

THE WAR AT THE HEART OF KALI-YUGA

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We are at war. No, it is not President Bush’s “war on terror”, nor the other fratricidal wars happening in Africa and in the Middle East. It is not also the drug wars which have engulfed Rio de Janeiro and Colombia, neither the silent wars in many cities and in many countries of the world, in which women and children are abused, sexually exploited, and treated as second-class citizens. There is a much more pervasive war than all these and it started, according to the Indian tradition, on 18 February 3102 BCE, and it will last for 432,000 years. It is the war at the heart of Kali-Yuga.

Kali-Yuga is said to be “the last and worst of the four Yugas or ages, the present age, age of vice”. The Sanskrit word “kali” also means strife, discord, quarrel, contention. (*A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* by M. Monier-Williams). In *The Secret Doctrine*, while explaining the esotericism of the Rig-Veda, HPB says:

Diti, we repeat, is the sixth principle of *metaphysical* nature, the *Buddhi* of Akâsa. Diti, the mother of the Maruts, is one of her terrestrial forms, made to represent, at one and the same time, the divine Soul in the ascetic, and the divine aspirations of mystic Humanity toward deliverance from the webs of Māya, and final bliss in consequence. Indra, now degraded, because of the Kali-Yuga, when such aspirations are no more general but have become abnormal through a general spread of *Ahamkāra* (the feeling of Egotism, *Self*, or I-AM-NESS) and ignorance – was, in the beginning, one of the greatest gods of the Hindu Pantheon, as the Rig-Veda shows. (vol. II, p. 614)

In Kali-Yuga, the sense of self-centredness and selfishness becomes widespread, which contributes to the strife, discord, quarrel, and contention that predominate during this cycle, for all of these originate and are nourished by a strong sense of individual separateness – egotism – which prevents spiritual discernment to unfold in human consciousness. Behind every war, every atrocity, every conflict, every persecution, stands a mind darkened by self-interest, by greed, by the desire to dominate, to enslave, to exploit for its own benefit. The battlefield of the Kali-Yuga war is the human mind and that makes it all-pervasive, devastating, and tremendous. This may help to explain why Kali-Yuga is also called the age of darkness. The influences operating in this cycle cause millions of human beings to be constantly imprisoned in a state of unawareness of their true nature and of their relationship with the vast creation around them.

But surprising as it may seem, every crisis, although it involves danger, also brings with it opportunities for growth. HPB wrote:

All causes now bring about their effects much more rapidly than in any other or better age. A sincere lover of the race can accomplish more in three incarnations under *Kali-Yuga*’s reign than he could in a much greater number in any other age. Thus, by bearing all the manifold troubles of this Age and steadily triumphing, the object of his efforts will be more quickly realized, for, while the obstacles

seem great, the powers to be invoked can be reached more quickly. (*H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, vol. IX, p. 102)

Because of the information revolution brought about by world-wide electronic communications, facts which in the past were kept from public knowledge can now be almost instantaneously scrutinized. The degree of public accountability of people in public offices, for example, has also increased, although sometimes vested interests continue to try to protect those involved in mal practices from being exposed to the public eye. CEOs of some powerful corporations and their associates sometimes behave as if they would never be found out, while diverting obscene amounts of money to secret bank accounts in illegal business practices and transactions. But it only takes one investigative journalist or reporter to make it known to the whole world.

Tyrannical political regimes can now also be exposed and brought down almost overnight. In October 1989, during the process of erosion of the former Soviet Union, in the short space of one week several decades-old Eastern European dictatorships collapsed in an almost unimaginable way. Did it happen only because the Soviet regime was eroding from within, or because people in their hundreds of thousands took to the streets to uphold their right to freedom and to democratic values?

But, alas, violence has also reached undreamt of proportions in this age. It is also beyond description in its senselessness, brutality, and gratuitous nature. Is this because the energies operating during Kali-Yuga activate much more promptly every content existing in the human mind, making violence a response to situations and persons which is not mediated by reason and intellect, but by the irrational desire to lash back and destroy, what Sigmund Freud called ‘death instinct’ (*thanatos*)?

