

Ātman (Hinduism)

Ātman (/ˈɑːtmən/; Sanskrit: आत्मन्) is a Sanskrit word that means inner self, spirit, or soul.^{[1][2]} In Hindu philosophy, especially in the Vedanta school of Hinduism, *Ātman* is the first principle:^[3] the *true* self of an individual beyond identification with phenomena, the essence of an individual. In order to attain Moksha (liberation), a human being must acquire self-knowledge (*atma Gyan*). For the different schools of thought, self-realization is that one's true self (*Jīvātman*) and the ultimate reality (*Brahman*) are: completely identical (Advaita, Non-Dualist),^{[2][4]} completely different (Dvaita, Dualist), or simultaneously non-different and different (Bhedabheda, Non-Dualist + Dualist).^[5]

The six orthodox schools of Hinduism believe that there is *Ātman* in every living being (*jiva*). This is a major point of difference with the Buddhist doctrine of *Anatta*, which holds that there is no soul or self.^{[6][7][8]}

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Definition

Ātman (*Atma*, आत्मा, आत्मन्) is a Sanskrit word which means "essence, breath, soul."^{[9][10]} It is derived from the Proto-Indo-European word **h₁eh₁tmō* (a root meaning "breath" with Germanic cognates: Dutch *adem*, Old High German *atum* "breath," Modern German *atmen* "to breathe" and *Atem* "respiration, breath", Old English *ebian*). It can also be linked to the Greek word "atmos", from which the word atmosphere is derived.^[9]

Ātman, sometimes spelled without a diacritic as *atman* in scholarly literature,^[11] means "real self" of the individual,^{[1][10]} "innermost essence",^[12] and soul.^{[1][13]} *Atman*, in Hinduism, is considered as eternal, imperishable, beyond time, "not the same as body or mind or consciousness, but... something beyond which permeates all these".^{[14][15][16]} In Advaita vedanta, it is "pure, undifferentiated, self-shining consciousness,"^[17] the witness-consciousness which observes all phenomena yet is not touched by it.

Atman is a metaphysical and spiritual concept for Hindus, often discussed in their scriptures with the concept of Brahman.^{[18][19][20]}

Development of the concept

Vedas

The earliest use of the word *Ātman* in Indian texts is found in the Rig Veda (RV X.97.11).^[21] Yāska, the ancient Indian grammarian, commenting on this Rigvedic verse, accepts the following meanings of *Ātman*: the pervading principle, the organism in which other elements are united and the ultimate sentient principle.^[22]

Other hymns of Rig Veda where the word *Ātman* appears include I.115.1, VII.87.2, VII.101.6, VIII.3.24, IX.2.10, IX.6.8, and X.168.4.^[23]

Upanishads

Ātman is a central idea in all of the Upanishads, and "know your *Ātman*" is their thematic focus.^[24] These texts state that the core of every person's self is not the body, nor the mind, nor the ego, but *Ātman*, which means "soul" or "self".^[25] *Atman* is the spiritual essence in all creatures, their real innermost essential being.^{[26][27]} It is eternal, it is the essence, it is ageless. *Atman* is the deepest level of one's existence.

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* describes *Atman* as that in which everything exists, which is of the highest value, which permeates everything, which is the essence of all, bliss and beyond description.^[28] In hymn 4.4.5, *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* describes *Atman* as *Brahman*, and associates it with everything one is, everything one can be, one's free will, one's desire, what one does, what one doesn't do, the good in oneself, the bad in oneself.

That *Atman* (self, soul) is indeed Brahman. It [*Ātman*] is also identified with the intellect, the Manas (mind), and the vital breath, with the eyes and ears, with earth, water, air, and ākāśa (sky), with fire and with what is other than fire, with desire and the absence of desire, with anger and the absence of anger, with righteousness and unrighteousness, with everything — it is identified, as is well known, with this (what is perceived) and with that (what is inferred). As it [*Ātman*] does and acts, so it becomes: by doing good it becomes good, and by doing evil it becomes evil. It becomes

virtuous through good acts, and vicious through evil acts. Others, however, say, "The self is identified with desire alone. What it desires, so it resolves; what it resolves, so is its deed; and what deed it does, so it reaps.

— Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.4.5, 9th century BCE^[29]

This theme of *Ātman*, that the soul and self of every person and being is the same as Brahman, is extensively repeated in Brihadāranyaka Upanishad. The Upanishad asserts that this knowledge of "I am Brahman", and that there is no difference between "I" and "you", or "I" and "him" is a source of liberation, and not even gods can prevail over such a liberated man. For example, in hymn 1.4.10,^[30]

Brahman was this before; therefore it knew even the Ātma (soul, himself). I am Brahman, therefore it became all. And whoever among the gods had this enlightenment, also became That. It is the same with the sages, the same with men. Whoever knows the self as "I am Brahman," becomes all this universe. Even the gods cannot prevail against him, for he becomes their Ātma. Now, if a man worships another god, thinking: "He is one and I am another," he does not know. He is like an animal to the gods. As many animals serve a man, so does each man serve the gods. Even if one animal is taken away, it causes anguish; how much more so when many are taken away? Therefore it is not pleasing to the gods that men should know this.

— Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 1.4.10^[30]

Katha Upanishad

Along with the *Brihadāranyaka*, all the earliest and middle Upanishads discuss *Ātman* as they build their theories to answer how man can achieve liberation, freedom and bliss. The *Katha Upanishad*, for example, explains *Ātman* as the imminent and transcendent innermost essence of each human being and living creature, that this is one, even though the external forms of living creatures manifest in different forms. For example, hymn 2.2.9 states,

As the one fire, after it has entered the world, though one, takes different forms according to whatever it burns,

so does the internal Ātman of all living beings, though one, takes a form according to whatever He enters and is outside all forms.

— Katha Upanishad, 2.2.9^[31]

Katha Upanishad, in Book 1, hymns 3.3 to 3.4, describes the widely cited analogy of chariot for the relation of "Soul, Self" to body, mind and senses.^[32] Stephen Kaplan^[33] translates these hymns as, "Know the Self as the rider in a chariot, and the body as simply the chariot. Know the intellect as the charioteer, and the mind as the reins. The senses, they say are the horses, and sense objects are the paths around them". The Katha Upanishad then declares that "when the Self [Ātman] understands this and is unified, integrated with body, senses and mind, is virtuous, mindful and pure, he reaches bliss, freedom and liberation".^[32]

Chandogya Upanishad

The *Chandogya Upanishad* explains *Ātman* as that which appears to be separate between two living beings but isn't, that essence and innermost, true, radiant self of all individuals which connects and unifies all. Hymn 6.10 explains it with the example of rivers, some of which flow to the east and some to the west, but ultimately

all merge into the ocean and become one. In the same way, the individual souls are pure being, states the *Chandogya Upanishad*; an individual soul is pure truth, and an individual soul is a manifestation of the ocean of one universal soul.^[34]

Other Upanishads

Ātman is a key topic of the Upanishads, but they express two distinct, somewhat divergent themes. Some teach that Brahman (highest reality; universal principle; being-consciousness-bliss) is identical with *Ātman*, while others teach that *Ātman* is part of Brahman but not identical to it.^{[35][36]} This ancient debate flowered into various dual and non-dual theories in Hinduism. The *Brahmasutra* by Badarayana (~100 BCE) synthesized and unified these somewhat conflicting theories, stating that *Atman* and Brahman are different in some respects, particularly during the state of ignorance, but at the deepest level and in the state of self-realization, *Atman* and Brahman are identical, non-different (advaita).^[35] This synthesis overcame the dualistic tradition of Samkhya-Yoga schools and realism-driven traditions of Nyaya-Vaisesika schools, enabling it to become the foundation of Vedanta as Hinduism's enduring spiritual tradition.^[35]

Schools of thought

All major orthodox schools of Hinduism – Nyaya, Vaisesika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, and Vedanta – accept the foundational premise of the Vedas and Upanishads that "*Ātman* exists". *Jainism* too accepts this premise, although it has its own idea of what that means. In contrast, both Buddhism and the *Charvakas* deny that there is anything called "*Ātman*/soul/self".^[37]

Knowing *Ātman*, also referred to as self-knowledge, is one of the defining themes of all major orthodox schools of Hinduism, but they diverge on how. In Hinduism, self-knowledge is the knowledge and understanding of *Atman*, what it is, and what it is not. Hinduism considers *Atman* as distinct from the ever-evolving individual personality characterized with *Ahamkara* (ego, non-spiritual psychological I-ness Me-ness), habits, prejudices, desires, impulses, delusions, fads, behaviors, pleasures, sufferings and fears. Human personality and *Ahamkara* shift, evolve or change with time, state the schools of Hinduism; while, *Atman* doesn't.^[37] *Atman*, state these schools, is the unchanging, eternal, innermost radiant self that is unaffected by personality, unaffected by ego of oneself, unaffected by ego of others; *Atman* is that which is ever-free, never-bound, one that seeks, realizes and is the realized purpose, meaning, liberation in life.^{[38][39]} Puchalski states, "the ultimate goal of Hindu religious life is to transcend individually, to realize one's own true nature", the inner essence of oneself, which is divine and pure.^[40]

Vedanta school

Philosophical schools such as Advaita (non-dualism) see the "spirit/soul/self" within each living entity as being fully identical with Brahman.^[41] The Advaita school believes that there is one soul that connects and exists in all living beings, regardless of their shapes or forms, and there is no distinction, no superior, no inferior, no separate devotee soul (*Atman*), no separate god soul (Brahman).^[41] The oneness unifies all beings, there is divine in every being, and that all existence is a single reality, state the Advaita Vedanta Hindus. In contrast, devotional sub-schools of Vedanta such as Dvaita (dualism) differentiate between the individual *Atma* in living beings, and the supreme *Atma* (*Paramatma*) as being separate.^{[42][43]}

Advaita Vedanta philosophy considers *Atman* as self-existent awareness, limitless and non-dual.^[44] To Advaitins, the *Atman* is the Brahman, the Brahman is the *Atman*, each self is non-different from the infinite.^{[41][45]} *Atman* is the universal principle, one eternal undifferentiated self-luminous consciousness, the truth asserts Advaita Hinduism.^{[46][47]} Human beings, in a state of unawareness of this universal self, see their "I-ness" as different from the being in others, then act out of impulse, fears, cravings, malice, division,

confusion, anxiety, passions, and a sense of distinctiveness.^{[48][49]} To Advaitins, Atman-knowledge is the state of full awareness, liberation, and freedom that overcomes dualities at all levels, realizing the divine within oneself, the divine in others, and in all living beings; the non-dual oneness, that God is in everything, and everything is God.^{[41][44]} This identification of individual living beings/souls, or *jiva-atmas*, with the 'one Atman' is the non-dualistic Advaita Vedanta position.

The monist, non-dual conception of existence in Advaita Vedanta is not accepted by the dualistic/theistic Dvaita Vedanta. Dvaita Vedanta calls the *Atman* of a supreme being as *Paramatman*, and holds it to be different from individual *Atman*. Dvaita scholars assert that God is the ultimate, complete, perfect, but distinct soul, one that is separate from incomplete, imperfect *jivas* (individual souls).^[50] The Advaita sub-school believes that self-knowledge leads to liberation in this life, while the Dvaita sub-school believes that liberation is only possible in after-life as communion with God, and only through the grace of God (if not, then one's *Atman* is reborn).^[51] God created individual souls, state Dvaita Vedantins, but the individual soul never was and never will become one with God; the best it can do is to experience bliss by getting infinitely close to God.^[52] The Dvaita school, therefore, in contrast to monistic position of Advaita, advocates a version of monotheism wherein Brahman is made synonymous with Vishnu (or Narayana), distinct from numerous individual Atmans. Dvaita school, states Graham Oppy, is not strict monotheism, as it does not deny existence of other gods and their respective *Atman*.^[53]

In the Akshar-Purushottam Darshan school of Vedant, the *atman*, referred to as the *jiva*, is defined as a distinct, individual soul, i.e. a finite sentient being. *Jivas* are bound by *maya*, which hides their true self, which is characterized by eternal existence, consciousness, and bliss. There are an infinite number of *jivas*. They are extremely subtle, indivisible, impierceable, ageless, and immortal. While residing within the heart, a *jiva* pervades the entire body by its capacity to know (*gnānshakti*), making it animate. It is the form of knowledge (*gnānswarūp*) as well as the knower (*gnātā*). The *jiva* is the performer of virtuous and immoral actions (*karmas*) and experiences the fruits of these actions. It has been eternally bound by *maya*; as a result, it roams within the cycle of birth and death. Birth is when a *jiva* acquires a new body, and death is when it departs from its body. Just as one abandons one's old clothes and wears new ones, the *jiva* renounces its old body and acquires a new one.^[54]

Mimamsa school

Ātman, in the ritualism-based Mīmāṃsā school of Hinduism, is an eternal, omnipresent, inherently active essence that is identified as I-consciousness.^{[55][56]} Unlike all other schools of Hinduism, Mimamsaka scholars considered ego and *Atman* as the same. Within Mimamsa school, there was divergence of beliefs. Kumārila, for example, believed that *Atman* is the object of I-consciousness, whereas Prabhakara believed that *Atman* is the subject of I-consciousness.^[55] Mimamsaka Hindus believed that what matters is virtuous actions and rituals completed with perfection, and it is this that creates merit and imprints knowledge on *Atman*, whether one is aware or not aware of *Atman*. Their foremost emphasis was formulation and understanding of laws/duties/virtuous life (*dharma*) and consequent perfect execution of *kriyas* (actions). The Upanishadic discussion of *Atman*, to them, was of secondary importance.^{[56][57]} While other schools disagreed and discarded the *Atma* theory of Mimamsa, they incorporated Mimamsa theories on ethics, self-discipline, action, and dharma as necessary in one's journey toward knowing one's *Atman*.^{[58][59]}

Vaiśeṣika school

The Vaiśeṣika school of Hinduism, using its non-theistic theories of atomistic naturalism, posits that *Ātman* is one of the four eternal non-physical^[60] substances without attributes, the other three being *kala* (time), *dik* (space) and *manas* (mind).^[61] Time and space, stated Vaiśeṣika scholars, are *eka* (one), *nitya* (eternal) and *vibhu* (all pervading). Time and space are indivisible reality, but human mind prefers to divide them to

comprehend past, present, future, relative place of other substances and beings, direction and its own coordinates in the universe. In contrast to these characteristics of time and space, Vaiśeṣika scholars considered *Ātman* to be many, eternal, independent and spiritual substances that cannot be reduced or inferred from other three non-physical and five physical *dravya* (substances).^[61] Mind and sensory organs are instruments, while consciousness is the domain of "atman, soul, self".^[61]

The knowledge of *Ātman*, to Vaiśeṣika Hindus, is another knowledge without any "bliss" or "consciousness" *moksha* state that Vedanta and Yoga school describe.^[37]

Nyaya school

Early atheistic Nyaya scholars, and later theistic Nyaya scholars, both made substantial contributions to the systematic study of *Ātman*.^[62] They posited that even though "self/soul" is intimately related to the knower, it can still be the subject of knowledge. John Plott^[62] states that the Nyaya scholars developed a theory of negation that far exceeds Hegel's theory of negation, while their epistemological theories refined to "know the knower" at least equals Aristotle's sophistication. Nyaya methodology influenced all major schools of Hinduism.

