

The end of our world is not nigh



Abstract and train of thoughts

Prophecies from the Vishnu-Purana on the dissolution of our world.

On the four ages of the Kali age, the decline of all things, and the deterioration of mankind.

The redeeming properties of the Kali age.

Devotion to Vishnu sufficient to salvation in that age for all castes and persons. 7

Three different kinds of dissolution.

Duration of a Pararddha. The clepsydra, or vessel for measuring time. The dissolution that occurs at the end of a day of Brahmā. 10

On the first kind of dissolution. On the second kind, or elemental dissolution. On all being resolved into primary spirit. 12

On the third kind of dissolution, or final liberation from existence.

Evils of worldly life. Sufferings in infancy, manhood, old age. Pains of hell. Imperfect felicity of heaven. Exemption from birth desirable by the wise. The nature of spirit or god. Meaning of the terms Bhagavat and Vasudeva. 15

1. When the child is about to be born. 15

2. When old age arrives. 16

3. The agonies of death. 16

4. The tortures in hell. 17

5. There is no end of pain even in heaven. 17

6. Only knowledge and works can make man a god. 17

Anecdotes on the means of attaining liberation.

Khandikya instructs Keshidhwaja how to atone for permitting the death of a cow, and offers him a requital. 19

Appendix. Sacred Astronomical Cycles. 23

Suggested reading for students.

From our Planetary Round and Globes Series. 24



Prophecies from the Vishnu-Purana on the dissolution of our world.

On the four ages of the Kali age, the decline of all things, and the deterioration of mankind.

From Horace Hayman Wilson. (Tr. & Annot.) *The Vishnu-Purāna*. London: John Murray, 1840. Book VI, ch. 1, pp. 621-26.

Maitreya You have narrated to me, illustrious sage, the creation of the world, the genealogies of the patriarchs, the duration of the Manvantaras, and the dynasties of princes, in detail. I am now desirous to hear from you an account of the dissolution of the world, the season of total destruction, and that which occurs at the expiration of a Kalpa.¹

Parashara Hear from me, Maitreya, exactly the circumstances of the end of all things, and the dissolution that occurs either at the expiration of a Kalpa, or that which takes place at the close of the life of Brahmā. A month of mortals is a day and night of the progenitors: a year of mortals is a day and night of the gods. Twice a thousand aggregates of the four ages is a day and night of Brahmā.² The four ages are the Krita, Tretā, Dvāpara, and Kali;³ comprehending together twelve thousand years of the gods. There are infinite successions of these four ages, of a similar description, the first of which is always called the Krita, and the last the Kali. In the first, the Krita, is that age which is created by Brahmā; in the last, which is the Kali age, a dissolution of the world occurs.

Maitreya Venerable sir, you are able to give me a description of the nature of the Kali age, in which four-footed virtue⁴ suffers total extinction.

Parashara Hear, Maitreya, an account of the nature of the Kali age, respecting which you have inquired, and which is now close at hand.

- The observance of caste, order, and institutes will not prevail in the Kali age, nor will that of the ceremonial enjoined by the *Sāma*, *Rig*, and *Yajur Vedas*.
- Marriages in this age will not be conformable to the ritual, nor will the rules that connect the spiritual preceptor and his disciple be in force.

¹ Two kinds of great or universal dissolution are here intimated; one occurring at the end of a Kalpa, or day of Brahmā, to which the term Upasanhriti is applied in the text, and Ātyantika laya by the commentator; and the other taking place at the end of the life of Brahmā, which is termed a great or elemental dissolution: Mahā pralaya and Prākṛita pralaya.

² These measures of time are more fully detailed in the first book: see Bk. I, ch. 3.

³ [See Appendix, on Sacred Astronomical Cycles. — ED. PHIL.]

⁴ This is an allusion to a popular notion, originating probably with *Manu* (I, 81, 82):

In the Krita age the genius of truth and right stands firm on his four feet; but in the following ages he is deprived successively of one foot, &c.

- The laws that regulate the conduct of husband and wife will be disregarded, and oblations to the gods with fire no longer be offered.
- In whatever family he may be born, a powerful and rich man will be held entitled to espouse maidens of every tribe.
- A regenerate man will be initiated in any way whatever, and such acts of penance as may be performed will be unattended by any results.¹
- Every text will be scripture that people choose to think so:² all gods will be gods to them that worship them; and all orders of life will be common alike to all persons.
- In the Kali age, fasting, austerity, liberality, practised according to the pleasure of those by whom they are observed, will constitute righteousness.
- Pride of wealth will be inspired by very insignificant possessions.
- Pride of beauty will be prompted by (no other personal charm than fine) hair.
- Gold, jewels, diamonds, clothes, will all have perished, and then hair will be the only ornament with which women can decorate themselves.
- Wives will desert their husbands, when they lose their property; and they only who are wealthy will be considered by women as their lords.
- He who gives away much money will be the master of men; and family descent will no longer be a title of supremacy.
- Accumulated treasures will be expended on (ostentatious) dwellings.
- The minds of men will be wholly occupied in acquiring wealth; and wealth will be spent solely on selfish gratifications.
- Women will follow their inclinations, and be ever fond of pleasure.
- Men will fix their desires upon riches, even though dishonestly acquired.
- No man will part with the smallest fraction of the smallest coin,³ though entreated by a friend.
- Men of all degrees will conceit themselves to be equal with Brahmans.
- Cows will be held in esteem only as they supply milk.⁴
- The people will be almost always in dread of dearth, and apprehensive of scarcity; and will hence ever be watching the appearances of the sky: they will all live, like anchorites, upon leaves and roots and fruit, and put a period to their lives through fear of famine and want.

¹ "Such an act is just what it is," <Sanskrit>, that is, it may be attended by inconvenience to the individual, but is utterly inefficacious for the expiation of sin.

² Whether it is conformable or contradictory to the Vedas and the law. The passage may be rendered also, "The doctrine or dogma of any one 'soever will be scripture."

³ He will not part with the half of the half of half a Pana; that is, with ten Cowries; a Pana being equal to eighty Cowries, or small shells. Five Panas are equal to one Ana, or the sixteenth of a Rupee; and, at two shillings the Rupee, ten Cowries are equal to about one-seventh of a farthing.

⁴ They will be valued for their individual use only, not from any notion of their generic sanctity.

