

# by Swami Kriyananda

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## Introduction

This is the third in a special series of papers related to Paramhansa Yogananda's mission on earth. In this paper I propose to show how that mission relates to the world as a whole.

People are already familiar with the spiritual and religious aspects of his work. They know that he came to teach, as he put it, "the original teachings of Jesus Christ, and the original yoga teachings of Krishna." He explained further that he had come to unite all religions in understanding the true goal of all religion: Self-realization—the realization of God as the indwelling Self of all beings.

In his teachings Paramhansa Yogananda drew to a focus countless rays of truth, expressed diversely through the ages, and showed that they were essentially the same. He also presented a unitive way of life, one that would make spiritually relevant such diverse fields as business, marriage, education, the arts, and countless others.

Finally, he proposed a distinct life-style that would enable people to incorporate all these interests into a harmonious, God-centered existence. This life-style, which he urged people to adopt throughout the years of his earthly mission, would be possible through the creation of "world-brotherhood colonies," of which Ananda World-Brotherhood Village is the first actual example.

The sheer breadth of his vision, and its practical relevance to the needs of this age, demonstrate him to be, in the fullest possible sense, a World Teacher. For he was not only the guru of a particular group of disciples, but was sent to be the way-shower for a new age. He was sent as a savior for the "many millions," as he put it, who would tune into the divine ray which he had brought to earth at this time, as civilization moves into a time of new awakening and greater spiritual awareness.

In the first two of this series of papers I made several references to this as being a new age. Swami Sri Yukteswar, Paramhansa Yogananda's guru, stated in his book, *The Holy Science*, that we entered this age at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. Pursuant to the ancient teachings of India, he named it, Dwapara Yuga.

There has been much controversy in our time over the concept of a new age. On the one hand it is greeted with joy—though also, one must admit, with a certain excessive exuberance—as an excuse for abandoning all traditional restraints, whether on the arts,

on education, or on social behavior. On the other hand, the term, "New Age," has—understandably enough—acquired a certain ill repute. Many writers in this century have insisted that civilization is in a desperate decline—not in spite of, but because of the advancement of modern science.

In addition, there are the great religions, many of whose followers fervently believe that their own teaching defines past, present, and future time on this planet. To them, there cannot be a new age. For Moslems, the cornerstone of their religion is the statement, "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is His prophet." For Christians, the present year is 1993 of the Christian Era—A.D., Anno Domini, the year of our Lord. To Christian fundamentalists especially, we are rapidly approaching the "end times" predicted in the Bible, and the Second Coming of Christ.

Naturally, a world view in which mankind, after plodding through dark centuries in ignorance, is seen to be standing poised and ready to embrace the stars goes harshly against the grain of anyone who believes that the past two thousand years mark the era of Christian enlightenment.

Much of the antagonism one encounters to the "new age" is, I think, due to the way those who embrace it have proclaimed their enthusiasm: scientists, who often presume themselves the possessors of a new wisdom because of the facts a few of them have discovered; "avant garde" artists and other self-styled trend-setters, who for the whole of this century have milked the new age for every ounce of its shock value; and, more recently, the hippies and "New Agers"—although these are at least more refreshing to listen to, even if some of their notions (tarot cards, "channeling," tribal dances) seem more medieval than futuristic. The enthusiasm of these latecomers to the "new age" scene is at least not as strident as the self-important claims made by the trend-setters in former decades.

The public, however, gazing on all this confusion, feels bewildered. Is it surprising that people should want to glance back for comfort to traditions that they find at least recognizable? After all, the relativity of time claimed by Einstein hasn't thrown anyone's clocks out of kilter. Scientific discoveries haven't altered any of the fundamental human realities.

What is most notable about modern times is that, on every level of endeavor, human perceptions have been expanding. New windows have been opening out onto the universe. There is a need now to make sense of these new perceptions of reality. We cannot simply reject them. Nor can we continue to embrace them, like adolescents, for their shock value. We must assess the new realities with mature judgment.

First, we must accept the fact that they are indeed new. And we must transcend the fear that true values are being threatened. For Truth is not a house divided. It is no enemy to itself. And self-proclaimed "wisdom" that is not rooted in Truth, however much it may seem sanctioned by tradition, is mere superstition.

In this paper, I shall explain at some length what Sri Yukteswar meant by the new age, and the reasons he gave for his claim that we have entered it. I'll present facts in support of his statement that could not have been mustered at that time, a century ago, when he made it. For science, then, had yet to make the discoveries that would justify, and that since have justified, his claims.

The first part of this paper is of such widespread interest that I intend to use it as the basis for a book on the subject. In fact, this paper has proved extremely difficult to write for the reason that the thoughts kept branching out toward two very different audiences: you, first, the members of Ananda Church of God-Realization, and also a general book audience which I tried mentally to hold at bay, at least until this paper was finished.

There were points, especially in the first chapters, on which I would have liked to dilate. But I was afraid of detracting from the message of the last chapters, which contain the essential points of this paper.

The first chapters present the general basis for Sri Yukteswar's perception of this as a new age, and for understanding what the term, new age, implies. The last chapters focus more specifically on Yogananda's mission in this new age.

Lest, in my early papers, a few readers were left with the impression that religious organizations are in themselves obstructive to the spread of true religion, I show in the last chapters that religious organizations can also be expansive and beneficial, in the true spirit of Dwapara Yuga, and that Paramhansa Yogananda himself set the tone for this type of organization.

The first part of what follows is abstracted from the book I mentioned, which I hope to finish soon. Its working title is, *The Road Ahead: Moving into a New Age*.

## **Chapter One: Are We in a New Age?**

That we live in a new age seems incontestable. Almost everything about this Twentieth Century proclaims the new age as a fact.

In 1899, the director of the U.S. Patent Office, Charles Duell, wrote to President William McKinley, recommending that the office be abolished. "Everything," he stated, "that can be invented has been invented."

At that time, virtually all the inventions that we associate with modern civilization were either unknown or in so rudimentary a state of development as to be looked upon today as comical, or else as endearingly quaint. The world in President McKinley's day was one without paved highways and speeding cars, without airplanes, radio, television, tape recorders, refrigerators, washing machines, and countless other things that we today take completely for granted.

