

The Pantheistic Nature of God in Hinduism from an Islamic Perspective: A Comparative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Hinduism is often described as a monotheistic religion. Muslim scholars have examined it through the framework of Islamic Tawhid. Some regard Hinduism as polytheistic; others argue it contains monotheism. Some suggested that monotheistic ideas developed gradually within it. Although comparative studies between Hinduism and Islam have addressed certain aspects of monotheism, they have largely overlooked a systematic analysis of Pantheism in Hinduism from an Islamic perspective. Pantheism is commonly understood as the belief that God and the universe are identical. The central problem of this study concerns the presence of pantheistic concepts in Hindu scriptures that identify the divine with the universe. This notion appears to conflict with the monotheistic nature of Hinduism from an Islamic perspective. Despite numerous studies on monotheistic characteristics of Hinduism, limited attention has been given to a systematic examination of Hindu pantheism from an Islamic theological perspective. Therefore, this study analyses the pantheistic nature of God in Hinduism and evaluates its compatibility with the Islamic concept of divine oneness. The study finds that Hindu scriptures and Vedantic philosophies contain significant pantheistic elements that portray Brahman as the ultimate reality permeating all existence. From the Islamic perspective, these concepts contradict the doctrine of Tawhīd, which affirms God's absolute transcendence and distinction from creation. Therefore, the study concludes that Hindu pantheism is fundamentally incompatible with Islamic monotheism, although both traditions acknowledge a form of divine nearness.

Keywords: *Pantheism, Islam, Hinduism, Tawhid, Oneness of God*

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INTRODUCTION

Pantheism is often discussed as a divine presence that can be sensed within the universe. Scholars defined this belief diversely. OED defines pantheism as “A belief or philosophical theory that God is immanent in or identical with the universe; the doctrine that God is everything and everything is God. Frequently with implications of nature worship or (in a weakened sense) love of nature”⁵

Similarly, in Ahmad Celeba’s words, Pantheism is the doctrine of those who unite God and the world, and claim that everything is God. It is an ancient doctrine adopted by Brahmanism, Stoicism, Neo-Platonism, and Sufism.⁶

L. Reese maintains that pantheism is the belief that God exists in the universe as a whole. He further distinguishes pantheism from panentheism, which holds that God includes the universe as part of his being, though not the whole. He further observes that pantheism is generally monistic, although some forms may appear pluralistic, where the divine is one of the elements in the world whose function is to animate the different elements that constitute the world.⁷

Despite ongoing scholarly debates regarding its scope and meaning, the core understanding of pantheism remains largely consistent. In pantheism, initially, two basic components, God and the universe, are discussed from the omnipresent and transcendental aspects of divine attributes. Therefore, theologians and scholars have noted that ‘Pantheism’ is a doctrine of religious philosophy.⁸ It has several formulations and descriptions; however, the central idea of this doctrine is ‘all is God, and God is all’.⁹

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research approach, prioritizing depth over statistical generalization.¹⁰ Accordingly, the researcher engages with the data in a more interpretative and reflective manner, aiming to uncover meaning and context through a rational analytical lens.

The methodology of this study involves both data collection and data analysis, structured around two principal methods: The descriptive and comparative methods.

The descriptive method serves for the qualitative analysis by describing and organizing the collected data systematically. This method is concerned with articulating the characteristics, classifications, and dimensions of the data, providing a rich, detailed account of the phenomena under study. The descriptive approach is not limited to surface-level observations; rather, it probes into the intricacies of the data, aiming to measure and map out the various components. In doing so, this method helps establish a clear

⁵ Oxford English Dictionary. “Pantheism (n.), sense 1.” July 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1023271650>.

⁶ Jamil Celeba, *Al-Mu’jam al-Falsafi*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Lubnānī, 1982), 569.

⁷ William L. Reese, “Pantheism,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, July 5, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/pantheism>.

⁸ Muhammad Azizul Hoque, “Pantheism in Wordsworth: A Study from the Islamic Perspective,” *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 5, no. 1 (2014): 45, <https://doi.org/10.24035/ijit.05.2014.005>.

⁹ Alessandro Busani, “Theism and Pantheism in Rumi,” *Iranian Studies* 1, no. 1 (Winter 1968): 8–24. Also, Michael P. Levine, “Pantheism, Ethics and Ecology,” *Environmental Values* 3 (1994): 121–38.

¹⁰ Bruce L. Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, 4th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001), 3ff.

understanding of what the data represents and sets the stage for further analytical processes.¹¹

Complementing the descriptive method is the comparative method, which introduces an additional layer of analysis by focusing on identifying and examining the convergence and divergence across various data points or themes.¹² Through this method, the researcher engages in a process of juxtaposition, wherein the collected data is compared to reveal patterns of similarities and differences.

Through the combined use of these methods, the study aims to deliver a comprehensive and intellectually rigorous analysis of the pantheistic dimension of Hinduism from the perspective of Islamic thought, firmly grounded in qualitative research principles.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Pantheism in Islamic Theology

The study finds that mainstream Islamic theology rejects pantheism in all its forms. The doctrine of Tawḥīd maintains a clear distinction between Allah and His creation. Qur'anic teachings emphasize that Allah is unique, transcendent, and independent from the universe. However, some Qur'anic verses refer to divine nearness. Islamic scholars interpret these verses as referring to Allah's knowledge, power, and authority rather than physical presence within creation. Therefore, pantheism is regarded as incompatible with Islamic monotheism (Tawhid).