The Nyaya scholars defined *Ātman* as an imperceptible substance that is the substrate of human consciousness, manifesting itself with or without qualities such as desires, feelings, perception, knowledge, understanding, errors, insights, sufferings, bliss, and others.^{[63][64]} Nyaya school not only developed its theory of *Atman*, it contributed to Hindu philosophy in a number of ways. To the Hindu theory of *Ātman*, the contributions of Nyaya scholars were twofold. One, they went beyond holding it as "self evident" and offered rational proofs, consistent with their epistemology, in their debates with Buddhists, that "Atman exists".^[65] Second, they developed theories on what "Atman is and is not".^[66] As proofs for the proposition "self/soul exists", for example, Nyaya scholars argued that personal recollections and memories of the form "I did this so many years ago" implicitly presume that there is a self that is substantial, continuing, unchanged, and existent.^{[65][66]}

Nyayasutra, a 2nd-century CE foundational text of Nyaya school of Hinduism, states that the soul is a proper object of human knowledge. It also states that soul is a real substance that can be inferred from certain signs, objectively perceivable attributes. For example, in book 1, chapter 1, verses 9 and 10, Nyayasutra states^[63]

Ātman, body, senses, objects of senses, intellect, mind, activity, error, *pretyabhava* (after life), fruit, suffering and bliss are the objects of right knowledge.

Desire, aversion, effort, happiness, suffering and cognition are the *Linga* (लिङ्ग, mark, sign) of the *Ātman*.

— Nyaya Sutra, I.1.9-10^[63]

Book 2, chapter 1, verses 1 to 23, of the Nyayasutras posits that the sensory act of looking is different from perception and cognition—that perception and knowledge arise from the seekings and actions of *Ātman* (soul).^[67] The Naiyayikas emphasize that the *Ātman* has qualities, but is different from its qualities. For example, desire is one of many qualities of the *Ātman*, but the *Ātman* does not always have desire, and in the state of liberation, for instance, the *Ātman* is without desire.^[63]

Samkhya school

The concept of *Ātman* in Samkhya, the oldest school of Hinduism, is quite similar to one in Advaita Vedanta school. Both Samkhya and Advaita consider the ego (*asmita*, *ahamkara*) rather than the *Ātman* to be the cause of pleasure and pain.^[68] They both consider *Ātman* as self, soul that is innermost essence of any individual

being. Further, they both consider self-knowledge as the means of liberation, freedom and bliss. The difference between Samkhya and Advaita is that Samkhya holds there are as many *Atmans* as there are beings, each distinct reality unto itself, and self-knowledge a state of Ipseity. In contrast, the monism theme of Advaita holds that there is one soul, and that the self of all beings are connected and unified with Brahman.^[37] The essence and spirit of everything is related to each self, asserts Advaita Vedanta, and each *Atman* is related to the essence and spirit of everything; all is one; self is Brahman and Brahman is self. Samkhya asserts that each being's *Atman* is unique and different.^[37]

Yoga school

The Yogasutra of Patanjali, the foundational text of Yoga school of Hinduism, mentions *Atma* in multiple verses, and particularly in its last book, where Samadhi is described as the path to self-knowledge and kaivalya. Some earlier mentions of *Atman* in Yogasutra include verse 2.5, where evidence of ignorance includes "confusing what is not Atman as Atman".

अनित्याशुचिदुःखानात्मसु नित्यशुचिसुखात्मख्यातिरविद्या

Avidya (अविद्या, ignorance) is regarding the transient as eternal, the impure as pure, the pain-giving as joy-giving, and the non-Atman as Atman.

— Yogasutra 2.5^[69]

In verses 2.19-2.20, Yogasutra declares that pure ideas are the domain of the soul, the perceivable universe exists to enlighten the soul, but while the soul is pure, it may be deceived by complexities of perception or its intellect. These verses also set the purpose of all experience as a means to self-knowledge.

द्रष्टा दृशिमात्रः शुद्धोऽपि प्रत्ययानुपश्यः
तदर्थ एव दृश्यस्यात्मा

The seer (soul) is the absolute knower. Though pure, modifications are witnessed by him by coloring of intellect.

The spectacle exists only to serve the purpose of the Atman.

— Yogasutra 2.19 - 2.20^[69]

In Book 4, Yogasutra states spiritual liberation as the stage where the yogin achieves distinguishing self-knowledge, he no longer confuses his mind as his soul, the mind is no longer affected by afflictions or worries of any kind, ignorance vanishes, and "pure consciousness settles in its own pure nature".^{[69][70]}

The Yoga school is similar to the Samkhya school in its conceptual foundations of *Ātman*. It is the self that is discovered and realized in the Kaivalya state, in both schools. Like Samkhya, this is not a single universal *Ātman*. It is one of the many individual selves where each "pure consciousness settles in its own pure nature", as a unique distinct soul/self.^[71] However, Yoga school's methodology was widely influential on other schools of Hindu philosophy. Vedanta monism, for example, adopted Yoga as a means to reach *Jivanmukti* – self-realization in this life – as conceptualized in Advaita Vedanta.

Influence of Atman theory on Hindu Ethics

The *Atman* theory in Upanishads had a profound impact on ancient ethical theories and dharma traditions now known as Hinduism.^[73] The earliest *Dharmasutras* of Hindus recite *Atman* theory from the Vedic texts and Upanishads,^[75] and on its foundation build precepts of dharma, laws and ethics. *Atman* theory, particularly the Advaita Vedanta and Yoga versions, influenced the emergence of the theory of *Ahimsa* (non-violence against all creatures), culture of vegetarianism, and other theories of ethical, dharmic life.^{[76][77]}



Ahimsa, non-violence, is considered the highest ethical value and virtue in Hinduism.^[72] The virtue of *Ahimsa* follows from the *Atman* theories of Hindu traditions.^{[73][74]}

Dharma-sutras

The *Dharmasutras* and *Dharmasastras* integrate the teachings of *Atman* theory. Apastamba *Dharmasutra*, the oldest known Indian text on dharma, for example, titles Chapters 1.8.22 and 1.8.23 as "Knowledge of the *Atman*" and then recites,^[78]

There is no higher object than the attainment of the **knowledge of *Atman***. We shall quote the verses from the Veda which refer to the attainment of the knowledge of the *Atman*. All living creatures are the dwelling of him who lies enveloped in matter, who is immortal, who is spotless. A wise man shall strive after the knowledge of the *Atman*. It is he [Self] who is the eternal part in all creatures, whose essence is wisdom, who is immortal, unchangeable, pure; he is the universe, he is the highest goal. – 1.8.22.2-7

Freedom from anger, from excitement, from rage, from greed, from perplexity, from hypocrisy, from hurtfulness (from injury to others); Speaking the truth, moderate eating, refraining from calumny and envy, sharing with others, avoiding accepting gifts, uprightness, forgiveness, gentleness, tranquility, temperance, amity with all living creatures, yoga, honorable conduct, benevolence and contentedness – These virtues have been agreed upon for all the *ashramas*; he who, according to the precepts of the sacred law, practices these, becomes **united with the Universal Self**. – 1.8.23.6

— Knowledge of the *Atman*, *Apastamba Dharma Sūtra*, ~ 400 BCE^[78]

Ahimsa

The ethical prohibition against harming any human beings or other living creatures (*Ahimsa*, अहिंसा), in Hindu traditions, can be traced to the *Atman* theory.^[73] This precept against injuring any living being appears together with *Atman* theory in hymn 8.15.1 of *Chandogya Upanishad* (ca. 8th century BCE),^[79] then becomes central in the texts of Hindu philosophy, entering the dharma codes of ancient *Dharmasutras* and later era *Manu-Smriti*. *Ahimsa* theory is a natural corollary and consequence of "Atman is universal oneness, present in all living beings. *Atman* connects and prevades in everyone. Hurting or injuring another being is hurting the *Atman*, and thus one's self that exists in another body". This conceptual connection between one's *Atman*, the universal, and *Ahimsa* starts in *Isha Upanishad*,^[73] develops in the theories of the ancient scholar Yajnavalkya, and one which inspired *Gandhi* as he led non-violent movement against colonialism in early 20th century.^{[80][81]}

यस्तु सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मन्येवानुपश्यति । सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं ततो न विजुगुप्सते ॥६॥

यस्मिन्सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मैवाभूद्विजानतः । तत्र को मोहः कः शोक एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ॥७॥

स पर्यगाच्छुक्रमकायमव्रणम् अस्नाविरँ शुद्धमपापविद्धम् । कविर्मनीषी परिभूः स्वयम्भूः याथातथ्यतोऽर्थान्

व्यदधाच्छाश्वतीभ्यः समाभ्यः ॥८॥

And he who sees everything in his atman, and his atman in everything, does not seek to hide himself from that.

In whom all beings have become one with his own atman, what perplexity, what sorrow, is there when he sees this oneness?

He [the self] prevades all, resplendent, bodiless, woundless, without muscles, pure, untouched by evil; far-seeing, transcendent, self-being, disposing ends through perpetual ages.

— Isha Upanishad, Hymns 6-8,^[80]

Atman – the difference between Hinduism and Buddhism

All orthodox schools of Hinduism hold the premise, "Atman exists, as self evident truth". Buddhism, in contrast, holds the premise, "Atman does not exist (or, An-atman) as self evident".^{[82][6]}

Buddhists do not believe that at the core of all human beings and living creatures, there is any "eternal, essential and absolute something called a soul, self or atman".^[7] Buddhists reject the concept and all doctrines associated with *atman*, call atman as illusion (*maya*), asserting instead the theory of "no-self" and "no-soul".^{[6][83]} Buddhism, from its earliest days, has denied the existence of the "self, soul" in its core philosophical and ontological texts. In its soteriological themes, Buddhism has defined nirvana as that blissful state when a person realizes that he or she has "no self, no soul".^{[7][84][85]}

Hindus believe in *Atman*. They hold that at the core of all human beings and living creatures, there is "eternal, innermost essential and absolute something called a soul, self that is Atman."^[7] The Panchakosha system defined in the Taittiriya Samhita clearly distinguishes between Atman and Anatman. In this system, the Atman is said to be enveloped in the 5 layers called Panchakosha which are Anātman (Hinduism) or the non-self.^[86] However, within the diverse schools of Hinduism, there are differences of opinion on whether souls are distinct, whether a supreme soul or god exists, whether the nature of *Atman* is dual or non-dual, how to reach moksha— the knowledge of self that liberates one to blissful content state of existence, and whether moksha is achievable in this life (Advaita Vedanta, Yoga) or is achievable only in after-life (Dvaita Vedanta, Nyaya). However, despite the diversity of ideas and paths in different schools of Hinduism, unlike Buddhism, the foundational premise of Hinduism is that "soul/self exists", and there is bliss in seeking self, knowing self, and self-realization.^{[7][87]}

While the Upanishads recognized many things as being not-Self, they felt that a real, true Self could be found. They held that when it was found, and known to be identical to Brahman, the basis of everything, this would bring liberation. In the Buddhist Suttas, though, literally everything is seen is non-Self, even Nirvana. When this is known, then liberation – *Nirvana* – is attained by total non-attachment. Thus both the Upanishads and the Buddhist Suttas see many things as not-Self, but the Suttas apply it, indeed non-Self, to *everything*.

— Peter Harvey, An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices^[88]

Buddhist texts chronologically placed in the 1st millennium of the Common Era, such as the Mahayana tradition's Tathāgatagarbha sūtras suggest self-like concepts, variously called Tathāgatagarbha or Buddha nature.^{[89][90]} These have been controversial ideas in Buddhism, and "eternal self" concepts have been generally rejected. In modern era studies, scholars such as Wayman and Wayman state that these "self-like" concepts are neither self nor sentient being, nor soul, nor personality.^{[91][92]} Some scholars posit that the Tathāgatagarbha Sūtras were written to promote Buddhism to non-Buddhists.^{[93][94][95]}

In Theravada tradition, the Dhammakaya Movement in Thailand teaches that it is erroneous to subsume nirvana under the rubric of *anatta* (non-self); instead, nirvana is taught to be the "true self" or *dhammakaya*.^[96] Similar interpretations have been put forth by the then Thai Sangharaja in 1939. According to Williams, the Sangharaja's interpretation echoes the *tathāgatagarbha* sutras.^[97] The Dhammakaya Movement teaching that nirvana is *atta* (atman) in 1999, has been criticized as heretical in Buddhism by Prayudh Payutto, a well-known scholar monk, who added that 'Buddha taught nibbana as being non-self'. This dispute on the nature of teachings about 'self' and 'non-self' in Buddhism has led to arrest warrants, attacks and threats.^[98]

According to Johannes Bronkhorst, a professor of Indology specializing in early Buddhism and Hinduism, while there may be ambivalence on the existence or non-existence of self in early Buddhist literature, it is clear from these texts that seeking self-knowledge is not the Buddhist path for liberation, and turning away from self-knowledge is.^{[99][100]}

Atman jnana and know thyself

The Atman concept and its discussions in Hindu philosophy parallel with *psuchê* (soul) and its discussion in ancient Greek philosophy.^[101] Eliade notes that there is a capital difference, with schools of Hinduism asserting that liberation of *Atman* implies "self-knowledge" and "bliss".^[101] Similarly, the self-knowledge conceptual theme of Hinduism (*Atman jnana*)^[102] parallels the "know thyself" conceptual theme of Greek philosophy.^{[24][103]} Max Müller summarized it thus,

There is not what could be called a philosophical system in these Upanishads. They are, in the true sense of the word, guesses at truth, frequently contradicting each other, yet all tending in one direction. The key-note of the old Upanishads is "know thyself," but with a much deeper meaning than that of the *γνῶθι σεαυτόν* of the Delphic Oracle. The "know thyself" of the Upanishads means, know thy true self, that which underlies thine Ego, and find it and know it in the highest, the eternal Self, the One without a second, which underlies the whole world.

— Max Müller^[104]

See also

- Ātman (Buddhism)
- Ātman (Jainism)
- Ishvara
- Jiva (Hinduism)
- Jnana
- Moksha
- Spirit
- Tat tvam asi
- Tree of Jiva and Atman

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Most Buddhist traditions and texts reject the premise of a permanent, unchanging *atman* (self, soul).^{[2][3]} However, some Buddhist schools, sutras and tantras present the notion of an *atman* or permanent "Self", although mostly referring to an Absolute and not to a personal self.