The greatest change has occurred in our perception of reality, with the discovery, early in this century, that matter is energy. This discovery is forcing us to the conclusion that energy is the reality underlying everything—not only matter, but institutions and ideas.

A number of people have claimed that once the oil resources on our planet are exhausted we'll be thrown back again to the medieval ages. They are mistaken. It would be impossible for man at this stage of civilization's development for the simple reason that we have become not only energy-dependent, but energy-conscious. It is in terms of energy that we, today, perceive everything.

It wasn't the discovery of oil that gave us the modern age. It was an already-growing consciousness of energy. Energy-consciousness led to modern man's discovery of oil.

My father, who was an oil geologist posted to Rumania, told me that oil was first discovered seeping out of the ground in that country, as it had been doing for centuries, being for all that time considered nothing but a nuisance. It was when people recognized their need for energy that oilmen like my father were sent to Rumania to develop those resources.

When mankind is ready for a new step in his development, that step appears to him as if magically. Like penicillin, which is simply bread mold, that next step may have been staring people in the face for many centuries. It wasn't the fact of its discovery that produced the change: It was mankind's preparedness to make the discovery. Once man was ready, the discovery itself became both possible and inevitable.

The shock waves from the discovery that matter is energy have actually given us a hint of still-deeper possibilities. Could it be that energy, in its turn, will prove to be only a manifestation of some other, even subtler reality? Sir James Jeans, the eminent physicist,

believed so. Referring to this fundamental reality, he called it "mind stuff." Well, why not give it a simpler label: consciousness.

A New Age? Traditionally, the chronology of nations and civilizations begins from earthly events: the birth of Jesus, the death of Buddha, the emigration of Mohammed to Medina, the assorted reigns of emperors and kings.

By any objective reckoning, however, the present time is so radically different from any other time in history that it seems reasonable to define it, frankly, as new. With the number of new perceptions of reality growing daily until they threaten to reach the proportions of a global avalanche, it seems hopeless to continue trying to reconcile the times we now live in with a civilization so clearly of the past.

The old order began to crumble before the onslaught of an increasingly powerful spirit of inquiry. The first hammer blows were felt in the West. Soon, they were being felt throughout the world. It was this spirit of inquiry that led to the Italian Renaissance, to the Protestant Reformation, to the voyage of Christopher Columbus and the universal shock of realizing that the world is round, and to the great voyages of discovery that came after Columbus's landing in the New World.

The spirit of inquiry led to the discovery of numerous startling facts: that other, advanced civilizations existed on this planet, and have existed in times past, quite as great as our own. Evidently, Marco Polo hadn't lied after all! Our own civilization, even our own religion, stood not alone and unchallenged on a broad moor of savagery: It had its peers, standing with equal dignity.

Other parts of the world, in their turn, were being similarly shaken out of their complacency meanwhile by these inexplicably advanced barbarians from Europe.

The major blow to what we may now call the old age came from the findings of modern science. The discoveries of Kepler, Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, and others changed so fundamentally mankind's approach to reality that it would be safe to say that people everywhere in the world came, in time, to question all of the assumptions previously made by great minds in their civilizations.

Science gave the world a completely different way of thinking. Logic, which was always the strength of Western thought, was turned on its head by science. Instead of allowing universally recognized assumptions to form the basis of a line of reasoning, science challenged those very assumptions—or else said, as it did of questions regarding God and the soul, "We can't test those hypotheses, so let us set them aside, at least for

now, and pursue questions that can be tested." Scientists studied facts, and from those facts determined their conclusions.

The insecurity produced by this new way of thinking was profound enough in the West, where people had at least specialized in a logical approach to reality, and minimized the intuitive approach. Elsewhere in the world, "insecurity" doesn't begin to describe the reaction. Bewilderment says it better. The impact of Western culture produced such upheavals of cultural confusion as have still to settle into new, more enlightened patterns of living.

A story—probably apocryphal, but very revealing nonetheless—illustrates this confusion better than most factual accounts could. A Hindu assured a Westerner, "With all the archaeological investigations that have been conducted in my country, not a single wire has been discovered. This proves that in ancient India we had the wireless!"

Worst of all, from a standpoint of civilized values, people began doubting morality itself, since it couldn't be tested and proved by scientific instruments. Morality, spiritual values, God, the soul, life after death, and a veritable host of other questions without at least some of which civilization can hardly exist, seemed irrelevant to people whose eyes were now dazzled by the discoveries of science. Science, in other words, somehow managed to find itself the creator of a new religion—though a very sterile religion it proved to be.

Nevertheless, new ways of thinking are here to stay, and need to be understood, not bewailed. Perhaps spiritual values can be tested—not with instruments, but by deep human experience. There is nothing in the new approach to reality that says that man must limit himself to experimenting with matter alone—particularly now that matter has been shown not even to exist except as a vibration of something much subtler.

Religion—not the actual teachings of Jesus Christ and Buddha, but the outward images in which religion has been clothed—no longer holds the same relevance for modern mankind. Yet there is still, more powerfully than ever, a deeply felt need for understanding and that inner security which religion alone can give us. What is lacking is only the perception of how to fulfill that need.

The classics, too, no longer hold the same appeal they once did. They relate to an old age, to old ways of looking at things. And yet, the insights they convey beneath their old images are as relevant as ever. There cannot but arise, gradually, a need to probe again more deeply for answers that we won't find on any Ten O'clock News.

Either mankind is slipping, as many classicists and as virtually all religious fundamentalists believe, or else this really is a new and more enlightened age. If the latter, then these new ways of thinking need to be probed for the potential they hold for insights into eternal, and not merely ephemeral, realities.

For what we have today is not only a completely new perception of the universe, but a potentially much deeper perception of the truth. The change we are undergoing in our thinking, moreover, is not limited to any nation or culture; it is world-wide.

For starters, it doesn't seem unreasonable to say that, whether we like it or not, times have changed, radically so. In fact, it seems eminently reasonable that these changes are so far-reaching, so world-wide, so fundamental in their impact on human beings everywhere as to make the conclusion that we live in a new age inescapable.

