

## Syncretic Analysis of Theological Mystic Epistemologies

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### Abstract

Having diverse theological metaphors and mystical practices, Greek and Asian theological tenets are quite similar which can be traced back from Pythagorean cult to ancient Hinduism and Islamic mystical traditions. The study aimed to explore such similarities among theological scriptures. We selected original scriptures (English translated) of Hinduism, Buddhism, Pythagoreanism and Sufism and used content analysis to discover syncretic level of these blocks of beliefs that revealed their diverse metaphorical picture but syncretic nature of textual campaign. The juxtaposed picture of diverse mystical metaphors elicited different beliefs of transmigration, soul-body discourses, pantheism and panentheism while we found syncretic ideas 'above mystical metaphors' like the experience of nirvana, Mukti and Fana in Buddhism, Hinduism and Sufism, respectively, and similarity of beliefs on karmic reactions, pantheism, Panentheism, liberation etc. However, the practices to have the rendezvous –The Unit-Whole merge – were diverse whereas the ultimate end of these mystical experiences led the indulgers from individual consciousness to universal consciousness: The Unity of Truths.

**Key words:** mysticism; mukti; transmigration; pantheism; panentheism, nibbana

### 1. Introduction

The present study is based upon the idea that different theological or mystical beliefs and concepts are similar. However, the functional meanings of these concepts are subject to distinction due to their apparent description in the present era. We are not arguing that all doctrines of different religions are similar or same but some of the important doctrines are similar such as transmigration in Hinduism and Pythagoreanism. Moreover, some philosophical problems are to be dealt before approaching the idea of syncretic level of different doctrines across theological beliefs. These problems are subject to decipher the doctrines such as decipherization of transmigration and mukti. Therefore, we began with the importance of decipherization to be used in order to approach syncretic level of important theological doctrines and then, substantiated decipherization through Hinduism, Sufism, Buddhism and Pythagoreanism.

We confined our syncretic analysis to the transmigration, liberation, pantheism and panentheism because it would not be possible to decipher every doctrine of different religions in order to approach their syncretic level in confined space of the article.

#### 1.1 Decipherization android Syncretism

Decipherization, the process to decode experiences into recognised codes of communication, confined the experiences in recognised codes that in turn confine the understanding of receivers. The problem of decipherization and receiving of codes is best enunciated in two anecdotes of The Masnavi of Rumi – a well renowned Sufi. He explained that how four persons from different geographies i.e., Greece, Arab, Turkey and Iran, quarrelled with each other while speaking of the same desire i.e., to buy grapes, in their own languages. The prime cause of quarrel was decipherization of the same word in unrecognised codes of different languages (p. 160). Even the anecdote loosely reflects the idea of decipherization problem, yet it did not decipher the idea emphasised here. The second story explained that how a revenant was taught the decipherization of codes (of a tree of knowledge) by a sage when he was in quest of the tree. The sage explained to him,

‘...Sometimes it is named tree, sometimes sun,  
Sometimes lake, and sometimes cloud,  
‘Tis one, though it has thousands of manifestations;  
Its least manifestation is eternal life!  
Though ‘tis one, it has a thousand manifestations,  
The name that fit that one is countless...  
In regard to another person He may be son.  
In relation to another He may be wrath and vengeance,  
In relation to another, mercy and goodness.  
He has thousands of names, yet is One’ (Rumi, p. 160-61).

Similarly, we are arguing that the decipherization problem obfuscate the reality, but the essence is same. Therefore, firstly, using syncretism we concentrated on essence of words, actions, mechanisms etc. otherwise the method would be identical to find merely apparent similarities between two concepts. Secondly, to analyse discourses of the theological scriptures we believe that syncretism should priorities the essence of a textual campaign as hermeneutics suggested. Moreover, if the essence is same then differentiations are arbitrary. For example, the decipherization of analogous codes ascertains apparent functional meanings whereas a profound analysis of analogous codes would demand their epistemological analysis. Thus, the textual analysis of *mukti* in its cultural context would imperatively result in its distinction from Sufi doctrines e.g., *baqa*, whereas the decipherization of both doctrines while analysing their apparent functional meanings, confined to cultural context, shall reveal their identical nature. Similarly, using the syncretism of analogous meanings, confined to a cultural context, we attempted to discover whether Sufism, Hinduism and Buddhism are syncretized by their essences. These three blocks of beliefs are product of highly similar ancient cultures; therefore, Pythagoreanism is also included in the analysis to profoundly scrutinize their syncretic level beyond cultural context. It would make the analysis more rigorous because the blocks of beliefs emerged from similar culture may have higher probability of syncretic nature. Moreover, etymology of their epistemological codes would only lead to the prominent languages of the culture (e.g. Sufis preferred Punjabi – a dialect of India and Pakistan – to decipher their experience that etymologically originated from Sanskrit) that would also increase the probability of their syncretic nature because etymologically the decipherization of two functional codes being product of the same culture, have same linguistic and cultural origin as well as the essence but different vocals.