External links

Early Buddhism

"Atman" in early Buddhism appears as "all *dharmas* are not-Self (an-atta)", where *atta* (*atman*) refers to a metaphysical Self, states Peter Harvey, that is a "permanent, substantial, autonomous self or I".^[10] This concept refers to the pre-Buddhist Upanishads of Hinduism, where a person is viewed as having a lower self (impermanent body, personality) and a Higher or Greater Self (real permanent Self, soul, atman, atta).^{[11][12][13]} The early Buddhist literature explores the validity of the Upanishadic concepts of self and Self, then asserts that every living being has an impermanent self but there is no real Higher Self.^[14] The Nikaya texts of Buddhism deny that there is anything called Ātman that is the substantial absolute or essence of a living being, an idea that distinguishes Buddhism from the Brahmanical (proto-Hindu) traditions.^[15]

The Buddha argued that no permanent, unchanging "Self" can be found.^{[16][17]} In Buddha's view, states Wayman, "*eso me atta*, or this is my Self, is to be in the grip of wrong view".^[18] All conditioned phenomena are subject to change, and therefore can't be taken to be an unchanging "Self".^[17] Instead, the Buddha explains the perceived continuity of the human personality by describing it as composed of five skandhas, without a permanent entity (Self, soul).^{[19][20]}

Pudgalavada

Of the early Indian Buddhist schools, only the Pudgalavada-school diverged from this basic teaching. The Pudgalavādins asserted that, while there is no ātman, there is a pudgala or "person", which is neither the same as nor different from the skandhas.^[20]

Buddha-nature

Buddha-nature is a central notion of east-Asian (Chinese) Mahayana thought.^[21] It refers to several related terms,^[note 1] most notably *Tathāgatagarbha* and *Buddha-dhātu*.^[note 2] *Tathāgatagarbha* means "the womb of the thus-gone" (c.f. enlightened one), while *Buddha-dhātu* literally means "Buddha-realm" or "Buddha-substrate".^[note 3] Several key texts refer to the *tathāgatagarbha* or *Buddha-dhātu* as "atman", Self or essence, though those texts also contain warnings against a literal interpretation. Several scholars have noted similarities between *tathāgatagarbha* texts and the substantial monism found in the atman/Brahman tradition.^[24]

The *Tathāgatagarbha* doctrine, at its earliest, probably appeared about the later part of the 3rd century CE, and is verifiable in Chinese translations of 1st millennium CE.^[25]

Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra

In contrast to the madhyamika-tradition, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* uses "positive language" to denote "absolute reality". According to Paul Williams, the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* teaches an underlying essence, "Self", or "atman".^[26] This "true Self" is the Buddha-nature (*Tathāgatagarbha*), which is present in all sentient beings, and realized by the awakened ones. Most scholars consider the *Tathāgatagarbha* doctrine in *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* asserting an 'essential nature' in every living being is equivalent to 'Self',^[note 4] and it contradicts the Anatta doctrines in a vast majority of Buddhist texts, leading scholars to posit that the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtras* were written to promote Buddhism to non-Buddhists.^{[28][29]}

According to Sallie B. King, the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* does not represent a major innovation.^[30] Its most important innovation is the linking of the term *buddhadhātu* with *tathāgatagarbha*.^[30] According to King, the sutra is rather unsystematic,^[30] which made it "a fruitful one for later students and commentators, who were obliged to create their own order and bring it to the text".^[30] The sutra speaks about Buddha-nature in so many different ways, that Chinese scholars created a list of types of Buddha-nature that could be found in the text.^[30] One of those statements is:

Even though he has said that all phenomena [dharmas] are devoid of the Self, it is not that they are completely/ truly devoid of the Self. What is this Self ? Any phenomenon [dharma] that is true [satya], real [tattva], eternal [nitya], sovereign/ autonomous/ self-governing [aisvarya], and whose ground/ foundation is unchanging [asraya-aviparinama], is termed 'the Self ' [atman].^[31]

In the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* the Buddha also speaks of the "affirmative attributes" of nirvana, "the Eternal, Bliss, the Self and the Pure."^[32] The *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* explains:

The Self ' signifies the Buddha; 'the Eternal' signifies the Dharmakaya; 'Bliss' signifies Nirvana, and 'the Pure' signifies Dharma.^[33]

Edward Conze connotatively links the term *tathagata* itself (the designation which the Buddha applied to himself) with the notion of a real, true self:

Just as *tathata* designates true reality in general, so the word which developed into *Tathagata* designated the true self, the true reality within man.^[34]

It is possible, states Johannes Bronkhorst, that "original Buddhism did not deny the existence of the soul [Ātman, Attan]", even though a firm Buddhist tradition has maintained that the Buddha avoided talking about the soul or even denied its existence.^[35] While there may be ambivalence on the existence or non-existence of self in early Buddhist literature, adds Bronkhorst, it is clear from these texts that seeking self-knowledge is not the Buddhist path for liberation, and turning away from self-knowledge is.^[36] This is a reverse position to the Vedic traditions which recognized the knowledge of the self as "the principal means to achieving liberation".^[36]

"Self" as a teaching method

According to Paul Williams, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* uses the term "Self" in order to win over non-Buddhist ascetics. He quotes from the sutra:^[37]

The Buddha-nature is in fact not the self. For the sake of [guiding] sentient beings, I describe it as the self.^[38]

In the later *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* it is said that the *tathāgatagarbha* might be mistaken for a self, which it is not.^[39]

Ratnagotravibhāga

The *Ratnagotravibhāga* (also known as *Uttaratantra*), another text composed in the first half of 1st millennium CE and translated into Chinese in 511 CE, points out that the teaching of the *Tathāgatagarbha* doctrine is intended to win sentient beings over to abandoning "self-love" (*atma-sneha*) – considered to be a moral defect in Buddhism.^{[40][41]} The 6th-century Chinese *Tathāgatagarbha* translation states that "Buddha has *shiwo* (True Self) which is beyond being and nonbeing".^[42] However, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* asserts that the "Self" implied in *Tathāgatagarbha* doctrine is actually "not-Self".^{[43][44]}

Current disputes

The dispute about "self" and "not-self" doctrines has continued throughout the history of Buddhism.^[45] According to Johannes Bronkhorst, it is possible that "original Buddhism did not deny the existence of the soul", even though a firm Buddhist tradition has maintained that the Buddha avoided talking about the soul or even denied its existence.^[46] French religion writer André Migot also states that original Buddhism may not have taught a complete absence of self, pointing to evidence presented by Buddhist and Pali scholars Jean Przyluski and Caroline Rhys Davids that early Buddhism generally believed in a self, making Buddhist schools that admit an existence of a "self" not heretical, but conservative, adhering to ancient beliefs.^[47] While there may be ambivalence on the existence or non-existence of self in early Buddhist literature, Bronkhorst suggests that these texts clearly indicate that the Buddhist path of liberation consists not in seeking self-knowledge, but in turning away from what might erroneously be regarded as the self.^[48] This is a reverse position to the Vedic traditions which recognized the knowledge of the self as "the principal means to achieving liberation."^[48]

In Thai Theravada Buddhism, for example, states Paul Williams, some modern era Buddhist scholars have claimed that "nirvana is indeed the true Self", while other Thai Buddhists disagree.^[49] For instance, the Dhammakaya Movement in Thailand teaches that it is erroneous to subsume nirvana under the rubric of *anatta* (non-self); instead, nirvana is taught to be the "true self" or *dhammakaya*.^[50] The Dhammakaya Movement teaching that nirvana is *atta*, or true self, was criticized as heretical in Buddhism in 1994 by Ven. Payutto, a well-known scholar monk, who stated that 'Buddha taught nibbana as being non-self'.^{[51][52]} The abbot of one major temple in the Dhammakaya Movement, Luang Por Sermchai of Wat Luang Por Sodh Dhammakayaram, argues that it tends to be scholars who hold the view of absolute non-self, rather than Buddhist meditation practitioners. He points to the experiences of prominent forest hermit monks such as Luang Pu Sodh and Ajahn Mun to support the notion of a "true self".^{[52][53]} Similar interpretations on the "true self" were put forth earlier by the 12th Supreme Patriarch of Thailand in 1939. According to Williams, the Supreme Patriarch's interpretation echoes the *tathāgatagarbha* sutras.^[54]

Several notable teachers of the Thai Forest Tradition have also described ideas in contrast to absolute non-self. Ajahn Maha Bua, a well known meditation master, described the *citta* (mind) as being an indestructible reality that does not fall under *anattā*.^[55] He has stated that not-self is merely a perception that is used to pry one away from infatuation with the concept of a self, and that once this infatuation is gone the idea of not-self must be dropped as well.^[56] American monk Thanissaro Bhikkhu of the Thai Forest Tradition describes the Buddha's statements on non-self as a path to awakening rather than a universal truth.^[57] Thanissaro Bhikkhu states that the Buddha intentionally set the question of whether or not there is a self aside as a useless question, and that clinging to the idea that there is no self at all would actually *prevent* enlightenment.^[58] Bhikkhu Bodhi authored a rejoinder to Thanissaro, claiming that "The reason the teaching of anatta can serve as a strategy of liberation is precisely because it serves to rectify a misconception about the nature of being, hence an ontological error."^[59]

Buddhist scholars Richard Gombrich and Alexander Wynne argue that the Buddha's descriptions of non-self in early Buddhist texts do not deny that there is a self. Gethin claims that anatta is often mistranslated as meaning "not having a self", but in reality meant "not the self".^[60] Wynne claims early Buddhist texts such as the *Anattalakkhana Sutta* do not deny that there is a self, stating that the five aggregates that are described as not self are not descriptions of a human being but descriptions of the human experience.^[61] Wynne and Gombrich both argue that the Buddha's statements on anattā were originally a "not-self" teaching that developed into a "no-self" teaching in later Buddhist thought.^{[61][60]} Thanissaro Bhikkhu points to the *Ananda Sutta* (SN 44.10), where the Buddha stays silent when asked whether there is a 'self' or not,^[62] as a major cause of the dispute.^[63]

See also

- Anatta
- Angulimaliya Sutra
- Anguttara Nikaya
- Atman (Hinduism)
- Brahman
- Brahma-viharas
- Buddha-nature
- Digha Nikaya
- God in Buddhism
- Khuddaka Nikaya
- Kunjed Gyalpo Tantra
- Luminous mind
- Mahaparinirvana Sutra
- Samyutta Nikaya
- Self (spirituality)
- Shunyata
- Srimala Sutra
- Tathagatagarbha Sutra
- Three marks of existence

Notes

1. Buddha-dhatu, mind, *Tathagatagarbha*, Dharma-dhatu, suchness (tathata).^[22]
2. Sanskrit; Jp. *Busshō*, "Buddha-nature".
3. Kevin Trainor: "a sacred nature that is the basis for [beings'] becoming buddhas."^[23]
4. Wayman and Wayman have disagreed with this view, and they state that the *Tathagatagarbha* is neither self nor sentient being, nor soul, nor personality.^[27]

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2. John C. Plott et al (2000), Global History of Philosophy: The Axial Age, Volume 1, Motilal Banarsidass, ISBN 978-8120801585, p. 63, Quote: "The Buddhist schools reject any Ātman concept. As we have already observed, this is the basic and ineradicable distinction between Hinduism and Buddhism".

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External links

- "Nirvana Sutra": full text of "Nirvana Sutra", plus appreciation of its teachings. (<http://www.nirvanasutra.net/>)
 - "Tathagatagarbha Buddhism": key sutras of the Tathagatagarbha Buddhist tradition (<https://web.archive.org/web/20060614093904/http://www.webspawner.com/users/bodhisattva/index.html>)
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Jīva (Jainism)

Jīva (Sanskrit: जीव) or *Atman* (/ˈɑːtmən/; Sanskrit: आत्मन्) is a philosophical term used within Jainism to identify the soul.^[1] As per Jain cosmology, *jīva* or soul is the principle of sentience and is one of the *tattvas* or one of the fundamental substances forming part of the universe. The Jain metaphysics, states Jagmanderlal Jaini, divides the universe into two independent, everlasting, co-existing and uncreated categories called the *jīva* (soul) and the *ajīva* (Sanskrit: अजीव non-soul).^[2] This basic premise of Jainism makes it a dualistic philosophy.^[3] The *jīva*, according to Jainism, is an essential part of how the process of *karma*, *rebirth* and the process of liberation from rebirth works.^[4]

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Soul substance

Jains regard soul as one of the six fundamental and eternal substances (*dravyas*) which forms the universe. The two states of soul substance are mentioned in the Jain texts. These are — Svābhva (pure or natural) and Vibhāva (impure or unnatural state). Souls in transmigration are in impure state and liberated ones are said to be in natural or pure state.^[5]

Jain philosophy is the oldest Indian philosophy that completely separates matter from the soul.^[1] According to *The Theosophist*, "some religionists hold that Atman (Spirit) and Paramatman (God) are identical, while others assert that they are distinct; but a Jain will say that Atman and Paramatman are identical as well as distinct."^[6]

The five vows of Jain practice are believed in Jainism to aid in freeing the *jīva* from karmic matter, reduce negative karmic effects and accrue positive karmic benefits.^[4]

Souls and rebirth

According to Jain philosophy, rebirth occurs through soul. Depending on the karmic particles attached to a soul, Jain theology states a being is reborn in one of four *gatis* (states of existence), namely, heavenly being (*deva*), human (*manushya*), hell being (*naraki*) and animals and plants (*triyancha*).^[7] Besides this there also

exist a sub-microscopic life form, Nigoda, possessing only one sense, i.e., of touch.^[8]

In Jain beliefs, souls begin their journey in a primordial state, and exist in a state of consciousness continuum that is constantly evolving through Saṃsāra.^[9] Some evolve to a higher state, some regress asserts the Jaina theory, a movement that is driven by the karma.^[10] Further, Jaina traditions believe that there exist Abhavya (incapable), or a class of souls that can never attain moksha (liberation).^{[11][12]} The Abhavya state of soul is entered after an intentional and shockingly evil act.^[13] Jainism considers souls as pluralistic each in a karma-samsara cycle, and does not subscribe to Advaita style nondualism of Hinduism, or Advaya style nondualism of Buddhism.^[12]

The Jaina theosophy, like ancient Ajivika, but unlike Hindu and Buddhist theosophies, asserts that each soul passes through 8,400,000 birth-situations, as they circle through Saṃsāra.^{[14][15]} As the soul cycles, states Padmanabh Jaini, Jainism traditions believe that it goes through five types of bodies: earth bodies, water bodies, fire bodies, air bodies and vegetable lives.^[16] With all human and non-human activities, such as rainfall, agriculture, eating and even breathing, minuscule living beings are taking birth or dying, their souls are believed to be constantly changing bodies. Perturbing, harming or killing any life form, including any human being, is considered a sin in Jainism, with negative karmic effects.^{[17][18]}

A liberated soul in Jainism is one who has gone beyond Saṃsāra, is at the apex, is omniscient, remains there eternally, and is known as a Siddha.^[19] A male human being is considered closest to the apex with the potential to achieve liberation, particularly through asceticism. Women must gain karmic merit, to be reborn as man, and only then can they achieve spiritual liberation in Jainism, particularly in the Digambara sect of Jainism;^{[20][21]} however, this view has been historically debated within Jainism and different Jaina sects have expressed different views, particularly the Shvetambara sect that believes that women too can achieve liberation from Saṃsāra.^{[21][22]}

In contrast to Buddhist texts which do not expressly or unambiguously condemn injuring or killing plants and minor life forms, Jaina texts do. Jainism considers it a bad karma to injure plants and minor life forms with negative impact on a soul's Saṃsāra.^[23] However, some texts in Buddhism and Hinduism do caution a person from injuring all life forms, including plants and seeds.^{[23][24][25]}

Real Self

According to the Jain text, Samayasāra:

Know that the *Jiva* (soul) which rests on pure faith, knowledge, and conduct, alone is the Real Self. The one which is conditioned by the karmic matter is to be known as the impure self. – Verse 1-2-2



Depiction of the concept of soul (in transmigration) in Jainism. Golden color represents *nokarma* – the quasi-karmic matter, Cyan color depicts *dravya karma*– the subtle karmic matter, orange represents the *bhav karma*– the psycho-physical karmic matter and White depicts *sudhatma*, the pure consciousness.



