of the supersensory realm and his body is a reality of the realm of the senses. Indeed, one of the issues that most preoccupy human beings is the soul-body relationship. There are many works on this subject that concern Islamic scholars as well as

philosophical movements. The nature of the soul and its relationship with the body has always been an area that has been wondered about and tried to be understood. Philosophy has also revealed works, views, and theories related to this concept in theology.

In Islamic understanding, there are some meanings of the word soul. Islam argues that living things have a soul and that this soul is eternal. "God is believed to endow humans with rūh and nafs (i.e., ego or psyche). The rūh "drives" the nafs, which comprises temporal desires and sensory perceptions. The nafs can assume control of the body if the rūh surrenders to bodily urges".<sup>11</sup> Each spirit experiences the afterlife in accordance with their deeds and convictions in the earthly life. In the Islamic Sufi understanding, the Spirit is considered as the essence of the living thing. "In Sufism, rūh is a person's immortal, essential self—pneuma, i.e., the "spirit" or "soul".<sup>12</sup> In the Qur'an, some features of the concept of the soul are given. "Then He fashioned him (man) in due proportion and breathed into him His Ruh (Soul created by Allah for that person), and He gave you hearings (ear) sights (eyes) and hearts. Little is the thanks you give".<sup>13</sup> In Islam, the taking of the soul is in the hands of God. Because destiny has an important place in Islamic belief. Only Allah knows the duration of the life of all living things and how they will die. At the same time, this process is written in the destinies (Kadar or Kader) of people. "Allah takes the souls at the time of their death, and those that do not die [He takes] during their sleep. Then He keeps those for whom He has decreed death and releases the others for a specified term. Indeed, those are signs for people who give thought".<sup>14</sup> The source of the love that Sufis show towards living beings is the Qur'an. According to the Sufis and Quran (Sura 15 verse 29), all living things on earth are sacred, because God, breathed into the souls of all living things in Qalu Bala (Soul Assembly), that is, during the creation phase of Spirits and living things. Sufis think that living things carry a piece of God and they have an unconditional pure love for all living beings.\

## 2. Result and conclusion

The concept of soul is a term that has found its place in both belief systems. However, two different belief systems have processed and used the concept of Spirit in line with their own beliefs. The idea of the infinity of the soul finds its place frequently in Hindu and Islamic principles. In Hinduism, even if the soul is the body of the individual with the Karma-Moksha-Samsara cycle, it can come back to the earth with this cycle. The soul's return to earth is directly proportional to the previous life. However, according to most Islamic intellectuals, the concept of Soul Emigration was not found to be correct. However, there are some ideas that adopt the idea of Tanasukh (Reincarnation). In the religion of Islam, the Spirit will wait until Doomsday, and then the world will receive the reward for the good and evil he has done in his life. As will be seen in both religious

<sup>6</sup> Richard King (1995), *Early Advaita Vedanta and Buddhism*, State University of New York Press, ISBN 978-0-7914-2513-8, p. 64.

<sup>7</sup> K. N. Jayatilleke (2010), *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, ISBN 978-81-208-0619-1, pp. 246–49.

<sup>8</sup> "Atman in Hinduism Origin & Concept | What is Atman?" Study.com, 16 December 2022. [study.com/academy/lesson/atman-Hinduism-origin-concept.html](https://study.com/academy/lesson/atman-Hinduism-origin-concept.html)

<sup>9</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "soul". Encyclopedia Britannica, 18 Feb. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/soul-religion-and-philosophy>. Accessed 3 April 2023.

<sup>10</sup> Atman, <https://www.yogapedia.com/definition/5245/atman>, July 16, 2020

<sup>11</sup> Ahmad, Sultan (2011). "Nafs: What Is it?". *Islam In Perspective* (revised ed.). Author House. p. 180. ISBN 978-1-4490-3993-6. Retrieved 2017-07-15 – via Google Books.

<sup>12</sup> Ahmad, Sultan (2011). "Nafs: What Is it?". *Islam In Perspective* (revised ed.). Author House. p. 180. ISBN 978-1-4490-3993-6. Retrieved 2017-07-15 – via Google Books.

<sup>13</sup> Quran, 32:9.

<sup>14</sup> Quran 39:42.

belief systems, it has been seen as possible for the Spirit to be punished or rewarded. Again, according to the Hindu-Islamic understanding, assumptions have been made that the concept of Spirit is in the bodies of people. The idea of Atman reaching Brahman, getting rid of the cycle of reincarnation, and freedom of the soul, which is frequently emphasized in Hinduism, has also found a place for itself in mystical Islam in the form of Baqa (Ascension to God), and Fana (Oneness in God). The terms Fana and Baqa are mystical Sufi terms such as reaching God or becoming one with God.

At the same time, the thesis that souls are created by God is stable in both religions. Brahman as the sole creator occupies the strongest position in Hinduism. One of the basic principles of Islam is the rule "Everything belongs to Allah". According to the perception of the two religions, the soul is a living being. In the Islamic understanding, while the souls who lived badly on Earth are punished with hell, this event results in the entry of bad souls into animal or plant bodies in Hinduism.

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