

LESSON 13

TIME CYCLE

Jains believe that time is infinite, without any beginning or end. Time is divided into infinite equal time cycles (Kalchakras). Each time cycle is divided 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 Aras. During the Utsarpini half cycle opportunity to spiritual practice and availability of spiritual teachers gets progressively better along with individual strength, age, body and other happiness. During the Avasarpini half cycle opportunity to spiritual practice and availability of spiritual teachers gets progressively lesser along with individual strength, age, body and other happiness. Presently, we are in the fifth Ara of the Avasarpini phase. When the Avasarpini phase ends the Utsarpini phase begins. This kalchakra repeats again and continues forever.

The six aras are:

- 1) Happiness Happiness all the time (Sukham Sukham Kal)
 - 2) Happiness (Sukham Kal)
 - 3) Happiness with some unhappiness (Sukham Dukham Kal)
 - 4) Unhappiness with some happiness (Dukham Sukham Kal)
 - 5) Unhappiness (Dukham Kal) 21,000 years.
 - 6) Unhappiness Unhappiness all the time (Dukham Dukham Kal) 21,000 years.
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- 1) **Happiness Happiness 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 the twins, a boy and a girl. All the needs and desires of the people are fulfilled by ten different kinds of wish giving trees (Kalpavriksha). 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.
 - 2) **Happiness (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.
 - 3) **Happiness with some unhappiness (Sukham Dukham Kal)** - This is a phase consisting of more happiness than misery. During this period the wish giving trees do not consistently provide what is desired. Towards the end of this period in the current time cycle Rushabhdev became the first Tirthankara. 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 emperor (Chakravarti) Bharat and his brother Bahubali well known for his strength, and Brahmi who devised

eighteen different alphabets were Rushabhdev's children.

- 4) **Unhappiness with some happiness (Dukham Sukham Kal)** - This is a phase of more misery, sorrow, and suffering than happiness. The other twenty-three Tirthankaras and eleven emperors were born during this era, which came to an end three years and eight months after Lord Mahavira's nirvana.
- 5) **Unhappiness (Dukham Kal)** - This era is currently prevailing. It is an era of unhappiness which began approximately 2,600 years ago and will last for a total of 21,000 years. No one born during this period will gain salvation in his or her present life, because no one will follow true religion. It is said that by the end of this era, the Jain religion will be lost (only temporarily, to be revived in next half cycle by future Tirthankaras again).
- 6) **Unhappiness Unhappiness all the time (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 era, a period of Utsarpini will start and the time cycle will take an upward swing. Miseries will gradually diminish and happiness will increase to absolute happiness. These cycles will go on forever.

As per Svetambara tradition Tirthankaras are born in the end of third and during fourth era while as per Digamber tradition Tirthankaras are born during fourth era.