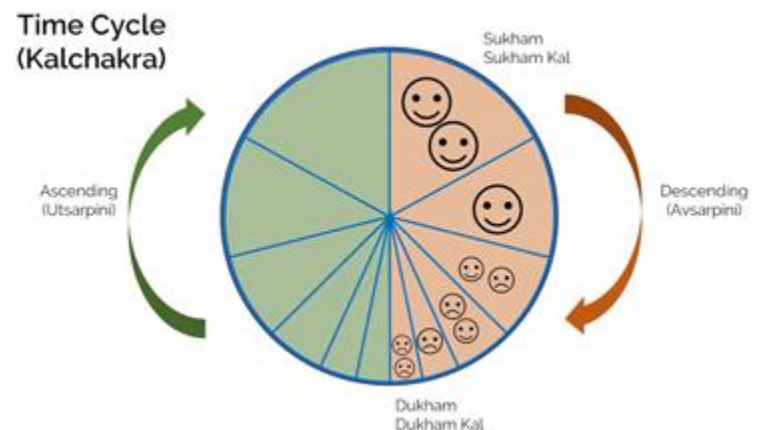


Jains believe that time is infinite, without any beginning or end. Time is divided into an infinite equal time cycle (Kalchakra). Every time cycle is further subdivided into two equal halves. The first half is the progressive cycle or ascending order, called Utsarpini. The other half is the regressive cycle or the descending order, called Avasarpini. Every Utsarpini and Avasarpini is divided into six unequal periods called Aaras. During the Utsarpini half cycle, progress, development, happiness, strength, age, body, religious trends, etc., go from the worst conditions to the best. During the Avasarpini half cycle, progress, development, happiness, strength, age, body, religious trends, etc. go from the best conditions to the worst. Presently, we are in the fifth Aara of the Avasarpini phase. When the Avasarpini phase ends the Utsarpini phase begins. This Kalchakra repeats again and continues forever.

The six Aaras are

- (1) Sukham Sukham Kal (happiness all the time).
- (2) Sukham Kal (happiness).
- (3) Sukham Dukham Kal (happiness with some unhappiness).
- (4) Dukham Sukham Kal (unhappiness with some happiness).
- (5) Dukham Kal (unhappiness).
- (6) Dukham Dukham Kal (unhappiness all the time).



Sukham Sukham Kal - This is a time of absolute happiness. During this phase, the people are very tall and live for a very long period of time. Children are born as twins, a boy, and a girl. All the needs and desires of the people are fulfilled by ten different kinds of Kalpavriksha (wish-giving trees). These trees provide places to live, clothes, pots and pans, good food, fruits, sweets, harmonious music, jewelry, beautiful flowers, radiant lamps, and a bright light at night. There is no killing, crime, or vice.

Sukham Kal - This is the phase of happiness, but it is not absolute. The wish-giving trees still continue to provide for the people's needs, but the people are not as tall and do not live as long.

Sukham Dukham Kal - This is a phase consisting of more happiness than misery. During this period the Kalpavrikshas do not consistently provide what is desired. Towards the end of this period in the current time cycle, Rushabhdev became the first Tirthankar. He realized that things

were going to get worse. So, he taught the people useful arts including, sewing, farming, and cooking which will enable them to depend upon themselves. He introduced a political system and became the first king. This era came to an end three years and eight months after the nirvana of Rushabhdev. The first Chakravarti Bharat, Bahubali well known for his strength, and Brahmi who devised eighteen different alphabets were Rushabhdeva's children.

Dukham Sukham Kal - This is a phase of more misery, sorrow, and suffering than happiness. The other twenty-three Tirthankaras and eleven Chakravartis were born during this era which came to an end three years and eight months after Lord Mahavir's nirvana.

Dukham Kal - This Aara is currently prevailing. It is an Aara of unhappiness which began a little over 2,500 years ago and will last for a total of 21,000 years. No one born during this period will gain salvation in their present life, because no one will follow true religion. It is said that by the end of this Aara, the Jain religion will be lost (only temporarily, to be revived in the next half cycle by future Tirthankars again).

Dukham Dukham Kal - This is a time of absolute misery and unhappiness. During this time, people will experience nothing but suffering. There will be no trace of religious activities. The life spans of people will be very short, exceeding no more than twenty years. Most people will be non-vegetarian and the social structure will be destroyed. The weather will become extreme, the days will be very hot, and the nights will be very cold.

At the end of this Aara, a period of Utsarpini will start and the time wheel will take an upward swing. Miseries will gradually diminish and happiness will increase to absolute happiness. This cycles will go on forever.

Image source: YJA Pathshala