



*International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Studies (IJHSSS)*  
*A Peer-Reviewed Bi-monthly Bi-lingual Research Journal*  
*ISSN: 2349-6959 (Online), ISSN: 2349-6711 (Print)*  
*Volume-II, Issue-II, September 2015, Page No. 297-302*  
*Published by Scholar Publications, Karimganj, Assam, India, 788711*  
*Website: <http://www.ijhsss.com>*

---

## **Concept of Soul and Liberation in Jainism**

**Kusum Doley**

*Dept. of Philosophy Bihpuria College, Bihpuria, Lakhimpur, Assam, India*

### **Abstract**

*Jainism is primarily an ethical teaching and its aim is the perfection of the soul. The idea of the soul has occupied an important place in Jaina Philosophy. The whole universe is brought under the two everlasting, uncreated, eternal and co-existing categories which are called which are Jiva and Ajiva. Jiva means the conscious spirit and Ajiva means the unconscious non-spirit. According to Jainism a Jiva or a soul is a conscious substance. Consciousness is the essence of the soul. Jiva is self-illuminated and illuminated other things also. The soul is eternal, but it also undergoes, changes of states. Jainism is realistic and pluralistic. It believes in the reality of the world with all the plural objects in it.*

*When the soul is freed from bondage of karma and has transcended the possibility of rebirth, it attains liberation. Karma is a subtle matter which enters into the soul and causes its bondage. By ignorance the soul identifies itself with matter. Karma is the link which unites the soul to the body. Ignorance of truth and four passions which are called Kasaya or sticky substance. The state when Karmic particles actually begin to flow towards the soul to bind. The state when these particles actually infiltrate into the soul and bind it is called bandha or bondage.*

*In Jainism liberation can come only through true discrimination between soul and matter. It bondage of the soul is its association with matter, liberation must mean the complete dissociation of the soul from matter. This can be attained by complete elimination of the matter with which the soul has become already mingled. Right faith, knowledge and conduct are the three Jewels (tri-ratna) of Jainism. They are inseparably bound up and perfection of one goes with the perfection of the other two. This paper is an attempt to study the concept of Soul and Liberation in Jainism.*

**Key Words: Jainism, jiva, soul, bondage, liberation.**

---

## **Introduction**

It is customary to divide the schools of Indian philosophy into two broad classes-orthodox and heterodox. The Nyaya, the Vaiseshika, the Samkhya, the Yoga, the Mimamsa and the Vedanta are the orthodox schools. The Carvaka, the Buddhist and the Jaina are the heterodox schools. They reject the authority of the Vedas and the concept of God. As heterodox school, Jainism denies the existence of God as the creator of the world. Jainism admit the reality of the world and the permanent souls which heterogeneous in their nature.

Jaina Philosophy is common-sense realism and pluralism. The objects perceived by us are real and they are many. They Jainas are the followers of jina, the victor. The name Jainism indicates the predominantly ethical character of the system. Jainism do not believe in God, but they adore the

Tirthankaras. The whole universe of being is traced to the two everlasting, uncreated, co-existing but independent categories of jiva and ajiva.

## **Objective**

For this paper, the following objectives are formulated to discuss.

- a) To explain the concept of soul in Jaina Philosophy.
- b) To analysis, how can soul liberation in Jainism.

## **Concept of Soul**

Jainism is realistic pluralistic. It believes in the reality of world with all the plural objects in it. According to Jainism a jiva or a soul is a conscious substance. Consciousness is the essence of the soul. Souls in Jainism may be theoretically arranged in a continuous series according to the degree of consciousness. Man has got an eternal conscious substance within him known as the Jiva (soul). All living beings have souls within them, only the soul of man is most developed, because consciousness in it is the most manifest. Man's soul is potentially perfect and is capable of attaining infinite power, infinite knowledge, infinite faith and infinite bliss.

The Jiva is not infinite but co-extensive with body, as it can immediately know objects only within the body. Consciousness is not present everywhere but only in the body. It is the soul that knows things, performs activities, enjoys pleasures, suffers pain and illumines itself and other objects. The soul is eternal, but it also undergoes, change of states. It is different from the body and its existence is directly proved by its consciousness of itself.

For Jains the existence of the soul is directly proved by such uncontradicted immediate experience as 'I feel pleasure'. According to Jainism when we perceive the quality of a substance, we say, we perceive the substance. They argued that on seeing a rosy colour we hold that we perceive the substance rose to which the colour belongs. On similar grounds we can holds that soul is directly perceived, because we immediately perceive characters of the soul as pleasure, pain, volition, doubts, remembrance and knowledge etc.