Is there, then, some way to explain the changes that have been, and that still are taking place?

Interestingly, an explanation was offered almost a century ago, before the shift toward energy-awareness was even sufficiently clear to be defined, and five years before the director of the U.S. Patent Office wrote to President McKinley recommending that the Patent Office be abolished. In a sense, that recommendation was correct. All that could be squeezed out of the old age had been squeezed already. Virtually all the inventions that have come thereafter have been powered by energy. The old age was a closed book. A new age had begun. Man's task, now, is to understand the implications of this new era of discovery.

## **Chapter Two: The Ages of Civilization**

Toward the end of the last century, a man with exceptional credentials as a scholar and man of wisdom wrote a book titled *The Holy Science*. Swami Sri Yukteswar, of Serampore, Bengal, was a man of deep insight. He was also one deeply learned in the ancient lore of India, which includes the oldest body of knowledge known to man—much of it pre-dating history as we today know it. In his book he stated that, according to a system of chronology that was established by astronomers in ancient times, our earth has entered a new age, and quite recently.

His book appeared in 1894 A.D. Therein he described the ancient chronology, and corrected certain misinterpretations of that chronology that have crept in over recent centuries.

India long ago, in common with other ancient civilizations, taught that the earth passes through a succession of four ages. Western scholars, understandably, make short shrift of those traditions. Sri Yukteswar, however, gave them surprisingly scientific support. It is interesting, moreover, that several civilizations of ancient times had similar traditions.

In India the four ages were named, Satya Yuga (also Krita Yuga), the spiritual age; Treta Yuga, the mental age; Dwapara Yuga, the energy age; and Kali Yuga, the dark age. Kali Yuga was said to be an age of spiritual ignorance, when mankind in general lives in bondage to matter. Kali Yuga is the age, according to Sri Yukteswar, out of which mankind has recently emerged.

Other very old civilizations gave different names to their four ages. The Egyptians called them the ages of gods, demi-gods, heroes, and men. The Greeks named them the golden, silver, bronze, and iron ages. Interestingly, according to all those traditions, mankind within historic times lived in the last, and lowest, age.

People nowadays, on learning of those old traditions, dismiss them condescendingly as mythological. They add their cynical reaction to the claim that we now live in the darkest age, perhaps with a Brooklynese, "So what else is noo?" In India too it is believed—of course!—that we still live in the lowest age. What better (conclude our modern skeptics) could our primitive history have bequeathed to us?

Sri Yukteswar, however, announced that the world actually left the dark age, or Kali Yuga, recently, and entered the next, higher age of Dwapara Yuga. For the previous descent from higher to lower ages, he said, is only part of a cyclic pattern. After Dwapara (the bronze age of the Greeks, and the heroic age of the Egyptians), will again come Treta, the silver age, or age of "demi-gods," and after that once more Satya Yuga, the golden age and the age of the gods.

Of immediate interest to us today is the fact that Sri Yukteswar said Dwapara Yuga is an age of energy. In the ancient Egyptian tradition, too, the next age above that of man is an age of heroes, a description which suggests energy also. And the Greek tradition of a bronze age suggests, in addition, copper, of which bronze is an alloy. Copper, as we know, is the element used today for transmitting electricity.

Interestingly, certain ancient artifacts and bas reliefs discovered in various parts of the world suggest that ancient man may actually have known and used electricity. There is, for example, the wet cell battery that was discovered in the Baghdad museum by the German engineer and archaeologist, Wilhelm König. That relic dates back to 248 B.C.



There are, again, bas reliefs in the ancient Egyptian temple of Dendera that depict what look very much like electrodes and plasma discharge tubes.

In India, the presently accepted tradition is that we still live in Kali Yuga, the dark age. According to this conventional reading of the texts—a reading dismissed with cool logic by Sri Yukteswar—mankind is, relatively speaking, not much past the beginning of Kali Yuga, and is destined to sink ever more deeply into the swamp of ignorance and moral degradation that is the product of this age. The prospect is worse than gloomy. Things, according to that interpretation, will continue to worsen for another 427,000 years. At that point, some believe, the world will be annihilated, whereas others believe that Satya Yuga, the spiritual age, will reappear and will initiate once again the eternal process of descent from edenic idyll to stygian disaster.

In contrast to these dour forecasts, Sri Yukteswar sounded a positively happy note. He claimed that a serious flaw had crept into the reckoning, several centuries ago, of the much more ancient yuga system. The flaw itself, he said, was a product of Kali Yuga's gift of ignorance to mankind.

The true duration of Kali Yuga, and of each of the other ages, is, Sri Yukteswar proclaimed, far briefer than those impossibly long time spans allotted to them conventionally. Instead of 432,000 years in all for Kali Yuga, that age lasts only 1,200 years. In the year 1600 A.D., the earth began to come out of Kali Yuga, and completed its emergence a hundred years later, in the year 1700 A.D.

As the night stars pale before the slowly coming dawn, so the final century of Kali Yuga saw the weakening of those rays before the approach of Dwapara Yuga, the age of energy. In 1700 A.D. we experienced the first roseate clouds, so to speak, of Dwapara. Two hundred years more were needed for these new rays to strengthen to the point where they brought the earth to Dwapara Yuga proper.

In 1900 A.D., what we might call the sun of Dwapara Yuga proper rose above the horizon. The age of energy had begun.

What makes Sri Yukteswar's analysis so utterly fascinating is that it corresponds amazingly well to objective facts that are now known to science, but that were unknown at the time he wrote his book.

At the time he wrote, science had not yet learned that matter is energy. Even more astonishingly, Sri Yukteswar's description of the universe, since verified scientifically in numerous details, was completely unknown to the astronomers of his time.