Classification of Saṃsāri Jīvas (Transmigrating Souls) as per Jainism.

According to Vijay Jain, the souls which rest on the pure self are called the Real Self, and only *arihant* and *Siddhas* are the Real Self.^[26]

Stages of spiritual development

Jain texts explain that there are fourteen stages of spiritual development called *Gunasthana*. These are:^[27]

1. *Mithyadristi*: The stage of wrong believer
2. *Sasādana*: downfall from right faith
3. *Misradrsti*: mixed right and wrong belief
4. *Avirata samyagdrsti*: vowless right belief
5. *Deśavirata*: The stage of partial self-control
6. *Pramattasamyata*: Slightly imperfect vows
7. *Apramatta samyata*: Perfect vows
8. *Apūrvakaraṇa*: New thought-activity
9. *Anivātibādara-sāmparāya*: advanced thought-activity (Passions are still occurring)
10. *Sukshma samparaya*: slightest delusion
11. *Upaśānta-kasaya*: subsided delusion
12. *Ksīna kasāya*: destroyed delusion
13. *Sayogi kevali*: Omniscience with vibration
14. *Ayogi kevali*: The stage of omniscience without any activity

Classification

According to Jainism, sentient beings are ranked based on their senses. Four basic elements, viz. earth, water, air and fire ranks among the lowest in them.^[28]

See also

- [Atma Siddhi](#)
- [Atman \(Buddhism\)](#)
- [Atman \(Hinduism\)](#)
- [God in Jainism](#)
- [Ratnatraya- Three Jewels of Jainism](#)

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God or the absolute is responsible for higher selves or souls or ground-states, but not for the actions of heteronomous human beings.

↪ Roy Bhaskar with Mervyn Hartwig. *The Formation of Critical Realism: A Personal Perspective*. London and New York: Routledge imprint of Taylor & Francis Group, an Informa PLC business. 2010. Page 151.

... unity also has its place because, when we're living in a eudaimonistic society, then we won't be identical. You'll be different from me, but we'll be in unity. Your ground-state is different from mine, that gives you a different dharma, a different set of qualities, a different set of potentials, from mine. You'll value our diversities. And so we need concepts of unity as well as identity. Duality is a very important concept for the philosophy of meta-reality because it's precisely that which we're trying to eliminate or reduce.

~ Roy Bhaskar, "The Philosophy of Meta-Reality, Part I: Identity, Spirituality, System." *Alethia*. Later renamed, *Journal of Critical Realism*. Volume 5, number 1, 2002. Pages 21–34.

... if you go deeply enough into any aspect of being you will find buried in its fine structure or deep interior qualities which can only be described in terms of such quasi-metaphorical language as emptiness (*sunyata*), suchness (*tathata*), the void or the Buddha-nature, pure unbounded love or *sat-chit-anand* [truth-consciousness-bliss], that is the bliss consciousness of being which, whether you want to argue it possesses a teleological dynamic, in the sense that in some actual or metaphorical way all things strive for it (so that it would then be the fundamental driving force of evolution), it nevertheless certainly constitutes, in interiorised form, the ground-state of every moment of all being, the "quiddity" of everything which is.

~ Roy Bhaskar. *From Science to Emancipation: Alienation and the Actuality of Enlightenment*. London

and New York: Routledge imprint of Taylor & Francis Group, an Informa PLC business. 2012. Page xiv.

... [T]his is crucial – the experience of union or identity in the moment of absolute transcendence in any process of learning or discovery can only be rendered fully intelligible on the basis that it involves “the union between something already enfolded within the discovering agent, brought up to consciousness by a moment of Platonic anamnesis or recall, with the alethic [disclosed] self–revelation of the being known, existing outside him” – i.e. it involves the union of two beings at the level of the implicit, supramental consciousness of their ground–states, entailing the theory of generalized co–presence or interconnectedness – that at the level of fundamental possibility or alethia [truth or disclosure] everything is implicitly contained within everything else. From there it is but a short step to link “the latent immanent teleology of praxis” (the pulse of freedom ...) to the immanent teleology of the ground–state and cosmic envelope, and to view everything in the universe as enchanted and as “in the process of becoming one with its ground–state.” PMR [The philosophy of metaReality] is thus a form of panentheism, which, however, is significantly different from the Platonic panentheism espoused by [Thomas] Nagel (“Secular philosophy”) and Hegelian panentheism (... for example Sebastian Job ...) [Viewing everything in the universe as enchanted and in the process of becoming one with its ground–state] constitutes an immanent critique of [Karl] Marx’s theory, which “does successfully capture a deep, perhaps the deepest dual level, in our social structure” but “one which presupposes, and depends on the

efficacy of a deeper, untheorised level, that of the ground–state qualities of unrecognised (non–commodified) creativity and unconditional love and other ground–state qualities that Marx did not theorise, just as his vision of a communist society actually depends on the process of self–realisation or enlightenment and its universalisation that the individual process [‘the free development of each’] both implies and presupposes for its completion.” ...

~ Mervyn Hartwig, “Introduction,” in Roy Bhaskar. *From Science to Emancipation: Alienation and the Actuality of Enlightenment*. London and New York: Routledge imprint of Taylor & Francis Group, an Informa PLC business. 2012. Pages xxvii–xxxi.

Soul - Meaning in Sanskrit

Soul

Difficulty: ●●●●●

Pronunciation

IPA: soul Sanskrit: सोल



Meanings of Soul in Sanskrit

Don't Transliterate

noun

- आत्मा [atma]
- रजसानुः [rajasanuḥ]
- दैव (m) [daihya]
- पुंगलः [pungalaḥ]
- देहेवर (m) [deheśvara]

Word Forms / Inflections

souls (noun plural)

Rhyming Words for "Soul"

Rhymes for Soul

Definitions and Meaning of Soul in English

soul

noun

- a human being
Synonyms: individual, mortal, person, somebody, someone
Example
- there was too much for one person to do
- the human embodiment of something
Example
- the soul of honor
- a secular form of gospel that was a major Black musical genre in the 1960s and 1970s
Example
- soul was politically significant during the Civil Rights movement
- deep feeling or emotion
Synonyms: soulfulness
- the immaterial part of a person; the actuating cause of an individual life
Synonyms: psyche

Synonyms of Soul

individual, mortal, person, somebody, someone, soul, soulfulness, psyche

Description

In many religious, philosophical, and mythological traditions, the **soul** is the incorporeal essence of a living being. Soul or psyche comprises the mental abilities of a living being: reason, character, feeling, consciousness, qualia, memory, perception, thinking, etc. Depending on the philosophical system, a soul can either be mortal or immortal.

अस्य शब्दस्य प्रथमः अर्थः अस्ति परमात्मा, ब्रह्म इति । अतः (सात्त्विकमन्त्रे) मनिष् ।

यत्त्वान्मोति यददतो यत्वारि विषयाविह । यत्वास्य सन्ततो भावः तस्माद्वान्मोति कीर्यते ।

आत्मेव दृष्टः सदा प्रजानामादश्नैवमिदेषु दो - याद १८-१३

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noun

soul-searching

आत्मविक्षणम्

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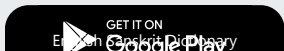
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- cosmic
- आवेष्टवम्
- अस्तिवम्
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आत्मा (*atma*) - Meaning in English

आत्मा

Popularity: ★★★★★ Difficulty: ●●●●●

Pronunciation

ātmā, aatmaa

Meanings of आत्मा in English

noun

1. [Soul](#)

Rhyming Words for "आत्मा"

[Rhymes for आत्मा](#)

Description

अस्य शब्दस्य प्रथमः अर्थः अस्ति परमात्मा, ब्रह्म इति । अतः (सात्त्विकमने) मनिषि ॥

यत्त्वान्मोति यज्जदतो यत्त्वारि विषयानिह । यत्त्वास्य सन्ततो भावः परमादात्मोति यत्रियति ।

आत्मेव दष्टः सदसा प्रजानामादर्शनेच्छामित्येषु दो - याद १८-१३

In many religious, philosophical, and mythological traditions, the **soul** is the incorporeal essence of a living being. Soul or psyche comprises the mental abilities of a living being: reason, character, feeling, consciousness, qualia, memory, perception, thinking, etc. Depending on the philosophical system, a soul can either be mortal or immortal.

Also see "[आत्मा](#)" on Wikipedia.

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More matches for आत्मा

verb

आत्मानं संयम्	Curb
आत्मानं संयम्	check
आत्मानं संयम्	control
आत्मानं संयम्	hold in
आत्मानं संयम्	moderate

noun

आत्मालुभासनम्	self-control
आत्मालुभासनम्	self-denial
आत्मालुभासनम्	self-discipline

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Sanskrit to English Dictionary: आत्मा

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Beyond Combination: How Cosmic Consciousness Grounds Ordinary Experience

‘Man is a stream whose source is hidden. Always our being is descending into us from we know not whence’.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, ‘The Over-Soul’

ABSTRACT: *The aim of this paper is twofold. First, our purpose is to propose and motivate a novel and scientifically informed variant of cosmopsychism, namely, the view that the experiences of ordinary subjects are ultimately grounded in an all-pervading cosmic consciousness. Second, we will demonstrate that this approach generates promising avenues for addressing familiar problems of phenomenal constitution. We use stochastic electrodynamics (SED) as the physical bedrock of our approach, supplementing it with key insights about the nature of consciousness long emphasized in eastern philosophy and other wisdom traditions. We proceed to show that our approach substantiates an intriguing way of thinking about the dynamical emergence of ordinary consciousness from cosmic consciousness, identifying the latter with the vacuum state of quantum field theory. Finally, we argue that the present approach is well suited to address problems of phenomenal constitution, in particular as they pertain to the qualities and structure of experience and to the generation of subjects.*

KEYWORDS: combination problem, cosmopsychism, panpsychism, stochastic electrodynamics, zero-point field, quantum coherence

Introduction

The last three decades witnessed a surge of interest in consciousness as a scientific and philosophical problem of the first rank. Correlated with this trend is a growing sense of dissatisfaction with standard materialist approaches to the mind-body problem: in particular with the explanatory gap associated with the notion that phenomenal consciousness is a cosmic latecomer emerging from an

Itay Shani would like to thank the audience at the *Idealism and the Mind-Body Problem* workshop (NYU Shanghai, June 2017) for stimulating feedback that contributed to the motive force behind the present paper. Thanks are also due to Miri Albahari for many prolific discussions. Both IS and JK thank an anonymous referee for this journal for providing us with insightful comments.

antecedent background of insensate physical stuff. Complementary to this latter sentiment is the revival of the idea that consciousness is ontologically fundamental, that is, an irreducible feature of ultimate reality or perhaps even the very essence of ultimate reality itself.

One approach that holds consciousness to be ontologically basic and enjoys growing popularity among scientists and philosophers who are critical of orthodox materialism is *panpsychism*. The distinctive markers of panpsychism can be thought of along two orthogonal dimensions: one horizontal, the other vertical. Horizontally, there is the idea that consciousness is immanent throughout nature, namely, that all concrete things are, in one way or another, infused with the dwelling presence of consciousness (hence the ‘pan’ in panpsychism). Vertically, there is the assumption that consciousness goes ‘all the way down’, which is to say that even prebiotic microscopic entities—no matter how small or simple—are endowed with a modicum of experiential life.

It is important, however, to avoid certain misconceptions regarding panpsychism. One prevalent misinterpretation is that panpsychism implies that *all* things are conscious. This, however, does not follow, for both the horizontal and the vertical dimension of panpsychism are entirely consistent with the notion that many macro-scale objects (rocks and chairs are typical examples) are *inanimate*, containing microscopic pockets of consciousness in their midst but lacking a unified consciousness extending across their full scale. Another misapprehension consists in the assumption that panpsychism is exhausted by *micropsychism*, the view that all conscious experiences are ultimately grounded in micro-level conscious experience. Again, there is nothing in the immanence hypothesis or even in the idea that consciousness goes all the way down to exclude the converse doctrine of *cosmopsychism*, according to which the ultimate ground of creaturely conscious experience is a cosmic-level consciousness.

In the early days of the revived interest in panpsychism, around the turn of the millennium, proponents and opponents alike were almost exclusively interested in atomistic or thing-pluralist variants of the doctrine, namely, in theories whose basic metaphysical assumptions reflect the reductionist bottom-up approach of orthodox materialism, with the important qualification that the elementary building blocks of nature (which were typically identified with subatomic particles) are considered to be endowed with rudimentary flashes of experience (see Chalmers 1996; Seager 1995; Strawson 2006).¹ More sophisticated manifestations of consciousness were presumed to result from one or another kind of combinatory integration—a mental chemistry, so to speak (see Coleman 2012; Goff 2006).

Following others, we call this brand of panpsychism *micropsychism*. The term is due to Strawson (2006) who uses it to denote a position that is somewhat weaker than panpsychism since it requires only that *some* microscopic ultimates are experience involving. Others, however, use ‘micropsychism’ as a label for atomistic panpsychism (see Chalmers, forthcoming; Goff, forthcoming). We find the latter use intuitive and will follow it henceforth.

¹ A more recent exposition of Strawson’s view suggests that it is consistent with a quantum-field-based type of cosmopsychism (see Strawson, forthcoming).

More recently, however, there is a growing interest in a holistic, thing-monist, alternative that came to be known as *cosmopsychism* (see, for example, Jaskolla and Buck 2012; Goff 2017; Mathews 2011; Nagasawa and Wager 2017; Shani 2015). On this latter view it is the cosmos as whole, rather than its tiniest bits and pieces, that is presumed to be ontologically fundamental and the ultimate ground of macro-level consciousness. As such, the assumption is that there is a cosmic level of consciousness, and that it is this cosmic consciousness (rather than microscopic forms of consciousness) that serves as the ultimate bedrock substantiating the experiential lives of creatures like us.²

A major trigger for the rise of interest in cosmopsychism is the hope that a holistic, top-down, substantiation of macro-level experience will prove a more viable option than an atomistic, bottom-up constitution. Micropsychism experiences serious difficulties in facing the *combination problem*, and advocates of cosmopsychism belong with those who suspect that a sound solution requires a radical shift in perspective (but see Dainton [2011], Miller [2018], and Roelofs [2015] for recent attempts to address the combination problem from a micropsychist perspective).

In essence, the combination problem (Seager 1995) consists in the task of explaining how macro-level phenomenal consciousness—the ongoing flow of subjective experience with which we are personally acquainted and which we ascribe with confidence to other people and animals around us—results from the combination of fundamental micro-level experiences. Put differently and in broader terms, the challenge is to explain how fundamental micro-consciousness *substantiates* familiar macro-consciousness. It is generally agreed that the combination problem is the most pressing theoretical challenge facing panpsychism at the present and that the future of the panpsychist platform depends crucially on the ability to address this challenge.