Abhayananda (2007) acclaimed that Samadhi, Fana, Nirvana and the mystic union are acquired truth from the experience of the same Truth, the unmistakable realisation of self and the self-Truth union (p. 2). To make the matter simple, we call it Unity. This unity in experience revealed that the observant, no matter what religion [s]he believes in, is under self-surveillance which, by all means, is the way of contemplation towards the reality. Thus, the mystical revelation elicits similar experiences of the reality. This unity of experiences reveals unity of reality, that is to say, every mystical observant unanimously testified it in self-image. Therefore, Mansoor Al-Hallaj, Catherine of Genoa, Kabir, Boehme and Basho consecrated the same: The Unity with source of all, they are themselves the truth.

## 1.2 The ontological dilemma

The demonstration of unity-observant demands ontological enunciation of the unity for which their disseminated writings and theological scriptures as sources of their episteme, set epistemological transmutation of the unity sources in question. A scholar being an out-observant of the unity cannot contemplate the substantiated existence of the unity. Therefore, its transubstantiated form became the only validate source to deal with the matter as Lewis (2001) ruminatively asserted, 'If there was a controlling power outside the universe, it could not show itself to us as one of the facts inside the universe... The only way in which we could expect it to show itself would be inside ourselves as an influence or a command trying to get us to behave in a certain way' (p. 24). All the acclaimed observers of the unity, who had/have their epistemological sources would be the transubstantiated form of the unity because they proclaimed the unity-observant oneness. Their epistemological scriptures and episteme is what action driven, leading path to the destination they selected and approached. Thus, the scriptures e.g., Bhagavat Gita (hereinafter as Gita), should be taken as prime epistemological sources to detect whether the unity exists? The paper dealt with this question to set grounds for syncretic level of theological mystic epistemology, whereas the material existence of the unity has been denied by different theological scriptures. For example, Buddhism and Islam are contrary to the material form of the unity of Hinduism and Pythagoreanism.

Ontologically, when they claimed to observe the truth, the supreme power, having no material form, the observation is deniable. The non-material form means unobservable, the unity out of form means out of sight. Whereas their claimed experience of the unity makes it material, the unity-observant oneness. The contemplated supreme power they acclaimed through poems and philosophical prose is resulted in the material form of their own self as in case of Sufism and Hinduism. Buddha himself became the supreme truth as well as Pythagoras, after a kind of revelation in their own way of experience. Thus, the only form of the unity in material is the contemplator himself, whereas his eloquent utterance is the source to measure their level, frequency and somehow duration of contemplation and to detect the syncretic level. Therefore, in the paper, contemplators' epistemology, whether their magniloquence which became theological scriptures as in case of Buddhism or theological scripture itself as in case of Hinduism, were selected as prime unit of analysis for the study.

## 2. Material and Method

In the study, we selected four mystical guises i.e., Hinduism, Sufism, Buddhism and Pythagoreanism which also have different theological and philosophical episteme. The undisputed theological and philosophical scriptures were selected to assess the syncretic level

among them. In this regard, Gita from Hinduism, Sutta Pitaka (hereinafter as Pitaka) from Buddhism, two poetic books of two Sufis i.e., Bhulleh Shah (hereinafter as Shah) and Shah Hussain (hereinafter as Hussain) from Sufism and four most authenticated and validated scriptures on Pythagoras were selected. Table 1 comprised the selected scriptures and major themes of the study.

Five English translations of Gita were selected so that any ambiguity and ambivalence in the meanings of the original Sanskrit scriptures should not be distorted. Four books of Sutta Pitaka, three of them were translated by Bhikku Bodhi, a widely acknowledged Buddhist scholar, and one of them by Maurice Walshe, were selected. Two original Punjabi language poetic scriptures of Sufism written by Shah and Hussain were selected. We translated the selected stanzas of Sufis in English. The translated stanza was sent to the different experts and their comments were received. The recommendations of experts were incorporated in the translations. We again sent the corrected translations to the same experts for their review of the revised version. The reviewers approved the revised translated version.