- In truth there will never be abundance in the Kali age, and men will never enjoy pleasure and happiness.
- They will take their food without previous ablution, and without worshipping fire, gods, or guests, or offering obsequial libations to their progenitors.
- The women will be fickle, short of stature, gluttonous: they will have many children, and little means: scratching their heads with both hands, they will pay no attention to the commands of their husbands or parents: they will be selfish, abject, and slatternly: they will be scolds and liars: they will be indecent and immoral in their conduct, and will ever attach themselves to dissolute men.
- Youths, although disregarding the rules of studentship, will study the *Vedas*.
- Householders will neither sacrifice nor practise becoming liberality.
- Anchorets will subsist upon food accepted from rustics; and mendicants will be influenced by regard for friends and associates.¹
- Princes, instead of protecting, will plunder their subjects; and, under the pretext of levying customs, will rob merchants of their property.
- In the Kali age everyone who has cars and elephants and steeds will be a Rājā:² everyone who is feeble will be a slave.
- Vaiśyas will abandon agriculture and commerce, and gain a livelihood by servitude or the exercise of mechanical arts.
- Śūdras, seeking a subsistence by begging, and assuming the outward marks of religious mendicants, will become the impure followers of impious and heretical doctrines.³

Oppressed by famine and taxation, men will desert their native lands, and go to those countries which are fit for coarser grains.⁴ The path of the *Vedas* being obliterated, and men having deviated into heresy, iniquity will flourish, and the duration of life will therefore decrease. In consequence of horrible penances not enjoined by scripture, and of the vices of the rulers, children will die in their infancy. Women will bear children at the age of five, six, or seven years; and men beget them when they are eight, nine, or ten. A man will be grey when he is twelve; and no one will exceed twenty years of life.⁵ Men will possess little sense, vigour, or virtue, and will therefore perish in a very brief period. In proportion as heresy extends, so, Maitreya, shall the

¹ The *Bhāgavata* has, “Religious students will be regardless of vows and purification; householders will beg, not give alms; anchorets will dwell in villages; and mendicants will be desirous of riches.”

² That is, princes and warriors will be so no longer by virtue of their birth and caste.

³ Most of the mendicant orders admit members without distinction of caste; but probably Buddhists especially are here intended. The *Bhāgavata* repeatedly alludes to the diffusion of heretical doctrines and practices, the substitution of outward signs and marks for devotion, and the abandonment of the worship of Vishnu. The Śaiva mendicant orders are probably those especially in view. The same probably are intended by our text in the subsequent allusion to unauthorized austerities, and sectarian marks.

⁴ “Gavedhuka (*Coix barbata*) and other bad sorts of grain”; <Sanskrit> Another reading is <Sanskrit>, “Countries growing wheat, barley, and the like.” But to place wheat and barley amongst inferior grains, and to rank them lower than rice, is a classification that could have occurred to a native of Bengal alone.

⁵ The *Vāyu* says three and twenty; the *Bhāgavata*, from twenty to thirty.

progress of the Kali age be estimated by the wise. In proportion as the number of the pious, who adhere to the lessons of the *Vedas*, diminishes — as the efforts of individuals who cultivate virtue relax — as the first of males becomes no longer the object of sacrifices — as respect for the teachers of the *Vedas* declines — and as regard is acknowledged for the disseminators of heresy — so may wise men note the augmented influence of the Kali age.¹

In the Kali age, Maitreya, men, corrupted by unbelievers, will refrain from adoring Vishnu, the lord of sacrifice, the creator and lord of all; and will say,

Of what authority are the *Vedas*? what are gods or Brahmans? what need is there of purification with water?

Then will the clouds yield scanty rain: then will the corn be light in ear, and the grain will be poor, and of little sap: garments will be mostly made of the fibres of the San:² the principal of trees will be the Sami:³ the prevailing caste will be the Śūdra: millet will be the more common grain: the milk in use will be chiefly that of goats: unguents will be made of Usīra grass. The mother and father-in-law will be venerated in place of parents; and a man's friends will be his brother-in-law, or one who has a wanton wife. Men will say,

Who has a father? who has a mother? each one is born according to his deeds, and therefore they will look upon a wife's or husband's parents as their own. Endowed with little sense, men, subject to all the infirmities of mind, speech, and body, will daily commit sins; and everything that is calculated to afflict beings, vicious, impure, and wretched, will be generated in the Kali age. Then shall some places follow a separate duty,⁴ devoid of holy study, oblations to fire, and invocations of the gods.⁵ Then, in the Kali age, shall a man acquire by a trifling exertion as much eminence in virtue as is the result of arduous penance in the Krita age, or age of purity.⁶



¹ The complaints of the prevalence of heterodox doctrines, and neglect of the practices of the *Vedas*, which recur in the *Bhāgavata* and our text, indicate a period of change in the condition of the Hindu religion, which it would be important to verify. If reference is made to Buddhism, to which in some respects the allusions especially apply, it would probably denote a period not long subsequent to the Christian era; but it is more likely to be of a later date, or in the eighth and ninth centuries, when Samkara is said to have reformed a variety of corrupt practices, and given rise to others. See *As. Res.*, Vol. XVI, p. 12.

² *Crotolaria juncea*.

³ The silk cotton, *Bombax heptaphylla*.

⁴ The expression Kwachil-loka, <Sanskrit>, "a certain place," is explained by the commentator, Kikata, &c.; confirming the inference that Buddhism is especially aimed at in the previous passages; for Kikata, or south Behar, is the scene of Śākya's earliest and most successful labours.

⁵ Several of the *Purānas* contain allusions to the degeneracy of the Kali age, but none afford more copious details. The description in the *Bhāgavata* is much shorter; that of the *Vāyu* is much the same, and employs many of the same verses and illustrations.

⁶ This might be suspected of being said ironically, referring to what had been just observed of places where a religion prevailed that required neither study nor sacrifice. The commentator, however, understands it literally, and asserts that allusion is here made to the Vaishnava faith, in which devotion to Vishnu or Krishna, and the mere repetition of his name, are equally efficacious in the Kali age with the penances and sacrifices of the preceding ages: therefore he concludes the Kali, by this one property, is the best of all the ages: <Sanskrit> This interpretation is confirmed by the following chapter.

The redeeming properties of the Kali age.

Devotion to Vishnu sufficient to salvation in that age for all castes and persons.

Op. cit., Book VI, ch. 2, pp. 627-29.

Upon this subject, Maitreya, you shall hear what the wise Vyāsa has related, as it is communicated truly by me.

It was once a matter of dispute amongst the sages, at what season the least moral merit obtained the greatest reward, and by whom it was most easily displayed. In order to terminate the discussion, they went to Veda Vyāsa to remove their doubts. They found the illustrious Muni, my son, half immersed in the water of the Ganges; and awaiting the close of his ablutions, the sages remained on the banks of the sacred stream, under shelter of a grove of trees. As my son plunged down into the water, and again rose up from it, the Munis heard him exclaim,

Excellent, excellent, is the Kali age!

Again he dived, and again rising, said in their hearing,

Well done, well done Śūdra; thou art happy!

Again he sank down, and as he once more emerged they heard him say,

Well done, well done, women; they are happy! who are more fortunate than they?

After this, my son finished his bathing, and the sages met him as he approached to welcome them. After he had given them seats, and they had proffered their respects, the son of Satyavatī said to them,

On what account have you come to me?

They replied,

We came to you to consult you on a subject on which we entertain some doubt; but that may be at present suspended: explain to us something else. We heard you say, “Excellent is the Kali age! Well done, Śūdra! Well done, women!” Now we are desirous to know why this was said, why you called them repeatedly, happy. Tell us the meaning of it, if it be not a mystery. We will then propose to you the question that occupies our thoughts.