However, it is by no means obvious that a cosmopsychist framework can deliver us from the difficulties of mental combination. In particular, since it appears that cosmopsychism is vulnerable to a *decombination* problem that mirrors the combination problem faced by micropsychism. For if macro-consciousness is grounded in cosmic consciousness, does this not require the assumption that macro-level experiences are dissected from cosmic level experiences in a process that reverses micropsychist combination? Why should top-down (or cosmic-macro) constitution be less problematic than bottom-up (micro-macro) constitution? Is not the very idea of mental constitution afflicted with insurmountable obstacles, from whichever angle it is approached? This is a serious and fair concern that cosmopsychists cannot ignore.

While it is not our goal to disprove micropsychism, we hold the opinion that the cosmopsychist framework presented below carries a potential for moving the discussion forward or, at the very least, for pointing in a promising direction. We have both defended a cosmopsychist approach to consciousness in the past—one

² Apart from micropsychism and cosmopsychism, there is also a body of work that falls under the banner of *emergentive* panpsychism (see Brüntrup 2017; Mörch 2014; Rosenberg 2004; Seager 2017). Although marked with holistic overtones, emergentive panpsychism does not imply the reality of cosmic consciousness, thereby constituting a third alternative. While we recognize the significance of this line of research, we shall not discuss it any further here.

of us from a philosophical standpoint (Shani 2015), the other from the standpoint of modern physics (Keppler 2012, 2013, 2016, 2018). In the present paper we argue that a combined approach that integrates both lines of work yields the resources for addressing some of the major difficulties associated with cosmic-macro constitution and the decombination problem.

In the next section we comment on some of the major combination and decombination problems discussed and debated in the philosophical literature. This will serve to clarify the terrain and to highlight the explanatory challenges faced by cosmopsychism with regard to mental constitution. It will also set up the problem space we target in later sections. In section 2 we introduce stochastic electrodynamics (SED), a nonstandard approach to quantum theory and fundamental physical reality, as the conceptual framework that will serve as the physical basis of our approach. In section 3 we show how this conceptual framework sustains an explanation of the emergence of ordinary experience against the background of an all-pervading field of cosmic consciousness. In section 4 we return to issues of mental combination, showing how an SED-based cosmopsychism opens up a promising avenue for solving a variety of constitution problems pertaining to the structure, and the qualities, of subjective experience. In section 5, we tackle the *subject combination problem*, arguably the most formidable of all problems of mental constitution. Finally, in section 6 we address some additional questions pertaining both to the conceptual soundness of our proposal and to issues of philosophical import that go beyond the scope of the present paper.

1. Micropsychism, Cosmopsychism, and the Challenge of Phenomenal Constitution

As mentioned above, the most formidable challenge facing panpsychism is to explain the constitutive dependency of familiar macro-level consciousness upon fundamental consciousness. If panpsychists are right in their contention that in order to reintegrate consciousness in nature we must evoke the hypothesis that experience is elemental, then this hypothesis ought to prove itself explanatorily potent: in one way or another, primordial consciousness must ground the reality of evolved sophisticated phenomenologies. Yet, as William James ([1890] 1950: vol. 1, chap. 5) famously argued, it is difficult to conceive how one conscious mind may derive its existence, *qua* conscious mind, from another (or from a plurality of such minds). Each conscious mind, says James, is phenomenally self-contained, and this runs counter to the assumption of subjective overlap involved in the notion that the phenomenal life of any macro-level subject is literally composed of (or decomposed from) the phenomenal lives of other, more basic subjects.

One intuitive and *prima facie* attractive way of explaining the ontological dependency of macro-level consciousness upon fundamental consciousness is by reference to *compositional* constitution. On this view, experiences as well as conscious selves enter into relations of *cross-level inclusion*: they are literally composed of or fractured from other experiences and selves (microscopic or cosmic, as the case may be). Yet, the idea that experiences or experiencing selves

enter into strict relations of combinatory inclusion breeds considerable difficulties. In the first place, in the spirit of James's critique, it is open to the objection that nothing seems to *necessitate* the formation of novel experiences or experiencing selves from compositional (or decompositional) operations upon preexistent experiences or selves. In the absence of such necessitation or entailment, the postulation of consciousness at the basis of things fails to guarantee the reality of macro-level consciousness—giving rise to an explanatory gap that appears analogous to the one afflicting orthodox materialism.³ Second, and worse still, there is the more radical contention that such putative inclusion relations are not merely explanatorily deficient or inconclusive, but altogether incoherent. Each conscious perspective, so goes the idea, is strictly exclusive of all others; hence, none can include or be included in another. Consequently, the price of insisting on interspectival combination is exacted in the form of loss of mental coherence. (The subtleties of this question cannot be explored in full here; for more detailed discussions see Albahari [forthcoming]; Basile [2010]; Coleman [2014]; and Shani [2015]). The struggle to make good sense of phenomenal inclusion, and more generally of any relation of phenomenal grounding, is what gives the combination problem its bite.⁴

Let us now delineate in broad brush strokes the troubled territory of the combination problem in its various derivatives. For the sake of orderly exposition we shall focus first on a few conspicuous variants of the combination problem as they appear in the context of micropsychism before pointing to their presumed analogs within the problem space of cosmopsychism.

As mentioned earlier, the 'combination problem' is actually a genus term designating a family of related problems. Chalmers (2017) argues that the combination problem (CP) can be broken down into three major subcategories (there are other problems, known in the literature, that do not fit neatly into this tripartite classification, but we will not elaborate on them here):

- (1) The *subject* CP: How do micro-subjects combine to yield a macro-subject?
- (2) The *quality* CP: How do micro-qualities combine to yield macro-qualities?
- (3) The *structure* CP: How do microexperiential structures combine to yield macroexperiential structures?

Given the assumptions of compositional constitution and cross-level inclusion, the combination problem can be plotted against any of these three different axes. Consider first the *subject* CP, which many believe to be the most formidable of all combination problems (see, e.g., Coleman 2014; Miller 2018). Here the challenge

³ Argumentation along this line often parallels familiar arguments directed against orthodox materialism: in particular in the form of *conceivability* arguments (see Chalmers 2017; Goff 2009), or *knowledge* arguments (Chalmers 2017).

⁴ Interestingly, James's original statement of the problem (1890: 162) can be interpreted as lending support to either of the two challenges discussed above: lack of necessitation and straightforward impossibility.

is twofold. First, to explain why any collection of subjects, however arranged, should ever give rise to a higher, inclusive subject. Second, to demonstrate that the very idea of subjective inclusion—according to which macro-level conscious perspectives are literally constituted of myriads of copresent micro-perspectives—is coherent, involving no logical contradictions or epistemic absurdities (see above).

Moving to the *quality* CP, the challenge here is to explain how the phenomenal richness of the world we know could possibly be accounted for in terms of the putatively austere phenomenal qualities manifested by, say, subatomic particles. The problem is particularly acute given a ‘Russellian’ panpsychist picture, according to which all basal phenomenal properties are realizers of (functionally characterized) primitive physical properties (see Chalmers 2015; Lockwood 1993; Smolin 2015). On such a picture, a meager palette of indistinct qualities is burdened with the task of combinatorially generating the splendidous and seemingly inexhaustible gamut of all possible experiences (this is the so-called *palette* problem, see Lockwood 1993).

Finally, the *structure* CP consists in the alleged mismatch between the contours of everyday experience and the phenomenal structure we would naturally expect to result from combinatorial operations over microscopic experiences. Paradoxically, it appears that the structure of daily experience is both too rich and too poor when compared with the presumed structure of its microexperiential base. On the one hand, it is hard to fathom how the primitive structural properties of microscopic experiences could account for the considerable spatiotemporal and multimodal complexity of macroscopic experience. On the other hand, macro-level phenomenology appears remarkably coarse-grained when compared with the putative grainy structure of collections of microexperiences (this is the so-called *grain* problem, see Lockwood 1993; Sellars 1965).

Are these problems translatable, *mutatis mutandis*, to cosmopsychism? Many believe they are (see Chalmers, forthcoming; Miller 2018). Of course, much depends on how we choose to characterize the cosmic consciousness that, on this view, substantiates all other experiencing beings (see sections 4 and 5 below). Nevertheless, it is easy to see how constitution problems analogous in form to those afflicting micropsychism can resurface in the context of cosmopsychism by (as it were) reversing the arrow of constitution.

A *structure* constitution problem arises when one considers how the structure of everyday experience might be grounded in the structure of cosmic experiences. This problem appears particularly pressing if one assumes that the cosmic consciousness at the basis of all things is phenomenally austere, namely, that its experiential landscape is barren and homogenous in comparison to the mental lives of evolved localized creatures like us (see Chalmers, forthcoming). The same assumption gives rise to a *quality* constitution problem: How can the qualitatively rich inner world of macro-subjects emerge from the meager phenomenal background afforded by cosmic consciousness? How can a barren cosmic landscape sustain multiple oases of experiential affluence in its midst?

However, as before, it appears that the hardest of all constitution problems pertains to the constitution of *subjects*. Analogously to the bottom-up formation of macro-subjects from micro-subjects, the top-down derivation of macro-subjects

from a cosmic subject faces the challenges of necessitation and intelligibility. Concerning the first challenge, the question is in what sense the postulation of a cosmic consciousness as the ground of all things helps explain (let alone necessitate) the manifest reality of evolved localized subjects. Concerning the second, the challenge is to show that the ontic dependency of macro-subjects upon an overarching cosmic consciousness can be delineated coherently, without incurring epistemic absurdity.

On the face of it, then, all the generic constitution problems afflicting micropsychism can be reformulated as applicable to cosmopsychism. Nonetheless, we surmise that the turn toward cosmopsychism is more than a formal reversal of the arrow of explanation. It reflects a profound shift in metaphysical outlook and, as such, it brings novel conceptual resources to bear on the problems at hand. In particular, we believe that a cosmopsychist platform informed, on the one hand, by contemporary physics and, on the other hand, by rather ancient metaphysical assumptions about the ultimate nature of cosmic consciousness, effects radical changes in our approach to questions of phenomenal constitution. In addition, it can prove itself instrumental in our ability to confront these questions successfully. The rest of the paper is an attempt to substantiate this claim.

2. SED as a Conceptual Foundation for Quantum Physics

The physical bedrock of our approach is SED, the foundations of which were laid some fifty years ago (Marshall 1963, 1965; Boyer 1969, 1975) and have been continuously advanced over the past decades (De la Peña-Auerbach and Cetto 1977; De la Peña and Cetto 1994, 1995, 2001, 2006; De la Peña et al. 2009, 2015). The primary goal of this theory consists in deriving the formalism of quantum mechanics and quantum electrodynamics (QED) from first principles. Crucially, SED is based on the conception that the universe is imbued with an all-pervasive electromagnetic background field, called zero-point field (ZPF). The undisturbed ZPF, which features unique properties, is a maximally disordered field, meaning that the field modes are completely uncorrelated among each other (De la Peña and Cetto 1994, 1995; De la Peña et al. 2009).

In principle, the background activity represented by the ZPF corresponds to the vacuum fluctuations of QED. Yet, there are significant differences. In the conventional interpretation of QED the vacuum field is viewed as an unpleasant ingredient of the theory that is degraded to a virtual field being solely responsible for small corrections on top of the quantum behavior of matter. By contrast, in the conceptual framework of SED the ZPF occupies center stage in that it is looked upon as the origin of the quantum behavior of matter (De la Peña et al. 2015); this framework is further elucidated below. Before we get into the details, it should be pointed out that the universal background activity is not only composed of an electromagnetic field, but also of fields that mediate other fundamental forces, such as the weak and strong interaction. However, we will ignore the latter fields since our main emphasis lies on the treatment of physical systems that are dominated by the electromagnetic interaction, something that applies particularly to living matter.

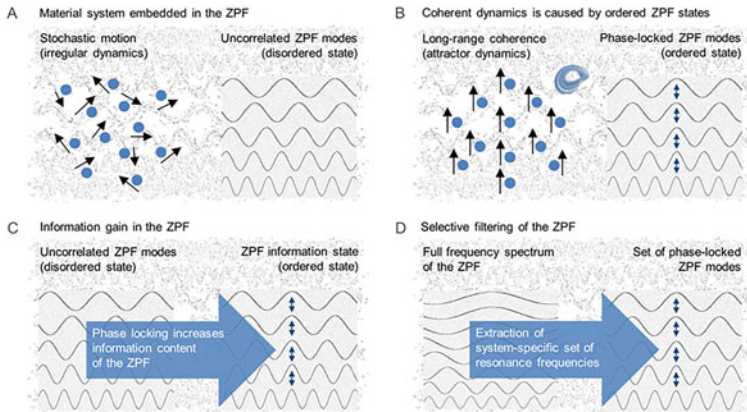


Figure 1. (A) Every material system can be regarded as an open system in permanent contact with the random ZPF. Due to their interaction with the initially uncorrelated field modes, the system components acquire a stochastic motion and behave as stochastic oscillators. (B) A system that is sufficiently shielded from disruptive thermal influences can reach a dynamically stable state (i.e., an attractor) that is orchestrated by the ZPF. As a consequence, the system *enters the quantum regime* and displays long-range coherence, which in turn results in a phase-locked coupling of the field modes that are involved in the maintenance of the attractor dynamics. (C) Since such a phase locking increases the information content of the ZPF, the modified ZPF state accompanying the formation of an attractor can be viewed as a ZPF *information state*. (D) Seen from a different perspective, a quantum system features the characteristics of a resonant oscillator that *extracts its system-specific set of resonance frequencies* selectively from the full frequency spectrum of the background field.

According to SED, the electrically charged components of every physical system interact unavoidably with the radiative background (see figure 1A), that is, every material system can be regarded as an open stochastic system in permanent contact with the random ZPF (De la Peña et al. 2015). As long as the interaction strength between the oscillating components and the relevant field modes, for which the system exhibits a strong resonant behavior, exceeds disturbing forces, such as thermal noise, the energy exchange between the system and the ZPF can reach equilibrium. In such a balance situation the ZPF takes control of the system and imposes restrictions on the dynamics of the system components that manifest themselves in quantization conditions in accordance with the stationary states predicted by quantum theory (De la Peña and Cetto 1995, 2001, 2006). In other words, a system in equilibrium with the ZPF falls into a dynamically stable state, that is, an attractor, and displays *quantum behavior* (De la Peña and Cetto 1995).

Due to the close interrelationship between material systems and the background field, the presence of matter also exerts influence on the internal structure and dynamics of the ZPF. This interplay induces a modification and partial organization of the local field in such a way that the relevant ZPF modes, which can be regarded as a system-specific set of resonance frequencies playing a dominant role in the maintenance of the balance situation, become *highly correlated* (De la Peña and Cetto 2006; De la Peña et al. 2009). In other words,

the orchestration of a dynamically stable system requires the initially chaotic ZPF to change over to a partially ordered state that shows a phase locking of the relevant field modes. As a result (see [figure 1B](#)), all the components of the system are effectively coupled through the ZPF, giving rise to collective cooperation and *long-range coherence* (De la Peña and Cetto [2001](#)).