We analysed the data by using content analysis with thematic approach because such saturated data would not be able to examine in syncretic manner without proposing some themes. To be connected with the assertion of essence of the scriptures, the themes were not constructed owing to the frequent repetition of a word but being highly essential in scriptures. For example, the concept of transmigration was not as much repeated in the data, but it is one of the essences of Hinduism (Gandhi, 1996, p. 3), Buddhism and Pythagoreanism. Moreover, each selected scripture is etymological distinctive e.g., Punjabi and Greek, yet English translations were guided by 'the idea' of the content, not merely the translation of original scriptures. For example, in the preface of Anguttara Nikaya, Bodhi clarified, 'This translation, like my previous renderings from the Pali Canon and commentaries, aims to fulfil two ideals that are to some degree in tension with one another: first, to be faithful to the meaning of the original; and second, to express this meaning in clear contemporary English' (p. 7).

Nevertheless, we preferred to use some original terminologies as much as possible that have two major reasons. First, the translator(s) of the original scriptures preferred to retrain some original words (i.e. key words or terminologies) or their transliterations instead of English translation. Secondly, the original words or their transliterations have already been popular enough in English, particularly in religious studies, with the same expression that an original word carries, that they were no longer harm the meaning of the original word in either language. For example, we preferred to retain A'maal (singular Amal) Kamma and Karma instead of action (and reaction) in Sufism, Buddhism and Hinduism respectively.

Table 1

*Field, scriptures, rationale and themes of the study*

Field	Scriptures Original	Translated by	Rationale	Preliminary themes	Aim
<b>Asia</b>					
Hinduism	1. Bhagvad Gita	1. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada in 1986 2. Sri Swami Sivananda in 2000 3. Tridandi Bhiksu Sripad Sagar Maharaj in 2006 4. Shri Purohit Swami in 2010 5. Mikhail Nikolenko in 2008	Gitopanisad summarised the essence of all Vedas; and is directly spoken by god (Krishna) to Arjun.	a. Purush/Atma b. Maya c. Karma d. Samsara e. Mukti or moksha	Mukti
Buddhism	1. Sutta Pitaka <i>Consisted of:</i> 1a. Digha Nikaya 1b. Majjhima Nikaya 1c. Samyutta Nikaya 1d. Anguttara Nikaya	1a. Maurice Walshe in 1995 1b. Bhikkhu Ñanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi in 2005 1c. Bhikkhu Bodhi in 2011	Three books of Sutta Nikaya consisted of the sayings of Buddha	a. Anatta b. khandhas c. Kamma d. Upapatti-bhava e. Nibbana	Nibbana

1d. Bhikkhu Bodhi in  
2012

Sufism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Diwan-e-Shah Hussain</li> <li>2. Diwan-e-Bulleh Shah</li> </ol>	Original Punjabi texts was analysed	They were locals of subcontinent while other Sufis were immigrants.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Ru'h (Soul)</li> <li>b. Fana/Baqa (mortality / Immortality)</li> <li>c. Wahddat-ul- wajood (Pantheism) Wahddat-ul-Sha'hod (Panentheism)</li> </ol>	mortality/ Immortality
<b>Greece</b>					
Pythagoreanism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Life of Pythagoras by Iamblichus (1818)</li> <li>2. On the life of Pythagoras by Porphyry</li> <li>3. Lives of eminent philosophers by Diogenes Laertius.</li> <li>4. The refutation of all Heresies</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Thomas Taylor in 1818</li> <li>2. Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie (n.a)</li> <li>3. R. D. Hicks in 1972</li> <li>4. Antipope Legge in 1921</li> </ol>	Book 1, 2 and 3 are most important sources of historical facts about Pythagoras (Macris, 2014)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Soul-Body</li> <li>b. Reciprocity of actions</li> <li>c. Metempsychosis</li> <li>d. Pantheism</li> </ol>	Liberation

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Transmigration and Liberation of Soul

*Samsara* in Sanskrit is identical to metempsychosis of Orphic and Pythagorean cult which strongly hold the belief of repeated embodiment of soul with later destined body: the determined body for soul resting upon the doctrine of Karma (in Hinduism) or Kamma (in Buddhism). However, the Sufi doctrine of *Fana* that is the unit whole mergence, is quite distinctive to above mentioned doctrines of transmigration yet soul has to drift apart the former body in this doctrine. The requisite metaphysical entity to *samsara*, *Upapatti-bhava* and metempsychosis is soul; to moral or ethical conduct it is Karma while both conjointly represent the transmigration in this episteme. Initially, therefore, soul has the prime importance to be discussed focusing on above mentioned perspectives.