Being thus addressed by the Munis, Vyāsa smiled, and said to them,

Hear, excellent sages, why I uttered the words “Well done, well done.” The fruit of penance, of continence, of silent prayer, and the like, practised in the Krita age for ten years, in the Tretā for one year, in the Dvāpara for a month, is obtained in the Kali age in a day and night: therefore did I exclaim, “Excellent, excellent, is the Kali age!” That reward which a man obtains in the Krita by abstract meditation, in the Tretā by sacrifice, in the Dvāpara by adoration, he receives in the Kali by merely reciting the name of Keśava. In the Kali age a man displays the most exalted virtue by very little exertion; therefore, pious sages, who know what virtue is, I was pleased with the Kali age. Formerly the

Vedas were to be acquired by the twice-born through the diligent observance of self-denial; and it was their duty to celebrate sacrifices conformably to the ritual. Then idle prayers, idle feasts, and fruitless ceremonies, were practised but to mislead the twice-born; for although observed by them devoutly, yet, in consequence of some irregularity in their celebration, sin was incurred in all their works, and what they ate, or what they drank, did not affect the fulfilment of their desires. In all their objects the twice-born enjoyed no independence, and they attained their respective spheres only with exceeding pain. The Śūdra, on the contrary, more fortunate than they, reaches his assigned station by rendering them service, and performing merely the sacrifice of preparing food, in which no rules determine what may or may not be eaten, what may or may not be drunk. Therefore, most excellent sages, is the Śūdra fortunate.

Riches are accumulated by men in modes not incompatible with their peculiar duties, and they are then to be bestowed upon the worthy, and expended in constant sacrifice. There is great trouble in their acquisition; great care in their preservation; great distress from the want of them; and great grief for their loss. Thus, eminent Brahmans, through these and other sources of anxiety, men attain their allotted spheres of Prajāpati and the rest only by exceeding labour and suffering. This is not the case with women: a woman has only to honour her husband, in act, thought, and speech, to reach the same region to which he is elevated; and she thus accomplishes her object without any great exertion. This was the purport of my exclamation, “Well done!” the third time. I have thus related to you what you asked. Now demand the question you came to put to me, in any way you please, and I will make you a distinct reply.

The Munis then said to Vyāsa,

The question we intended to have asked you has been already answered by you in your reply to our subsequent inquiry.

On hearing which, Krishna Dwaipāyana laughed, and said to the holy persons who had come to see him, whose eyes were wide open with astonishment,

I perceived, with the eye of divine knowledge, the question you intended to ask, and in allusion to it I uttered the expressions, “Well done, well done.” In truth, in the Kali age duty is discharged with very little trouble by mortals, whose faults are all washed away by the water of their individual merits; by Śūdras, through diligent attendance only upon the twice-born; and by women, through the slight effort of obedience to their husbands. Therefore, Brahmans, did I thrice express my admiration of their happiness; for in the Krita and other ages great were the toils of the regenerate to perform their duty. I waited not for your inquiry, but replied at once to the question you purposed to ask. Now, ye who know what virtue is, what else do you wish me to tell you?

The Munis then saluted and praised Vyāsa, and, being freed by him from uncertainty, departed as they came. To you also, excellent Maitreya, have I imparted this secret, this one great virtue of the otherwise vicious Kali age. The dissolution of the world, and the aggregation of the elements, I will now describe to you.¹



¹ The illustration of the efficacy of devotion to Vishnu given in this chapter is peculiar to this *Purāna*, but the doctrine is common to it and the *Bhāgavata*. It is repeatedly inculcated in that work. The parallel passage in the twelfth book is the following:

Purushōttama, abiding in the hearts of men, takes away all the sins of the Kali age, produced by place or property. Bhagavān, abiding in the heart, and heard, repeated, read of, worshipped, or honoured, dissipates the ills of men for ten thousand births. As fire, entering into the substance of gold, purifies it from the alloy with which it is debased in the mine, so Vishnu, united with the devotee, is the refiner from all that is evil. By learning, penance, suppression of breath, friendship, pilgrimage, ablution, mortification, gifts, prayer, the soul attains not that exceeding purity which it derives from the presence of Vishnu. Therefore, with all your soul, O king, hold Keśava ever present in your heart. Let one about to die be most careful in this; for so he goes to supreme felicity. Let the name of the supreme god, Vishnu, be repeated diligently by all in their last moments; for he who desires liberation shall attain it by the frequent repetition of the name of Krishna. Final felicity is derived in the Kṛita age from holy study; in the Tretā, from religious rites. In the Dvāpara it is attained by pious services; but in the Kali age it is secured by repeating the name of Hari.

Similar doctrines are taught in the *Gīta*, and other Vaishnava works. See *As. Res.*, Vol. XVI, p. 116.

Three different kinds of dissolution.

Duration of a Parārdha. The clepsydra, or vessel for measuring time. The dissolution that occurs at the end of a day of Brahmā.

Op. cit., Book VI, ch. 3, pp. 630-33.

The dissolution of existing beings is of three kinds, incidental, elemental, and absolute.¹ The incidental is that which relates to Brahmā, and occurs at the end of a Kalpa: the elemental is that which takes place after two Parārdhas: the absolute is final liberation from existence.

Maitreya Tell me, excellent master, what is the enumeration of a Parārdha, the expiration of two of which is the period of elemental dissolution.²

Parashara A Parārdha, Maitreya, is that number which occurs in the eighteenth place of figures, enumerated according to the rule of decimal notation.³ At the end of twice that period elemental dissolution occurs, when all the discrete products of nature are withdrawn into their indiscrete source. The shortest period of time is a Mātrā, which is equal to the twinkling of the human eye. Fifteen Mātrās make a Kāshṭā; thirty Kāshṭās, one Kalā; fifteen Kalās, one Nādikā.

¹ The first is called Naimittaka, “occasional” or “incidental,” or Brāhmya, as occasioned by the intervals of Brahmā’s days; the destruction of creatures, though not of the substance of the world, occurring during his night. The general resolution of the elements into their primitive source, or Prakriti, is the Prākritika destruction, and occurs at the end of Brahmā’s life. The third, the absolute or final, Ātyantika, is individual annihilation; Moksha, exemption for ever from future existence. The *Bhāgavata* here notices the fourth kind, of which mention occurred in a preceding passage (Bk. I, ch. 3). Nitya or constant dissolution; explaining it to be the imperceptible change that all things suffer in the various stages of growth and decay, life and death.

The various conditions of beings subject to change are occasioned by that constant dissolution of life which is rapidly produced by the resistless stream of time, taking everything perpetually away:
<Sanskrit>

The *Vāyu* describes but three kinds of Pralaya, omitting the Nitya.

² Maitreya has a rather indifferent memory (see Bk. I, ch. 3); but the periods specified in the two places do not agree. In the first book two Parārdhas, as equal to one hundred years of Brahmā, are 311.040.000.000.000 years of mortals.

³ Counting according to this mode of enumeration, a Parārdha is represented by 100.000.000.000.000.000. The *Vāyu Purāna* has a term for each of these decimal values.

