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COMPARATIVE STUDY OF METAPHYSICAL CONCEPTS AND DIVINE DECREES IN NON-REVEALED RELIGIONS AND ISLAM

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Abstract:
Metaphysical inquiries regarding the nature of the Supreme Reality, spiritual entities, eschatological resurrection, and cosmic governance lie at the core of human religious evolution. This comparative paper examines the metaphysical frameworks and divine decrees within non-revealed/oriental religious traditions—specifically Hinduism, Confucianism, and Zoroastrianism—alongside the rigorous monotheistic paradigm of Islam. By contrasting the pantheistic and polytheistic spectrums of Hinduism, the humanistic-cosmic order of Confucianism, and the dualistic cosmogony of Zoroastrianism against Islamic Tawḥīd (transcendent monotheism), this study demonstrates how non-revealed traditions conceptualize the metaphysical world through immanent, cyclic, or dualistic lenses, whereas Islam presents an absolute, transcendent, yet intimately active Creator. Furthermore, the paper examines how these worldview distinctions influence eschatological expectations: the Hindu doctrine of Samsara (reincarnation) and Moksha versus the Islamic Ba‘th ba‘d al-Mawt (bodily resurrection) and final judgment (Qiyāmah).

Keywords: Metaphysics, Islamic Theology, Tawḥīd, Comparative Religion, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Confucianism, Eschatology, Reincarnation, Resurrection.

1. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 The Domain of Metaphysics in Comparative Religious Studies

Metaphysics (Mā ba‘d al-Ṭabī‘ah) represents the branch of philosophy and theology concerned with the fundamental nature of reality, existence, divinity, the unseen realm, and the ultimate destiny of creation. Across human civilizations, religious systems have served as the primary vehicles for formulating metaphysical worldviews. These frameworks regulate not only spiritual doctrines but also legal, moral, and social norms—the divine decrees (Aḥkām) that structure human conduct in accordance with cosmic realities.

In the classification of world religions, scholars frequently distinguish between Abrahamic religions (Adyān Ilāhiyyah) and non-revealed or historical/oriental traditions (Adyān Ghayr Ilāhiyyah). While revealed religions claim direct divine descent through prophetology (Nubuwwah) and scripture, non-revealed religions often emerge from evolutionary cultural philosophies, ancestral veneration, naturalistic observations, or historical reformers whose original teachings transformed into structured spiritual systems over centuries.

1.2 Research Objectives and Scope

This study provides a rigorous comparative analysis of the fundamental metaphysical constructs and divine decrees across non-revealed religions—specifically Hinduism, Confucianism, and Zoroastrianism—and Islam. The core parameters of comparative analysis include:

- The Concept of Godhead and Divine Nature (Tasawwur-e-Khudā / Tawḥīd)
- Pneumatology and Spiritual Beings (Angels, Devas, Spirits, and Demons)
- Cosmology and Cosmic Governance (Creation, Divine Decree, and Cosmic Order)
- Eschatology and the Unseen Realm (Life After Death, Reincarnation, Resurrection, Heaven/Swarga/Tian and Hell/Narak)

1.3 Methodology and Citation Standard

This research adopts an analytical, comparative, and textual methodology. Textual evidence provided in primary and secondary historical sources is systematically integrated.

2. METAPHYSICAL CONCEPTS IN NON-REVEALED RELIGIONS

2.1 Hinduism (Sanātana Dharma)

2.1.1 Historical Origin and Philosophical Spectrum

Hinduism is intrinsically tied to the geography of the Indus River basin, where the term "Hindu" originally functioned as a geographical designation rather than a formal religious identity (1). Adherents traditionally refer to their belief system as Sanātana Dharma, meaning the "Eternal Law." Estimated to originate around 3000 BCE, Hinduism represents one of the oldest living religious traditions (2).

Unlike traditions defined by a single historical founder or a unified creed, Hinduism encompasses a vast spectrum of beliefs, mythologies, and philosophical schools. It incorporates pantheism, monism, polytheism, and animism. Within popular traditions, the Hindu pantheon is metaphorically or literally described as containing upwards of 330 million deities (Devas), reflecting diverse cultural and sectarian evolution (10).