Hinduism, Pythagoreanism and Sufism hold the belief about immortality of soul. Gita asserted, ‘no one is able to destroy that imperishable soul’ (Gita, 2:17); and ‘this, the Indweller in the body (soul) of everyone, is always indestructible’ (Gita, 2:30). Whereas the detailed description on attributes<sup>1</sup> of soul is mentioned in Gita 2: 20-24; 13: 32-34. Similarly, Porphyry spoke for Pythagoras that ‘soul is immortal’ (p. 19; 45) but for him soul has two parts: rational and irrational (Iamblichus, 1818, p. 171); and three order: power, anger and desire whose balance and imbalance produce prudence and vice in the soul respectively (Iamblichus, 1818, p. 161-168). Shah sung, “I am immortal while claiming himself a soul” (Shah, p. 443) and Hussain affirmed the deception of material appearance (body) as beauty and wealth is delusion (p. 253).

The immortality of soul affirms *Maya* of perceived self or material body propagated by Hinduism. Material self or body is not real self (Gita, 2:16), therefore, an actor must not grieve upon whether it is living or dead (Gita, 2:11) because the real self means no harm and vice (Gita, 13:30, 32). This material body is *Ksetra* (field) of *atma*. All sufferings are the resultant factors of bodily activities (Gita, 13:21) which is material-nature (Gita, 13:30) while *atma* is solely bliss in its pure nature. However, the individual soul (*Purusha*) and the supreme soul (*Paramatmah*) exists, simultaneously, in the material body (*sariram*). Whereas the doctrine of *Anatta*, in Buddhism, loosely equates with soul to enlighten people to believe that there is no immortal soul or soul at all but a continuous dynamic flux of energy.

*Anatta* is sharp active contrary to *Atma* or *Atma jnana* –to know true self, the soul – because Gita explicitly declared in Sankhya Yoga ‘...of the eternal (the soul) there is no change’ (Gita, 2:16). Although Pythagoras believed that soul and body are the ingredients of human being, he preferred soul to body (Iamblichus, 1818, p. 156) claiming body is the garment of soul (Iamblichus, 1818, p. 196) having justice (Iamblichus, 1818, p. 1610-169) and intellect as its prime virtue (Iamblichus, 1818, p. 183). It reflects that he did not consider body as delusion rather a temporary outer layer of soul, which possess its own existence being susceptible to decay. Hinduism also used similar analogy for soul-body juxtapose<sup>2</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup>We are quoting one of these verses which is as follow, ‘For the soul there is neither birth nor death at any time. He has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain’ (Gita, 2:20)

<sup>2</sup>As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, the soul similarly accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones (Gita, 2:22).

confirmed the demise of material body: ‘The material body of the indestructible, immeasurable and eternal living entity is sure to come to an end’ (Gita, 2:18) which reflects that soul is prioritised over it (Gita, 2:42).

In Buddhist scriptures, soul-body riddle seems dilemma (Digha Nikaya, p. 147; hereinafter as Digha) or unanswered (Majjhima Nikaya 1995, p. 586; hereinafter as Majjhima) as in Digha Buddha left the truth undeclared, ‘I have not declared that the soul is one thing and the body another’ (p. 164), similar answer is given in Majjhima (p. 536). However, Anguttara Nikaya (hereinafter as Anguttara) asserted to relinquish the personal views about soul-body dilemma to affirm oneself in the state of solitude (Anguttara, p. 428; p. 1360). In Samyutta Nikaya (hereinafter as Samyutta), Tathagata, while steering a middle discourse, provided a brief philosophical reason for not indulging in soul-body the riddle, which is as follows:

If there is the view, ‘The soul and the body are the same,’ there is no living of the holy life; and if there is the view, ‘The soul is one thing, the body is another,’ there is no living of the holy life (life devoted to noble path, *added*). Without veering towards either of these extremes, the Tathagata teaches the Dhamma by the middle: ‘With birth as condition, aging-and-death’ (Samyutta, p. 573-74)

Latterly, Gautama clarified that this dilemma is ignorance driven (Samyutta, p. 1031). The ignorance of not knowing about four noble truths (Samyutta, p. 535). He, indeed, rebuked both extremes: Nihilism and Eternalism, and suggested to concentrate on present life for outcomes. Thus, soul-body riddle is non-issue.