He stated that the galaxy is energized from its heart—what he called its "grand center"—or, citing the ancient texts, the Vishnunabhi, or "seat of the creative power, Brahma, the universal magnetism." Sri Yukteswar described the sun's movement within the galaxy, the energizing effect of that "grand center" as the sun approaches closer to it, and the weakening of that effect as we move farther away. His book, *The Holy Science*, was written and published ninety-nine years ago. It was some ninety years later that astronomers finally discovered a gigantic outpouring of energy from the galactic center, and also from the centers of other galaxies. Today, the debate still rages over what this massive source of energy may signify. Science of course can only measure, and is therefore only aware of, the grosser kinds of energy. Spiritual energy is beyond the reach of physical instruments.

At the time Sri Yukteswar wrote, scientists already knew something of the stellar movements, but had no idea that these occur independently of our sun. Their belief was that the stars revolve around the sun, which the astronomers thought to be the largest body in space. They had no notion that our stellar system is a galaxy. The thought had not yet occurred to them that the Milky Way is simply our galaxy seen edgewise from our own position near the edge of it. They had no conception of the vast distances that exist between the stars. Most astonishing of all is their belief that the sun was the center of the universe, and of a rather small universe at that. Even today, astronomers are skeptical of the possibility that life may exist elsewhere in space.

It was only in 1918 that the American astronomer Harlow Shapley demonstrated that the sun is the center of nothing more than our solar system. It was not until after 1924, moreover—when Edwin Hubble demonstrated that the so-called nebula in Andromeda is in fact a galaxy—that it began to dawn on astronomers that the Milky Way must be a galaxy also.

When I was a schoolboy in England in the mid-nineteen-thirties, and joined a few friends in founding an astronomy club, we found it wonderful to contemplate the recent discovery that there were two or three other galaxies in the universe besides our own. Today, a mere half-century later, over 100 billion galaxies are known to exist, and I suspect the astronomers have simply stopped counting!

Sri Yukteswar explained that, as the sun moves in an orbit of its own within the galaxy, it approaches closer to, then recedes from, the galactic "grand center." During its approach, powerful rays of energy emanating from that "grand center" energize the solar system, and thereby awaken human consciousness, enabling the generality of mankind to comprehend, on increasingly subtle levels, the inner workings of the universe. As the sun recedes from that "grand center," the general awareness of mankind gradually dims,

becoming progressively less able to comprehend the universal laws until finally matter assumes, for mankind, the nature of an absolute reality, solid and immutable.

Energy is what awakens consciousness. Hence the correlation between mental energy and genius. High mental energy is a universal sign of exceptional intelligence. The opposite is true also: Low mental energy always accompanies stupidity.

During Satya Yuga, the human race as a whole is able to perceive everything in creation as indeed "mind stuff," just as Sir James Jeans suspected. In that golden age, the majority of human beings will realize that the universe is a projection of divine consciousness.

By contrast, during Kali Yuga the human race as a whole is incapable of perceiving matter except as the senses reveal it. Man is forced, if he has the subtlety to consider this point at all, to attribute consciousness to material causes, or else to view it as wholly separate and unrelated to matter. God, in the dark age, can only be considered to be, as theologians have in fact described Him, "wholly other."

Sri Yukteswar's amazing insights, partly but not wholly drawn from an enlightened study of the ancient texts, revealed universal realities that were unknown at that time to even the most advanced scientists. His knowledge is impressive enough in itself to command a respectful hearing. It must be added, however, that there are aspects of his explanation that have not yet been verified scientifically.

He claimed, for example—again, on the basis of those ancient texts—that our sun, in addition to its known revolution around the galaxy (astronomers calculate one of these revolutions at approximately two hundred million years), moves in a secondary revolution within the galaxy around its stellar dual. Such a dual still remains to be discovered. It is interesting to note, however, that astronomers are in fact becoming intrigued by the possibility that such a dual may exist.

Several years ago, articles appeared in newspapers in America and abroad that quoted the suggestion of a number of astronomers that there may actually be a sister to our sun. Such a dual, they stated, would explain certain eccentricities in the movements of the outer planets of our solar system. It is well known, of course, that many stars do have duals. If such a sister sun were discovered, it would probably, the astronomers stated, turn out to be a "dark" star.

Sri Yukteswar claimed also that the time span for each orbital revolution of the sun around its dual is 24,000 years. He explained that this revolution coincides with one

complete precession of the equinox—from 0° Aries backwards through Pisces, Aquarius, and so on, ultimately back to 0° Aries again.

Since the precession of the equinox is an unfamiliar phenomenon to most people, let me explain it here briefly.

The sun, the moon, and the planets appear to circle the earth. Of course, only the moon really orbits the earth, but to human eyes they all seem to do so. (It is with appearances that we are concerned here.) Behind those moving bodies, and forming a sort of backdrop, are the constellations, or signs, of the zodiac. Each constellation consists of a configuration of distant stars which, taken together, have long been believed to emanate certain psychic influences. Modern astronomy accepts these constellations only as conveniences, and not because it believes in those influences. The constellations are simply a long-established, traditional way of dividing up the heavens.

While there are many constellations in the heavens, those forming the zodiac, in front of which the sun, moon, and planets of our solar system move, are only twelve in number.

That moment when the sun crosses the equator, moving from the southern to the northern hemisphere, marks the beginning of spring. This vernal point occurs on or about March 21st of each year. The degree in a sign, or constellation, over which the sun happens to be passing at that moment alters slightly every year, moving a fraction of a degree backward. Present ephemerides always show the vernal point as 0° Aries, meaning, at the beginning of the constellation Aries. In fact, however, that is a convenient fiction. Every year for the past fifteen hundred years or so the vernal point has been moving fractionally backward through Pisces, the sign immediately before Aries. In another 300 years or so it will reach 0° Pisces, then move back into the sign of Aquarius. This is why people often refer to the present time as the Age of Aquarius, although in fact they've jumped the gun. The sun has yet to reach that point at the vernal equinox.

Astronomers claim that the equinoctial precession requires about 25,800 years to complete one revolution around the zodiac. Their explanation of this precession is based on the fact that Earth wobbles slightly on its axis. Sri Yukteswar ties the precession to the sun's movement around its dual. No one so far has made a serious attempt to compare these diverse phenomena, partly because the very movement of the sun around its dual still remains to be proved. Perhaps the discrepancy between the astronomers' 25,800 years and Sri Yukteswar's 24,000 is due to variations in the speed of the precession. Or perhaps both explanations simply describe two parallel, but separate, phenomena. In any case, 24,000 years was the figure given by Sri Yukteswar, basing his conclusions on the ancient texts.

