

# Jain Tattvas and Philosophy of Karma

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The Jain tattvas, or principles, are the single most important subject of Jain philosophy. It deals with the karma theory of Jainism, which provides the basis for the path of liberation. Jain literature explains nine or seven fundamental tattvas. Without the proper knowledge of this subject, a person can not progress spiritually. The proper understanding of this subject brings about the right faith (samyak-darshana), right knowledge (samyak-jnana), and right conduct to an individual.

## Nine Tattvas (Principles)

1. Jiva - Soul or living being (Consciousness)
2. Ajiva - Non-living substances
3. Asrava - Cause of the influx of karma
4. Bandha - Bondage of karma
5. Punya\* - Virtue
6. Papa\* - Sin
7. Samvara - Stoppage or arrest of the influx of karma
8. Nirjara - Exhaustion of the accumulated karma
9. Moksha - Total liberation from karma

\* Punya and Papa are the diverse results of Asrava and Bandh. Some exponents of Jains do not treat them as separate tattvas. According to them, there are only seven principles instead of nine.

## Soul (Jiva) or Living being Substance

Jiva or Soul is the only substance, which in pure state possesses infinite knowledge, vision, power, and bliss. The pure soul is a liberated soul. The worldly soul is covered by karma particles. Karma subdues the natural qualities of the soul. The qualities of the impure soul are as follows:

- Limited Knowledge, Vision, Power, and Bliss
- Possesses a body (plants, hellish, animal, human, or angel)
- Wanders into the cycle of life and death
- Suffers from birth, death, pain, and pleasure.

The ultimate goal of human life is to remove all karma particles, which are attached to the soul. Then the soul will become pure and liberated.

## Ajiva (Non-living) Substances

Except soul, everything else in the entire universe is a non-living substance. The non-living substances are classified into five categories.

Matter - Pudgal

Space - Aakas

Medium of motion - Dharmastikay

Medium of rest - Adharmastikay

Time - Kaal or Samay

Out of five categories, only matter substance possesses body, color, and senses. Karma is one of the categories of matter. It is known as karmic matter (karma pudgala). Karma particles are of very fine matter not perceptible to the senses. The entire universe is filled with such karmic matter.

Every living being is covered by karmic matter from the beginning of time. It is the karmic matter that keeps the soul away from the realization of its true nature. It is due to karma one feels pleasure and pain, reincarnates in the different forms of life, acquires certain types of the physical body, and the duration of life.

To be continued...