2.1.2 Godhead in Hindu Thought: Pantheism, Monism, and the Trimurti

The concept of the Supreme Divine in Hindu literature operates on multiple metaphysical levels:

Pantheism and Monism (Advaita / Wahdat al-Wujūd): In the Upanishads, the Divine (Brahman or Atman) is conceived as the ultimate, immanent, and transcendent essence underlying all cosmic manifestations. God does not exist as an entity distinct from creation; rather, creation is the manifest expression of the Divine (1). Brahman is beyond anthropomorphic description, human thought, and linguistic encapsulation. The universe itself is energized by this eternal cosmic soul (3). The Yajurveda asserts that the divine entity pervades all living and non-living existence, sustaining creation (4). The Atharvaveda and Mandukya Upanishad emphasize the ultimate reality of Ishvara or Om as the eternal, omnipresent, and imperishable cosmic reality (10).

The Trimurti (The Sacred Triad): To reconcile abstract metaphysical monism with popular religious devotion, Hinduism formulated the doctrine of Trimurti—the triad of primary gods who execute cosmic functions:

- **Brahma:** The Creator deity. According to Dharma Shastras, Brahma emerged from a golden cosmic egg (Hiranyagarbha) as the primary generator of cosmic form (5). However, temple worship of Brahma remains minimal in comparison to other deities.
- **Vishnu:** The Preserver and Sustainer. Viewed as the compassionate caretaker of the universe, Vishnu maintains cosmic order (Dharma). Popular Hinduism accords Vishnu full sovereign divinity, alongside his consort Lakshmi (6). Vishnu manifests on earth through various incarnations (Avatars) across cosmic epochs.
- **Shiva (Mahadeva):** The Destroyer and Transformer. Associated with destruction, ascetical power, and ultimate cosmic dissolution, Shiva symbolizes both destruction and spiritual liberation (Nirvana). Worshiped frequently through the Linga, Shiva is portrayed as the master of spirits and ascetics (7).

2.1.3 The Concept of Avatar (Incarnation)

The doctrine of Avatar (derived from ava-tr, "to descend") denotes the physical manifestation of divinity on earth (8). According to the Bhagavad Gita and the Puranas, whenever righteousness declines and evil prevails, the Divine assumes a physical or human form to restore order, protect the virtuous, and destroy wickedness (9).

2.1.4 Pneumatology: Devas and Spiritual Hierarchy

In Hindu metaphysics, Devas function analogously to angels in Abrahamic religions, operating as spiritual administrators of physical elements and moral laws (10):

- **Indra:** Sovereign deity of the heavens, rain, and thunder.
- **Varuna:** Guardian of cosmic order, truth, and moral laws (Rta).

- **Agni:** Deity of fire and divine messaging.
- **Vayu:** Deity of wind and life-force.
- **Maruts:** Storm spirits associated with atmospheric power.
- **Ushas & Surya:** Deities of dawn and the solar disk.

Philosophically, Devas are viewed as elevated souls traversing cosmic cycles who have attained divine status through merit, though they remain subject to eventual cosmic dissolution (11). Vedic reform movements (such as Arya Samaj) argue that the Vedas command exclusive worship of the singular Ishvara, presenting Devas as subservient entities (13).

2.1.5 Hindu Eschatology: Samsara, Karma, and Nirvana

Hindu metaphysics rejects a single linear temporal lifespan. Instead, existence is governed by Samsara—the continuous cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (11):

- **Karma:** The law of cause and effect. Every action, thought, and intention generates karmic energy that dictates the soul's (Atman) future incarnation. Virtuous deeds lead to rebirth in higher social strata or heavenly realms (Swarga), while negative deeds lead to birth in lower animal forms, plant life, or hellish states (Narak) (11, 16).
- **Moksha / Nirvana:** Ultimate spiritual liberation achieved when the soul breaks free from Samsara through knowledge (Jnana), devotion (Bhakti), or righteous action (Karma Yoga) (17).
- **Heavenly and Hellish Realms:** Hindu texts describe seven upper heavenly realms (Bhuva Loka, Swarga Loka, Mahar Loka, Jana Loka, Tapa Loka, Satya Loka) and seven subterranean lower realms (Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Tala Tala, Maha Tala, Rasa Tala, Patala) overseen by Yama (god of death) and recorded by Chitragupta (17, 20, 21, 22).