Daśa,	10;
Śatam,	100;
Sahasram,	1000;
Ayutam,	10.000;
Niyutam,	100.000;
Prayutam,	1.000.000;
Arvudam,	10.000.000;
Nyurvudam,	100.000.000;
Vrindam,	1.000.000.000;
Param,	10.000.000.000;
Kharvam,	100.000.000.000;
Nikharvam,	1000.000.000.000;
Śankham,	10.000.000.000.000;
Padmam,	100.000.000.000.000;
Samudram,	1.000.000.000.000.000;
Madhyamam,	10.000.000.000.000.000;
Parārdham,	100.000.000.000.000.000.

In the first book the Parārdham, as the half of Brahmā’s life, is but 155.520.000.000.000, fifteen instead of eighteen places of figures.

A Nādikā is ascertained by a measure of water, with a vessel made of twelve Palas and a half of copper, in the bottom of which there is to be a hole made with a tube of gold, of the weight of four Māshas, and four inches long.¹ According to the Māgadha measure, the vessel should hold a Prastha (or sixteen Palas) of water. Two of these Nādīs make one Muhūrta; thirty of which are one day and night. Thirty such periods form a month; twelve months make a year, or a day and night of the gods; and three hundred and sixty such days constitute a year of the celestials. An aggregate of four ages contains twelve thousand divine years; and a thousand periods of four ages complete a day of Brahmā. That period is also termed a Kalpa, during which fourteen Manus preside; and at the end of it occurs the incidental or Brahmā dissolution. The nature of this dissolution is very fearful: hear me describe it, as well as that which takes place at the elemental dissolution, which I will also relate to you.

At the end of a thousand periods of four ages the earth is for the most part exhausted. A total dearth then ensues, which lasts a hundred years; and, in consequence of the failure of food, all beings become languid and exanimate, and at last entirely perish. The eternal Vishnu then assumes the character of Rudra, the destroyer, and descends to reunite all his creatures with himself. He enters into the seven rays of the sun,² drinks up all the waters of the globe, and causes all moisture whatever, in living bodies or in the soil, to evaporate; thus drying up the whole earth. The seas, the rivers, the mountain torrents, and springs, are all exhaled; and so are all the waters of Pātāla, the regions below the earth. Thus fed, through his intervention, with abundant moisture, the seven solar rays dilate to seven suns,³ whose radiance glows above, below, and on every side, and sets the three worlds and Pātāla on fire. The three worlds, consumed by these suns, become rugged and deformed throughout the whole extent of their mountains, rivers, and seas; and the earth, bare of verdure, and destitute of moisture, alone remains, resembling in appearance the back of a tortoise. The destroyer of all things, Hari, in the form of Rudra, who is the flame of time, becomes the scorching breath of the serpent Śesha, and thereby reduces Pātāla to ashes. The great fire, when it has burnt all the divisions of Pātāla, proceeds to the earth, and consumes it also. A vast whirlpool of eddying flame then spreads to the region of the atmosphere, and the sphere of the gods, and wraps them in ruin. The three spheres shew like a frying-pan amidst the surrounding flames, that prey upon all moveable or stationary things. The inhabitants of the two upper spheres, having discharged their functions, and being annoyed by the heat, remove to the sphere above, or Maharloka. When that be-

¹ The description of the Clepsydra is very brief, and wanting in precision. One of the commentaries is more explicit:

A vessel made of twelve Palas and a half of copper, and holding a Prastha, Māgadha measure, of water, broad at top, and having at bottom a tube of gold of four Māshas weight, four fingers long, is placed in water, and the time in which the vessel is filled by the hole in the bottom is called a Nādikā: <Sanskrit>

The term Śalākā generally means a needle or stake, but it must here denote a pipe. The common measure of the Nādi is a thin shallow brass cup, with a small hole in the bottom. It is placed on the surface of water, in a large vessel, where nothing can disturb it, and where the water gradually fills the cup, and sinks it. *As. Res.*, Vol. V, p. 87.

² See Bk. II, ch. 11, note 3.

³ These also have their several appellations: the commentator quotes the Vedas as the authority: Ārāga, Bhrāja, Pātala, Patanga, Swamābhāk, Jyotishmat, and Savibhāsa.

comes heated, its tenants, who after the full period of their stay are desirous of ascending to higher regions, depart for the Janaloka.¹

Janārdhana, in the person of Rudra, having consumed the whole world, breathes forth heavy clouds; and those called Samvartta, resembling vast elephants in bulk, overspread the sky, roaring, and darting lightnings. Some are as black as the blue lotus; some are white as the water-lily; some are dusky, like smoke; and some are yellow; some are of a dun colour, like that of an ass; some like ashes sprinkled on the forehead; some are deep blue, as the lapis lazuli; some azure, like the sapphire; some are white, as the conch or the jasmine; and some are black, as collyrium; some are of bright red, like the ladybird; some are of the fierceness of red arsenic; and some are like the wing of the painted jay. Such are these massy clouds in hue: in form some resemble towns, some mountains, some are like houses and hovels, and some are like columns. Mighty in size, and loud in thunder, they fill all space. Showering down torrents of water, these clouds quench the dreadful fires which involve the three worlds, and then they rain uninterruptedly for a hundred years, and deluge the whole world. Pouring down in drops as large as dice, these rains overspread the earth, and fill the middle region, and inundate heaven. The world is now enveloped in darkness, and all things, animate or inanimate, having perished, the clouds continue to pour down their waters for more than a hundred years.



On the first kind of dissolution.
On the second kind, or elemental dissolution.
On all being resolved into primary spirit.

Op. cit., Book VI, ch. 4, pp. 634-37.

When the waters have reached the region of the seven Rishis, and the whole of the three worlds is one ocean, they stop. The breath of Vishnu becomes a strong wind, which blows for more than a hundred years, until all the clouds are dispersed. The wind is then reabsorbed, and he of whom all things are made, the lord by whom all things exist, he who is inconceivable, without beginning of the universe, reposes, sleeping upon Śeṣha, in the midst of the deep. The creator, Hari, sleeps upon the ocean, in the form of Brahmā — glorified by Sanaka. And the saints who had gone to the Janaloka, and contemplated by the holy inhabitants of Brahmāloka, anxious for final liberation — involved in mystic slumber, the celestial personification of his own illusions, and meditating on his own ineffable spirit, which is called Vāsudeva. This, Maitreya, is the dissolution termed incidental, because Hari, in the form of Brahmā, sleeps there, as its incidental cause.

¹ The passage may also be understood, “Those go to Janaloka who are desirous of obtaining Brahmā, or final liberation, through the ten stages of perfection — devotion, penance, truth, &c.” In the *Vāyu Purāna* more details are specified. Those sainted mortals who have diligently worshipped Vishnu, and are distinguished for piety, abide, at the time of dissolution, in Maharloka, with the Pitris, the Manus, the seven Rishis, the various orders of celestial spirits, and the gods. These, when the heat of the flames that destroy the world reaches to Maharloka, repair to Janaloka in their subtle forms, destined to become re-embodied, in similar capacities as their former, when the world is renewed, at the beginning of the succeeding Kalpa. This continues throughout the life of Brahmā; at the expiration of his life all are destroyed: but those who have then attained a residence in the Brahmāloka, by having identified themselves in spirit with the supreme, are finally resolved into the sole-existing Brahmā.