How can the Theosophical Society help to bring clarity, sanity, and light to the world in this dark age? The following reflections by HPB seem quite relevant to the prevailing situation in the third millennium, although she wrote them in the nineteenth century (*BCW*, vol. 11, “The New Cycle”):

We must prepare and study truth under every aspect, endeavouring to ignore nothing, if we do not wish to fall into the abyss of the unknown when the hour shall strike. It is useless to leave it to chance and await the intellectual and psychic crisis, which is preparing, with indifference, if not with crass disbelief, saying that at the worst the rising tide will carry us naturally towards the shore; for it is very likely that the tidal wave will cast up nothing but a corpse. The strife will be terrible in any case between brutal materialism and blind fanaticism on the one hand, and philosophy and mysticism on the other—mysticism, that veil of more or less translucency which hides the eternal Truth.

But you, Occultists, Kabbalists and Theosophists, you well know that a Word, old as the world, though new to you, has been sounded at the beginning of this cycle, and the potentiality of which, unperceived by others, lies hidden in the sum of the digits of the years 1 8 8 9; you well know that a note has just been struck which has never been heard by mankind of this era; and that a New Idea is revealed, ripened by the forces of evolution. This Idea differs from everything that has been produced in the nineteenth century; it is identical, however, with the thought that has been the dominant tone and the keynote of every century, especially the last—absolute freedom of thought for humanity.

For of all the past centuries our nineteenth has been the most criminal. It is criminal in its frightful selfishness, in its skepticism which grimaces at the very idea of anything beyond the material; in its idiotic indifference to all that does not pertain to the personal self, more than any of the previous centuries of ignorant barbarism and intellectual darkness. Our century must be saved from itself before its last hour strikes. For all those who see the sterility and folly of an existence blinded by materialism and ferociously indifferent to the fate of their neighbour, this is the moment to act: now is the time for them to devote all their energies, all their courage and all their efforts to a great intellectual reform. This reform can only be accomplished by Theosophy, and let us add, by Occultism or the wisdom of the Orient. The paths that lead to it are many; but the wisdom is one.

The criticism has been made many times that “theosophists do not do anything”! That action is what is needed, not talks, lectures, seminars, etc. This criticism is very often superficial for it fails to perceive what is the real nature of the work of the TS. In the above quotation, HPB speaks about the need for a “great intellectual reform”. Is not this an implicit recognition that the battleground in this age is the human mind itself, and that if it does not change, we will not see any real and lasting change in the world?

She goes on to say that “this reform can only be accomplished by Theosophy”. No amount of ideology, of belief, of “coaching”, can achieve this. Only wisdom can, and wisdom is completely different from knowledge and its derivatives, like ideology and belief, for while the latter normally involve the acceptance of second-hand ideas, wisdom implies an awakened perception of things as they are, leading to a clear, undistorted relationship with life.

The study and assimilation, by oneself, of the fundamental principles of Theosophy, the Timeless Tradition, can pave the way for a deep and irreversible change in the way the human mind works, for as we delve deeper and deeper into the theosophical teaching our very perception is transformed, the strong grip of self-centredness and self-importance is loosened and we begin to see life as a vast field of learning and of relationships based on cooperation and harmony. The TS does not encourage only individual study, but group study as well, wherein we can learn from others and share our own understanding in an atmosphere of freedom of thought and mutual appreciation. Such study can have a *direct* effect on the thought-atmosphere of the world and can help to create invisible avenues of understanding, peace and spiritual aspiration that will touch many people in their own way and in their own time.

Theosophy has a fundamental role to play in the war at the heart of Kali-Yuga, which is fiercely raging within the human mind today. It can point out to those who are interested that knowledge without compassion can be a lethal weapon, for it hardens the heart and destroys understanding. And that in a universe ruled by an Eternal Law (*rta*), self-responsibility is a moral and ethical imperative, which applies to the physical, emotional, and mental dimensions of human life. Compassion and self-responsibility are indeed a mighty ‘army’ in the war at the heart of Kali-Yuga.