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Competitive Exams: Jainism

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In Jainism, Moksa and Nirvana (Jainism) are the same. When a soul (atman) achieves Nirvana, it is released from the cycle of births and deaths, and achieves its pure self. It then becomes a Siddha (literally means one who has accomplished his ultimate objective) .

In Jainism, attaining Moksa requires annihilation of all karmas, good and bad; because if karma is left, it must bear fruit. Moksa or Mokkha means liberation, salvation or emancipation of soul. It is a blissful state of existence of a soul, completely free from the karmic bondage, free from samsara, the cycle of birth and death. A liberated soul is said to have attained its true and pristine nature of infinite bliss, infinite knowledge and infinite perception. Such a soul is called siddha or paramatman and considered as supreme soul or God. In Jainism, it is the highest and the noblest objective that a soul should strive to achieve. In fact, it is the only objective that a person should have; other objectives are contrary to the true nature of soul. With right faith, knowledge and efforts all souls can attain this state. That is why, Jainism is also known as mokṣa mārga or the “path to liberation.”

The concept of moksa, presupposes an existence of infinite eternal souls, who alone are doer, enjoyer and responsible for their action. Thus, all souls are entangled in the mundane worldly activities, bound to karmas since beginningless time and transmigrating and reincarnating from one existence to another. According to Jainism, all souls can bring an end to this repeated cycle of births and deaths and attain liberation, that is mokṣa. Jainism upholds the concept of individuality of souls, even after liberation. There are infinite living beings who have attained moksa and infinite living who have not attained moksa, The soul continues to maintain distinct individuality even after moksa. Hence, there are infinite siddhas or liberated beings existing in eternal infinite bliss. According to Jain cosmology, Siddhasila is the place where all the siddhas i.e.. . The liberated beings reside. It is at the apex of the universe. Moksa or liberation can be attained only in the human birth. Even the demi-gods and heavenly beings have to re-incarnate as humans and practice right faith, knowledge and conduct to achieve liberation. According to Jainism, human birth is quite rare and invaluable and hence a man should make his choices wisely.

A soul is bound by the karmas since beginningless time. The first step to achieve mokṣa is to inculcate Samyaktva or rational faith or perception.

Samyaktva

According to Jainism, Samyak Darsana (Rational Perception) , Samyak Jnana (Rational Knowledge) and Samyak Caritra (Rational Conduct) collectively also known as Ratnatraya or the three Jewels of Jainism constitute true Dharma. According to Umasvati, Samyak Darsana, Jnana Caritra together constitutes mok? amarga or the path to liberation.

Samyak Darsana or rational perception is the rational faith in the true nature of every substances of the universe.

Samyak Jnana or rational knowledge is the right knowledge of true and relevant knowledge of the reality, the tattvas. It incorporates the two principles of Anekantvada or non-absolutism and Syadvada or relativity of truth. Right knowledge must be free from three main defects: Doubt, delusion, and indefiniteness

Samyak Caritra or rational conduct is the natural conduct of a (soul) living being. It consists in following austerities, engaging in right activities and observance of vows, carefulness and controls. Once a soul secures samyaktva, mok? a is assured within a few lifetimes.

Kevala Jnana

Kevala Jnana, the highest form of transcendental knowledge that a samyaktvisti soul can attain, also means “absolute knowledge” “Enlightenment” and “Omniscience.” Kevala is the state of isolation of the jiva from the ajiva attained through ascetic practices which burn off one’s karmic residues, releasing one from bondage to the cycle of death and rebirth. Kevala Jnana, thus means infinite knowledge of self and non-self, attained by a soul after annihilation of the all ghatiya karmas. Such is person who has attained Kevala Jnana is called a Kevali. He is also known as Jina (the victor) or Arhat (the worthy one) and worshipped as a god by the Jains. The soul who has reached this stage achieves mok? a at the end of his life span, after annihilation of the aghatiya karmas.

Nirvana

Nirvana means final release from the karmic bondage. When an enlightened human, such as, an Arhat or a Tirthankara extinguishes his remaining aghatiya karmas and thus ends his worldly existence, it is called nirvana. Technically, the death of an Arhat is called nirvana of Arhat, as he has ended his wordly existence and attained liberation. Moksa, that is to say, liberation follows nirvana. An Arhat becomes a siddha, the liberated one, after attaining nirvana.