2.2 Confucianism (Ruism)

2.2.1 Nature of Confucian Thought

Confucianism, established by Master Kong (Confucius, 551–479 BCE), operates primarily as an ethico-political and moral framework focused on social harmony, filial piety (Xiao), and righteous governance (Ren) (23). Scholars continuously debate whether Confucianism constitutes a formal religion or a moral philosophy. However, its core classics contain profound implicit metaphysical principles.

2.2.2 The Metaphysical Concept of Tian (Heaven)

Confucius avoided speculative metaphysical debates regarding the detailed nature of spirits or the afterlife, focusing instead on practical moral duties in earthly life. When questioned about death, Confucius remarked: "When we do not yet know about life, how can we know about death?" (23).

Despite this pragmatic orientation, Confucian cosmology relies on the concept of Tian (Heaven):

- Tian represents an intelligent, impersonal, or semi-personal supreme cosmic power that establishes moral order and confers the "Mandate of Heaven" (Tianming) upon virtuous rulers (23).
- Confucius expressed profound reverence for Tian, viewing his own moral mission as divinely ordained: "Heaven knows me... At fifty, I knew the mandates of Heaven" (23).
- In Confucian classic texts such as the I Ching (Yi Jing), moral cause and effect operate systematically across generations: families that accumulate goodness enjoy lingering blessings, whereas those accumulating evil suffer inevitable distress (24).

2.2.3 Ancestral Spirits and Rites (Li)

While Confucius did not elaborate on an individual eternal soul in the Abrahamic sense, Confucianism heavily emphasizes ancestral veneration. Ancestral spirits reside in the realm of Tian and can exert benign influences upon living descendants if honored through proper ritual rites (Li) (23, 24).

2.3 Zoroastrianism (Mazdayasna)

2.3.1 Historical Context and Founder

Founded by the prophet Zarathustra (Zoroaster) in ancient Persia (c. 6th century BCE), Zoroastrianism represents one of the earliest monotheistic-dualistic religious frameworks (25). Zarathustra preached against prevailing polytheistic ritualism, calling for exclusive devotion to the supreme creator deity (25).

2.3.2 Ahura Mazda and Theological Dualism

Zoroastrian metaphysics rests upon a primary theological cosmic conflict:

- **Ahura Mazda (The Wise Lord):** The supreme, uncreated, all-knowing, and perfectly good God who created the spiritual (Menog) and physical (Getig) worlds (26).

- **Angra Mainyu (Ahriman):** The hostile, destructive spirit responsible for evil, disease, chaos, and moral corruption (26).

While historical Zoroastrianism developed a strong dualistic paradigm where Ahura Mazda and Ahriman lock in cosmic warfare, early texts (Gathas) emphasize Ahura Mazda's ultimate sovereign victory over darkness (28, 29).

2.3.3 Prophethood and Angelology

Zoroastrianism presents a defined prophetology and angelology (30):

- **Prophethood:** Zarathustra is viewed as a divinely chosen messenger tasked with guiding humanity toward righteousness through truthfulness in thoughts, words, and deeds (25).
- **Amesha Spentas (Holy Immortals):** Six divine emanations or archangels assisting Ahura Mazda in cosmic administration (31, 32):
    - Vohu Manah (Good Mind)
    - Asha Vahishta (Truth/Righteousness)
    - Khshathra Vairya (Desirable Dominion)
    - Spenta Armaiti (Holy Devotion)
    - Haurvatat (Wholeness/Perfection)
    - Ameretat (Immortality)

2.3.4 Zoroastrian Eschatology: The Chinvat Bridge, Heaven, and Hell

Zoroastrianism presents a linear historical eschatology that strongly parallels Abrahamic concepts:

- **Individual Judgment:** Upon death, the human soul remains near the body for three days before traveling to the Chinvat Bridge (Bridge of the Separator) (33, 34).
- **The Crossing:** For the righteous soul, the bridge expands into a broad, pleasant pathway guided by a beautiful maiden (Daena, representing bad or good conscience). The soul ascends through tiers of light—the stars, moon, and sun—eventually entering the Highest Heaven (Garo Demana, the House of Song/Light) (34). For the wicked soul, the bridge shrinks to a blade's edge. The soul plummets into the abyss of Hell (Drujo Demana, the House of Lies), described as a dark, foul, solitary realm of intense torment (35).
- **Frashokereti:** The final cosmic renewal when evil is permanently annihilated, dead bodies are resurrected, and creation is restored to pristine perfection (34, 35).