The causal relationships described above convey an idea of the fundamental mechanisms underlying quantum systems that can be interpreted with regard to both information gain in the ZPF and selective extraction of particular frequencies from the ZPF (Keppler [2012, 2013, 2016](#)). From the first perspective (see [figure 1C](#)), the phase-locked ZPF modes that accompany the formation of an attractor represent a local ZPF information state that exhibits higher information content compared to the disordered initial state of the background field. Each attractor is characterized by its specific set of phase-locked field modes and, hence, by its unique ZPF *information state*. Seen from the second point of view (see [figure 1D](#)), a system in equilibrium with the ZPF behaves as a resonant stochastic oscillator that *extracts its resonance frequencies selectively from the full frequency spectrum of the background field*. These system-specific ZPF modes undergo a phase-locked coupling while all the other modes remain unaffected.

Bearing this universal mechanism of structure formation in mind, it becomes obvious that there is no clear separation between the microcosm and the macrocosm, so that quantum behavior should not be restricted to the lowest levels of matter. The key insight is that coherent structures come into existence through selective *filtering* of the omnipresent ZPF, in keeping with the guiding principle that the maintenance of the dynamic equilibrium in more complex material systems involves more complex ZPF information states. Correspondingly, quantum phenomena can be expected to appear in many macroscopic systems, particularly in living organisms, provided that they are sufficiently shielded from disruptive thermal influences (Del Giudice et al. [2005](#)).

Beyond that, there is one more remarkable feature that can be attributed to the ZPF, namely, that not only the stability of matter, but also the putatively intrinsic properties of elementary particles, such as the quantized spin, turn out to be emergent phenomena arising from a deeper stochastic process involving the ZPF (De la Peña et al. [2009](#)). This suggests that the ZPF can be seen as the root cause of the quantum behavior of matter and that all physical properties of matter can be understood as dynamically *acquired* properties resulting from the interaction with the background field.

In summary, SED paves a way for a deeper understanding and explanation of quantum phenomena and opens up new vistas that otherwise remain concealed behind the formalism of QED. In this way, it radically changes our notion of reality by giving significance to the ZPF as a creative agent that shapes matter and, due to its inherent stochasticity, constitutes the source of structural variety in the universe. In particular, the properties of any kind of quantum system can be traced back to the resonant interaction between the system components and the ZPF, which in turn modifies the background field and results in the formation of system-specific ZPF information states. In contrast, the components of classical systems are not dynamically coupled via the ZPF, thus leaving the ZPF completely

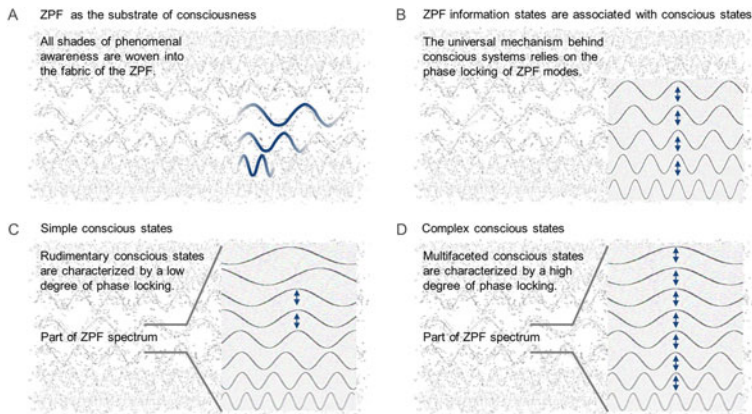


Figure 2. (A) The theoretical framework is based on the hypothesis that the all-pervasive ZPF is the carrier of consciousness, that is, all shades of phenomenal awareness are woven into the fabric of the ZPF. (B) Under this assumption, the principle of dynamical coupling of sets of ZPF modes is eminently suitable for the extraction of an enormous variety of shades of consciousness from the phenomenal color palette immanent in the ZPF. (C) The quantity of consciousness of a system is determined by the dynamically accessible part of the ZPF spectrum and the degree of phase locking the system is able to establish in this part. Simple conscious states are characterized by a low degree of phase locking. (D) In contrast, complex conscious states are characterized by a large number of phase-locked ZPF modes.

unaffected and rendering the system incapable of generating ZPF information states (Keppler 2016, 2018).

3. SED as a Theoretical Framework for Consciousness

The aforementioned features suggest that the ZPF is perfectly suited for playing the dual role as the carrier of both primordial energy and consciousness. Accordingly, we posit that all conceivable shades of phenomenal awareness are inherent in the frequency spectrum of the ZPF (see figure 2A). Due to its disordered ground state, the ZPF can therefore, from the external perspective, be regarded as a vibrant pool of activity, and from the internal perspective be looked upon as a *formless sea of consciousness* or unstructured ocean of awareness that carries an enormous range of potentially available phenomenal nuances. Proceeding from this postulate, the mechanism underlying quantum systems meets the requirements that are to be imposed on a truly fundamental mechanism behind conscious systems, leading us to the assumption that *conscious systems extract their states of consciousness from the phenomenal color palette immanent in the ZPF* (see figure 2B). These hypotheses express that every ZPF information state is associated with a conscious state or, put differently, that a pattern of phase-locked ZPF modes determines the physical as well as the phenomenal properties of a quantum system (Keppler 2013, 2016, 2018).

As a consequence, it can be expected that every quantum system is a conscious system, with the accessible spectrum of conscious states of a given system being

delimited by its dynamic variability, that is, by the variety of transiently stable attractors, and the quantity of consciousness of each state being determined by the degree of phase locking in the accessible part of the ZPF (see [figures 2C and 2D](#)). These inferences are valid unless there are plausible additional constraints for the domain of consciousness, which we do not see at the moment. While simple quantum systems, such as atoms and molecules, are probably equipped with a very rudimentary, limited, and monotonous form of consciousness, we may assume that complex quantum systems, such as coherently oscillating cell assemblies in living organisms, are endowed with a broad range of multifaceted conscious experiences.

At this point, it is important to recall that the phenomenal properties of quantum systems are not intrinsic properties, but dynamically acquired properties that can be attributed to the system over the lifetime of an attractor. In contrast to quantum systems, the dynamics of classical systems are completely independent of the ZPF, thus leaving the background field unaffected and preventing the generation of ZPF information states. This suggests that such systems are excluded from conscious awareness (Keppler [2013, 2016, 2018](#)) or, expressed differently, that it is nomologically impossible for classical systems to be conscious.

From this mechanism we obtain a clear demarcation criterion between conscious and nonconscious systems in such a way that the formation of transiently stable attractors distinguishing themselves by a high degree of coherence is an essential prerequisite for conscious processes; this is supported by an extensive body of evidence from neuroscience (Desmedt and Tomberg [1994](#); Rodriguez et al. [1999](#); Engel and Singer [2001](#); Melloni et al. [2007](#); Freeman [2007](#); Freeman and Vitiello [2007](#)). Such attractors manage the transition from potentiality to actuality; that is, a potential conscious state is actualized once an attractor is fully unfolded and the concomitant ZPF information state is generated (Keppler [2013, 2018](#)). In summary, our SED-based approach indicates that the creation principle in the universe, with respect to both physicality and phenomenology, is grounded in *selective restriction* of the omnipresent ZPF.

4. Reassessing Phenomenal Constitution in Light of the Filtering Hypothesis: Issues of Quality and Structure

The framework presented in the last two sections bears conspicuously on matters of phenomenal constitution. This is particularly evident with regard to constitution problems pertaining to the *quality* and *structure* of experience. In essence, we believe that our approach circumvents this family of problems, making them largely irrelevant for the kind of cosmopsychism we advocate. The core issue at stake is the compositional assumption that the experiences of nonfundamental subjects derive their qualities and structure from the qualities and structure of experiences consciously entertained at the fundamental level of reality (by a plurality of subjects according to micropsychism or by a single subject if cosmopsychism is presupposed). In other words, the crucial presupposition behind common formulations of the quality and the structure combination problems is that the experiences of macro-subjects are literally composed of, or fractured from,

manifest experiences of elemental subjects. As noticed above (see [section 1](#)), the problem is to render these presupposed compositional relations intelligible. By contrast, the present framework breaks free from this core presupposition and in doing so avoids its tangles.

In the first place, our proposed framework avoids the assumption that there is a literal sense in which either the quality or the structure of the experiences of any single subject are derived (composed or fractured) from the manifest experiences of any other subject or subjects. Instead, as explained above, we employ the *filtering hypothesis*, according to which the phenomenal portrait of each quantum coherent system is a function of the manner in which it resonates with the ZPF, stirring the latter into a unique set of phase-locked modes. The individual dynamical properties and the contextual embeddedness of each such system ensure the uniqueness of the phenomenal portrait it carves for itself through its ongoing interaction with the ZPF, so that no two subjects are phenomenally identical in all respects. But insofar as the present problem is concerned, the main point is that no subject is phenomenally composed of or fractured from another subject; rather, each subject obtains its phenomenal character by tapping directly into the universal pool of cosmic consciousness immanent to the ZPF and by extracting from it a system-specific set of correlated resonance frequencies. (As panpsychists we still hold on to the idea that macro-subjects are *physically* constituted of micro-subjects: cells, atoms, etc. But the point is that once constituted as a complex physical entity with specific dynamical characteristics, each macro-subject obtains its phenomenology through resonant interaction with the background field, rather than by summing over the experiences of its micro-constituents.)

Equally important is the observation that while our approach identifies the conscious experiences of subjects with patterns of organization emergent within a universal field of cosmic consciousness (i.e., with phase-locked ZPF modes) we assume *neither* that these experiences are enjoyed by cosmic consciousness as its own *nor* that they constitute proper parts of extant cosmic experiences. Of crucial relevance, in this respect, is the distinction between *implicit* and *explicit* phenomenology. As mentioned earlier, we maintain that all conceivable shades of phenomenal consciousness are inherent in the frequency spectrum of the ZPF (see [figure 2A](#)). However, in the unorganized ground state of the background field these phenomenal nuances lie dormant and undifferentiated: they exist *in potentia* rather than *in actualis*, implicitly rather than explicitly. Thus, although the entire phenomenal ‘color palette’ is immanent in the ZPF, it would be a misinterpretation to conclude that a cosmic consciousness must therefore experience any of these potential states as an actual subjective experience: no ordinary concrete experience can be read into the ZPF in its default state of uncorrelated field modes.

Indeed, that our approach does not imply any ordinary phenomenal states on the part of cosmic consciousness can also be related from a different angle, that of traditional, spiritually based conceptions of cosmic consciousness. In line with such conceptions, we hold that cosmic consciousness is, fundamentally, a *pure* consciousness, that is, a formless sea of awareness that serves as the universal womb

out of which all creaturely forms of experience arise. This conception of the ultimate ground of being as a *pure* consciousness is perhaps most articulately developed in Hinduism and Buddhism, but traces of it can be found in spiritual traditions the world over, including: Taoism; the mystery cults of the ancient world; Neoplatonism; Christian, Jewish, and Muslim mysticism; Aztec philosophy, and more.

Could this formless ground state be nevertheless endowed with some fundamental phenomenal attributes? In spiritual traditions as well as in reports based on deep states of meditation, pure consciousness is often associated with an ineffable sense of unconditioned bliss, love, and unity. But even assuming the reality of such cosmic phenomenology, insofar as the present discussion is concerned, the relevant point is that there is no viable sense in which our ordinary experiences can be thought of as bits and pieces dissected from it. In other words, no mereological assumption of phenomenal decombination is involved.

Finally, the confusion between implicit and explicit phenomenology bears upon another misconception concerning cosmopsychism. As mentioned in [section 1](#), a key assumption behind the quality and the structure decombination problems is the *austerity hypothesis*, which implies that if there is such a thing as cosmic consciousness, then its experiences are relatively shallow and homogenous. Thus, the problem is to explain how the allegedly meager phenomenal landscape of cosmic consciousness could possibly ground the lavish phenomenology of creatures like us. Again, the perspective we bring to the table avoids the problem because, as mentioned earlier, while we take the ZPF to be phenomenally indescribably rich, its richness is implicit and *in potentia*. Thus, we make no assumption to the effect that the universal background field from which our experiences are ultimately derived is phenomenally affluent in the same explicit manner in which human experience may be said to be so. Instead, our approach enables us to explain how the phenomenal character of our everyday experience is grounded in cosmic consciousness *without* violating the letter of the austerity hypothesis.⁵

5. Cosmic Consciousness and the Constitution of Subjects

We come at last to the *subject* constitution problem. As noted in [section 1](#), the challenge is to articulate a substantive and informative ontological sense in which the subjectivity of created subjects depends on the subjectivity inherent in cosmic consciousness—and to do so coherently, without succumbing to daunting conceptual aporia. The first task, to which we turn next, is to explain the place of subjectivity in the picture we advocate. Earlier, we pointed to the difference between cosmic consciousness and the consciousness of individual creatures by describing the former as *pure consciousness*, a limit state of consciousness characterized by a unitary sense of undifferentiated wholeness. In like manner

⁵ Having said that, we consider the austerity hypothesis problematic in that it correlates informational richness with *manifest* physical complexity. While this assumption may be appropriate in classical physics, it does not seem in accord with quantum physics and the ontology of quantum fields. The ZPF is a case in point: judged by its surface structure it may appear barren and austere, but if one probes deeper into its potential for storing information and into the manner in which its dynamical properties substantiate all emergent concrete forms of matter, a very different perspective opens up.

(and, again, in alignment with spiritually informed commentary on the nature of absolute consciousness) we maintain also that cosmic consciousness realizes an analogous limit state of subjectivity and can therefore be described as a *pure subject*.

A pure subject is an *aperspectival* subject, that is, a universal subject devoid of individual conscious perspective. Regular subjects experience their inner reality and the world around them in a *conditioned* manner constrained by the unique particularities of their creaturely being: their body physique; the qualities of their senses; their present situatedness; past experience and accumulated memory; drives, desires, and conscious purposes; established knowledge structures; attitudes and judgments; unconscious complexes and tendencies; language; social and cultural conditioning; etc. Such constraining factors serve to delimit and shape one's experiential flow: constituting a unique mode of opening to the world, a specific (albeit open-ended) angle through which things are experienced. This constrained and qualified opening to the world is what we understand by *perspective* (see Shani 2015). It may be added also that the common manner in which perspectival subjects experience reality is *dual*: one experiences a world of objects (including inner objects, such as thoughts and feelings) 'over there', to be taken in by the here and now of one's own self. Thus, in contrast to regular subjects, a pure subject can be thought of as one whose subjectivity is free from the constraints of creaturely perspective and from the dual partitioning the latter imposes upon experience. In other words, the experience of a pure subject is *aperspectival* and *nondual* (for a detailed and informative analysis of this intriguing mode of subjectivity see Albahari, *forthcoming*).