In Sufi philosophy, soul-body is not a dilemma because soul, Sufis believed, is true self and the body is tended to inevitable decay. In fact, they do not have philosophical contribution to the soul-body riddle rather soul is self which is craving to rendezvous with Supreme Truth: The almighty God. They perceived self is illusion and egoistic which must be volitionally perished. Therefore, initially, they suggest annihilating the perceived self: ‘Bhulla is lover of the Truth, thus become selfless’ (Shah, p. 126) and Hussain addressed himself vituperatively as ‘I am sordid, my cast is sordid, and who used to call me reputed’ (Hussain, p. 232). Similarly, Buddhist scriptures ascertained that self is a product of *khandhas*<sup>3</sup> that reflects the dynamism of self – Anatta – non self or egolessness (Digha, p. 234) which is corresponded to Heraclitus’s axiom of constant flux.

### **3.1.1 Action, transmigration and liberation**

Kamma, Karma, A'maal and social conducts are metaphorically distinguishable, but they perpetuate same nature of actions in the world for which either transmigration (except Buddhism and Sufism) or liberation would be a resultant condition. A'maal in Sufism are alike Greek word *agape*: self-less love for humanity or God (Lewis, 1991; Thomas, 2004). In Buddhism, kamma is not merely actions rather it refers to volitional act, elicited and expressed by corresponding motives and bodily parts as described by Buddha: ‘It is volition, bhikkhus, that I call kamma’ (Anguttara, p. 963) and doer is responsible for his actions. Therefore,

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<sup>3</sup> Five aggregates: form, sensation, perception, mental formation and consciousness which asserted that perceived self is delusion.



virtuous and unvirtuous motives and deeds (Anguttara, p. 1398) produce pleasure and suffering, respectively, (Anguttara, p. 159, 1509) which is narrated in The Book of Fours<sup>4</sup>. The above-mentioned results could be experienced either in life, rebirth or subsequent occasions (Anguttara, p. 963). It reveals that kamma is the determining force of *Vipaka* (consequences), even rebirth.

There are different kind of rebirths (see, e.g., Digha, p. 505) that can be occurred in any of its five realms: hell, animal-rebirth, the realm of hungry ghosts, humankind and the deva world (Digha, p. 495) based upon the desert of wholesome and unwholesome kamma (Anguttara, p. 1502). The rebirth in any of these realms, even in devas world, is *dukkha* (suffering). Thus, the liberation from suffering (or acquisition of Nibbana) is the ultimate aim which can be accomplished which Buddha suggested in his last days<sup>5</sup>.

In one sense, Kamma is identical to Karma that denotes not merely actions but store of accumulated and tranquil actions: the leading principle of transmigration. Gita (2:9) emphasised to perform prescribed actions without bewildering. Krishna himself has to act (Gita, 2:22) because individuals imitate Rishis, Kings and supreme beings (Gita, 2:21). It concludes that actions are unavoidable (Gita, 2:5) although it harms others (Gita, 2:30). *Krishna* enunciated both methods of *Dharma* i.e., Yoga of wisdom and action (Gita, 2-3) to signify karmic reactions. Like Buddhism, Karma possesses cause and effect mechanism, therefore, wisdom and vice exist into the womb of corresponding actions and vice versa (Gita, 14:9). Thus, *Dhyana* leading to steady *Mana* and vengeance as a product of cruelty are karmic reactions.

Gita (13:24) claimed that knowledge of material nature (*Prakriti*), living entity (*Purusha*) and interaction of the modes of nature (*gunas*) will lead to the *Mukti* which can be obtained through *Sankhya yoga* (Gita, 13:25). *Prakriti* has superior and inferior forms (Gita, 7:4-6) that produce *gunas* i.e., *Sattva* (goodness), *raja* (passion) and *tama* (ignorance) (Gita, 14:5). Each mode of *gunas* is in constant struggle to overcome each other (Gita, 14:10) and has corresponding outcomes (Gita, 14:6-9) even the determination of rebirth (Gita, 14:16). Although, *sattvic* person will be designated at higher order after death yet he will not be liberated from *samsara* (Gita, 14:14-18) because *Mukti* is far greater endeavour than karmic reactions of *gunas* as mentioned in Gita, 'When the embodied being is able to transcend these three modes (*gunas*) associated with the material body, he can become free from birth, death, old age and their distresses and can enjoy nectar even in this life' (Gita, 14:20). To surpass *gunas*, one has to attain *Sanyas* (Gita, 10:2, 4) which is conditioned with *Tyaga*. Without *Tyaga*,

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<sup>4</sup> Bhikkhus, there are these four kinds of kamma proclaimed by me after I realised them for myself with direct knowledge. What four? There is dark kamma with dark result; there is bright kamma with bright result; there is dark-and-bright kamma with dark-and-bright result; and there is kamma that is neither dark nor bright with neither-dark-nor-bright result, kamma that leads to the destruction of kamma' (p. 601, for detail see Anguttara, p. 601-7).

