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### The concept of jīvātmā or individual soul in upaniṣads and śrīmad Bhagavad gītā

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#### **Abstract**

Jīvātmā or individual soul exists in a very pure, eternal, invisible, unchangeable, immutable, formless and infinite. In Hinduism the individual soul is called as Ātman. As per upaniṣadic idea that individual soul is very conscious and he has no desires, ego, dreams, feelings and any other relationship with the body. The individual soul is smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest. He resides in the heart of all beings. He is free from any type of griefs. He is soundless, touchless, tasteless and he has no smell and he has no beginning or end. I have taken an attempt to describe the qualities of that individual soul from upaniṣads and Bhagavad gītā.

#### **Introduction**

In Hinduism, the jīvātmā or individual soul has gained a distinct place and he is eternal, universal and very pure. Although the jīvātman is eternal he is imprisoned at the time of birth and he left the body and take a new existence as per his karma (action) at the time of death. According to Hindu beliefs a performer of, good actions became able to gain a good birth and a performer of bad actions get an evil birth.

According to the schools of Hinduism the individual soul (jīvātmā) exists in a state which is very pure, eternal, invisible, unchangeable, immutable, indestructible, formless and infinite. In Hinduism, the individual soul is mostly called as the self or the Ātman. In many other Hindu scriptures are called this self-individual soul as self-sense means I (aham). But as per upaniṣadic idea that individual soul is very conscious and who has no any modifications and also he is existed in the beings as very pure. He has no desires, ego, dreams, feelings and any other relation with anybody else.

According to non-dualism schools, the individual soul is insisted with māyā (illusion). When he gets liberation (mokṣa), at that time he disappeared and enters into the supreme soul. But as per the dualistic schools, the individual soul is separate and indefinite from the supreme soul (Brahma) and as per the dualism, then all soul is different and individual from the others.

Advaita vedānta of ādi śaṅkarācārya describes that the Ātman or individual soul has formed by awareness. The soul when realizes that, there is no other without the supreme soul (Brahman), at that time he becomes eligible to get the eternal bliss in this world.

**Brahmasatyam jagannithyā jīvo brahmaiva nāparaḥ/**

**Jīvanmuktastu tadvidvān iti vedāntaḥ//<sup>1</sup>**

In western philosophy, Rene Descartes gives his opinion that man was a union of the body and the soul, each a distinct substance acting on the other, and the soul who was equivalent to the wind. (Soul, Religion and philosophy, encyclopedia Britannica)

Different type of religions and different opinions about the individual soul and its relationship with the beings and also the mortality of the jīvātmā and his creation.

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### The concept of jīvātmā in Kaṭha upaniṣad

The knowing soul has not taken birth and nor dies. It does not come from anything and nor anything came into being from it. The soul who has no birth, he is eternal, perpetual and he is the old one who has not suffered any destruction, even the body is destroyed.

**Na jāyate mriyate vā vipāścīn'nāyaṁ  
kutaścīna babhūva kaścit/  
Ajo nityaḥ śāśvato'yaṁ purāṇo  
na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre//<sup>2</sup>**

Ādi Śaṅkarācārya who is a great philosopher and commentator describes in his vivekacūḍāmaṇi that, the ātman has no birth and no death. It has no growth nor ruin and it has no any changes. It is eternal after the body destroyed, it has no cessation of existence. It is like the sky which is in a jar and it exists as an independent. The ātman is beyond of all changes.

**Na jāyate no mriyate na vardhate  
na kṣīyate no vikaroti nityaḥ/  
Vilīyamāne'pi vapuṣyamuṣminna  
līyate kumbha evāmbaram svayam//<sup>3</sup>**

This jīvātmā or individual soul is concealed in all beings and it reveals not to all but it is only seen by the seers of the subtle and which is very pointed and by the subtle knowledge(buddhi).

**Eṣa sarveṣu bhūteṣu gūḍho'tmā na prakāśate/  
Dr̥ṣyate tvagryayā budhyā sūkṣma darśibhiḥ//<sup>4</sup>**

The killer who thinks, he is killing the soul and that killed thinks, he is killed by anybody. They are not both known to him (the soul or jīvātmā). Because this soul is not killed and nobody cannot able to kill it.

**Hantā cenmanyate hantuṁ  
hataścenmanyate hatam/  
Ubhau tau na vijānīto nāyaṁ  
hanti na hanyate//<sup>5</sup>**

The ātman or individual soul is smaller than the smallest and he is greater than the greatest. He resides in the heart of all creatures. The jīvātmā or individual soul which has no desires, it becomes free from any type of griefs, remember the renown of that soul through his purity of senses and clean of mind.

**Aṇoraṇiyān mahato mahīyānātmāsya  
jantornihito guhāyām/  
Tamakratuḥ paśyati vītaśoko  
dhātuprasādnmahi mānamātmanah//<sup>6</sup>**

Although the soul or jīvātmā seats yet it can travel to a great distance. Though it sleeps, it can go everywhere. Besides the supreme soul, nobody cannot able to know that individual soul whether he is joyful or joyless. The description of the upaniṣad is like this.

**Āsīno dūram vrajati śayāno yāti sarvataḥ/  
Kastaṁ madāmadam devaṁ  
madanyo jñātumarhati//<sup>7</sup>**

The ātmā or individual soul is not attained by the study of the Vedas and nor by intellect gained it nor by much learning. But it is gained by him, whom it desires, this is the self-soul or ātmā who discloses the real self-appearance.

**Nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyo na  
medhayā na vahunā śrutena/  
Yamevaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyastasyaiṣa  
ātmā vivṛṇute tanuṁ svām//<sup>8</sup>**

Further, it is said that, the individual soul or ātmā is the master of the chariot and who is already seated on it."ātmānaṁ rathinaṁ vidhi śarīraṁ rathameva tu"(kaṭhopeniṣad.III,3)

This jīvātmā or individual soul is concealed in all and it reveals not to all but it is only seen by the seers of the subtle and which is very pointed and by the subtle knowledge(budhi).

**Eṣa sarveṣu bhūteṣu gūḍho'tmā na prakāśate/  
Dr̥ṣyate tvagryayā budhyā sūkṣmadarśibhiḥ//<sup>9</sup>**

The ātman or individual soul has no sound means soundless, he is touchless, tasteless and he has no forms and he is eternal and he has no smell. He has no beginning or end. He is the beyond of all sense perceptions and he is immutable. One who realizes the reality he becomes free from the jaws of death in this world.

**Āśadhamasparśamarupamvyayaṁ tathā'  
rasaṁ nityam agandhavac ca a yat/  
Anādyanantaṁ mahataḥ paraṁ dhruvaṁ  
nicāsyā tanmṛtyumukhāt pramucyate//<sup>10</sup>**

The genius does not grieve after realizing the ātman, that is all pervading one who sees the objects of a dreaming state and also waking state.

**Svapnāntaṁ jāgaritāntaṁ cobhou yenānupaśyati/  
Mahāntaṁ bibhumātmanam  
matvā dhīro na śocati//<sup>11</sup>**

That great ātman cannot able to get by the words, the mind and not by the eyes. It exists in anywhere, who says, how can it be realized.

**Naiva vācā na manasā prāptum śakyo na cakṣuṣā/  
Asīti bruvato'nayatra kathaṁ tadupalabhyate//<sup>12</sup>**

### The concept of Ātman in māṇḍūkya upaniṣad

Māṇḍūkya upaniṣad says about the jīva or individual soul that, it is not known to anything when the jīva sleeps by the influence of māyā which is beginningless and when it awakens, at that time, realizes the dreamless, beginningless and nonduality.

**Anādimāyayā supto yadā jīvaḥ prabudhyate/  
Ajamanidramasvapnamadvaitaṁ budhyate tadā//<sup>13</sup>**

The jīva is not ever born. It has no cause to produce which exists. There is nothing to born forever, which is the highest truth.

**Na kaścijjāyate jīvaḥ sambhavo'sya na vidyate/  
Etattaduttamaṁ satyaṁ yatra kiñcinna jāyate//<sup>14</sup>**

Although there are different forms, frames, and functions, yet, it has no influence and any other difference in the sky(ākasa) and which is always seen as one. such as, the ātman is the same truth and it cannot be explained in variety.

**Rupakāryasamākhyāśca bhidyante tatra tatra vai/  
Ākāśasya na bhedo'sti tadvajjīveṣu nirnayaḥ//<sup>15</sup>**

Like a rope is imagined like the snake or water line in the dark place and whose real nature cannot be imagined as well as the ātman is perceived in various ways.

**Anīcīta yathā rajjurandhakāre vikalpitā/  
Sarpadhārādibhirbhāvaistadvadātmā vikalpitaḥ//<sup>16</sup>**

The concept of jīvātmā or individual soul in śrīmad Bhagavad gītā

Bhagavān (god) says know, that soul is indestructible(avināśī). It pervades in all bodies. Nobody can be able to destroy that ātmā due to immutable.

**Avināśī tu tadvidhi yena sarvamidaṁ tataṁ/  
Vināśamavyasyāsyā na kaścikartumaharti//<sup>17</sup>**

One who thinks that ātmā slays and also who thinks, this ātmā is slain, they are not both perceived the real truth of this ātmā. Because this ātmā neither slays nor this is slain.

**Ya enaṁ xetti hantāraṁ yaścainaṁ manyate hatam/  
Ubhau tou na vijānīto nāyaṁ hantiṁ na hanyate//<sup>18</sup>**

The ātmā has no birth, nor this ātmā die at any moment. The soul has not come into any being and also he will not again come into being. The individual soul is always seen as unborn, permanent, ancient and eternal. He has no slain even the body is destroyed.

**Na jāyate mriyate vā kadācinnāyaṁ  
bhūtvā vā na bhūyaḥ/  
Ajo nityaḥ śāśvato'yaṁ purāṇo  
na nanyate hanyamāne śarīre//<sup>19</sup>**

Ātmā is divided in to two, the first one is aṇuātmā and second is bibhu-ātmā. kaṭhōpaniṣad says like this.

**Aṇoraṇīyānmahato mahīyān  
Ātmāsyā jantornihito guhāyām/  
Tamakratuḥ paśyanti vītaśoko  
Dhātuḥ prasādānmahimānamātmanah//<sup>20</sup>**

One who knows that this ātmā is indestructible (avināśī), eternal(Nitya) and it has no birth(Aja) and no change. O Arjuna, how can one slay to anybody or, how can one become a cause of slaying of others?

**Vedāvināśīnaṁ nitayaṁ ya enamajmavyam/  
Kathaṁ sa puruṣaḥ pārtha kaṁ  
ghātayati hanti kam//<sup>21</sup>**

As the persons abandon his old dress, and wears a new dress like thus, the individual soul has given up the old body and takes a new body to reside in that body.

**Vāsāmsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya havāni  
grhṇāti naro'parāṇi/  
Tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jirāṇā  
nyanāni samyāti navāni dehi//<sup>22</sup>**

The muṇḍaka upaniṣad and śvetāśāstropaniṣad describe the whole philosophy of the Vedānta that, there are two birds in the same tree but one bird has taken the fruit to eat, at the same time another bird is sitting on the branch of the tree without eating. Here one is the individual soul and another is the supreme soul. The upaniṣadic description is like this.

**Samāne vṛkṣe puruṣo nimagno'  
nīsayā śocati muhyamānaḥ/  
Juṣṭaṁ yadā paśyatyanyamīśamasya  
mahimānamiti vītaśokaḥ//<sup>23</sup>**

The soul or ātmā cannot be cut into pieces by the weapon of anybody, the fire cannot able to burn it and the water cannot able to do wet it, nor any wind can able to dry it(ātmā).

**Nainaṁ chindanti śāstrāṇi  
nainaṁ dahanti pavakaḥ/  
Na cainaṁ kledayantyāpo  
na śoṣayati marutaḥ//<sup>24</sup>**

The Ātmā or individual soul is unbreakable, and it cannot be burnt by fire and not dried by the air. Ātmā is everlasting, omnipresent (sarvagata), stable and unchangeable(sthāṇu) and eternal also.

**Acchedyo'yamadāhyo'yamakledyo'śoṣya eva ca/  
Nityaḥ sarvagataḥ sthāṇuracalo'yaṁ sanātanaḥ//<sup>25</sup>**

The individual soul is subtle as the hair point which is divided into hundreds of times and he is capable of infinity and he is known as jīvātmā. He has no forms like male or female, nor neuter. He identified with that, whatever body he assumes.

**Vālāgraśatabhāgasya śatadhā kalpitasya ca/  
Bhāgo jīvaḥ sa vijñeyaḥ sa  
cānantaḥ sa cānantaḥ kalpate//  
Naiva strī na pumāneṣa na caivāyaṁnapuṁsakaḥ/  
Yadyaccharī ramādatte tena tena sa yujyate//<sup>26</sup>**

The soul is said as invisible, unthinkable, unchangeable and knowing him like thus, one cannot be able to think for the body.

**avyakto'yamacintyo'yamavikāryo'yamucyate/  
Tasmādevaṁ viditvainaṁ nānuśocitumarhasi//<sup>27</sup>**

Śvetāśvataropaniṣad says that the ātmā or individual soul is greater than greatest and this ātmā is hidden in the inner heart of all creatures. One can free from all desires and sorrows by the grace of that divine soul who is the creator of the universe and the person

becomes able to realize the reality of God by his divine grace.

**Aṅoraṇīyān mahato mahīyānātmā  
guhāyaṁ nihito'sya jantoh/  
Tamakratuḥ paśyati vītaśoko  
dhātuḥ prasādānmahimānmīśam//<sup>28</sup>**

26.śvetāśvataropaniṣad.5.9,5.10.

27.Bhagavadgītā.2.25.

28.śvetāśvataropaniṣad.3.20.

### Conclusion

From the above discussions it is concluded that the individual soul has come from that supreme soul.. He is the greater than the greatest and he is formless,touchless,unthinkable,unchangeable and who has no destruction even after the body is destroyed and also he is omnipresent,stable and eternal and whose existence is perceived forever.

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### Footnotes

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- 5.kaṭhopaniṣad,2,19.
- 6.kaṭhopaniṣad,2,20.
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- 8.kaṭhopaniṣad.2.23.
- 9.kaṭhopaniṣad.3.12.
- 10.kaṭhopaniṣad.3.15.
- 11.kaṭhopaniṣad.4.4.
- 12.kaṭhopaniṣad.4.4.
- 13.māṇḍūkya upaniṣad.1.7.16.
- 14.māṇḍūkya upaniṣad.3.48.
- 15.māṇḍūkya upaniṣad.3.6.
- 16.māṇḍūkya upaniṣad.2.17.
- 17.Bhagavadgītā.2.17.
- 18.Bhagavadgītā.2.19.
- 19.Bhagavadgītā.2.20.
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- 21.Bhagavadgītā.2.1.
- 22.Bhagavadgītā.2.22.
- 23.muṇḍaka upaniṣad.3.1.2.Śvetāśvataropaniṣad.4.7.
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