When the universal spirit wakes, the world revives; when he closes his eyes, all things fall upon the bed of mystic slumber. In like manner as a thousand great ages constitute a day of Brahmā, so his night consists of the same period; during which the world is submerged by a vast ocean. Awaking at the end of his night, the unborn, Vishnu, in the character of Brahmā, creates the universe anew, in the manner formerly related to you.¹

I have thus described to you the intermediate dissolution of the world, occurring at the end of every Kalpa. I will now, Maitreya, describe to you elemental dissolution.

When by dearth and fire all the worlds and Pātālas are withered up, and the modifications of Mahat and other products of nature are by the will of Krishna destroyed, the progress of elemental dissolution is begun. Then, first, the waters swallow up the property of earth, which is the rudiment of smell; and earth, deprived of its property, proceeds to destruction. Devoid of the rudiment of odour, the earth becomes one with water. The waters then being much augmented, roaring, and rushing along, fill up all space, whether agitated or still. When the universe is thus pervaded by the waves of the watery element, its rudimental flavour is licked up by the element of fire, and, in consequence of the destruction of their rudiments, the waters themselves are destroyed. Deprived of the essential rudiment of flavour, they become one with fire, and the universe is therefore entirely filled with flame, which drinks up the water on every side, and gradually overspreads the whole of the world. While space is enveloped in flame, above, below, and all around, the element of wind seizes upon the rudimental property, or form, which is the cause of light; and that being withdrawn, all becomes of the nature of air. The rudiment of form being destroyed, and fire deprived of its rudiment, air extinguishes fire, and spreads resistlessly over space, which is deprived of light when fire merges into air. Air then, accompanied by sound, which is the source of ether, extends everywhere throughout the ten regions of space, until ether seizes upon contact, its rudimental property; by the loss of which, air is destroyed, and ether remains unmodified: devoid of form, flavour, touch, and smell, it exists unembodied and vast, and pervades the whole of space. Ether, whose characteristic property and rudiment is sound, exists alone, occupying all the vacuity of space. But then the radical element egotism devours sound, and all the elements and faculties are at once merged into their original. This primary element is consciousness, combined with the property of darkness, and is itself swallowed up by Mahat, whose characteristic property is intelligence; and earth and Mahat are the inner and outer boundaries of the universe. In this manner, as in the creation were the seven forms of nature (Prakriti), reckoned from Mahat to earth,² so, at the time of elemental dissolution, these seven successively re-enter into each other. The egg of Brahmā is dissolved in the waters that surround it, with its seven zones, seven oceans, seven regions, and their mountains. The investure of water is drunk up by fire: the stratum of fire is absorbed by that of air: air blends

¹ The Naimittika Pralaya is described in the *Vāyu*, *Bhāgavata*, *Kūrma*, and other *Purānas*, to the same effect, and very commonly in precisely the same words.

² See Bk. I, ch. 2.

itself with ether: the primary element of egotism devours the ether, and is itself taken up by intellect, which, along with all these, is seized upon by nature (Prakriti). Equilibrium of the three properties, without excess or deficiency, is called nature (Prakriti), origin (Hetu), the chief principle (Pradhāna), cause (Kāraṇa), supreme (Param). This Prakriti is essentially the same, whether discrete or indiscrete; only that which is discrete is finally lost or absorbed in the indiscrete. Spirit also, which is one, pure, imperishable, eternal, all-pervading, is a portion of that supreme spirit which is all things. That spirit which is other than (embodied) spirit, in which there are no attributes of name, species, or the like — which is one with all wisdom, and is to be understood as sole existence — that is Brahmā, infinite glory, supreme spirit, supreme power, Vishnu, all that is; from whence the perfect sage returns no more. Nature (Prakriti), which I have described to you as being essentially both discrete and indiscrete, and spirit (which is united with body), both resolve into supreme spirit. Supreme spirit is the upholder of all things, and the ruler of all things, and is glorified in the *Vedas* and in the Vedānta by the name of Vishnu.

Works, as enjoined by the *Vedas*, are of two kinds, active (Pravṛitta) and quiescent (Nivṛitta); by both of which the universal person is worshipped by mankind. He, the lord of sacrifice, the male of sacrifice, the most excellent male, is worshipped by men in the active mode by rites enjoined in the *Rig*, *Yajur*, and *Sāma Vedas*. The soul of wisdom, the person of wisdom, Vishnu, the giver of emancipation, is worshipped by sages in the quiescent form, through meditative devotion. The exhaustless Vishnu is whatever thing that is designated by long, short, or prolated syllables, or that which is without a name. He is that which is discrete, and that which is indiscrete: he is exhaustless spirit, supreme spirit, universal spirit, Hari, the wearer of universal forms. Nature, whether discrete or indiscrete, is absorbed into him, and (detached) spirit also merges into the all-diffusive and unobstructed spirit. The period of two Parārdhas, as I have described it to you, Maitreya, is called a day of that potent Vishnu; and whilst the products of nature are merged into their source, nature into spirit, and that into the supreme, that period is termed his night, and is of equal duration with his day. But, in fact, to that eternal supreme spirit there is neither day nor night, and these distinctions are only figuratively applied to the almighty. I have thus explained to you the nature of elemental dissolution, and will now expound to you which is final.¹



¹ The *Bhāgavata* notices the Prākṛita pralaya much more briefly, and it is omitted in the *Vāyu*.

On the third kind of dissolution, or final liberation from existence.

Evils of worldly life. Sufferings in infancy, manhood, old age. Pains of hell. Imperfect felicity of heaven. Exemption from birth desirable by the wise. The nature of spirit or god. Meaning of the terms Bhagavat and Vasudeva.

Op. cit., Book VI, ch. 5, pp. 638-44.

The wise man having investigated the three kinds of worldly pain, or mental and bodily affliction and the like,¹ and having acquired true wisdom, and detachment from human objects, obtains final dissolution. The first of the three pains, or *Ādhyātmika*, is of two kinds, bodily and mental. Bodily pain is of many kinds, as you shall hear. Affections of the head, catarrh, fever, choleric, fistula, spleen, hæmorrhoids, intumescence, sickness, ophthalmia, dysentery, leprosy, and many other diseases, constitute bodily affliction. Mental sufferings are love, anger, fear, hate, covetousness, stupefaction, despair, sorrow, malice, disdain, jealousy, envy, and many other passions which are engendered in the mind. These and various other afflictions, mental or corporeal, are comprised, under the class of worldly sufferings, which is called *Ādhyātmika* (natural and inseparable). That pain to which, excellent Brahman, the term *Ādhibhautika* (natural, but incidental) is applied, is every kind of evil which is inflicted (from without) upon men by beasts, birds, men, goblins, snakes, fiends, or reptiles; and the pain that is termed *Ādhidaivika* (or superhuman) is the work of cold, heat, wind, rain, lightning, and other (atmospherical phenomena). Affliction, *Maitreya*, is multiplied in thousands of shapes in the progress of conception, birth, decay, disease, death, and hell. The tender (and subtile) animal exists in the embryo, surrounded by abundant filth, floating in water, and distorted in its back, neck, and bones; enduring severe pain even in the course of its development, as disordered by the acid, acrid, bitter, pungent, and saline articles of its mother's food; incapable of extending or contracting its limbs; reposing amidst the slime of ordure and urine; every way incommoded; unable to breathe; endowed with consciousness, and calling to memory many hundred previous births. Thus exists the embryo in profound affliction, bound to the world by its former works.