### **Jains believe**

- I. The soul exists forever.
- II. Each is always independent.
- III. The soul is responsible for what it does.
- IV. The soul experiences the experiences the consequences of its actions.
- V. The soul can become liberated from the cycle of birth and death.

The Jainas conceive the soul primarily as a living being. Consciousness is found in every part of a living body, and if consciousness the character of the soul, the soul should be admitted to be present in every part of the body and therefore to occupy space.

## **Bondage of the soul**

The suffering individuals, for the Jains, are a jiva or a living, conscious substance called the soul. This soul is inherently perfect. It has infinite potentiality within. The soul is either liberated or mundane. Karma is subtle matter which enters into the soul and causes its bondage. By ignorance it identifies itself with matter. Karma is the link which unites the soul to the body. According to the

Jainism the passions which cause bondage are anger, pride, infatuation and greed. These are called Kasaya, because the presence of these in the soul makes matter particles stick to it.

As the nature and number of material particles attracted by the soul depend on its Karma. These particles themselves come to be called Karma-matter or even simply karma. The Jaina speaks of the many karmas and names each after the effect it produces. Jainism gives some example, gotra-karma, ayus karma etc. Gotra-karma is the Karma that determines the family into which one is born. Ayus karma is the karma determining the length of life, and so on.

According to Jainism, there are two kinds of bondage or bandha.

- i. Bhava bandha
- ii. Dravya bandha

Internal or ideal bondage, i.e. the soul's bondage to bad disposition (bhava bondage). And material bondage, i.e. the soul's actual association with matter (dravya-bondage).

Bondage, in Jaina philosophy, come, therefore, to mean the fact that jiva, infected with passions, takes up matter in accordance with its karma. As passion or bad disposition of the soul is the internal and primary cause of bondage, and the influx of matter into the soul is only the effect of it. The state when karmic particles actually infiltrate into the soul and bind it is called Bandha or Bondage. In bondage, the karmic matter unites with the soul by intimate interpenetration, just as water unites with milk or fire unites with the red-hot iron ball.

## **Concept of liberation**

According to Jaina Philosophy, the escape of the jiva from matter is liberation. Liberation can come only through true discrimination between soul and matter. It is setting the self free from the material superstructure. If the bondage of the soul is its association with matter, liberation must mean the complete dissociation of the soul from matter. This can be attained by stopping complete elimination of the matter with which the soul has become already mingled. The first process is called samvara (i.e. the stoppage of influx) and the second nirjara (i.e. exhaustion or wearing out of karma in the soul).

## **Samvara element**

In this way the Jainas hold that samvar and nirjara are the means to moksha. Samvar element stops astrava and bandha. With it Jiva is freed attachment, hatred and love and obtains equanimity for pleasure and pain and becomes free of distortions with the result that material particles do not enter it to cause any limitations.

Samvara has two distinctions-

- i. Bhava samvara
- ii. Dravya samvara.

Initially, in samvara distortions like love, hatred and attachment are negative, the state being called 'bhava samvara'. The following this entry of matter is stopped. This is called 'dravya samvara'. Once the entry of karma particles has been stopped, it cannot be started afresh. When all the karma matter of the Jiva has been destroyed he attains moksha.

The Jainas have suggested the following ways of obstructing the entry of karma-

- i. Samitian
- ii. Guptian

- iii. Panch mahavrta
- iv. Karma
- v. Anuprekshayen
- vi. Parisaha
- vii. Charitra or character

## **Nirjara element**

The destruction of karma particles, the seeds of limitation, is called nirjara. These particles are the ones already adhering to the self. In order to precipitate to this state, it is essential to sacrifice bad qualities like attachment etc., and to have nididhiyasana. This makes the mind flexible and pure and the Jiva can recognise the 'soul' situated in its own body. With this, the person endeavouring is bereft of his pain and the ultimate end of life, philosophy and religion, self realisation is experienced.

We have seen that the passions or eravings of the soul lead to the association of the soul with matter. Looking into the cause of the passions themselves, we find that they ultimately spring from our ignorance. Knowledge alone can remove ignorance. The Jainas, therefore stress the necessity of right knowledge. Right knowledge can obtain only by studying carefully the teaching of the omniscient tirthankaras or teachers who have already attained liberation and are, therefore fit to lead others out of bondage. But before we feel inclined to study their teachings, we must have a general acquaintance with the essentials of the teachings and consequent faith in the competence of these teachers. This right sort of faith based on general preliminary acquaintance paves the way for right knowledge and is, therefore regarded as indispensable. But mere knowledge is useless unless it is put to practice. Right conduct is therefore regarded by the Jaina as the third indispensable condition of liberation.