3. THE ISLAMIC METAPHYSICAL PARADIGM

3.1 Absolute Monotheism (Tawḥīd) and the Divine Nature

Islamic metaphysics is founded upon Tawḥīd—the absolute, uncompromising oneness and transcendence of Allah. Islam asserts that belief in Tawḥīd was the singular foundational message delivered by all prophets from Adam to Muhammad (36).

3.1.1 Categorization of Tawḥīd

Islamic theologians structure Tawḥīd into three interrelated dimensions:

- **Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah (Unity of Lordship):** Affirming that Allah alone is the sole Creator, Sustainer, Controller, and Sovereign Master of the universe (36).
- **Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah / al-'Ibādah (Unity of Worship):** Directing all acts of worship, prayer, devotion, and obedience exclusively to Allah, rejecting all intermediaries or secondary deities (38).
- **Tawḥīd al-Asmā' wa-l-Ṣifāt (Unity of Divine Names and Attributes):** Affirming all attributes describing Allah in the Qur'an and authentic Sunnah without anthropomorphism (Tashbīh), negation (Ta'ṭīl), or physical spatial containment (37, 39).

3.1.2 Quranic Foundations of Tawḥīd

The textual bedrock of Islamic metaphysics is codified in Surah al-Ikhlāṣ and Ayah al-Kursī:

"Say, 'He is Allah, [who is] One, Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent.'" (Qur'an 112:1–4)

The Divine epithet Al-Ṣamad signifies the self-sufficient, absolute Sovereign upon whom all creation depends, while remaining entirely independent of creation (37). Islam rejects all concepts of divine incarnation (Avatar), physical progeny, or pantheistic fusion between Creator and creation(Almida.albqrah.Alhashar.Alnahal.alanbia.Almomnoon.Alshurah.Alnoor.Alkuhf)

3.2 Islamic Pneumatology: Angels (Malā'ikah)

In Islamic metaphysics, angels are created from pure light (Nūr). They lack free will in moral choices, possessing absolute, impeccable obedience to divine commands(Alnahal.Fatir.Gafir.Qaaf.Inftar.Aale Imran.Almudussir)

3.3 The Unseen Creation: Jinn and Satan (Iblīs)

3.3.1 Nature of the Jinn

Unlike angels, Jinn are conscious metaphysical beings created from smokeless fire (Mārijin min Nār) prior to human creation. They possess agency and free will, making them morally accountable before Allah:

"And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me." (Qur'an 51:56)

3.3.2 Satan (Iblīs) and Moral Evil

Islam explicitly rejects dualistic models where Satan acts as an independent god of evil. Iblīs was originally a devout Jinn elevated among the angelic ranks who fell from grace through pride (Kibr) and disobedience when commanded to bow before Adam:

"He refused and was arrogant and became of the disbelievers." (Qur'an 2:34)

Satan's power is strictly limited to temptation (Waswasah); he possesses no ontological power over human agency(Yusuf.Almida.Alaraf)

3.4 Islamic Eschatology (Al-Ma‘ād)

3.4.1 Death and the Intermediate Realm (Barzakh)

Upon physical death, the human soul enters Barzakh—an intermediate spiritual realm separating the earthly world from the final resurrection(Alanbia.Alqiamah)

The archangel of death (Malak al-Mawt) extracts the soul . In the grave, two angels (Munkar and Nakīr) interrogate the deceased regarding three fundamental principles: Who is your Lord? What is your religion? Who is your Prophet? . Based on faith and deeds, the grave becomes either a meadow of Paradise or a trench of punishment (‘Adhāb al-Qabr).