1. When the child is about to be born.

When the child is about to be born, its face is besmeared by excrement, urine, blood, mucus, and semen; its attachment to the uterus is ruptured by the *Prajāpati* wind; it is turned head downwards, and violently expelled from the womb by the powerful and painful winds of parturition; and the infant losing for a time all sensation, when brought in contact with the external air, is immediately deprived of its intellectual knowledge. Thus born, the child is tortured in every limb, as if pierced with thorns, or cut to pieces with a saw, and falls from its fetid lodgement, as from a sore, like a crawling thing upon the earth. Unable to feel itself, unable to turn itself, it is dependent upon the will of others for being bathed and nourished. Laid upon a dirty bed, it is bitten by insects and mosquitoes, and has not power to drive them away.

¹ The three kinds of affliction, inseparable, incidental, and superhuman, are fully described in the commentary on the first verse of the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*, in a similar strain as that which is adopted in the text.

Many are the pangs attending birth, and many are those which succeed to birth; and many are the sufferings which are inflicted by elemental and superhuman agency in the state of childhood. Enveloped by the gloom of ignorance, and internally bewildered, man knows not whence he is, who he is, whither he goeth, nor what is his nature; by what bonds he is bound; what is cause, and what is not cause; what is to be done, and what is to be left undone; what is to be said, and what is to be kept silent; what is righteousness, what is iniquity; in what it consists, or how; what is right, what is wrong; what is virtue, what is vice. Thus man, like a brute beast, addicted only to animal gratifications, suffers the pain that ignorance occasions. Ignorance, darkness, inactivity, influence those devoid of knowledge, so that pious works are neglected; but hell is the consequence of neglect of religious acts, according to the great sages, and the ignorant therefore suffer affliction both in this world and in the next.

2. When old age arrives.

When old age arrives, the body is infirm; the limbs are relaxed; the face is emaciated and shrivelled; the skin is wrinkled, and scantily covers the veins and sinews; the eye discerns not afar off, and the pupil gazes on vacuity; the nostrils are stuffed with hair; the trunk trembles as it moves; the bones appear beneath the surface; the back is bowed, and the joints are bent; the digestive fire is extinct, and there is little appetite and little vigour; walking, rising, sleeping, sitting, are all painful efforts; the ear is dull; the eye is dim; the mouth is disgusting with dribbling saliva; the senses no longer are obedient to the will; and as death approaches, the things that are perceived even are immediately forgotten. The utterance of a single sentence is fatiguing, and wakefulness is perpetuated by difficult breathing, coughing, and painful exhaustion. The old man is lifted up by somebody else; he is clothed by somebody else; he is an object of contempt to his servants, his children, and his wife. Incapable of cleanliness, of amusement, or food, or desire, he is laughed at by his dependants, and disregarded by his kin; and dwelling on the exploits of his youth, as on the actions of a past life, he sighs deeply, and is sorely distressed. Such are some of the pains which old age is condemned to suffer. I will now describe to you the agonies of death.

3. The agonies of death.

The neck droops; the feet and hands are relaxed; the body trembles; the man is repeatedly exhausted, subdued, and visited with interrupted knowledge; the principle of selfishness afflicts him, and he thinks what will become of my wealth, my lands, my children, my wife, my servants, my house? the joints of his limbs are tortured with severe pains, as if cut by a saw, or as if they were pierced by the sharp arrows of the destroyer; he rolls his eyes, and tosses about his hands and feet; his lips and palate are parched and dry, and his throat, obstructed by foul humours and deranged vital airs, emits a rattling sound; he is afflicted with burning heat, and with thirst, and with hunger; and he at last passes away, tortured by the servants of the judge of the dead, to undergo a renewal of his sufferings in another body. These are the agonies which men have to endure when they die. I will now describe to you the tortures which they suffer in hell.

4. The tortures in hell.

Men are bound, when they die, by the servants of the king of Tartarus with cords, and beaten with sticks, and have then to encounter the fierce aspect of Yama, and the horrors of their terrible route. In the different hells there are various intolerable tortures with burning sand, fire, machines, and weapons; some are severed with saws, some roasted in forges, some are chopped with axes, some buried in the ground, some are mounted on stakes, some cast to wild beasts to be devoured, some are gnawed by vultures, some torn by tigers, some are boiled in oil, some rolled in caustic slime, some are precipitated from great heights, some tossed upwards by engines. The number of punishments inflicted in hell, which are the consequences of sin, is infinite.¹

5. There is no end of pain even in heaven.

But not in hell alone do the souls of the deceased undergo pain: there is no cessation even in heaven; for its temporary inhabitant is ever tormented with the prospect of descending again to earth. Again is he liable to conception and to birth; he is merged again into the embryo, and repairs to it when about to be born; then he dies, as soon as born, or in infancy, or in youth, or in manhood, or in old age. Death, sooner or later, is inevitable. As long as he lives he is immersed in manifold afflictions, like the seed of the cotton amidst the down that is to be spun into thread. In acquiring, losing, and preserving wealth there are many griefs; and so there are in the misfortunes of our friends. Whatever is produced that is most acceptable to man, that, Maitreya, becomes a seed whence springs the tree of sorrow. Wife, children, servants, house, lands, riches, contribute much more to the misery than to the happiness of mankind. Where could man, scorched by the fires of the sun of this world, look for felicity, were it not for the shade afforded by the tree of emancipation? Attainment of the divine being is considered by the wise as the remedy of the threefold class of ills that beset the different stages of life, conception, birth, and decay, as characterized by that only happiness which effaces all other kinds of felicity, however abundant, and as being absolute and final.²

6. Only knowledge and works can make man a god.

It should therefore be the assiduous endeavour of wise men to attain unto god.³ The means of such attainment are said, great Muni, to be knowledge and works. Knowledge is of two kinds, that which is derived from scripture, and that which is derived from reflection. Brahmā that is the word is composed of scripture; Brahmā that is supreme is produced of reflection.⁴ Ignorance is utter darkness, in which knowledge, obtained through any sense (as that of hearing), shines like a lamp; but

¹ Some further particulars of the different hells, and the punishments inflicted in them, have been given before: see Bk. I, ch. 15.

² All this is conformable to the Sāṅkhya doctrines in particular, although the same spirit pervades all Hindu metaphysics.

³ Tasmāt Tat prāptaye yatna kartavya panditairnaraiḥ. <Sanskrit> The expression Tat prāptaye, “for the obtaining of *that*,” refers to the phrase immediately preceding, Bhagavatprapti, “obtaining of,” or “attaining to, Bhagavat,” the lord.