Right faith, right knowledge and right conduct have therefore, to be known in Jaina ethics as the three gems that shine in a good life. In the very first sutra of Tattvarthadhigama sutra Umasvami states this cardinal teaching of Jainism. The path to liberation lies through right faith, knowledge and conduct. Liberation in joint of these three.

## **Right faith**

The first step in the process of self-realization is to discard superstitious beliefs and to adopt a rational attitude in life.

Right faith consists in seeing the true nature of every substances of the universe. Jainism advocates that one should first try to know, comprehend, and understand the nature of reality, one's own self, religious goal, and the path. One should analyse it, examine it, test it, verify it, and then, if satisfied, be convinced of its truth and efficacy.

From the practical point of view, perception in the nature of the reality means to have a total faith in the preachings of Tirthankars (Arihantas or Jain Gods) and their scriptures known as agams.

## **Right knowledge**

Right perception or faith makes us realize the reality of life, and the seriousness of our purpose in life.

Right knowledge is the true correct, proper and relevant knowledge of the reality. To understand reality, one should know the constituent elements of universe and their relationship.

From the practical point of view, right knowledge means the proper knowledge of the six universal substances and nine principle or tattvas.

Six universal substances are: Soul, matter, motion, rest, space and time.

Nine Tattvas are: Soul, matter, asrava, bandha, punya, papa, samvara, nirjara and moksha.

Philosophy, the knowledge of reality is known as the theory of non-absolutism (Anekantvada) and calls for an attitude of openness. Our limitations of knowledge dictate a style of relativity. The style of Syadvada allows no room for assertions. This Jaina theory of knowledge, incorporating the two principles of non-absolutism and relativity, has made an esteemed contribution toward liberalizing the mind of human being.

Right knowledge makes us examine in detail the matter brought into the mind by right perception or conviction. Both are mental processes.

Right knowledge must be free from three main defects: doubt, delusion and indefiniteness.

## **Right conduct**

Proper, correct, appropriate and truly natural conduct of the living being (soul) is known as right conduct.

The main purpose for a human being is to free himself from attachment (raga) and aversion (dvesha). That is to be free from all impure activities of thought, word and deed. This will attain the state of perfect equanimity.

For practical purpose, right conduct comprises ethical codes, rules and disciplines, which a human being is required to pursue for the ultimate freedom.

This resolves into taking the five great vows of an ascetic or five limited vows of householder.

- Non-Violence-Ahimsa
- Truth-Satya
- Non-stealing-Achaurya
- Chastity-Brahmacharya
- Non-possession/Non-attachment-Aparigraha.

Right faith and right knowledge are required for right conduct and all are interdependent.

The trinity is necessary for a successful life. This threefold discipline helps us realise our own intrinsic purity. The trinity must be cultivated collectively to ensure liberation.

Arihantas are human beings who have realized perfect vision, knowledge, power and bliss. They have preached the religion principles, philosophy of life and pain of liberation. At the end of their human life they will be totally liberated and will become siddhas.

Siddhas are souls that are completely free from karmic bondage and have attained liberation. They are body-less and live in Moksha at the top of the universe (lokakash).

Both arihantas and siddhas are the Gods of Jain religion. At present in the absence of arihantas, ascetics (acharyas, upadhyayas and sadhus) provide the spiritual guidance.

## **Conclusion**

This discussion has highlighted many obscure facts relating to Jaina theory of soul and liberation. Jainism is the religion of self-help and that is why the liberated soul is called a victor (jina) and a hero (vira). The aim of Jainism is the perfection of soul. When the soul is freed from bondage of karma and has transcended the possibility of rebirth, it attains liberation. A person who has attained liberation is siddha, a perfect soul. Bondage of the soul is due to its association with matter. Therefore, the complete dissociation of the soul from matter is moksha or liberation. Due to ignorance the soul comes to be associated with matter. This ignorance can be removed by studying the teachings and scriptures of Tirthankaras. The total dispel of ignorance is possible by right knowledge, right faith and right conduct-these three are known as the three jewels (Triratna) of Jainism. These three paths are equally indispensable for perfection. The state of liberation is a state of perfection. It is the state of liberated soul where freedom from action and desire is achieved. The state of perfection is passively described as freedom from passions and bondage where the soul gets ineffable peace and bliss.

## **References**

- 1) Chatterjee, S.C. and Datta, D.M.-An Introduction to Indian Philosophy.
- 2) Mohapatra, A.R.-Philosophy of Religion.
- 3) Sharma, C.D. – A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi.
- 4) Sharma, Dr. R.N.-Philosophy of Religion, Meerut, Delhi.
- 5) Sinha, J.N. - Indian Philosophy, Volume I.
- 6) Tiwari, K.N. –Comparative Religion, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi.