

Further Reading

DIFFERENT CONCEPTS OF PARAMATMA ACROSS FOUR FAITHS

Different concepts of Paramatma across four faiths:

1. In Sanatan/Vedic, Paramatma is understood as the Supreme Being or Universal Soul that transcends individual existence. The Atman, or individual soul, is believed to be a part of the Paramatma, which is present in every living being.

- **Brahman and Paramatma:** In Advaita Vedanta (a prominent philosophical school), Brahman is the ultimate, unchanging reality, while Paramatma is seen as the personal aspect of the divine that interacts with the world and individual souls. The soul's ultimate goal is to realize its oneness with Paramatma, often described as achieving Moksha (liberation from the cycle of birth and death).
- **Bhakti Traditions:** In devotional Sanatan/Vedic particularly within the Bhakti movement, Paramatma is often associated with a personal god, such as Vishnu, Shiva, or Krishna. Devotees seek a direct relationship with Paramatma through love and devotion (bhakti). This aspect emphasizes the presence of the divine as an all-encompassing force that resides both within and outside the individual.

2. Jain faith

Jain faith presents a different perspective on the soul and the universe. While the term Paramatma is not explicitly used in Jain texts, the idea of a universal soul can be compared with the Jain concept of Jiva (individual soul) and Ayur (cosmic soul).

- **Jiva:** Each living being, whether human, animal, or plant, is believed to have an individual soul (Jiva), which is eternal and possesses consciousness. However, Jains do not believe in a Supreme Soul that pervades the universe. Instead, they focus on the liberation of the individual soul through the realization of right knowledge, right faith, and right conduct.
- **Paramatma Concept**:** While there is no Paramatma in Jainism in the same sense as in Sanatan/Vedic, there is a concept of universe's supreme consciousness—a pure, omniscient being who has attained liberation (like the Tirthankaras, the enlightened beings). However, the emphasis remains on the individual soul's journey to liberation, not on merging with a Supreme Soul.

3. Buddhist

While Paramatma is not a term directly used in Buddhist, the concept of a supreme or ultimate principle can be related to the understanding of Dhamma (the cosmic law and teachings of the Buddha) and Buddha-nature.

- **Buddha-nature:** This concept suggests that all beings have an inherent potential for enlightenment and contain a "Buddha seed," a latent divinity or enlightened essence. In this sense, Buddhist faith doesn't describe a singular Supreme Soul but rather a universal essence of wisdom and compassion inherent in all beings.

Nirvana and Ultimate Reality: In Mahayana Buddhist, there is an emphasis on the interconnectedness of all beings and the realization of emptiness (shunyata), which transcends any notion of a permanent self. The closest concept to Paramatma in this tradition might be the realization of ultimate reality, Nirvana, where one transcends the illusion of individual existence and attains a state of universal peace.

4. Sikh faith

In Sikh faith, Paramatma is closely related to the concept of Waheguru, the Supreme Being or God who is formless, all-pervading, and beyond human comprehension. The divine essence of Waheguru is seen as transcendent and immanent—existing both beyond and within the universe.

- Waheguru: The term signifies the formless and omnipresent God who is the source of all life and existence. Sikh faith teaches that God is both transcendent (beyond the world) and immanent (present within every living being). This concept mirrors the idea of Paramatma as the universal soul, where the divine essence resides within all of creation.
- Unity of Soul and God: In Sikh faith, the soul is viewed as a part of the divine, and through meditation on the name of Waheguru and selfless service, one can reunite with the divine essence. The goal is to merge with Waheguru, not through renunciation, but through devotion, humility, and selfless action.