It must moreover be admitted that, taken all together, Sri Yukteswar's explanation reveals a level of information so far in advance of anything dreamed of by scientists until very recently that it merits the most careful study. Certainly it would be churlish at this point, and on the basis of still-unresolved questions, to dismiss as "mythological" the rest of what the ancient texts proclaimed. To do so would resemble a modern accountant sneering at the abacus—not because the abacus is slower or less accurate than our modern adding machine (the abacus has been shown, in the hands of experts, to be quite as fast and every bit as accurate), but simply because the abacus is not a modern adding machine.

Sri Yukteswar stated that the solar system, in its orbit around our sun's dual, is presently moving toward the "grand center" of our galaxy. Here, again, the extent of his knowledge is nothing short of astounding.

Until quite recently, astronomers, even after their discovery that the Milky Way is a galaxy, had no idea where the center of the galaxy is located, nor in what direction relative to that center our sun is moving. Only well into the present century was it discovered that the center of the galaxy lies in the constellation Sagittarius, and that the sun's movement is in the direction of a constellation about 50° from Sagittarius, named Hercules. Needless to say, on an elliptical orbit we would not be making a beeline for the galaxy's center. Hercules fits in very well with the concept of an elliptical movement in the general direction of Sagittarius.

Once again, Sri Yukteswar's explanation has proved to be uncannily accurate.

He explained that the great ages through which the earth passes coincide with the movement of the solar system in the direction of, and then away from, the "grand center" of the galaxy. With this explanation he challenged not only the prevailing scientific opinion of his day, but also convention in India.

There, it is held by many that Kali Yuga will end, after another 427,000 years, in the sudden reappearance of Satya Yuga, the highest age. Others claim that the world will be destroyed at that point. Sri Yukteswar's explanation of gradual change from high to low ages, then back again, is reasonable, whereas the conventional explanation of a unilateral descent has, as far as I can see, no logic whatever to back it up. No explanation, surely, can account for the supposedly abrupt change from Kali Yuga's squalid degradation to Satya Yuga's shining enlightenment. Sri Yukteswar stated that the present explanation crept in during the past Kali Yuga.

As for the claim that the world will be destroyed at the end of Kali Yuga, this claim is beyond logic; it therefore requires no logic to defend it. However, this theory is

at variance with another ancient tradition, that a planet is destroyed for only one of two reasons: that its inhabitants become either all good, or all bad.

From what we can observe of Nature's workings, its changes are always cyclic. Day fades through twilight to night, then returns—not abruptly, but through the graying dawn to daylight again. The weather warms slowly from mid-winter with its cold winds and snows, through the pale greening of spring to the heat and warm hues of summer. It then cools through autumn's falling leaves to the freezing snows and ice of winter again. The moon waxes, wanes, then waxes full again in endlessly repeating phases. Life appears, stumbling and helpless at first; gradually it assumes its full power; then, after reaching its peak, it fades and dies, to be born ever anew in endless repetition. The sunspots, too, are cyclic, with eleven-year periods of maximum and minimum activity.

Similar examples might be cited endlessly: the rise and fall of civilizations; the orbiting of planets and comets around the sun; the emotional ups and downs of sentient creatures. Contrary to the limited mind-set of Kali Yuga, it would appear that no natural development is ever really linear. In some cases, of course, it may look so—for example, when a surface is too broad to be encompassable by the human eye at ground level. Mankind during Kali Yuga believed that the earth was flat; it was only toward the end of ascending Kali Yuga that Christopher Columbus proved that the earth is in fact round. Interestingly, it was at approximately the same point during Kali Yuga's descending arc that this ancient knowledge appears to have been lost.

Euclidian geometry, with its straight lines and flat planes, was considered for centuries to be the last word for measuring reality. By contrast, scientists today claim that the universe is ruled by spherical geometry and not by Euclidian geometry at all. The sphere is, indeed, dominant in Nature.

Even the most advanced discoveries of modern science may turn out to be old stuff, well known to humanity long ago. Evidence is constantly being unearthed to suggest the past existence of ancient civilizations quite as advanced as our own, and in some cases more advanced. A growing body of evidence indicates that atomic power may have been known ages ago\* ; that the early Egyptians, Indians, and other peoples had flying machines; that mankind may have traveled to other planets; and that ancient peoples were capable of projecting images to great distances, even as modern man does with television.

All this comprises a body of evidence too startlingly different from presently accepted assumptions, and still insufficiently abundant, to demolish the model of the past that archaeologists have been painstakingly creating these last two hundred and more years. Though it must, therefore, be labeled "fringe" data, its sheer volume is gradually

becoming an embarrassment to orthodoxy. And it is drawing into its sphere of influence a swelling list of respected researchers.

Sri Yukteswar stated that, after 1,200 years of descending Kali Yuga, the earth reached, in 500 A.D., the point farthest from the galactic center. (To be exact, he placed that point at 499 A.D.. He himself rounded out this figure to 500 A.D., however, since it was thereby easier to match the ancient system with that in most widespread use today. The discrepancy of a single year didn't strike him as significant.)

In 500 A.D., then, mankind reached its lowest point of intellectual, moral, and spiritual ignorance. From 500 A.D., another 1,200 years of ascending Kali Yuga brought humanity to 1,700 A.D. and the beginning of Dwapara Yuga. A two-hundred-year transition period followed, bringing mankind fully into the present age of energy in the year 1900 A.D.

This Twentieth Century, finally, saw the true beginning of Dwapara Yuga.

Thus, we stand today at the beginning of what is, in fact, a new age. This new age of Dwapara will endure, in all, for 2,400 years. For, fortunately, the higher ages grow progressively longer. While Kali Yuga lasts only 1,200 years, Dwapara Yuga, the age of energy, lasts 2,400 years; Treta Yuga, the mental age, 3,600 years; and Satya Yuga, the spiritual age, 4,800 years. These 12,000 years, in all, form the ascending arc of the cycle. At the highest point of Satya Yuga, the process is reversed. In descending order, the earth then passes through another 4,800 years of Satya Yuga; 3,600 years of Treta Yuga; 2,400 years of Dwapara Yuga, and 1,200 years of Kali Yuga.