⁴ Brahmā is of two kinds; Śabda-Brahmā, spirit or god to be attained through the word, that is, the Vedas and the duties they prescribe; and Para-Brahmā, spirit or god to be attained through reflection, by which the difference between soul and matter is ascertained.

the knowledge that is derived from reflection breaks upon the obscurity like the sun. What has been said by *Manu*, when appealing to the meaning of the *Vedas* with respect to this subject, I will repeat to you. There are two (forms of) spirit (or god), the spirit which is the word, and the spirit which is supreme. He who is thoroughly imbued with the word of god obtains supreme spirit.¹ The *Atharva-Veda* also states that there are two kinds of knowledge; by the one, which is the supreme, god is attained; the other is that which consists of the *Rig* and other *Vedas*.² That which is imperceptible, undecaying, inconceivable, unborn, inexhaustible, indescribable; which has neither form, nor hands, nor feet; which is almighty, omnipresent, eternal; the cause of all things, and without cause; permeating all, itself unpenetrated, and from which all things proceed; that is the object which the wise behold, that is Brahmā, that is the supreme state, that is the subject of contemplation to those who desire liberation, that is the thing spoken of by the *Vedas*, the infinitely subtile, supreme condition of Vishnu. That essence of the supreme is defined by the term Bhagavat:³ the word Bhagavat is the denomination of that primeval and eternal god: and he who fully understands the meaning of that expression, is possessed of holy wisdom, the sum and substance of the three *Vedas*. The word Bhagavat is a convenient form to be used in the adoration of that supreme being, to whom no term is applicable; and therefore Bhagavat expresses that supreme spirit, which is individual, almighty, and the cause of causes of all things. The letter *Bh* implies the cherisher and supporter of the universe. By *ga* is understood the leader, impeller, or creator. The dissyllable *Bhaga* indicates the six properties, dominion, might, glory, splendour, wisdom, and dispassion. The purport of the letter *va* is that elemental spirit in which all beings exist, and which exists in all beings.⁴ And thus this great word Bhagavan is the name of Vāsudeva, who is one with the supreme Brahmā, and of no one else. This word therefore, which is the general denomination of an adorable object, is not used in reference to the supreme in a general, but a special signification. When applied to any other (thing or person) it is used in its customary or general import. In the latter case it may purport one who knows the origin and end and revolutions of beings, and what is wisdom, what ignorance. In the former it denotes wisdom, energy, power, dominion, might, glory, without end, and without defect.

¹ This seems intended as a quotation from *Manu*, but it has not been found in the code; it is. <Sanskrit>

² The commentator quotes other passages from the *Vedas* of a similar tendency, intimating, however, the necessity of performing acts prior to attaining knowledge; as, <Sanskrit>,

The decoction (preparatory process) being digested by rites, thereafter knowledge is the supreme resource. <Sanskrit>

Having crossed the gulph of death by ignorance (ceremonial acts), man obtains immortality by (holy) knowledge.

³ According to the comment, allusion is here made to the twelve syllable Mantra, or mystic formula addressed to Vishnu:

Om Bhagavate Vāsudevāya nama;

“Om! salutation to Bhagavat Vāsudeva.”

the repetition of which, by those devoted (bhakta) to Vishnu, is the easy mode of securing their liberation.

The mysticism is, however, no doubt older than the worship of Vishnu; and the term Bhagavat is defined in the text according to the interpretation of the *Vedas*.

⁴ The commentator says these interpretations are from the *Nirukta*, the glossary of the *Vedas*. The more etymological derivation of the term is, *Bhaga*, “power,” “authority,” and *vat*, possessive affix.

The term Vāsudeva means that all beings abide in that supreme being, and that he abides in all beings,¹ as was formerly explained by Keśidhwaja to Khāndikya, called Janaka, when he inquired of him an explanation of the name of the immortal, Vāsudeva. He said,

He dwelleth internally in all beings, and all things dwell in him; and thence the lord Vāsudeva is the creator and preserver of the world. He, though one with all beings, is beyond and separate from material nature (Prakriti), from its products, from properties, from imperfections: he is beyond all investing substance: he is universal soul; all the interstices of the universe are filled up by him: he is one with all good qualities; and all created beings are endowed with but a small portion of his individuality. Assuming at will various forms, he bestows benefits on the whole world, which was his work. Glory, might, dominion, wisdom, energy, power, and other attributes, are collected in him. Supreme of the supreme, in whom no imperfections abide, lord over finite and infinite, god in individuals and universals, visible and invisible, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, almighty. The wisdom, perfect, pure, supreme, undefiled, and one only, by which he is conceived, contemplated, and known, that is wisdom; all else is ignorance.



Anecdotes on the means of attaining liberation.

Khandikya instructs Keshidhwaja how to atone for permitting the death of a cow, and offers him a requital.

Op. cit., Book VI, ch. 6, pp. 645-48.

He, Purushōttama,² is also known by holy study and devout meditation; and either, as the cause of attaining him, is entitled Brahmā. From study let a man proceed to meditation, and from meditation to study;³ by perfection in both supreme spirit becomes manifest. Study is one eye wherewith to behold it, and meditation is the other: he who is one with Brahmā sees not with the eye of flesh.

Maitreya Reverend teacher, I am desirous of being informed what is meant by the term meditation (Yoga), by understanding which I may behold the supreme being, the upholder of the universe.

Parashara I will repeat to you, Maitreya, the explanation formerly given by Keśidhwaja to the magnanimous Khāndikya, also called Janaka.

¹ From the root *Vas*, <Sanskrit>, “abiding,” “dwelling.” See Bk. I, ch. 1, 2.

² [*i.e.*, the Indian Sphinx. See “Œdipus and Sphinx unriddled” in our Constitution of Man Series. — ED. PHIL.]

³ Both study of the Vedas (Swādhyāya) and abstraction (Yoga) are to be practised: when a man is weary of one, he may apply to the other. The Yoga, however, limits the practical part to silent prayer. <Sanskrit>

Wearied of meditation, let him pray inaudibly: weary of prayer, let him repeat meditation. <Sanskrit>

By the union of prayer and meditation let him behold soul in himself.

[Cf. “Brotherhood ranks above meditation” in our Down to Earth Series. — ED. PHIL.]

Maitreya Tell me first, Brahman, who Khāndikya was, and who was Keśidhwaja; and how it happened that a conversation relating to the practice of Yoga occurred between them.

Parashara There was Janaka, named Dharmadhwaaja, who had two sons, Amitadhwaaja and Kritadhwaaja; and the latter was a king ever intent upon existent supreme spirit: his son was the celebrated Keśidhwaja. The son of Amitadhwaaja was Janaka, called Khāndikya.¹ Khāndikya was diligent in the way of works, and was renowned on earth for religious rites. Keśidhwaja, on the other hand, was endowed with spiritual knowledge. These two were engaged in hostilities, and Khāndikya was driven from his principality by Keśidhwaja. Expelled from his dominions, he wandered with a few followers, his priest and his counsellors, amidst woods and mountains, where, destitute of true wisdom, he performed many sacrifices, expecting thereby to obtain divine truth, and to escape from death by ignorance.²

Once whilst the best of those who are skilled in devotion, Keśidhwaja, was engaged in devout exercises, a fierce tiger slew his milch cow³ in the lonely forest. When the Rājā heard that the cow had been killed, he asked the ministering priests what form of penance would expiate the crime. They replied that they did not know, and referred him to Kaśeru. Kaśeru, when the Rāja consulted him, told him that he knew not, but that Sunaka would be able to tell him. Accordingly the Rāja went to Sunaka; but he replied,

I am as unable, great king, to answer your question as Kaśeru has been; and there is no one now upon earth who can give you the information except your enemy Khāndikya, whom you have conquered.