Pantheistic Elements in Hindu Scriptures and post-Vedic Philosophical Schools

The investigation highlights that several Hindu scriptures contain and support a pantheistic understanding of God. Texts from the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and Vishnu Purana describe Brahman as the ultimate reality that pervades, sustains, and encompasses all existence. These scriptural descriptions portray the divine as intimately connected with the universe and, in some texts, as identical with ultimate reality.

Additionally, the study identifies that pantheistic concepts are most clearly developed in the Vedantic (post-Vedic) traditions. Advaita Vedanta by Shankara presents Brahman as the sole reality and regards the world's multiplicity as an appearance, reflecting a strong pantheistic tendency. In contrast, Ramanuja's Visista Advaita and Madhva's Dvaita maintain distinctions between God and the world, although both affirm the dependence of creation upon the divine.

Scholarly Perspectives on Hindu Pantheism

The study finds that scholars differ regarding the origin and extent of pantheism in Hinduism. Some theologians argue that pantheistic concepts are clearly present in the Vedas and become more explicit in later Hindu texts. Others maintain that the Vedas primarily express monotheistic ideas and that pantheistic interpretations emerged

¹¹ Hossain Nassaji, "Qualitative and Descriptive Research: Data Type versus Data Analysis," *Language Teaching Research* 19, no. 2 (February 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168815572747>.

¹² Seyed Mojtaba Miri and Zohreh Dehdashti Shahrokh, "A Short Introduction to Comparative Research" (2019), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336278925_A_Short_Introduction_to_Comparative_Research.

gradually in post-Vedic philosophical developments. Despite these differences, most scholars acknowledge the significant presence of pantheistic elements within Hindu religious thought.

Comparative Findings on Pantheism in Islam and Hinduism

The study finds a fundamental theological difference between Islam and Hinduism regarding the relationship between God and the universe. Islam rejects the identification of God with creation and emphasizes divine transcendence, whereas Hinduism incorporates pantheistic concepts that portray the divine as pervading or constituting reality. However, both traditions affirm a form of divine nearness, though they interpret it in substantially different ways.

Wahdat al-Wujūd in Sufi thought and Pantheism in Hinduism

The findings further reveal that some Sufi scholars, particularly proponents of *Wahdat al-Wujūd*, developed interpretations that resemble pantheism by describing all existence as manifestations of a single divine reality. Despite this conceptual convergence, the two traditions differ fundamentally: *Wahdat al-Wujūd* emerged within the Islamic framework of Tawhīd, while mainstream Islamic theology maintains an absolute distinction between Allah and creation. In contrast, Hindu pantheism is grounded in the metaphysical concept of Brahman as the all-pervading or constitutive reality of the universe.

Table: Comparative Analysis of Pantheism and Anthropomorphism in Islam and Hinduism

Sub Topic	Islam	Hinduism	Summary of Analysis	Similarity / Difference
Pantheism (Concept of God and Universe)	Rejects pantheism; God is distinct from creation.	Accepts pantheistic/monistic ideas; God pervades and identical with the universe.	Islam maintains separation. Hinduism expresses unity between God and cosmos.	Difference
Natural Phenomena	Sun, moon, earth are created signs of God, not divine.	Natural world may be seen as manifestation or expression of one God.	Islam denies divinity in nature; Hinduism allows divine presence within nature.	Difference
Theological Function	Rejection protects <i>Tawhid</i> and ensures exclusive worship of Allah.	Acceptance makes the divine accessible and relatable through forms and presence.	Islam safeguards monotheism while Hinduism broadens devotional experience.	Difference
Divine Nearness	God is near through knowledge, power, and authority,	God is near as all-pervading and as the inner self (<i>Ātman</i>).	Both affirm divine nearness but explain it differently.	Partially similarity & Partially difference

Sub Topic	Islam	Hinduism	Summary of Analysis	Similarity / Difference
	without immanence.			
Mystical Understanding (Wahdat al-Wujūd vs. Advaita Vedanta)	Some Sufi scholars (e.g., Ibn ‘Arabī and al-Ḥallāj) describe existence as manifestations of one divine reality through <i>Wahdat al-Wujūd</i> , although this is not the mainstream Islamic view.	Advaita Vedanta teaches that Brahman alone is the ultimate reality and that all existence is a manifestation of Brahman.	Both doctrines emphasize a single ultimate reality underlying existence.	Similarity
Theological Foundation Of Wahdat al-Wujūd and Advaita Vedanta	<i>Wahdat al-Wujūd</i> developed within the framework of Tawḥīd, while mainstream Islamic theology maintains a clear distinction between Allah and creation.	Pantheism is grounded in the metaphysical concept of Brahman as the all-pervading or constitutive reality of the universe and is accepted within several Hindu philosophical schools	Both discuss divine unity, but they differ fundamentally in their theological basis and understanding of the God-creation relationship.	Difference

DISCUSSION

Pantheism and the Fundamental Principle of Tawḥīd

The findings of this study demonstrate that the doctrine of Tawḥīd constitutes the primary theological basis for Islam’s rejection of pantheism. The Qur’an repeatedly emphasizes the uniqueness, transcendence, and incomparability of Allah. Verses such as: “There is nothing like unto Him” (Qur’an 42:11) and Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ (112:1–4) establish a clear ontological distinction between the Creator and creation. The analysis of classical Islamic sources further reveals that Muslim theologians consistently interpreted verses referring to divine nearness¹³ in a metaphorical rather than literal manner. Al-Ṭabarī¹⁴ and Ibn Kathīr¹⁵ explained that Allah’s presence “with” creation refers to His knowledge, authority, and power rather than physical indwelling within the universe.