Such negative characterization, however, gives rise to a legitimate concern, namely, whether a pure subject is a subject at all: in what sense can subjectivity survive the absence of perspective? What attributes, other than the existence of a perspective, could possibly justify the idea that cosmic consciousness possesses a subjective dimension? The answer to this question is that in the absence of perspective there remains *ipseity*, or selfhood as such: a *conscious presence* devoid of form and objects yet ready to assume ordinary qualitative tones and to serve as the apprehending recipient of objects if the right conditions for the emergence of an individual conscious perspective materialize. In the Hindu tradition this universal pure self is described as the *Atman*, and it is believed to be the ultimate ground of all perspectival conscious selves.⁶

Thus, on the view we advocate the ZPF is a bearer of pure consciousness as well as pure subjectivity. Consequently, consciousness and selfhood are posited as fundamental features of reality. What is not fundamental and therefore calls for explanation is the existence of *perspectival* selves endowed with structured

⁶ In Advaita Vedanta and other spiritually informed wisdom traditions this conscious presence is often described as a *witness-consciousness* (see e.g., Fasching 2011). Albahari (*forthcoming*) associates witness consciousness with a present-moment sense of being, characterized by such properties as intransitivity (being nonobjectual) and reflexivity (being self-revealing). Such consciousness is also frequently described as *luminous*, by which it is meant that it possesses a power analogous to light, a power that 'illuminates or reveals things so they can be known' (Thompson 2015: 3). The concept of *ipseity* is regularly deployed in the phenomenological literature (e.g., Sokolowski 2000; Zahavi 2005), albeit without cosmic implications; but see Almaas (2004: ch. 21) for a discussion of *ipseity* in relation to pure consciousness.

experience. We have already demonstrated how structured experience could be intelligently grounded in the formless reservoir of cosmic consciousness. The remaining task is to explain how perspectival subjects emerge against the background of cosmic consciousness and in particular to explain how the subjectivity of such subjects is intelligently grounded in the pure subjectivity of the background field.

To do so, recall first what perspectival subjects are. They are localized centers of consciousness; they experience reality in a constrained and selective manner, through specific channels, portals, and filters (as it were); finally, although their field of experience is unified, it is structured and dually framed: presenting objects as given to an underlying apprehending recipient. Thus, if perspectival subjects are to appear on the cosmic scene, the minimal conditions for the materialization of these characteristic features must be met. We believe that the SED-based process dynamics described in sections 2 and 3 meets these minimal conditions. Let us first recapitulate the essentials of this process dynamics and then explain how it meets the prerequisites for the emergence of conscious perspectives.

In the first place, the physical narrative underlying our approach describes the formation of dynamically stable quantum systems in resonant equilibrium with the ZPF (see also Keppler 2016). Moreover, as explained, the equilibrium conditions lead to a partial ordering of the local field, inducing long-range coherence in the emergent quantum regime (see figure 1B, left). Finally, the same process whereby the ZPF is organized through the phase-locked coupling of the field modes involved in maintaining the attractor dynamics leads also to selective elicitation of structured phenomenal states (see figures 1B, right, and 2B). Each of these features, we argue, is relevant to the possibility of perspectival subjectivity.

First, the emergence of meta-stable attractors in energetic equilibrium with the ZPF marks the formation of localized regions of intensity—in constant interaction with, yet functionally distinct from, the surrounding field. Such intensified regions, which can also be thought of as vortices in the ocean of cosmic consciousness (Shani 2015), sustain an *inner* conscious domain that is shielded, to a degree, from its environment—a ‘here’ demarcated from whatever may lie out ‘there’. Second, the physical boundaries of such stable organizations and the particularity of their individual characteristics serve as constraining factors that tether each system to *specific modes of opening to the world*, hence to a perspective. Third, the long-range coherence of such systems enables them (among other things) to sustain a *unity* of experience. Fourth, as explained before, the dynamical coupling of ZPF modes substantiates the fact that these emergent conscious centers are endowed with *structured and variable experiences*. Finally, operating in tandem, the structured texture of the emergent phenomenologies, the bifurcation between system and environment, and the fact that there is a great plurality of individuals each conditioning the experiences of others in multiple sorts of ways collectively account for the *dual* (i.e., subject-object) character of experience. Taken together, we believe that these factors substantiate a minimal sense of perspectival subjectivity.

The above discussion articulates a real sense in which perspectival subjects are grounded as subjects in the aperspectival ground of cosmic consciousness (for an alternative recent account see Albahari forthcoming). It remains to stress that

beyond all this there is also the issue of the grounding of perspectival selves in the *pure self* of cosmic consciousness. As mentioned before, we hold that cosmic consciousness is a bearer of pure subjectivity, namely, of a conscious *presence* devoid of form or objects yet ready to assume particulate qualitative tones and to serve as the apprehending recipient of objects. The emergence of dynamically stable systems in energetic equilibrium with the ZPF has the effect that each of these attractors continually modulates the local field in a particular manner. As a result, each of them appropriates to itself a selective portion of this universal subjective medium, molding it into a private realm engulfed by impulses, experiences, and endeavors—an *ego* aware of its objects and desires as it is unaware of its substantive unity with other selves and the ground of all being.

In sum, in as much as the problem of the constitution of subjects, as applied to cosmopsychism, is to articulate a substantive and informative ontological sense in which the subjectivity of created subjects is intelligently grounded in the subjectivity of cosmic consciousness, we believe that our account goes a long way toward addressing the challenge. Part of what makes the subject constitution problem so intractable is that it has been shown to repeatedly involve serious conceptual aporia. However, most, if not all, of these conceptual tangles appear to be related to the assumption that one *perspectival* subject is literally composed of, or fractured from, another (see [section 1](#)). In the idiom of cosmopsychism, the assumption is that the cosmos itself is a universal mind and that all lesser minds partake in it like colored tiles cut from a jigsaw puzzle's cardboard model—each carrying about itself a small piece of the grand picture. In contrast, our own approach assumes neither the existence of a universal perspectival subject nor a phenomenal decombination thereof. Put differently, our explanation of the emergence of subjects against the background of cosmic consciousness is free from problematic principles of phenomenal combination and perspectival inclusion. We hope we have done enough to elucidate the possibility of this alternative outlook and to motivate further investigations into its ultimate viability.

6. Implications and Explications

Having laid down the essentials of our approach, we would like in closing to address a few issues of general import to our enterprise—partly in order to address potential worries and partly with the purpose of pointing to relevant key questions that are beyond the scope of the present work.

One potential concern that might be raised with regard to our account is that the basic theoretical assumptions of our approach fail to close the explanatory gap concerning phenomenal consciousness. Why should the existence of a background field of cosmic consciousness, stirred into specific patterns of phase-locked ZPF modes, yield individual states of phenomenal consciousness? Could we not *conceive* that all of these activities occur and yet no ordinary states of phenomenal consciousness take place?

In response, we note first that questions of conceivability are hard to settle. To be sure, one can imagine without contradiction that the ZPF is not a carrier of (or identical with) cosmic consciousness or that the formation of phase-locked ZPF

modes is not the proper mechanism for extracting specific phenomenal states out of pure consciousness. But *if* one accepts the assumption that there is an underlying field of unlimited phenomenal spectrum and unbounded subjectivity whose default state is that of an undifferentiated unity as well as the assumption that the phase locking of field modes is an appropriate mechanism for differentiating this primal background field into partitioned classes of restricted phenomenal range and bounded subjectivity, is it then still conceivable that all the machinery described in sections 2 and 3 is in place and yet no ordinary phenomenal experiences ensue? Even though we find this question hard to answer beyond dispute, we hold the view that the ocean of consciousness in combination with the mechanism described above necessitates the existence of perspectival subjects endowed with phenomenal awareness.

On this note, it is useful to observe the difference between the present scenario and the one that sustains the explanatory gap in the case of materialist theories of consciousness. In the latter case, conceivability arguments reflect the notion that we have principled reasons to doubt that phenomenal facts are necessitated by purely structural (or functional or organizational) facts—no matter *what* type of structural facts are involved (see Chalmers 2017). In contrast, on the present scenario the relevant structural facts (concerning the organization of the ZPF via phase locked field modes) are tasked not with the generation of experience per se but, rather, with its modulation and restricted expression, a task description that is well *within* the capabilities of organization and structure. What constitutes the right kind of organization is, of course, a matter of dispute, but there is no ground for deep skepticism regarding the very notion that *some kind* of organization sustains the grounding of ordinary experience in fundamental consciousness. In this vein, we motivate our specific account on both philosophical and scientific grounds.

Furthermore, as stressed earlier in sections 2 and 5, the deepest reason for believing the combination problem to be *unsolvable in principle* is due to the suspicion that intersubjective inclusion relations are downright incoherent (see Coleman [2014] for an argument to this effect against micropsychism, and Albahari [forthcoming] for an argument against cosmopsychism). This specter of incoherence breeds skepticism regarding the notion that any emergent organization could ever suffice to explain the grounding of ordinary experience in fundamental experience (if *nothing* could solve the problem, surely no proposed emergent organization could). By demonstrating that the postulate of subjective inclusion is avoidable, our proposal diminishes the case for deep skepticism regarding the prospects for closing the explanatory gap between fundamental experience and ordinary experience—and in doing so it moves the discussion forward.

A second important question relates to the relevance of SED to the formulation of our conceptual framework. In a nutshell, the approach presented is based on the conviction that in order to integrate consciousness coherently into the scientific worldview one has to resort to the most basic level of physics and follow the path of quantum theory. Since SED, as set out in section 2, affords a look behind the scenes of standard quantum theory, it is a natural choice to build our framework on SED. In particular, SED's advantage over standard quantum theory is that it sustains a more informative explanation of the interactive process through which individual

systems and the background field mutually influence each other. It should then be expected that *if* phenomenal qualities are dynamically extracted from the background field, as our filtering hypothesis maintains, then it is SED that provides the most informative account of this process. And it does so on a level that cannot be achieved by the apparatus of conventional quantum theory. As a result, new perspectives open up for the development of a fundamental theory of consciousness that preserves the principle of causal closure and respects the law of parsimony, which is reflected in the idea that by use of one and the same mechanism quantum systems acquire both their physical properties and their phenomenal qualities.

Another general question regarding our account pertains to its metaphysical status. The key concept of our proposal—the notion of a cosmic background field—is susceptible of two distinct metaphysical renderings: an *idealist* interpretation according to which it is strictly a field of consciousness and a *double-aspect* interpretation that sees it as the carrier of both primordial energy and primordial consciousness. As presented here (and despite some shifting overtones in either direction), our proposal remains agnostic regarding the choice between these two competing alternatives. We take full cognizance of the fact that the question which alternative is to be preferred is substantive: each of these two interpretations presents a different picture of reality, faces unique theoretical challenges, connects with a distinct philosophical pedigree, and has its own champions and detractors. There is no doubt that the question must ultimately be addressed. Nevertheless, we consider it an advantage of our approach that it can be formulated and evaluated in relative independence of the issue of its ultimate metaphysical interpretation.

We offer a novel hypothesis with a coherent research agenda. Our approach can be assessed with respect to its performance along crucial valuation standards, such as (a) addressing issues of mental combination and the emergence of ordinary experience; (b) delineating and explaining systematic connections between ZPF information states and articulated phenomenal states, resulting in the derivation of psychophysical mapping rules between particular qualia and particular sets of phase-locked ZPF modes, thus shedding light on the internal structure of qualia space (see Keppler 2016); and (c) meeting suitability criteria as a general theoretical framework concordant with robust empirical knowledge concerning the neural correlates of consciousness (see Keppler 2016, 2018). All of this, we maintain, can be done independently of settling the question of precise metaphysical interpretation—a question that, given its gravity and the complicated nature of the issues involved, we cannot hope to address properly on the present occasion. Moreover, we think it is reasonable to expect that a better understanding of the manner in which the ZPF grounds ordinary phenomenal states (if indeed it does) could prove itself instrumental in clarifying the nature of the underlying metaphysical landscape.

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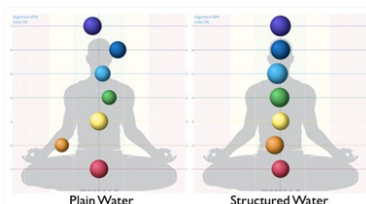
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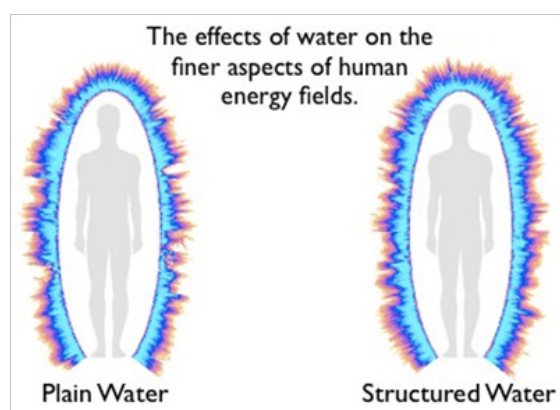
Science, Spirit & Soul of water that benefits life on earth – introduction to quantum electrodynamics

Proceeding

Water is regarded as the most sacred substance of the universe, which is the affirmations from wisdom cultures to what an eminent and notable Nobel Laureate stated below: “*Water is the Mother and matrix of all life.*”



In The Vedas (Sacred Texts of Bharat, India), a specific mantra (Invocation) to water is recited, that covers every aspect of what we are seeking to comprehend through our scientific investigations.



The ultimate purpose to all our research is for the qualitative enhancement of all life. The mantra is named “*Mantra Pushpam*” and the quintessence of the mantra elucidates what we reference today in “*Quantum Electrodynamics*” (Dr. Emilio Del Giudice) to Burning of Water (Dr. Vladimir Voeikov) and to the 4th Phase of Water (Dr. Gerald Pollack).



Over the past 17 years I have researched and continue

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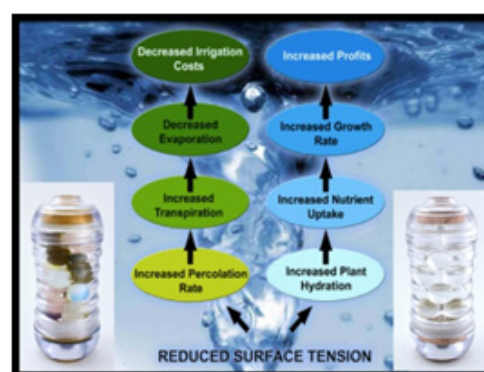
Krishna Madappa

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to explore water in the USA, Europe, S. America and India with commercial water companies, specializing in bottling to physical products. My collaboration with Dr. Konstantin Korotkov and with his advanced technology of Bio-Electrography, we explore the quality of coherent domains (aka: Structured) in aqueous solutions and utilize these outputs into field applications from agriculture to animal and human health. The underlying science is clearly defined by Dr. Mae Won Ho in an article titled “*Illuminating Water & Life*”



“The quantum electrodynamics theory of water put forward by Del Giudice and colleagues provides a useful foundation for a new science of water for life. The interaction of light with liquid water generates quantum coherent domains in which the water molecules oscillate between the ground state and an excited state close to the ionizing potential of water. This produces plasma of almost free electrons favoring redox reactions, the basis of energy metabolism in living organisms. Coherent domains stabilized by surfaces, such as membranes and macromolecules, provide the excited interfacial water that enables photosynthesis to take place, on which most of life on Earth depends. Excited water is the source of superconducting protons for rapid intercommunication within the body. Coherent domains can also trap electromagnetic frequencies from the environment to orchestrate and activate specific biochemical reactions through resonance, a mechanism for the most precise regulation of gene function.”



Conclusion

The results and agricultural outputs obtained from field to cell studies corroborate the defined principles from the article.

Acknowledgment

None.

Conflict of interest

Author declares there is no conflict of interest towards this manuscript.

Taking a Look at Evolution From Quantum Reality

By [Lothar Schafer](#) on March 25, 2003 in [Essay](#)

Molecules are the basis of life and molecules are quantum systems. We must, therefore, enter our knowledge of the quantum structure of molecules into the discussion of biology. Specifically, quantum reality as the basis for all observable phenomena is important for a comprehensive view of evolution.