Upon receiving this answer, Keśidhwaja said,

I will go, then, and pay a visit to my foe: if he kill me, no matter, for then I shall obtain the reward that attends being killed in a holy cause: if, on the contrary, he tell me what penance to perform, then my sacrifice will be unimpaired in efficacy.

Accordingly he ascended his car, having clothed himself in the deer skin (of the religious student), and went to the forest where the wise Khāndikya resided. When Khāndikya beheld him approach, his eyes reddened with rage, and he took up his bow, and said to him,

You have armed yourself with the deer skin to accomplish my destruction, imagining that in such an attire you will be safe from me; but, fool, the deer, upon whose backs this skin is seen, are slain by you and me with sharp arrows: so

¹ No such names occur amongst the Maithila kings of the *Vishnu Purāna* (see Bk. IV, ch. 5); but, as there noticed (note 6), the *Bhāgavata* inserts them. Janaka is used as a title. Kritadhwaaja, in some of the copies, is read Ritadhwaaja.

² The performance of rites as a means of salvation is called ignorance in the Vedas (see Bk. VI, ch. 5, note 7). Works are recommended as introductory to the acquirement of knowledge: it is ignorance to consider them as finite.

³ Tasya-dhenu. <Sanskrit> One copy has Homa-dhenu, "cow of sacrifice"; another, Dharma-dhenu, "cow of righteousness." The commentator explains the terms as importing the same thing, a cow yielding milk for holy purposes, or for the butter which is poured in oblations upon the sacrificial fire.

will I slay you; you shall not go free whilst I am living. You are an unprincipled felon, who have robbed me of my kingdom, and are deserving of death.

To this Keśidhwaja answered,

I have come hither, Khāndikya, to ask you to solve my doubts, and not with any hostile intention: lay aside therefore both your arrow and your anger.

Thus spoken to, Khāndikya retired a while with his counsellors and his priest, and consulted with them what course to pursue. They strongly urged him to slay Keśidhwaja, who was now in his power, and by whose death he would again become the monarch of the whole earth. Khāndikya replied to them,

It is no doubt true that by such an act I should become the monarch of the whole earth: he, however, would thereby conquer the world to come; whilst the earth would be mine. Now if I do not kill him, I shall subdue the next world, and leave him this earth. It seems to me that this world is not of more value than the next; for the subjugation of the next world endures for ever; the conquest over this is but for a brief season. I will therefore not kill him, but tell him what he wishes to know.

Returning then to Keśidhwaja, Khāndikya desired him to propose his question, which he promised to answer; and Keśidhwaja related to him what had happened, the death of the cow, and demanded to know what penance he should perform. Khāndikya, in reply, explained to him fully the expiation that was suited to the occasion; and Keśidhwaja then, with his permission, returned to the place of sacrifice, and regularly fulfilled every necessary act. Having completed the ceremony, with its supplementary rites, Keśidhwaja accomplished all his objects: but he then reflected thus:

The priests whom I invited to attend have all been duly honoured; all those who had any request to make have been gratified by compliance with their desires; all that is proper for this world has been effected by me: why then should my mind feel as if my duty had been unfulfilled?

So meditating, he remembered that he had not presented to Khāndikya the gift that it is becoming to offer to a spiritual preceptor, and, mounting his chariot, he immediately set off to the thick forest where that sage abode. Khāndikya, upon his reappearance, assumed his weapons to kill him; but Keśidhwaja exclaimed,

Forbear, venerable sage. I am not here to injure you, Khāndikya: dismiss your wrath, and know that I have come hither to offer you that remuneration which is due to you as my instructor. Through your lessons I have fully completed my sacrifice, and I am therefore desirous to give you a gift. Demand what it shall be.

Khāndikya having once more communed with his counsellors, told them the purpose of his rival's visit, and asked them what he should demand. His friends recommended him to require his whole kingdom back again, as kingdoms are obtained by prudent men without conflicting hosts. The reflecting king Khāndikya laughed, and replied to them,

Why should a person such as I be desirous of a temporary earthly kingdom? Of a truth you are able counsellors in the concerns of this life, but of those of the life to come you are assuredly ignorant.

So speaking, he went back to Keśidhwaja, and said to him,

Is it true that you wish to make me a gift, as to your preceptor?

Indeed I do,

— answered Keśidhwaja. Rejoined Khāndikya,

Then, as it is known that you are learned in the spiritual learning that teaches the doctrine of the soul, if you will communicate that knowledge to me, you will have discharged your debt to your instructor. Declare to me what acts are efficacious for the alleviation of human affliction.



Appendix. Sacred Astronomical Cycles.

	Years of mortals
360 days of mortals make a year	1
Krita-Yuga contains	1,728,000
Tretā-Yuga contains	1,296,000
Dvāpara-Yuga contains	864,000
Kali Yuga contains	432,000
The total of the said four Yugas constitute a Mahā-Yuga	4,320,000
Seventy-one of such Mahā-Yugas form the period of the reign of one Manu	306,720,000
The reign of 14 Manus embraces the duration of 994 Mahā Yugas, which is equal to	4,294,080,000
Add Samdhyās, i.e. intervals between the reign of each Manu, which amount to six Mahā-Yugas, equal to	25,920,000
The total of these reigns and interregnums of 14 Manus is 1,000 Mahā-Yugas, which constitute a Kalpa, i.e., one day of Brahmā equal to	4,320,000,000
As Brahmā's Night is of equal duration, one Day and Night of Brahmā would contain	8,640,000,000
360 of such days and nights make one year of Brahmā equal to	3,110,400,000,000
100 such years constitute the whole period of Brahmā's age i.e., a Mahā-Kalpa	311,040,000,000,000

These are the exoteric figures accepted throughout India, and they dovetail pretty nearly with those of the Secret works. The latter, moreover, amplify them by a division into a number of esoteric cycles, never mentioned in Brāhmanical popular writings — one of which, the division of the Yugas into racial cycles, is given elsewhere as an instance. The rest, in their details, have of course never been made public. They are, nevertheless, known to every “*Twice-born*” (Dvija, or Initiated) Brahman, and the *Purānas* contain references to some of them in veiled terms, which no matter-of-fact Orientalist has yet endeavoured to make out, nor could he if he would!

These sacred astronomical cycles are of immense antiquity, and most of them pertain, as stated, to the calculations of Nārada and Asuramaya.¹

¹ *Secret Doctrine*, II pp. 69-70; [computations by Rāo Bahādur P. Srinivas Row, as given in *The Theosophist* of November 1885.]

Suggested reading for students.



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