<sup>5</sup> 'by not understanding the Noble Truth of Suffering we have fared on, by not understanding the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering, of the Cessation of Suffering, and of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering we have fared on round the cycle of birth-and-death. And by the understanding, the penetration of the same Noble Truth of Suffering, of the Origin of Suffering, of the Cessation of Suffering and of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering, the craving for becoming has been cut off, the support of becoming has been destroyed, there is no more re-becoming' (Digha, p. 239).

pure *Dhyana* and *Smadhi* (Gita, 6:20), it is impossible to be liberated from samsara but hearing from a sage can also lead to *Mukti* (Gita, 13:30). Here, the imperative governing axiom is action because both the cultivation of knowledge and to get rid from fruitive desires are *Karma*. It is pronounced in chapter 5, ‘The renunciation of work and work in devotion are both good for liberation. But, of the two, work in devotional service is better than renunciation of work’ (Gita, 5:2). Now, it is explicit that to give up action is actually action driven because to seek ‘inaction in action and action in inaction’ would ultimately be action (Gita, 4:18). Thus, the wisdom of Supreme One is decisive measure of *Mukti* but it is conditioned with *Karma* in either way.

In Sufism, A’maal are responsible for one’s divine and rebirth status: Jannat (Heaven) or Jahannam (Hell) we will not resurrected (Hussain, p. 132). In this sense, *Kamma*, *karma* and A’maal are alike but the latter is not mechanised in transmigration because Sufis do not believe in it but rebirth. Shah and Hussain both denied transmigration and clarified their philosophical karmic position in various poetic verses eloquently. A’maal are also an imperative principle of spiritual elevation of a Sufi, therefore, to accomplish divine status, to comprehend and to observe divine reality a Sufi has to be through the process of *Terk* which is identical to *Tyaga*. *Terk* refers to renounce all material possessions to annihilate worldly desires because, Hussain divulges, nevertheless, death is inevitable (Hussain, p. 201). The adoption of *Terk* in practice leads to *Fana*. The doctrine of *Fana* – annihilation of ego either subjective (perceived self) or objective (material self) – is, simultaneously, a status and persistent chain of actions to acquire and maintain it – Hussain acclaims, to live become self-less (Hussain, p. 302). It demands the demise of material delusion (e.g., body, wealth, power, etc.) and to be spiritually apprentice of and identical to, spiritual teacher ‘while ingeminating His grace, He blessed me from His grace’ (Hussain, p. 354). For more clarification, poetic verses of Shah and Hussain are mentioned as follows:

1. ‘We have to die on this earth and will not come back here again,  
Our deeds, good and bad, will have its return (after life)’ (Hussain 2004, p. 94).
2. ‘Life is short on earth, pay attention to God as soon as possible  
Besides concerned matters, pay attention to God as soon as possible’ (Hussain 2004, p. 67).
1. ‘When you will leave this world, you will not come back  
Your beauty and youngness are about to perish, you do not belong here (this world),  
Your deeds, good or bad, will have its return (after life), do right deeds, otherwise,  
you would regret (in afterlife),  
And will weep after death like a lonely (wingless) bird because good deeds are wings  
to soar morally’ (Shah 2003, p. 54-60).

To dissolve into the self of, to surrender cordially to, and to be candid to abide by, the spiritual teacher loosely reflects the apparent sign of *Fana* but it commences neither in particular and nor terminates in general. It is a persistent process of self-annihilation, creation of second or other self and concurrent expiration and recreation of self by dissolution into Supreme One: The Truth. The dissolution of individual soul into supreme is extreme ultimate goal of ‘unit- whole mergence’. Such mergence is also *Fana* that is mechanised equivalently with *Baqa*. At this stage, *Fana* becomes *Baqa* but it affirms neither itself and nor denied its existence. In fact, it is *Fana* which eventually leads a soul to affirm itself in Supreme One. This infinite, eternal and sustained dissolution of unit into whole is characterised with, at the same time, *Fana* and

Baqa such as a drop of water drops into an ocean and lost its unique identity and acquires new one (Fana) while becoming ocean at the same time (Baqa).

One fallacy about Buddhism must be explicated that rebirth must not be confused with transmigration. In Majjhima Nikaya this misconception was corrected when a bhikhu (son of a fisherman) claimed, referring to Buddha, that the same consciousness moves through the round of rebirths. The other bhikkus (his listeners) denied his claim and went to the Lord (The spiritual teacher) to confirm whether he was right. The teacher severely rebuked the claimer by calling him 'Misguided Man'. The teacher then repeated his teachings and said, 'Have I not stated in many ways consciousness to be dependently arisen' (Majjhima, p. 350). By dependent consciousness he meant conditioned consciousness that 'the eye-consciousness is arisen by eye, that the ear-consciousness is arisen by ear and sound, that the nose-consciousness is arisen by nose and odours, that the tongue-consciousness is arisen by tongue and flavour' (Majjhima, p. 351). Similarly, he stated about body and mind consciousness dependent upon tangible and mind-objects, respectively (Majjhima, p. 349-353).

### 3.2 Panentheism and Pantheism

Panentheism contends universe and divine identical amalgamation – pantheism – and posits that supreme divine is the spirit of universe yet ontologically distinctive and transcendence, retaining its 'out-there' existence (Cooper, 2006; Keller, 2014). Hinduism introduced simplest explanation of panentheism (Biernacki, 2014). Its scriptures specifically Gita are strictly holding this philosophical postulate. It is unambiguous in Gita that divine is all pervaded, immanent and omnipotent; He generates and annihilates nature; sources all material and immaterial entities; offers and encompasses divine path for yogis yet rejoices his 'out-there' existence. His panentheistic presence is enunciated, diphonously, in Chapter 7, 9 and 11 in which he elaborated his all pervaded and out-there existence, we are quoting some verses below:

'...there is no truth superior to Me. *Everything rests upon Me, as pearls are strung on a thread...* Whatever being (and objects) that are pure, active and inert, know that they proceed from Me. They are in Me, *yet I am not in them*' (Gita, 7:7-12).

Similar description of his panentheistic attributes is asserted in chapter 9 (16-19) and also throughout the scripture which, essentially, expressed his pantheistic existence but when He analogically illustrated that 'as the mighty wind, blowing everywhere, rests always in the sky, all created beings rest in Me (Gita, 9:6). He clarified his panentheistic presence (Gita, 13:34). He spoke analogously several times to express his un-pantheistic divinity e.g., sun and shine, and pearl and thread (Gita, 7:7). It is important to quote that Gita not merely philosophically expressed the supreme celestial's out-there existence rather explained such contemplation experienced by Arjun<sup>6</sup> (Gita, 11:9-13).

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<sup>6</sup> Arjun saw 'the universal form of the Lord the unlimited expansions of the universe *situated in one place* although divided into many, many thousands' (Gita, 11:13).

Verse 12 and 20 from chapter 7 and 11 respectively, confirmed he is not pantheistic-being but panentheistic. Moreover, the most explicit explanation is posited in the beginning of chapter 9, which is as follows:

‘By Me, in My un-manifested form, this entire universe is pervaded. *All beings are in Me, but I am not in them.* And yet everything that is created does not rest in Me. Behold My mystic opulence! Although I am the maintainer of all living entities and although I am everywhere, *I am not a part of this cosmic manifestation,* for My Self is the very source of creation’ (Gita, 9:4-5).

Therefore, he suggested comprehending his all-pervaded form (Gita, 6:29-30; 7:29; 13:14) to enter into it (Gita, 2:70; 4:10) which is identical to *Baqa* in Sufism.

The credence of God is alien to Pali canon because the doctrine of *Pratityasamutpada* affirms that existence is conditioned which signifies causal mechanism of world such as karmic reaction. Theravada school priorities *pratityasamutpada* and Mahayana teachings strongly holds the doctrine of *Tathagatagarba* (the one thus gone; the one thus come and essence of all). Although, Mahayana scriptures are out of the scope of the study but partly contending tradition of Theravada and Mahayana demands a short comparative description on the accounts of God-nature because the themes, under discussion, are Godly segments.

In Theravada scriptures (e.g., Anguttara Nikaya) the doctrine of ‘Unconditioned’ is repeatedly used depicting the state of Bodhi or Nirvana but it was never explicated as identical to Tathagatagarba – Buddha-Nature. Although, ‘Unconditioned’ contends causal mechanism, reflects transcendental consciousness, affirms cessation of Dhukha and promises nirvana yet it is distinctive to Godly attributes. Whereas Tathagatagarba is identical to ‘Unconditioned’ in one sense: ‘State of Permanence’ – contrary to *Anatta*. The state of permanence does not explicitly declare to be God or to have Godly attributes but indicates that Buddhism is neither pantheistic nor panentheistic by its basic and ancient teachings specifically by Theravada school. Nevertheless, Mahayana school especially Zen sect believes in existence of God but does not prefer to use The Noun rather a doctrine: Tathagatagarba. Mahayana Buddhist laid foundation of Buddha-nature by interpreting Lotus Sutra, which has controversies to be an ancient text.

Pythagoras was panentheistic. His politics and rule of divine shows that gods do intervene in the world. He stated that ‘what comes first must be more honoured than what comes later’ approves that the rulers on earth are subsequent to gods. Hence, the ultimate ruling power are gods and divines. It must be noted that he also acclaimed himself divine that revealed the ruling cooperation of gods and divines. Precisely, his panentheistic tendency was appeared in his politicotheological philosophy. Thus, it makes more simplistic to claim that the mortals are bounded by the virtue that gods created and mechanised as it is quoted by Iamblichus (1818) that

‘All their decisions about what to do or not to do aimed at being in accord with the divine. This is the principle; all of life is so ordered as to follow the god, and the rationale of this philosophy is that people behave absurdly when they seek

the good anywhere but from the gods' (VP 137. Source is possibly Aristoxenus; cf. Guthrie [43] *HGP* 1.199, 1992).

Instead of godly mechanism of human life, he also believed on karma and taught the Dhamma by the middle as Siddhartha did. He asserted that human is partly responsible for his deed because they are not perfect, only God is, which again dragged divine intellect to submit his will to the supremacy of gods.

Table 2

*Summary of findings*

Theme	Hinduism	Buddhism	Sufism	Pythagoras
Transmigration	+	–	–	+
<i>Eternal Soul</i>	+	–	+	+
<i>Liberation</i>	+	+	+	+
<i>Karmic reaction</i>	+	+	+	+
Pantheism	–	–	–	–
Panentheism	+	–	+	+
<i>Intervening God</i>	+	–	+	+
<i>Source of all</i>	+	–	+	+

*Note:* same sign shows syncretic nature of a theme across theological scriptures.

Sufis believe on Oneness. They have very explicit poetic-philosophical illustration of this belief, but the dilemma emerges when they claim absolute Oneness which negate the existence of any other being except God Himself. Absolute Oneness strictly demands extinction of the all material and non-material existence. In fact, it refers to the existence of only and only one being: God. While they claim absolute oneness, they also not only firmly believe that a spiritual teacher is capable of godly attributes, but he is in fact god by all means. This claim is provisional unless they accomplish the sense of the true nature of God or become an image of their spiritual teacher. It shows that Sufis are not pantheistic rather panentheistic because the possession of godly attributes confirm the intervention of god in universe. Sufis ontology is poetic epistemology that explain existence as illusion which is, somewhat, alike Buddhism and Hinduism but the God is not 'out there' for them rather omniscient, omnipotent and all pervaded in one time across spaces. Hussain acclaimed that He is omnipresent, living within me and outside of me (Hussain, 2003, p. 551), offering Sufis His divine power, honouring them by approaching them and elevating their spiritual status by providing the chances to merge in Him. This unit-whole mergence is the highly divine goal to attain for Sufis which cannot be achieved without the guidance of spiritual teacher who is being guided by God.

#### 4. Conclusion

The selected theological epistemes led us to conclude that eternal soul is the basic philosophical tenant to begin a spiritual journey except Buddhism, but the ultimate goal is to be liberated from the illusions of this world to obtain pure reality which is 'out there'. This 'out

there' reality have different metaphors such as One God, gods and Nothingness – in Buddhism. To approach this 'out there' reality, various methods are designed by mystics. The variation in practices to approach the absolute reality rooted in epistemological philosophy of each theological segment. The combination of epistemological believes and ontological existences define methods to arrive at the ultimate end. Although, metaphor of methods and ultimate goal is distinctive, it reveals unity – The One ultimate goal – to merge in or to approach 'out there': The Unity.

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