In *The Extended Phenotype*, Richard Dawkins describes the merits of theories which help us to change the way we see. “We look at life”, he writes, “and begin by seeing a collection of interacting individual organisms. Then suddenly the image flips. The individual bodies are still there; they have not moved, but they seem to have gone transparent. We see through them to the replicating fragments of DNA within.” From this process new viewpoints emerge which make us “see animals and their behavior differently.”

Continuing where Dawkins stopped, I suggest that, when looking at life, we begin by looking at bodies and their DNA. Then suddenly the image flips, the DNA will become transparent, and we see the underlying quantum structure. Looking at a given stretch of DNA is like

looking at the tip of an iceberg. Underlying the visible part is a quantum structure with countless empty, invisible states. Simply by changing the way we observe, a new understanding of living organisms and their behavior can arise.

When I refer to the quantum nature of molecules, I do not mean that, in the blood and sweat of living organisms, genes necessarily perform any fancy quantum acrobatics, evolving in superpositions of states or making non-local connections. However, I do mean that it is important to be aware that molecules exist exclusively in quantum states with a fixed energy and an associated waveform (wave function) or probability distribution.

The First Evolutionary Relevant Aspect of the Quantum World concerns the fact that any activity at the molecular level is restricted to jumps from one state to another. Quantum jumps are spontaneous, seemingly caused by nothing and ruled by transition probabilities, which in turn are controlled by the state waveforms. When processes are ruled by probabilities, one can never be sure of the outcome of a specific event.

In living cells, the synthesis of genes, DNA molecules, is a quantum process. Thus, when a particular stretch of DNA is synthesized, the probability may be overwhelming that the resulting product sequence of nucleotides is the same as that of a DNA template that is

present, but that need not be so. When the product is not the same as the template, we say an error was made in copying a gene, and a mutation occurred.

In contrast, the quantum world knows no copying and no errors. In the synthesis of DNA a group of nucleotides simply forms a common quantum state. In a mutation, a group of nucleotides populates a vacant quantum state that was not occupied before. When the new state leads to variations in phenotypic effects, this is when natural selection takes control.

In this way one is led to consider that the units of natural selection are not stretches of chromosomes, but the waveforms of quantum states, which actualize in chromosomes.

The Second Evolutionary Relevant Aspect of the Quantum World concerns the fact that every quantum system consists not only of the observable state that it occupies, but also of countless other, invisible states that are vacant. The simplest example is the hydrogen atom. When a hydrogen atom is in its lowest energy state, the groundstate, it must be assumed that higher energy states also exist, even though they are not quite ‘real’ because they are empty.

Quantum chemists call vacant states ‘virtual’ because they virtually exist, but not ‘really.’ They have the

potential of becoming real when a transition is made to them. Only occupied states are actualized, real states. Virtual states exist like mathematical forms, but they are more than the mere idea of a mathematical form. To the reader not familiar with such aspects of quantum reality, Heisenberg's description might help. Quantum entities can exist in a kind of reality not known to ordinary things "between the idea of a thing and a real thing," he wrote.

In each molecule a large number of vacant states are available, to which that molecule can make a transition. Each quantum state is not an isolated entity but a member of a whole connected system of states, each with its own quantized energy and characteristic waveform.

Stretches of DNA are no different in this regard. A strand of DNA is the actualization of one out of many possible states that its nucleotides can populate. For each chain of nucleotides, there are countless empty states, and finite probabilities for spontaneous transitions to one of them. We see such transitions, for example, in recombination reactions or crossing-over. Populating empty states of DNA can lead to variations in phenotype, which natural selection then evaluates. Thus, the complex order evolving in the biosphere is not from chaos and not from nothing, as Darwinians often claim, but from the actualization of the precisely determined patterns of

quantum states, which already exist in the quantum structure of DNA before a transition is made to them.

There is a general notion that, since transitions to new states (mutations) are random, the variations caused by mutations must also be random. But the one does not follow from the other. While jumps from one quantum state to another are ruled by chance, the order of the states on which the jumping will land is not. “Blind chance can lead to anything”, Monod wrote, “even vision”. Monod was right, chance can lead to anything. However, whether chance is also able to create what it leads to, that is another question.

Ultimately, lifeforms are correlated with quantum waveforms. When new lifeforms evolve from existing species, they are the phenotypic effects of waveforms of quantum states occupied by nucleotides. Jumps from one waveform to another are spontaneous and caused by nothing. Adaptation will then give the random sampling of quantum states the direction of evolutionary progression.

Robert Pollack, in a lecture at the Science and the Spiritual Quest II Conference remarked: ” ... facts from science tell us that our species ... is not the creation of design, but the result of accumulated errors.” This is the well-established, conventional view of evolution. In contrast, the quantum perspective knows of no errors

made in the evolution of life. Rather, it suggests that, as an alternative to either intelligent design or blind chance, the revelation of the order of empty quantum states by their actualization is a plausible mechanism for the spontaneous emergence of complex order in the visible world.

In the immediate sense, the states involved in the evolutionary process are those of DNA. In a general sense, the states of DNA are just a part of the quantum structure of the universe, from which all of the visible order of reality evolves by virtual state actualization.

The Third Evolutionary Relevant Aspect of the Quantum World is that, even though the quantum probability fields carry no mass or energy, their properties and interactions determine the visible order of material things. The visible order of the universe is the phenotypic expression of a deeper order. The entities of this order, however, are not just miniaturized editions of ordinary things, but different in essence.

Therefore genes, lumps of matter, are not the terminus of reality and not the authors of any information that they convey. Rather, genes are the vehicles (modifying one of Dawkins' term) or relay stations by which the messages of an underlying order is revealed. Through genes the order of quantum reality (including its virtual order) can express itself in the material world. Genes have

phenotypic expressions in the way that biologists describe, while at the same time they are themselves phenotypic expressions of quantum waveforms.

In the quantum perspective the true power of Darwin's wonderful insight comes to the fore. A century before the discovery of the unpredictable quantum world, Darwin anticipated a mechanism that allows nature to reach into her transcendent roots.

Sociobiologists like Michael Ruse and E.O. Wilson claim that our values, including moral values, are part of innate, genetic dispositions which construct our minds. "Ethics as we understand it," Ruse and Wilson write in "The Evolution of Ethics" in [*Religion and the Natural Sciences*](#), "is an illusion fobbed off on us by our genes to get us to cooperate ... Our biology enforces its ends by making us think that there is an objective higher code, to which we are all subject." Similarly, Ruse writes in the May 2001 edition of *Research News*, "Morality is a collective illusion of humankind put in place by our genes in order to make us good cooperators."

In contrast, in the quantum world, genes do not pursue any ends, but following the laws of physics and chemistry, they just reveal universal order. Genes are not the great deceivers of humanity, nor selfish impostors, but can be considered messengers. If our moral principles are indeed conveyed by our genes, as Ruse and Wilson claim,

then we must assume that, in addition to the physical information needed to build bodies, they also transmit the metaphysical principles needed to build human minds. In no case are they the authors of the messages that they transmit but all genetic instructions derive from some objective source.

Many pioneers of 20th-century physics have attested to the quasi-mental or mind-like aspects of quantum reality. Thus, we may have to get used to its unexpected capacity of being the source not only of physical principles but also of principles relating to our mind. This implies that quantum reality is the missing link. If morality has been “put in place by our genes” it must be based on some property of the universal order that produced it—an objective correlate in the order of reality according to which genes operate.

The basic premise of my argument, then, is as follows: The visible order of the universe is a phenotypic effect of quantum reality. Therefore, every element of the visible reality must have a counterpart in the order of quantum reality.

Elements of the visible reality are both material and mental, physical and metaphysical, having to do with facts and with values. In view of the quasi-mental, mind-like aspects of quantum reality it is now plausible to assume that all principles of the visible reality, including

the non-physical or mental have a counterpart in quantum reality. Some waveforms of quantum reality have phenotypic expressions in material phenomena, like brain states. Others have phenotypic expressions in the metaphysical principles emerging in brain states.

How the elements of quantum reality express themselves in the visible reality is not quite clear. It is not quite clear for simple physical properties, where the lack of insight is referred to as the measurement problem of quantum reality. It is not at all clear for the metaphysical principles, where the lack of insight is demonstrated by the ongoing discussions about the relations between facts and values. In principle, two different mechanisms could be suggested: it is possible that we are on-line to a transcendent part of the universe. Alternatively, it is possible that we are in-tune with its order.

Concerning the former, it seems more likely that, if the background of the universe is mind-like, it will communicate with our minds, than that it will not. In that case, we can be on-line, and many people have attested to an experience of that kind.

The concept of being in-tune with the order of the universe evolves from the view of genes as messengers. Through genes, the order of quantum reality can express itself in the material world. As a result, we are in-tune with the order of the universe.

The consequences of this expanded view of evolution for the spiritual quest are obvious. When Darwin's hypothesis is placed into the molecular context of quantum reality, Dawkins' claim that Darwin made atheism "intellectually fulfilling" is no more logically conclusive than the evangelism of the creationists.

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<https://www.metanexus.net/taking-look-evolution-quantum-reality-0/>

groundstate

See also: **ground state**

English

Noun

groundstate (*plural* **groundstates**)

1. *Alternative spelling of* **ground state**

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ground state

See also: [groundstate](#)

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English

Noun

ground state (*plural* **ground states**)

1. (*physics*) the stationary state of lowest energy of a particle or system of particles

Translations

Translations

- German: Grundzustand ^(de) *m*

See also

-  **ground state** on Wikipedia.
- excited state

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unitive

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English

WOTD – 3 October 2011

Etymology

From Latin *unitivus*.

Pronunciation

- IPA^(key): /ˈjuːnɪtɪv/
- Hyphenation: u·ni·tive
- Audio (Northern California, US) (file)

Adjective

unitive (*comparative* **more unitive**, *superlative* **most unitive**)

1. Of, causing, or involving unity or union.

- **1986**, Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer, the Devil in the Middle Ages*, page 290:

The mystics' fundamental vision was **unitive**: all things, including sinful creatures, are united with God.

- **2003**, Albert Joseph Mary Shamon, *Firepower Through Confirmation*, page 13:

Starting with this principle, established by God, namely that sex must always be the expression of a love that is **unitive** (till death) and procreative (opened to life), we can arrive at a simple Sexual Ethics primer.

- **2009**, David Gershon, *Social change 2.0: a blueprint for reinventing our world*:

It was **unitive** in that it directly asked each person to go beyond that which separates him or her from other people.

Translations

causing or involving unity

- | | |
|---|---|
| ▪ Armenian: <u>միավորող</u> (miavoroġ) | ▪ Russian: <u>объединяющий</u> (ru) (ob"jedinjájuščij), |
| ▪ Finnish: <u>yhdistävä</u> (fi) | ▪ <u>соединительный</u> (ru) (sojedinítel'nyj) |
| ▪ German: <u>vereinheitlichend</u> (de) | ▪ Slovene: <u>združevalen</u> |
| ▪ Italian: <u>unitivo</u> | ▪ Spanish: <u>unitivo</u> <i>mm</i> |

References

- unitive (<http://www.websters1913.com/words/Unitive>) in *Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary*, G. & C. Merriam, 1913.

Italian

Adjective

unitive *f*.

1. feminine plural of unitivo

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आत्मा

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Sanskrit

- Noun

Hindi

Etymology

Borrowed from Sanskrit आत्मा (*ātmā*).

Pronunciation

- IPA^(key): /ɑː t̪.maː/

Noun

आत्मा • (*ātmā*) *f*.

- soul, spirit, self

उनकी **आत्मा** को शांति मिलें।

*unkī **ātmā** ko śānti milen.*
May her **soul** rest in peace.

Synonyms: रूह (*rūh*), भूत (*bhūt*)

- mind, consciousness

3. (*Hinduism, Sikhism*) supreme Spirit, paramatman

Synonym: परमात्मा (parmātmā)

Declension

Declension of आत्मा		
	Singular	Plural
<i>Direct</i>	आत्मा (ātmā)	आत्माँ (ātmāṅ)
<i>Oblique</i>	आत्मा (ātmā)	आत्माओं (ātmāon)
<i>Vocative</i>	आत्मा (ātmā)	आत्माओ (ātmāo)

Derived terms

- परमात्मा (parmātmā)
- पवित्र आत्मा (pavitra ātmā)
- महात्मा (mahātmā)

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- McGregor, Ronald Stuart (1993), “आत्मा (https://dsalrv04.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/app/mcgregor_query.py?qs=आत्मा&searchhws=yes)”, in *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*, London: Oxford University Press

Sanskrit

Noun

आत्मा • (ātmā)

1. nominative singular of आत्मन् (ātman)

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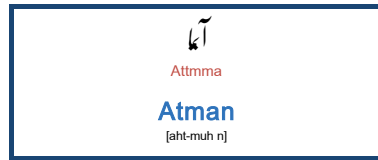
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Urdu Word آتما Meaning in English

The Urdu Word آتما Meaning in English is Atman. The other similar words are Atmma, Wujood E Asli and Rooh E Aala. Take a look at this page to find out more Kacha Meanings in English.



Atmma	آتما
Wujood E Asli	وجود اصلی
Rooh E Aala	روح اعلیٰ

Definitions of Atman

n. The life principle, soul, or individual essence.

n. The universal ego from whom all individual atmans arise. This sense is a European exscescence on the East Indian thought.

Form Noun, Hinduism.

How To Spell Atman [aht-muh n]

Origin of Atman From Sanskrit ātman, literally 'essence, breath'.

Atmma آتما Meaning In English - Find the correct meaning of Atmma in English, it is important to understand the word properly when we translate it from Urdu to English. There are always several meanings of each word in English, the correct meaning of Atmma in English is Atman, and in Urdu we write it آتما. The other meanings are Atmma, Wujood E Asli and Rooh E Aala. By form, the word Atman is an noun, Hinduism. It is spelled as [aht-muh n]. The word originated in From Sanskrit ātman, literally 'essence, breath'. After Urdu to English translation of Atmma, If you have issues in pronunciation than you can hear the audio of it in the online dictionary.

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More Word Meaning in Urdu

Bogged	Shuttering	Bolixed	Vegetatively
Warehouse	Reassertion	Scansorial	Attending Physician
Dramatized	RME	Astern	Hazrat
Last Home	GRATZ	Sangfroid	Fluctuations
Perfused	Thesaurus	Preacher	In A Row

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Slangs

Idioms

Word Of The Day

Rockery

[rok-uh-ree]

قد رتی چٹانوں کا سلسلہ

Qudrati Chatanoo Ka Silsila [More Details »](#)

Top Trending Words

Caffeine	کافیئن
Extensive	وسیع
Near	ماس
Saghar	ساحر: چلار
Allah	اللہ
Chest	چھاتی
Credit	میت
Ghazal	غزل، اردو
Hamd	حمد: اللہ کی تعریف کی عبادت کرنا
House	گھر
Nation	قوم
Ph	فون: موبائل فون کی کارڈنگ
School	اسکول
Unworried	بے یوٹھ
Find	پانا
Ansharah	سروہ: بچی
Avoid	الٹ کرنا
Back	پنہ
Blessed	مبارک
Blog	بلاگ