



English

The cycle of Yugas

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The Cycle of Yuga

There are times when the divine walked down on earth. In “Kruta/Satya Yuga” or “Era of Truth”, truth prevailed. The social order of human beings was in perfect accord with the divine order of things. Nature reflects the divine laws and when man gives himself up to nature, he realizes the realities of life and establishes divine life on earth.

In the next era, the “Treta Yuga”, ego begins to eclipse the laws of nature. Aspiration, contrary to laws of natural course of events, begins to well up in the human heart. Things get unsettled and woeful consequences ensue. The epic of Ramayana aptly depicts this period. When prompted by Manthara, Kaikeyi made a demand to satisfy her ego by banishing Rama, the divinity personified, to the woods. Rama stuck to the truth (satya) and thereby considerably checked the full sway of ego and its disastrous consequences from engulfing human society.

In “Treta Yuga”, the natural order of things predominated, although ego, with its fancy for unnatural desires, made inroads into the social order. The divine, personified as Rama, led society and asserted the natural norm for man and matter. He established the ideal order of the society and of the state. Rama displays exemplary regard for truth in his courage and determination to fight against evil, in his unique capacity to organize the entire social forces against a demonic order, in his sense of sacrifice for public peace and social order.

In the era that followed, “Dwapara Yuga”, divine order and ego stood opposed to one another as contending forces and so lent the name “Dwapara” to the era. In the epic of Mahabharata, the forces of ego represented by the Kauravas won the games with the Pandavas that stood for the divine order and banished the latter for some time. Ego was installed securely on the throne. All attempts to give a sympathetic consideration to the forces of nature failed and gave rise to a devastating war in Kurukshetra plunging both the contenders into unprecedented loss and colossal disaster. In this era, the divine, personified as

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Krishna, no longer leads the society but only counsels the righteous course. He acts only as a friend and philosopher to the men of action who champion the cause of divine life on earth.

In “Kali Yuga” or the “Era of Conflicts”, we are held under the sway of ego. The desire to act against the law of nature prompts human action. Man, far from surrendering to nature, seeks to subvert and subdue her. Fancy and falsehood seize the human mind. They lead man into a path that totally contradicts nature and the divine. Man, in his ego, seeks to be the master of the universe, thereby placing himself in total opposition to the divine. His folly invites total annihilation. In the Puranas, the savior, Kalki, is depicted as a force totally hostile to man. When ego completely eclipses the divine, Kalki with his awful appearance and grim ways, totally lacking sympathy for human weakness, takes up arms for the total annihilation of the human race.

The cycle of these four “Eras” or “Yugas” thus presents a dynamic view from total illumination to total eclipse, due to the pursuit of ego in the eternal interplay between forces of light and darkness. It is a philosophical concept based on scientific observation, which has been presented by the ancient sages of India who viewed the stream of time in their transcended stages. It is not a page from Grandma’s book of fanciful stories as most of us now-a-days take it to be.