We are, then, according to Sri Yukteswar, in a new age based not on any earthly event, but, completely impersonally, on the sun's passage through the cosmos.

Sri Yukteswar suggested that the human race recognize this fact of a new age by instituting a new, universal chronology. What, indeed, could be more fitting? It would be an affirmation that we really have entered a new phase of history, and that it is time now for mankind to seek to understand earthly events, as well as universal realities, in every aspect in new ways.

The present year, then, is not 1993 A.D. Following the chronology proposed by Sri Yukteswar, it is 293 Dwapara.

### **Chapter Three: What Is Happening to Our Planet?**

Few people, even among those most resistant to the thought of this being a new age, will deny that we live in a time of crisis. A person has only to listen to popular music to feel the pulse of the times.

It is revealing to trace the recent development of popular music: from the stately minuet of two centuries ago through the more exuberant rhythms of the waltz ("shockingly sensuous," people thought it when it first appeared), to the nervous excitement of the jazz age. Jazz-age nervousness was followed by hysteria, and the ponderous self-affirmation of the 'forties, with its era of the big bands. Then came, with increasing insistency, the violence, anguish, outrage, and brute passion of modern rock. This 200-year development demonstrates what sweeping changes public attitudes have undergone. Popular music says it better, perhaps, than any other medium: We live in a time of tension, of conflict inwardly and outwardly, of apocalyptic fear. Small wonder that fundamentalists look upon these as the "end times" predicted in the Bible, and find nothing to hope for from the new age.

It takes time for sweeping changes to occur. It takes time for them even to be noticed. Once they are noticed, they usually evoke a host of reactions, both positive and negative, that confuse the issues, and further delay the arrival of clear understanding. Change never comes easily.

Let us, then, step outside the present, and let us view the changes we're contemplating as historic events. We'll pretend, for a space, that we live in the future—in, let us say, the Twenty-Third Century A.D., or, to be thoroughly futuristic, in the year 493 Dwapara.

Kali Yuga (our historians tell us) was a time when human consciousness was limited by the belief that matter was fixed and absolute. Mankind was committed to that belief, and therefore could not easily understand things in fluid terms.

In religion, a truth was acceptable only if it could be clothed in an absolute definition—a dogma, as they quaintly called it then. The universe, even to the scientists of those times, was a giant mechanism. People visualized even the divine realms as being static, not dynamic—almost like crystal images, frozen in eternity.

In society, too, everything was assigned its proper place. People had their defined positions, and were, in turn, defined by those positions. A king was a king, not simply a human being living out a regal role. A peasant was a peasant, and if ever people thought of him in purely human terms (which they seldom did), then—to his social betters, at least—he definitely belonged to a lower order of humanity.



Challenges to the status quo were inconceivable, for the status quo was a mental state. People for the most part simply didn't inquire into such matters.

And then, gradually, the fogs of Kali Yuga began to lift. Old forms began to lose definition, like stars before the approaching dawn. Dwapara's influence began to filter into the world and into human consciousness.

Soon, a few precocious spirits began making startling discoveries. They learned that the earth is not flat as everyone had imagined, but round. Copernicus, in the early Sixteenth Century, proposed that the sun, not the earth, is the center of the universe, and was later backed in his theory by Galileo, Kepler, and Newton. Copernicus created a storm of protest, however, in more orthodox circles, where it was felt that the very foundations of religion were being shaken.

The Seventeenth Century saw the end of the night of Kali Yuga. Fixed notions regarding the natural order, based on the syllogisms of logic, lost their grip and were swept away on the incoming tides of modern scientific discovery. Dogmatic assertions gave way to experimentation as the sensible method for arriving at a truth. The ramparts of established assumptions were breached year after year by the steady cannonades of new findings.

High-walled habits of thought, however, though often breached, were not easily demolished. In the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries—during what Sri Yukteswar called the sandhya, or transition period, into Dwapara Yuga—there was a tendency to look upon new theories and discoveries with suspicion, even with hostility. What, indeed, could have been more natural? Resistance was present even in scientific circles. William Thompson Kelvin, the Nineteenth Century British mathematician and physicist, could never accept Maxwell's electromagnetic theory of light, for the reason, he said, that he couldn't make a mechanical model of it.

Kali Yuga was slow to relinquish its hold on people's minds. The new Dwapara Yuga energy was put to use in reinforcing lingering Kali Yuga attitudes. Men put their increase of energy to work in plundering our planet's riches, rather than working with Nature in reciprocal harmony.

Meanwhile, more sensitive spirits—the artists, poets, and composers of the Nineteenth Century, for example—decried the apparent triumph of materialism, and dreamed nostalgically of what they fondly supposed to have been simpler times. Hans Christian Andersen, reacting to the absurdity of this romantic dream, wrote a tale in which a Nineteenth Century man was transported in time back to the Middle Ages.

Andersen described the poor fellow's thorough disillusionment with the ubiquitous mud, the dark streets, the poverty, the endless inconveniences. His story made a good point.

And yet poetic spirits dreamed on. They never realized that their very dreams were animated by the new rays of awareness that would, eventually, liberate the human spirit from bondage to matter, and from the very materialism they deplored.

Where popular consciousness was concerned, the new awareness inspired in people a new desire for self-expression. Never again would they live in bondage to hereditary positions for which they felt no inner resonance. Here too, however, change came haltingly. The lingering rays of Kali Yuga caused new trends in social awareness to take the form of mass movements. People thought in terms of quantity rather than of quality. Mass uprisings, revolutions, and new social philosophies that proposed "power to the people" (rather than the more enlightened concept, "power to the truth") were simply signs of the times.

The Nineteenth Century saw what was widely touted as the triumph of materialism. In fact, what really happened was that Dwapara energy, as it filtered into people's consciousness, energized for a time their old ways of thinking, including the hypnosis of materialism. Dwapara Yuga merely appeared to animate those concepts, before it shattered them altogether.

The fact that morality, too, seemed so rigid during the Victorian era was due simply to the fact that people's traditional, fixed notions of proper behavior were being animated—preparatory, again, to their being shattered from within by the new rays of energy. People gradually found themselves inspired to adopt more fluid and energetic—above all, more loving and compassionate—ways of relating to one another.

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Let us now, having taken a brief glimpse backward at these general trends, return to the Twentieth Century. Nowadays it is common for people to decry the general decline in morality. Others, like Jean-Paul Sartre, who made nihilism a very definition of enlightenment, declare gloatingly that life no longer has any purpose, any meaning. From every angle, the mood of the times must be described as a crisis of faith.

People have not yet come to realize that the seeds of a deeper faith have already been sown, and that they are even now thrusting green shoots up into the air toward the welcoming sun.

Inevitably, a conflict rages between Kali Yuga attitudes, which conventional people look upon as right and good, and Dwapara attitudes, which the freer spirits on our planet today embrace as liberating. Conventional minds turn to the old texts and the old authorities in their support. In most cases, however, the support they claim is simply a matter of interpretation. Jesus Christ himself, whose teachings they so often call upon to combat science, encouraged his followers to embrace the truth, and not to be dogmatic. "The truth," he said, "shall make you free."

The conflict between the dying rigidity and dogmatism of Kali Yuga and the newborn openness of Dwapara Yuga seems destined to flare into open conflict before long. We may indeed live to see another world war, far more devastating than the last. We may suffer other types of disaster: plagues, world-wide depression, even global cataclysm, ere human consciousness becomes enough softened to receive, without obstructing them, the rays of Dwapara Yuga.

Earth changes, if they occur, will be Nature's response to the disharmonious thoughts and energies of mankind. Those same thoughts and energies, were people to turn them towards harmony, would produce world-wide changes for the better.

Devastation, however, even if it occurs, will serve only to clear the ground, so to speak, for the next season's crops. Disaster, during this ascending age or yuga, will not be total. Ultimately it will prove beneficial.

Essentially, the difference between human consciousness during Kali Yuga and during Dwapara Yuga was epitomized by Zeno in his paradox of the arrow. Zeno, a philosopher of ancient Greece, argued (those Greeks loved a good philosophical tussle!) that it is a contradiction in terms to refer to an arrow in flight. At any given moment during its supposed flight, he said, the arrow is stationary at a particular point in space. Its journey is but a series of endless points along the way. In other words, the arrow, despite appearances, isn't really moving at all.

The man of Kali Yuga mentality scratches his head, knits his eyebrows, and finally declares, "Well, gee! I guess dat makes sense. But den, how does the arrow ever get where it's goin'?" Kali Yuga mentality can't resolve the paradox for the simple reason that, to it, fixed points are the natural frame of reference; the motion between them is insubstantial, and is therefore less real.

Dwapara Yuga mentality, on the other hand, says, "How can you be so absurd! The arrow's motion is the reality, not the points along its journey. Those points, in themselves, haven't any reality. They are illusory." In Dwapara Yuga, matter itself is seen to be only a wave, or vibration, of energy.

Kali Yuga sees progress in terms of its individual stages. Dwapara Yuga sees it as a flow.

Kali Yuga sees every reality as compartmentalized, each one separate from every other. Dwapara Yuga sees reality as an integral whole.

Kali Yuga analyzes; it differentiates. Dwapara Yuga looks beneath differences for an underlying unity.

Kali Yuga says, "either...or." Dwapara Yuga says, "both...and."

For Kali Yuga mentality, as it separates every reality from every other, problems often appear to be unsolvable. Kali Yuga sees no natural connection between problems and their solutions. It is, therefore, problem-oriented, since a problem, when it exists, is the immediate reality.

Dwapara Yuga, with its unitive view, realizes that everything in creation is balanced by its opposite. Since it views things integrally, Dwapara Yuga is more naturally solution-oriented. On beholding a problem, it automatically looks for a companion solution. Dwapara Yuga therefore finds solutions to problems that, to Kali Yuga mentality, remain insoluble.

Modern science, burdened increasingly with complexity as it is, longs to find a new simplicity even as a desert traveler yearns to find an oasis. Science's fixation on details is, in fact, merely a carry-over from old Kali Yuga habits of thinking. Even today, the cutting edge of science is taking man beyond form to those forces of energy out of which forms are produced.

The struggle between fading Kali Yuga consciousness and the dawning influence of Dwapara Yuga is inevitable, and temporary. It cannot but be resolved in time. Let us therefore look ahead now, toward the time—not so distant—when the issues have become clearer. And let us visualize what the future holds for us.

For future trends are already beginning to emerge all around us. In fact, they are already becoming obvious to those who, as Jesus Christ put it, "have eyes to see."

## **Chapter Four: Glimpse into the Future**

What may we expect in the years and centuries to come? During Kali Yuga, matter was manipulated by lifting, carrying, or beating it somewhat clumsily into shape. Muscle ruled. Even with labor-saving devices, such as the lever, the sheer complexity of lifting or transporting things about was such that even minor results required a major

effort. Popular heroes were men of brawn. Importance was judged by a person's worldly power. Greatness was reckoned by his martial victories.

Nowadays, greatness is more often attributed to those who can invent devices for saving us from manual labor. We no longer stand in awe of those who, like Hercules, can do extraordinarily heavy work themselves. I remember the 1930s, when it took a considerable number of men fifteen years working with shovels to complete the underpass at the railway terminal in Bucharest, Rumania. And when, in the late 1940s in Los Angeles, California, I helped with the construction of a building, I recall we had even then to mix the concrete for its large basement by hand. Young people today have no idea how recently big machinery for jobs like these has come into use.

In future, who knows what means will be found to move heavy matter? Big machinery is the application of Dwapara-discovered energy to Kali Yuga know-how—to the lever, for instance, which was invented by the ancient Greek, Archimedes. As Dwapara Yuga progresses, subtler methods for moving matter will almost surely be discovered.