3.4.2 The Day of Resurrection (Qiyāmah) and Bodily Re-creation

Islam emphasizes absolute physical, bodily resurrection (Ba‘th ba‘d al-Mawt)(Alroom.Altakweer.Mrym.Alwaqia.Alqiamah.Alisrah)

- **First Trumpet (Ṣūr):** Blown by Isrāfīl, causing total cosmic collapse and the death of all living entities .
- **Second Trumpet:** Blown to resurrect all human bodies from their fundamental cellular components .
- **Rejection of Reincarnation:** Islam completely rejects karmic reincarnation (Samsara). Human life is a singular, decisive test.

3.4.3 The Great Gathering (Ḥashr), Judgment (Ḥisāb), and Al-Mīzān

On the Day of Gathering, all humanity is assembled on a vast plain under intense reckoning . Every individual receives their record of deeds (Kitāb/Ṣuḥuf). The cosmic scale (Al-Mīzān) weighs moral actions. All must traverse the bridge over Hell (Al-Ṣirāṭ); those with righteous deeds and divine grace cross safely into Paradise, while the unrighteous fall into the abyss.

3.4.4 Eternal Destinations: Paradise (Jannah) and Hell (Jahannam)

Paradise (Jannah): An abode of infinite physical, spiritual, and moral beauty featuring various ascending ranks (Jannat al-Firdaws, ‘Adn, Na‘īm):

The supreme spiritual reward is the unmediated vision of Allah (Ru'yah).

Hell (Jahannam): A realm of intense physical and existential suffering designed for absolute justice against evil, unrepentance, and divine rejection

4. ANALYTICAL COMPARATIVE SYNTHESIS

4.1 Divergence in Cosmology and Temporal Metaphysics

Non-revealed religions frequently adopt cyclic cosmic models. In Hinduism, existence expands and contracts through multi-billion-year epoch cycles (Yugas), matching the endless re-incarnation of individual souls (Atman). In contrast, Abrahamic monotheism—fully articulated in Islam—presents a linear temporal model: creation possesses an absolute temporal beginning (Khalaq), a single probationary earthly span, an intermediate state (Barzakh), and an ultimate end culminating in physical resurrection (Qiyāmah) and eternal afterlife.

4.2 Divergence in Ontology of Godhead

- **Pantheistic Immanence vs. Absolute Transcendence:** Hinduism presents Brahman as immanent within all matter, blurring the ontological boundary between Creator and creation. Islam strictly preserves the divine divide: Allah is entirely distinct from creation (Laysa ka-mithlihi shay') while maintaining absolute operational knowledge and sovereignty over every particle.

- **Dualism vs. Sovereign Monotheism:** Zoroastrianism attributes cosmic evil to an uncreated adversarial power (Ahriman). Islam rejects ontological dualism: Satan is merely a rebellious creation operating within divine permission. Evil is a moral consequence of created free will, not an independent cosmic deity competing with Allah.

5. CONCLUSION

This comparative research highlights the profound philosophical variations in how human traditions address core metaphysical questions. Non-revealed traditions offer rich philosophical formulations:

- **Hinduism** provides an intricate monistic-pantheistic worldview centered on karmic law (Samsara) and liberation (Moksha).
- **Confucianism** embeds metaphysics within ethical, social, and generational harmony dictated by Heaven (Tian).
- **Zoroastrianism** introduced a linear eschatological conflict between good and evil (Ahura Mazda vs. Ahriman), featuring individual bridge judgment (Chinvat) and ultimate world renewal.

Islam synthesizes these metaphysical inquiries into an uncompromising, transcendent monotheistic paradigm (Tawḥīd). By defining Allah as the uncreated, singular Sustainer (Al-Ṣamad), Islam eliminates pantheistic blur, polytheistic dispersion, and dualistic conflict. It validates the spiritual realm through impeccable light-created angels (Malā'ikah) and morally accountable Jinn, while framing human destiny around a singular earthly trial culminating in physical resurrection (Ba‘th), cosmic divine justice (Mīzān), and eternal spiritual and physical fulfillment in Paradise.

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