From an Islamic perspective, one should respect nature and God’s creation; however, one should not worship the cosmos, nature, and other creations with God. They are not objects of worship. The Qur’an explicitly states:

¹³ Al-Quran; 57:4

¹⁴ Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl Āy al-Qur’ān*, vol. 22 (Cairo: Dār Hijr, 1st ed.), 387

¹⁵ Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Umar Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm*, vol. 8 (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayyibah, 1st ed., 1997), 8.

‘Among His Signs are the Night and the Day, and the Sun and the Moon. Do not prostrate to the sun and the moon, but prostrate to Allah, who created them, if it is Him ye wish to serve.,

(Al-Quran 41:37)

Thus, creation serves as a sign pointing to the Creator, and through reflection upon these signs, one is guided to recognize and remember Allah. As the Qur’an declares:

“Verily! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are indeed signs for men of understanding. Those who remember Allah (always, and in prayers), standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and think deeply about the creation of the heavens and the earth”

(Al-Quran 3:190-191)

The significance of this finding extends beyond a mere theological disagreement with pantheism. From an Islamic perspective, preserving the distinction between Creator and creation serves as the foundation of all religious beliefs and practices. If God were identified with the universe or considered present within all created things in an ontological sense, the uniqueness of divine worship would become compromised. Consequently, Islam regards pantheism not only as a philosophical error but also as a theological position that may lead to confusion regarding the nature of worship, divine sovereignty, and human dependence upon God. Therefore, any doctrine that blurs the distinction between Allah and creation inevitably challenges the foundation of Islamic theology.

Scriptural Foundations of Pantheism in Vedic and post-Vedic tendencies

The findings reveal substantial textual evidence supporting the existence of pantheistic concepts within Hindu sacred literature. The Vidas (the highest and most authoritative source in Hinduism) contain several hymns that suggest pantheistic ideas. for instance in the Rig veda:

एक एवाग्निर्बहुधा समिद्ध एकः सूर्यो विश्वमनु प्रभूतः ।
एकैवोषाः सर्वमिदं वि भात्येकं वा इदं वि बभूव सर्वम् ॥
एक एवाग्निर्बहुधा समिद्ध एकः सूर्यो विश्वमनु प्रभूतः ।
एकैवोषाः सर्वमिदं वि भात्येकं वा इदं वि बभूव सर्वम् ॥¹⁶

English translation: “Agni is one, though kindled in various ways; one is the Sun, pre- eminent over all; one Dawn illuminesthis all; one is that which has become this all.”

Also, in the Yajur Veda :

हसः शुचिषद्वसुरन्तरिक्षसद्धोता वेदिषदतिथिर्दुरोणसत् ।
नुषदरुसदतसद्व्ययौमसब्जा गोजाऽऋतुजाऽद्विजाऽश्रुतं बृहत् ॥२४॥

¹⁶ Rig Veda, 8.58.2.

इयवस्यायुरस्यायुर्मर्य धेहि युद्धंस वर्धोऽस वर्षो मर्थि बेह्यूर्गस्यूज्ज मर्थि धेहि ।
इन्द्रस्य वां वीर्यकृतौ वाहूऽ- अभ्युपावहरामि ॥२५॥¹⁷

These hymns are interpreted by Tulsi Ram Sharma as follows:

*“Ishvara, the Supreme Soul of the Universe, is the maker of forms from elements, present in all forms of purity, the universal abode of all, present in the sky, creator of the universal yajna, present in and on the earth, holy as a sacred visitor, present in the homes, humans, the best of things, eternal nature and its law, and in all space, creator of the waters, stars and planets, giver of the light of eternal knowledge of the Veda, creator of the clouds, mountains and forests, the very Truth and Law Itself, and the greatest and highest of existence. You are so vast, so far, so great, wherever my eye goes. You are life itself. Give me life and longevity. You join me with you in samadhi. You are the light and lustre of existence. Give me that lustre. You are Energy Itself. Give me energy. Ruler and people of the land, you are the arms of the Lord of Power, creator of virility. I take you both close to Him.”*¹⁸

When examining the Upanishad, there appears to be substantial evidence suggesting the pantheistic characteristic of God in Hinduism. Some of these texts are presented below:

महतः परमव्यक्तमव्यक्तात्पुरुषः परः ।

पुरुषान्न परं किञ्चित्सा काष्ठा सा परा गतिः ॥ ११ ॥

एष सर्वेषु भूतेषु गूढोऽऽत्मा न प्रकाशते ।

दृश्यते त्वग्रया बुद्ध्या सूक्ष्मया सूक्ष्मदर्शिभिः ॥ १२ ॥¹⁹

English Translation: And higher than the mighty, one is the unmanifest and higher than the unmanifest is the Purusha, than the Purusha there is none Higher. He is the most high. He is the summit of our going.

This is the secret spirit in all creatures and maketh not Himself obvious, yet is He by the seers of the subtle through a subtle and perfect higher mind.²⁰ Also;

यदेवेह तदमुत्र यदमुत्र तदन्विह ।

मृत्योः स मृत्युमाप्नोति य इह नानेव पश्यति ॥ १० ॥

Shankaracharya explains that Brahman alone is the ultimate and all-pervading reality, while the apparent diversity of the world results from ignorance (avidyā). The distinctions between individuals, objects, and Brahman are merely conditioned by names, forms, and worldly limitations. He argues that perceiving oneself as separate from Brahman leads to the cycle of birth and death (samsāra). True knowledge is attained by realizing the identity of the self with Brahman, the one eternal reality.”²¹

Also, in chnadogya Upanishad it is clearly mentioned :

¹⁷ Yajurveda 10.24-25

¹⁸ Yajurveda, trans. Tulsi Ram (2013), n.p.

¹⁹ Katha Upanishad, 1.3.11–12.

