

Number of Souls in Jainism (3rd revision)

Jain literature defines that every soul of the entire universe is a unique individual and in existence forever. Not a single soul is created by any power and it can not be destroyed by any means. At a very high level all souls of the universe are classified into the following categories:

1. Liberated (Siddha) souls
2. Vyavahār_rāshi (Samsāri or worldly) souls
 - a. Vyavahār_rāshi Pratyeka Souls
 - b. Vyavahār_rāshi Nigod Souls
 - i. Vyavahār_rāshi Nigod Bādar Souls
 - ii. Vyavahār_rāshi Nigod Sukshma Souls
3. Avyavahār_rāshi Nigod souls
 - a. Avyavahār_rāshi Nigod Sukshma Souls (Only one category)

Pratyeka means one soul possesses one physical body

Nigod means infinite souls share one physical body

Bādar means one can see the body of the souls

Sukshma means one cannot see the body of the souls

Liberated (Siddha) souls:-

After attaining liberation each liberated soul remains in a permanent blissful state forever in a place called Moksha which is located on the top of Lokākāsh just above Siddhashilā. They possess infinite knowledge, vision, and power. They do not possess any karma and hence no physical body and not another rebirth. They exist as a pure soul or consciousness. They are a unique individual and maintain their existence forever. They do not merge into one supreme soul.

During each time cycle (Utsarpini and Avasarpini Era or Ascending and Descending Time cycle) finite numbers of Samsāri or worldly souls from human life attain liberation. However, in the past infinite time cycles have passed by and hence the numbers of souls liberated are infinite.

Vyavahār_rāshi (Samsāri or Worldly) souls:-

Vyavahār_rāshi or Samsāri or worldly souls possess limited knowledge, vision, and power. They have one to five senses depending upon their development, progress, and amount of karma they possess. One sensed souls are vegetation, water, earth, fire, and air. The five sensed souls are humans, heavenly beings, hellish beings, and animals. Some of the five sensed souls possess a mind. Some times the mind is considered the sixth sense. The soul can attain liberation only from this category. However, among all Vyavahār_rāshi souls only Human beings are capable of achieving liberation.

When one soul attains liberation, another soul comes out of Avyavahār_rāshi Nigod souls into Vyavahār_rāshi. Hence Vyavahār_rāshi or Samsāri souls remain constant at any given time.

All souls of the Vyavahār_rāshi are divided into two sub-categories

- **Vyavahār_rāshi Pratyeka Souls:** – In this category each soul possesses its own unique body. The soul may possess one to five senses depending upon their development and progress and amount of karma. In this category the total numbers of souls are innumerable (Aganit). However the maximum numbers of total human beings in the two and half islands (Adhi_dvip) of the Jain universe are numerable and the number is defined in the 4th Karma Granth which is about 10E29.
- **Vyavahār_rāshi Nigod Souls:** – In this category an infinite number of souls share one physical body. All souls possess only one sense. All Nigod souls are classified as vegetation souls even though some of the Nigod souls exist in space and not on the

earth. The total numbers of Vyavahär_räshi Nigod Souls are infinite (Anant). They are further divided into two sub-categories:

- Vyavahär_räshi Nigod Bädar Souls: - Bädar body means big body. Hence they can be seen. All root vegetables are classified in this category. In Jain terminology, it is called Sädhāran Vanaspati-Kāya, Kandamul or Jimikand.
- Vyavahär_räshi Nigod Sukshma Souls: - Sukshma means a very small body. Hence they cannot be seen. The entire universe is filled with such a type of Nigod Sukshma souls.

Avyavahär_räshi Nigod Souls: -

In this category infinite souls share one physical body (same as Vyavahär_räshi Nigod Souls). All souls possess only one sense. Since they are Nigod souls, they are classified as vegetation souls. All Avyavahär_räshi Nigod souls are Sukshma Souls and hence they can not be seen. The entire universe is filled with such type of Nigod Sukshma souls.

Both Vyavahär_räshi and Avyavahär_räshi Nigod Sukshma souls fill the entire universe. However the duration of Vyavahär_räshi Nigod souls are very short and they are in very small numbers when compared with Avyavahär_räshi Nigod souls. Hence Jain literature differentiates them by indicating Vyavahär_räshi souls are infinite (Anant) and Avyavahär_räshi souls are infinite x infinite (Anantā_anant).

When one soul from Vyavahär_räshi (Human soul) attains liberation then one soul from the Avyavahär_räshi Nigod souls gets a chance to come into Vyavahär_räshi. This chance does not depend upon the soul's karma. However this phenomenon is defined as Niyati, Bhavitvyatā, or predestination in Jain literature. Once a soul enters into Vyavahär_räshi, its life span is determined by the amount of karma it possesses and its journey begins from the Vyavahär_räshi Nigod category to Vyavahär_räshi Pratyeka souls to Human and ultimately to liberation.

In each time cycle a finite number of souls leaves from the Avyavahär_räshi Nigod category to Vyavahär_räshi or Samsāri souls category but the number of souls is never depleted there because they are Infinite x Infinite (Anantā_anant).

Clarification on Vegetation Souls (Vanaspati_kāya):

All vegetation souls are classified into the following three categories:

- Vyavahär_räshi Pratyeka Vegetation Souls: – Each soul has its own body. The vegetables which grow outside the earth are classified in this category. In Jain terminology, it is called Pratyeka Vanaspati_kāya
- Vyavahär_räshi Nigod Souls: - In all Nigod categories, infinite souls share one physical body. It has two subcategories
 - Vyavahär_räshi Nigod Bädar Souls: – One can physically see the vegetation. All root vegetables (Kandamul or Jimikand) are classified in this category. In Jain terminology, it is called Sädhāran Vanaspati-Kāya, Kandamul or Jimikand.
 - Vyavahär_räshi Nigod Sukshma Souls: – One cannot see them but the entire universe is filled with such souls.
- Avyavahär_räshi Nigod Souls – It has only one category and is defined as
 - Avyavahär_räshi Nigod Sukshma Souls: – One can not see them but the entire universe (14 Rājloka) is filled with such souls.

Vyavahär_räshi Nigod Souls are those souls that may have attained human life in the past and then fallen back into the Nigod category after acquiring very bad karma. They will come out of Nigod when their Karma are exhausted.

However Avyavahär räshi Nigod souls are those souls that so far have not had a chance to come out of the Nigod state. Also, only one of them (from infinite x infinite souls) will come out when one soul attains liberation. It is not dependent on the exhaustion of their karma. It is a chance or probability or predestination. We all are fortunate that we had that chance and we all came out from the Avyavahär_räshi Nigod category and have progressed to the stage where liberation is possible. We need to put forth maximum effort that we do not go back to the Nigod category.

Summary:

Following is the summary of the number of souls that exist in various categories:

1. Liberated (Siddha) souls - Infinite
2. Vyavahär_räshi or Samsäri or worldly souls – Constant
 - a. Human beings - Finite (Maximum number is 10E29 in the entire Jain universe)
 - b. Vyavahär_räshi Pratyeka Souls – Innumerable
 - c. Vyavahär_räshi Nigod Souls - Infinite
3. Avyavahär_räshi Nigod souls - Infinite x Infinite.

No new souls are created and no existing souls are destroyed or merged with another soul. Every soul is unique individual and exists forever. They were not created and cannot be destroyed by any means. The journey of every soul began from the Avyavahär_räshi Nigod souls and will travel through Vyavahär_räshi Nigod Souls to Vyavahär_räshi Pratyeka Souls to Humans and ultimately to Liberation.

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