

Jain Concept of the Soul

Jain ideas about the soul differ from those of many other religions.

The Jain word that comes closest to soul is *jiva*, which means a conscious, living being. For Jains body and soul are different things: the body is just an inanimate container - the conscious being is the *jiva*. After each bodily death, the *jiva* is reborn into a different body to live another life, until it achieves liberation. When a *jiva* is *embodied* (i.e. in a body), it exists throughout that body and isn't found in any particular bit of it.

Jain concept:

- The soul exists forever
- Each soul is always independent
- The soul is responsible for what it does
- The soul experiences the consequences of its actions
- The soul can become liberated from the cycle of birth and death
- Not all souls can be liberated - some souls are inherently incapable of achieving this
- The soul can evolve towards that liberation by following principles of behavior



Individuality: Each *jiva* is an individual quite independent of other *jivas*. Jains believe that there are an infinite number of souls in the universe - every living thing, no matter how primitive, is a *jiva* - and at any given time many of these *jivas* are not embodied.

Souls have not fallen from perfection: Each *jiva* has been associated with matter, and involved in the cycle of birth and death since the beginning of time. They did not in some way fall from perfection to become involved in this cycle. Some *jivas*, through their own efforts, have become liberated and escaped from the cycle.

Liberated souls: Some *jivas* have achieved liberation from the cycle of *samsara* or reincarnation and are not reborn. They are called *siddhas*. Liberated *jivas* don't have physical bodies; they possess infinite knowledge, infinite vision, infinite power, and infinite bliss - in effect they have become perfect beings.

- they do not create or destroy
- they do not intervene in the universe
- they did not set down the laws of the universe
- they don't reward human beings in any way, or forgive their sins, or give them grace
- human beings don't owe their existence to them
- humans can only use them as an inspiration

Non-liberated souls

Every jiva has the possibility of achieving liberation, and thus of becoming a god, and each soul is involved in a process of evolving towards that state.

Categories of non-liberated soul

Ekendriya - beings with one sense

It includes many things as immobile beings, with only one sense - the sense of touch:

- Earth-bodied: clay, sand, metal etc
- Water-bodied: fog, rain, ice etc
- Fire-bodied: fire, lightning etc
- Air-bodied: wind, gas etc
- Plant-bodied: trees, flowers, vegetables etc

Beindriya - beings with two senses

These are very simple organisms that are thought to have two senses - touch and taste. This category includes things like worms and termites.

Treindriya - beings with three senses

These have the senses of touch, taste and smell. This category includes insects like ants, beetles and moths.

Chaurindriya - beings with four senses

These have the senses of touch, taste, smell and sight. This category includes wasps, locusts and scorpions.

Panchendriya - beings with five senses

These have the senses of touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing. There are four classes of these beings:

- Infernal beings: souls living in hell. This form of jiva experiences the greatest suffering.
- Higher animals: This includes all non-human animals above insects.
- Human beings: This is the only form of jiva which is able to obtain liberation directly.
- Heavenly beings: This form of jiva is the happiest.