²⁰ Aravinda Ghose, trans., *The Katha Upanishad* (Poona: Ashtekar and Co., 1919), 18.

²¹ S. Sitarama Sastri, trans., *Katha Upanishad with Shankara's Commentary* (Madras: The India Printing Works, 1928), <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/katha-upanishad-shankara-bhashya/d/doc145231.html>.

सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म तज्जलानिति शान्त उपासीत ।
अथ खलु क्रतुमयः पुरुषो यथाक्रतुरस्मिँल्लोके पुरुषो
भवति तथेतः प्रेत्य भवति स क्रतुं कुर्वीत ॥ ३.१४.१ ॥

English translation: All this is Brahman. Everything comes from Brahman, everything goes back to Brahman, and everything is sustained by Brahman. One should therefore quietly meditate on Brahman. Each person has a mind of his own. What a person wills in his present life, he becomes when he leaves this world. One should bear this in mind and meditate accordingly.²²

On the verses of Mundak Upanishad 1/1/6:

यत्तद्वेश्यमगाह्यमगोत्रमवर्णमचक्षुःश्रोत्रं तदपाणिपादम् ।
नित्यं विभुं सर्वगतं सुसूक्ष्मं तदव्ययं यद्भूतयोनिं परिपश्यन्ति धीराः ॥ ६ ॥

English translation: That which cannot be perceived, which cannot be seized, which has no origin, which has no properties, which has neither ear nor eye, which has neither hands nor feet, which is eternal, diversely manifested, all-pervading, extremely subtle, and undecaying, which the intelligent cognized as the source of the *Bhutas*.²³

Shankaracharya demonstrated this verse. He mentioned that Brahman is beyond all physical attributes and cannot be perceived by ordinary senses, yet remains eternal and immutable. He describes Brahman as all-pervading, subtle, and present in all forms of existence without being limited by them. According to him, Brahman manifests throughout the universe while remaining free from change, decay, and material characteristics. Thus, Brahman is the ultimate reality underlying all existence and transcending all worldly distinctions.²⁴

Also in Mundaka Upanishad 2.2.11:

ब्रह्मैवेदममृतं पुरस्ताद्ब्रह्म पश्चाद्ब्रह्म दक्षिणतश्चोत्तरेण ।
अधश्चोर्ध्वं च प्रसृतं ब्रह्मैवेदं विश्वमिदं वरिष्ठम् ॥ ११ ॥

Shankaracharya also elaborated this verse as:

“The statement, *Brahman* alone the light of lights is true and that all else is only its modification, a matter of speech is a mere name and falsehood first made and logically demonstrated at length (afterward) is affirmed again as a conclusion by this *mantra*. That which is before us and which, in the eyes of the ignorant, appears to be not *Brahman* is certainly *Brahman*. Similarly what is behind us; so, that to the south; so, that to the north; so, that below, and that above and all that is extended everywhere in the form of effect, appearing otherwise than *Brahman* and possessed of name and form. Why say much? All this vast universe is *Brahman* certainly. All perception otherwise than as *Brahman* is

²² Swami Lokeshwarananda, trans., *Chandogya Upanishad (English Translation)* (Kolkata: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, n.d.), <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/chandogya-upanishad-english/d/doc239005.html> (accessed on March 12, 2026).

²³ S. Sitarama Sastri, trans., *Mundaka Upanishad with Shankara's Commentary* (Madras: The India Printing Works, 1928), 100, <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/mundaka-upanishad-shankara-bhashya/d/doc145080.html> (accessed March 19, 2024).

²⁴ Ibid

mere ignorance, just as the perception of a serpent in a rope. The *Vedas declare* that the one *Brahman* alone is really true.”²⁵

These quotes from several Upanishads demonstrate various forms of Hindu pantheism.

Additionally, examining secondary or more recent sacred Hindu sources reveals that they also affirm Hinduism's pantheistic tenets. Some of these evidences are presented with English translation below:

- BhagavatGita

अहं सर्वस्य प्रभवो मत्तः सर्वं प्रवर्तते |

इति मत्वा भजन्ते मां बुधा भावसमन्विताः ॥ 8॥²⁶

English translation: I am the origin of all creation. Everything proceeds from Me. The wise who know this perfectly worship Me with great faith and devotion.²⁷

While commenting on the verse:

अपरेयमितस्त्वन्यां प्रकृतिं विद्धि मे पराम् |

जीवभूतां महाबाहो ययेदं धार्यते जगत् ॥ 5॥²⁸

Shankaracharya demonstrated the relationship between God, the soul, and the universe in Hindu philosophy, particularly addressing the concepts of dualism and non-dualism. He critiques the non-dualistic view that the soul is identical to God, which would imply multiple gods. Instead, he supports the dualistic perspective where the soul is a distinct part of God's spiritual energy, yet still connected to the divine. Through references to scriptures like the *Viṣṇu Purāṇ* and teachings of Hindu thinkers, Shankaracharya asserts that while God is the supreme, all-pervading entity, there is a coexistence of unity and diversity within creation. God, souls, and matter are seen as distinct entities, each with different properties, with God being the sentient source of all. Ultimately, he maintained that God and the soul are both one and separate, embodying a complex relationship of unity and difference.²⁹

Pantheistic concepts of Hinduism and the manifestation of God in Hinduism are further explained and classified in the *Vishnu Purana* as follows:

द्वे रूपे ब्रह्मणस्तस्य मूर्तं चामूर्तमेव च |

क्षराक्षरस्वरूपे ते सर्वभूतेष्ववस्थिते ॥ ५५

अक्षरं तत्परं ब्रह्म क्षरं सर्वमिदं जगत् |

एकदेशस्थितस्याग्नेज्ज्योत्स्ना विस्तारिणी यथा |

परस्य ब्रह्मणः शक्तिस्तथेदमखिलं जगत् ॥ ५६

तत्राप्यासन्नदूर्त्वाद्बहुत्वस्वल्पतामयः |

ज्योत्स्नाभेदोऽस्ति तच्छक्तेस्तद्वन्मैत्रेय विद्यते ॥ ५७

ब्रह्मविष्णुशिवा ब्रह्मन्प्रधाना ब्रह्मशक्तयः |

²⁵ S. Sitarama Sastri, trans., *Mundaka Upanishad with Shankara's Commentary* (Madras: The India Printing Works, 1928), 151–152, <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/mundaka-upanishad-shankara-bhashya/d/doc145120.html> (accessed March 19, 2026).

²⁶ *Bhagavad Gita*, 10.8

²⁷ <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/chapter/10/verse/8>

²⁸ *Bhagavad Gita*, 7.5 (English translation: Such is My inferior energy. But beyond it, O mighty-armed Arjun, I have a superior energy. This is the *jīva śakti* (the soul energy), which comprises the embodied souls who are the basis of life in this world.) <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/chapter/7/verse/5>

²⁹ <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/chapter/7/verse/5>

ततश्च देवा मैत्रेय न्यूना दक्षादयस्ततः ॥ ५८

ततो मनुष्याः पशवो मृगपक्षिसरीसृपाः ।

न्यूनान् न्यूनतराश्चैव वृक्षगुल्मादयस्तथा ॥³⁰

English Translation: “ There are two states of this Brahma', one with, and one without shape; one perishable, and one imperishable; which are inherent in all beings. The imperishable is the supreme being; the perishable is all the world. The blaze of fire burning on one spot diffuses light and heat around, so the world is nothing more than the manifested energy of the supreme Brahma: and in as much as, Maitreya. as the light and heat are stronger or feebler as we are near to the fire, or far off from it, so the energy of the supreme is more or less intense in the beings that are less or more remote from him. Brahma. Visnu and Siva are the most powerful energies of god; next to them are the inferior deities, then the attendant spirits, then men, then animals, birds, insects, and vegetables; each becoming more and more feeble as they are farther from their primitive source. In this way, illustrious Brahman, this whole world, although in essence imperishable and eternal, appears and disappears, as if it were subject to birth and death.”³¹

In summary, the above-cited Hindu texts indicate a pantheistic concept of God, where the divine is both the source of the world and its essential reality. God is seen as present in all existence, ultimately representing the only true reality, with everything else deriving from Him.

Another part of this study reveals that pantheistic concepts become more systematic and philosophically developed within the Vedantic schools. While the Vedas and Upanishads contain foundational ideas, it was the Vedantic philosophers who transformed these ideas into comprehensive theological systems.

Among Vedantic schools, Advaita Vedanta represents the clearest expression of pantheistic thought. Shankara's assertion that Brahman alone is ultimately real and that multiplicity is merely apparent effectively dissolves the distinction between God and the universe. Shankara's Advaita (non-dualism) holds that Brahman alone is the ultimate reality and is characterized as attributeless (Nirguna). Nevertheless, at the level of appearance, he asserts that what appears to exist is a multiplicity of physical objects and persons and a Personal God until we get to the distinction between appearance and reality. So, according to Shankara, Brahman is the transcendent essence of the universe. He espouses that individuals are not different from Brahman, and the apparent multiplicity of the world is an illusion. Therefore, nothing exists in reality except God alone. This perspective of Shankara inherently carries pantheistic elements as it identifies the divine with the entirety of existence.

Ramanuja's Visista Advaita (qualified non-dualism) maintains that if there is a world other than God, then the world depends on God but not God on the world. He also holds that the world is in the body of God, in the sense that God can affect a part of the world without having to do so by affecting some other part of it.³²

³⁰ *Vishnu Purana*, 1.22.55–59

³¹ Horace Hayman Wilson, trans.. *The Vishnu Purán: A System of Hindu Mythology and Tradition*, vol. 2 (London: Trübner & Co., 1865), 92, <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/vishnu-purana-wilson/d/doc115958.html>.

³² Keith E. Yandell, *Philosophy of Religion* (London: Routledge, 1999), 102.

In contrast, Madhva's Dvaita Vedanta, or unqualified dualism norm, refuses that the world is the body of God, claiming that if this is the case, then God must rely on the world for his existence and actions. Thus, Madhva disagrees with Ramanuja on the notion of God's Body.³³

Therefore, while Shankara's view aligns closely with pantheism by identifying all existence with Brahman, Ramanuja and Madhva are in a similar position that affirms a dependent relationship of the world on God without equating the two.³⁴

In this framework, individual selves, the material world, and all forms of existence are ultimately manifestations of the same divine reality.

The significance of this finding lies in demonstrating that pantheism in Hinduism is not merely a poetic or symbolic expression. Rather, it constitutes a coherent metaphysical doctrine supported by post-Veda philosophical reasoning. At the same time, the findings reveal significant diversity within Hindu thought, as early Vedic Hinduism appears to differ from later Hindu philosophical traditions in its understanding of pantheism. While pantheistic concepts are less explicit in the earliest sources, they become more pronounced and systematically developed in the Upanishads and Vedantic schools.

Scholarly views on Hindu Pantheism

The findings reveal that scholars do not share a unanimous position regarding the existence and origin of pantheism in Hinduism. Therefore, the pantheistic nature of Hinduism has been a subject of considerable scholarly debate among both Eastern and Western researchers.

Further, scholars and theologians have diverse views on the pantheistic quality of the Hindu religion. Many argue that the Vedas- the highest and earliest Hindu sources- do not clearly teach pantheism, suggesting instead that such ideas developed later in the post-Vedic era. K.S. McDonald, for instance, maintains that there is no distinct teaching of pantheism in the hymns of the Veda.³⁵

Similarly, in an argument on pantheism, G.C. Narang argues that pantheistic interpretations were later used to reconcile the apparent plurality of gods by presenting them as manifestations of a single supreme reality, while the general tone of the Vedas does not strongly support pantheism.³⁶

Arqam Raees also explored the pantheistic concept of the Vedas. He concludes that the Vedas were free of any evidence of pantheism. He further defended his position on some hymns that somehow indicate the pantheistic attribute of God in Hinduism. He concluded that the meanings of these Vedic hymns are vague and general. Rather than signifying pantheism, it is more likely that these hymns point to the monotheistic characteristic of the creature out of his plurality. Furthermore, he believes that hymns with a stronger pantheistic message are uncommon and were probably added to or composed in the Vedas later due to their nature and tone.³⁷

In contrast, Abu Bakar Zakariya provided several examples drawn from various Hindu scriptures that unequivocally demonstrate pantheism in the Vedas. In addition,

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ K. S. McDonald, *Vedic Religion*, 2nd ed. (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1881), 28.

³⁶ G. C. Narang, *Message of the Vedas*, 2nd ed. (Lahore: New Book Society, 1946), 45.

³⁷ Arqam Ra'īs Ra'īsuddīn, *Mawqif al-Vedas min al-Ulūhiyyah: 'Arḍ wa Naqd* (PhD diss., Islamic University of Medina, Faculty of Da'wah and Theology, 2018).288-337

Abu Bakar maintained that the Vedas contain an early presentation of the well-established concept of pantheism, as found in the Upanishads and other later sources of Hinduism³⁸.

Furthermore, to bolster the aforementioned claim, K.S. McDonald mentioned that there are two or three mantras that may have demonstrated pantheism.³⁹

While discussing the Vedic Gods, Will Durant commented:

“This is one value of the Vedas to us that through them we see religion in the making and can follow the birth, growth, and death of gods and beliefs from animism to philosophic pantheism, and from the superstition of the Atharva-Veda to the sublime monism of the Upanishad.”⁴⁰

In this statement, Will Durant mentioned that the Vedas approve of philosophic pantheism. However, in general, scholars verify the pantheistic quality of Hinduism.

Further, while talking about the characteristics of the creator and the creation in Hinduism, Al-Biruni went on to show that Hindus hold that everything is god and the First Cause is the only source of real existence. Thus, Al-Biruni opines that due to this reason, Hindus believe that all creation (ie, land, water, fire, air, etc.) is sacred and holy.⁴¹ Similarly, Ahmad Celeba notes that Brahmins believe that Brahma is the universal truth, and the soul of the world.”⁴²

These findings are noteworthy because they challenge the widespread assumption that Hinduism can be adequately described solely as a monotheistic tradition.⁴³ While many Hindu scholars emphasize the existence of a single supreme reality, the nature of that reality differs considerably from the monotheistic conception found in Islam. The scriptural evidence indicates that the divine is often portrayed not merely as the creator of the universe but as the very substance or essence underlying all existence.

Also, these findings partially explain why some scholars have classified Hinduism as simultaneously monotheistic, monistic, and pantheistic. The complexity arises because Hindu texts frequently combine descriptions of a supreme divine reality with expressions of divine immanence throughout the cosmos. Therefore, this study suggests that pantheism is not a marginal or secondary aspect of Hindu theology but rather an important component of its philosophical and religious worldview.

Comparative Findings on Convergence and Divergence

A comparative examination of Islam and Hinduism reveals a fundamental theological difference concerning the relationship between God and the universe. While Islamic theology maintains a strict distinction between the Creator and creation and emphasizes divine transcendence, Hindu thought, especially post-Vedic philosophical texts, often incorporates pantheistic concepts that portray the divine as pervading or constituting reality. Nevertheless, both traditions acknowledge a form of divine nearness, although they differ considerably in their interpretation and theological implications.

A comparative analysis also finds that the concept of divine nearness constitutes both a point of similarity and a point of difference between Islam and Hinduism. Both traditions reject the notion of a distant or uninvolved deity. Both affirm that God is related

³⁸ Abū Bakr Muḥammad Zakariyyā, *al-Hindūsiyyah wa Ta'aththur Ba'd al-Firaq al-Islāmiyyah bihā* (Beirut: Dār al-Awrāq al-Thaqāfiyyah, 1432 AH), 506-535

³⁹ McDonald, *Vedic Religion*, 28.

⁴⁰ Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), chap. XIV, 403.

⁴¹ Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī, *Tahqīq Mā li-l-Hind min Maqūlah Maqbūlah fī al-'Aql aw Mardhūlah* (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyyah, 1958), 30.

⁴² Jamil Celeba, *Al-Mu'jam al-Falsafī*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Lubnānī, 1982), 569.

⁴³ Asad Ibrahim et al., “The Monotheistic Characteristics of Hinduism from The Perspective of Selected Muslim Scholars,” *Afkar* Vol. 26 No. 1 (2024): 189-220

to creation and actively sustains the universe. However, the basis of this relationship differs significantly. In Islam, divine nearness is understood through Allah's knowledge, power, mercy, and providence.⁴⁴ According to (Al-Quran 41:37), Allah remains distinct from creation while exercising complete authority over it. In Hindu pantheistic traditions (Rig Veda, 8.58.2; Yajurveda 10.24-25), divine nearness often takes the form of ontological presence, where Brahman is understood as existing within all things or constituting the ultimate reality behind them.

This distinction has profound theological implications. The Islamic understanding preserves divine transcendence while affirming divine involvement in the world. The Hindu pantheistic understanding emphasizes divine immanence and unity with existence. Consequently, the same language of "divine nearness" conceals fundamentally different metaphysical assumptions.

Wahdat al-Wujūd in Sufi thought and Pantheism in Hinduism

A general analysis of the pantheistic nature of Hinduism from an Islamic perspective reveals a fundamental theological divergence between Islam and Hinduism concerning the relationship between God and the universe. While Islamic theology consistently maintains a clear distinction between the Creator and creation, some Sufi scholars developed the doctrine of *Wahdat al-Wujūd* (unity of being), a concept that has frequently been compared to pantheism. Linguistically, *Wahdat al-Wujūd* is derived from the Arabic words *wahdah* (unity) and *wujūd* (being), and together they denote the "unity of being" or "unity of existence."⁴⁵

According to the *Wahdat al-Wujūd* doctrine, all creations are the only manifestation of the singular reality. This term illustrates that whatever exists in the universe is one or the other aspect of a single divine reality. Therefore, it suggests that everything in existence represents aspects or expressions of one divine essence, and that the multiplicity observed in the world is merely the outward appearance of that singular reality, which is perceived through its manifestations in creation.⁴⁶

Mohammad Azizul Hoque described the pantheistic view of Sufism: "Likewise, some sufis and Muslim mystics have merged the concept of oneness/monotheism (tawhid) with the concept of pantheism. According to them, God's existence is the existence of all created things. Among them, Ibn al-'Arabi is of great fame. He believes, 'Everything that exists is a part of and a manifestation of the Oneness of God. Humans are part of God. The idea of a separate self is the result of ignorance' (Islamic Pantheism)."⁴⁷

Additionally, certain Qur'anic verses have been cited by proponents of *Wahdat al-Wujūd* as supporting this interpretation, for example:

'Wheresoever you turn, there is the face of God' (2:115)

Also, another verse is cited to reinforce this view: 'He is with you, wherever you are...' (57:4)

⁴⁴ Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, vol. 22 (Cairo: Dār Hījr, 1st ed.), 387, also, Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 8 (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayyibah, 1st ed., 1997), 8.

⁴⁵ See: Umi Sumbulah, "Ibn Arabi's Thought on Wahdah al-Wujūd and Its Relevance to Religious Diversity," *Ulumuna: Journal of Islamic Studies* 20, no. 1 (2016): 56, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v20i1.793>

⁴⁶ See; Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 15., Also; Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (Iran: Al-Maktabah al-Zahrā', n.d.), 52

⁴⁷ Muhammad Azizul Hoque, "Pantheism in Wordsworth: A Study from the Islamic Perspective," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 5, no. 1 (2014): 50, <https://doi.org/10.24035/ijit.05.2014.005>.

However, the misinterpretation of these verses has led some Sufis to believe that Allah has transcendental as well as immanent aspects. Also, he is manifested in but also extends beyond the material universe.

Ibn Arabi clarifies the idea of these verses as:

“Everything is perishing except His Face; that is, there is no existent but He, nor existence to other than He, so that it should require to perish and His Face remains; that is, there is nothing except His Face: then whithersoever, ye turn here is the Face of God”.⁴⁸

A group of Sufi scholars assumes that God is present in all things. They believe that even their own bodies are nothing but God’s manifestation. Some clear aspects of this idea can be observed in Ibn Arabi’s writing, where he discussed self-identity and God. He demonstrated that the existence of anything in this universe is nothing but the existence of God only, he says:

*“And when this secret is revealed to thee thou understand that thou art not what is beside God and that thou art thine own end and thine own object in thy search after thy lord, and that thou dost not require to cease to be, and that thou hast continued and wilt continue without when and without times, as we mentioned above. And thou seest all thine action to be His actions, and all His attributes to be thine attributes. Thou seest thine outward to be His outward and thine inward to be His inward, and thy first to be His first and thy last to be His last, without doubting and without wavering. And thou seest thine attributes to be His attributes and thine essence, without thy becoming Him or His becoming thee, either in the greatest or least degree.”*⁴⁹

Similarly, another Sufi, al-Hallaj, expressed comparable ideas in his poetry, suggesting a unity between the human and the divine. He says:

*I am He whom I love,
and He whom I love is I,*

We are two souls dwelling in one body,
If thou seest me, thou seest Him,⁵⁰

It is also observed that some Indian Sufis inherit a pantheistic conception of divine unity, Haque mentioned:

‘In the course of time, this pantheistic conception was fully developed in the hands of the Indian Sufis, and before the completion of two or three centuries, it became so loose that it went far beyond the ordinary limit of toleration, necessitating a regular reformatory movement. It is interesting to note here that the unity of the Godhead, as well as the pantheistic view of this unity, was an old thing in Indian philosophy, which also formed a background of Indian Sufism⁵¹

⁴⁸ Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Risālah al-Wujūdiyyah (Treatise on Being)* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1st ed., 2004), 37–38.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p.37

⁵⁰ Al-Ḥusayn ibn Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj, *Dīwān al-Ḥallāj*, collected and compiled by Louis Massignon, n.d., 26.

⁵¹ Muhammad Azizul Hoque, “Pantheism in Wordsworth: A Study from the Islamic Perspective,” *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 5, no. 1 (2014): 51, <https://doi.org/10.24035/ijit.05.2014.005>.

To support his argument, Haque quoted Abdul Karim Jily, who suggested that all existence reflects the essence of God. Jily says: ‘His attributes, name, and sign—all these, which exist, are the very essence, and Allah is a component whole.’⁵²

Moreover, some Sufi scholars believe that there is no distinction between phenomena and God. Thus, good and bad that come to sight is He, Bu’aly Qalander says: ‘Whatever comes to sight, good or bad, Is the essence of the Reality, O the unaware!’⁵³

It is deduced from the previous discussion that Sufi philosophers have a different view on the said issue; nevertheless, it seems that Islam denounces pantheism in all respects. The rationale behind this is the monotheistic nature of Islam, which is contrary to all versions of pantheism.

This analysis reveals notable similarities between the Sufi doctrine of *Wahdat al-Wujūd* and the pantheistic concepts found in Hinduism, particularly in the Upanishads and Advaita Vedanta philosophy. Both traditions emphasize a single ultimate reality underlying all existence and view the multiplicity of the world as a manifestation of that reality. This similarity is further reflected in the writings of Ibn ‘Arabī, al-Ḥallāj, and certain Indian Sufis who described creation as a manifestation of the divine reality.

However, important differences remain between the two traditions. *Wahdat al-Wujūd* developed within an Islamic framework that affirms Tawḥīd, prophecy, and divine revelation. On the other hand, Hindu pantheism is grounded in the metaphysical concept of Brahman as the ultimate essence of the universe. Moreover, mainstream Muslim theologians rejected pantheistic interpretations and maintained a clear distinction between Allah and creation based on Qur’anic teachings such as “There is nothing like unto Him” (Qur’an 42:11). In contrast, pantheistic and monistic interpretations became integral components of Vedantic scriptures as well as in several Hindu philosophical schools, particularly Advaita Vedanta. Therefore, despite certain conceptual similarities regarding divine unity and existence, their theological foundations and doctrinal implications remain fundamentally different.

CONCLUSION

The central idea underlying pantheism is summarized in the phrase “all is God, and God is all,” which captures its essential claim of absolute unity between the divine and the cosmos. A comparative analysis of pantheism in Islam and Hinduism reveals divergence in theological foundations. Islam fundamentally rejects the identification of God with the universe. The doctrine of *Tawhid* requires a clear ontological distinction between Allah and His creation. Certain Sufi thinkers introduced ideas resembling pantheism, such as *Wahdat al-Wujud*, but mainstream Islamic theology does not accept these interpretations. Also, the Qur’anic verses suggesting divine nearness are interpreted metaphorically, referring to God’s knowledge, power, and authority rather than physical presence. Thus, pantheism contradicts Islamic monotheism, which insists that God is separate, independent, and not identical with the cosmos.

In Hinduism, however, pantheism emerges as a significant theological dimension, especially in the Upanishadic and later philosophical traditions. Many Hindu texts

⁵² Ibid, p.51. Also see: ‘Abd al-Karīm ibn Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī, *Al-Insān al-Kāmil fī Ma‘rifat al-Awākhir wa-al-Awā‘il* (Egypt: Maktabat Muḥammad ‘Alī Ṣubayḥ wa-Awladih, n.d.), 1:7–8.

⁵³ Muhammad Azizul Hoque, “Pantheism in Wordsworth: A Study from the Islamic Perspective,” *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 5, no. 1 (2014): 51, <https://doi.org/10.24035/ijit.05.2014.005>.

describe God as all-pervading and identical with the universe. Statements such as “all this is Brahman” indicate that everything originates from the divine, exists within, and returns to Him too. This reflects a pantheistic or monistic understanding in which God is not separate from the world. Therefore, while Islam rejects pantheism to preserve the separation between God and creation, Hinduism incorporates pantheistic elements to express the unity of the divine with the world, emphasizing one ultimate reality manifested throughout existence.

Another contrast lies in the purpose and function of these doctrines. In Islam, the rejection of pantheism is deeply rooted in the preservation of *Tawhid* (the absolute oneness and uniqueness of Allah). This has direct implications for worship, as it guarantees that all acts of devotion are directed exclusively toward the Creator rather than any aspect of creation. Thus, the rejection of Pantheism functions as a protective mechanism that preserves the purity of faith and maintains a disciplined, monotheistic framework of worship and belief.

On the other hand, Hinduism employs pantheism as a theological tool that makes the divine more accessible and experientially meaningful to human beings, according to Hindu scholars. Pantheistic tendencies in Hindu thought allow believers to perceive the divine as present in all aspects of existence, from nature to the inner self (*Ātman*). Consequently, pantheism in Hinduism serves to expand how the divine can be understood, approached, and worshipped. Therefore, in Hinduism, the pantheistic idea serves to make the divine accessible and relatable, allowing multiple pathways to understanding and worshipping God.

At the same time, a partial similarity can be observed in Islam and Hinduism as both acknowledge a form of divine nearness. Islam affirms that Allah is close to His creation through His knowledge, power, and authority, while maintaining His absolute transcendence and incomparability. Similarly, Hinduism expresses divine nearness by describing Brahman as present within the universe and as the inner self (*Ātman*) of all beings. In this sense, both traditions recognize that God is not distant from creation, but related to it in some manner.

However, the difference lies in how this nearness is understood. Islam interprets divine nearness without accepting pantheism, maintaining a strict distinction between Creator and creation. Hinduism, on the other hand, often expresses divine nearness through pantheistic ideas, where God is physically present in various forms and permeates the cosmos. The comparison, therefore, highlights a limited similarity in affirming divine proximity, but a decisive difference in theological interpretation and doctrinal acceptance.

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