Consider this possibility: Already matter is known to be but a vibration of energy. In time, perhaps sound will be used, or other forms of vibration, to move heavy objects. Indeed, a number of avant garde thinkers have already pondered mankind's past accomplishments, during those times when civilization is thought to have been primitive, but when, according to Sri Yukteswar, it was in an advanced age of the descending yuga cycle. These writers have suggested, for example, that sound vibrations would explain better than slave labor how the largest, most ancient pyramids were built. Fanciful? Perhaps. And again, perhaps not. And if fanciful, so was Jules Verne, the Nineteenth Century French author of science fiction, most of whose "impossible" predictions have long since been fulfilled.

In this final decade of the Twentieth Century we still live only at the beginning—with nineteen more centuries to go—of Dwapara Yuga proper. As the potentials of energy continue to unfold all around us, mankind will inevitably see wonders that today would seem incredible, if we could but imagine them—wonders that, a mere two hundred years ago, would have brought their inventors to the stake.

Like the director of the U.S. Patent Office, who proposed at the end of the last century that the office be closed since everything that could possibly be invented had been invented already, a number of scientists today have been saying that we are approaching the end of discovery. The universe, they claim, holds few surprises for us any longer.

What the Patent Office director referred to was mechanical gadgets. Probably he had no idea of the impact energy would have on mechanisms. And what those kindred spirits of his in science are referring to is, again, Kali Yuga-type knowledge. It may indeed be true that we are approaching the end of discovery—from a limited, Kali Yuga perspective. The age of energy, however, will open up boundless horizons in the centuries to come.

Uncovering matter's energy-secrets will bestow on humanity hitherto undreamed-of power and freedom. The knowledge that matter is energy will give mankind unprecedented power to transform and transport matter. Such developments cannot but have an enormous impact on our lives, and on the world around us.

It will also force upon us a measure of self-discipline, lest the consequences of irresponsible behavior bring us to disaster. But let us for now concentrate on the positive opportunities before us, not on their attendant dangers. And let us have faith that the rays of energy already enlightening the human mind, that have produced so many wonders, will bestow on mankind also the wisdom to handle them safely.

Indeed, the very fear that increased power might result in our destroying the planet is merely a sign of Kali Yuga thinking. It was that kind of thinking which inspired the head-shakers of the past to declare, "If God had wanted us to fly, He'd have given us wings."

In an ascending cycle, especially, the human instinct will surely be stronger for creation than for destruction.

What, then, will be the consequences of this new consciousness, this new sense of freedom? I see three probable trends, especially.

### **Trend Number One: Toward Simplicity**

The first will be a reaction against complexity and a return to a new simplicity. At present there is still in every field, from the physical sciences to medicine, psychology, education, business, and the sheer "business" of living, an ever-increasing burden of details. Complexity is the inheritance that Kali Yuga bequeaths to Dwapara Yuga. It is not a necessity of knowledge. It is merely the reflection of a mind more concerned with the minutiae of knowledge than with the "arrow-flight" of wisdom.

The new simplicity will be no return to rustic ignorance. Rather, it will accompany an enlightened awareness, an understanding that comes when knowledge is absorbed into an energetic flow of consciousness. What I'm describing is the simplicity of

intuitive wisdom. Increasingly, people will come to realize that, when the flow is right, the details have a way of taking care of themselves. This simple truth has an even simpler reason: Energy has its own intelligence.

In music, it is from such simplicity that good melodies are born. Haunting melodies are the product of aspiration, not of a sophisticated knowledge of musical notes. (Folk melodies, indeed, are often far lovelier than those painstakingly crafted by professional composers. That is why so many composers have felt constrained to borrow their melodies from folk traditions.)

In the arts, simplicity means intuitive flow, which transcends the intricacies of either intellectual or emotional creation.

In politics, simplicity means having the wisdom to understand that a carefully worked-out treaty is never a substitute for genuine good will.

In business, simplicity means recognizing that profits result from creative energy, and not from detailed sales analyses.

In medicine, simplicity means encouraging the flow of energy in the body. Only secondarily, in future, will doctors work to cure the specific body parts.

And in science, simplicity means the knowledge that great discoveries are the product of intuition rather than of encyclopedic knowledge.

## **Trend Number Two: Renewed Emphasis on the Individual**

The second trend will be a renewed emphasis on the individual human being. There will be less effort devoted to studying man as a social statistic, and more time devoted to his inner life, his personal attunement to higher Truth. People will come to realize that human accomplishments, even the greatest of them, will never be greater than man himself, as their source. For great achievements, in their totality, can only hint at the human potential for greatness.

Thus, complementing the continued quest for outer knowledge and dominion will be a return to the simple wisdom inscribed at the Delphic oracle, an admonition recorded in pre-history (who knows?—perhaps during the last descending Dwapara Yuga), the admonition: "Know thyself."

## **Trend Number Three: Quality over Quantity**

The third trend will be a growing demand for quality over quantity. "Bigger" will cease to be equated with "better."

The perception of matter as an absolute reality made kings during Kali Yuga imagine that, the more territory they possessed, the greater they themselves became. It made people think of humanity in the mass, rather than as individuals. It was what led Karl Marx as late as the last century to exalt the sweating laborer over the man of ideas. (What, indeed, is communism but a dying echo of Kali Yuga?)

E.F. Schumacher a few years ago wrote a trendy book titled, *Small Is Beautiful*. The title itself helped to sell the book. For, increasingly in human affairs, there is a trend toward miniaturization, and away from the bulldozer mentality which sets material power against material inertia in a struggle for conquest by brute force. The trend in future will be to adapt to reality, not to beat it into submission.

Great shifts in human awareness always begin with a few individuals, sensitive enough to have perceived the need for a change, and energetic enough to put their shoulders to the wheel. Changes in the general awareness follow gradually, usually only after one or more generations.

The more fundamental and far-reaching the change, the longer the time required for it to be accepted. Thus, some at least of the old habits of Kali Yuga persist well into Dwapara Yuga, and, given average human obtuseness, may well persist, if only vestigially, well into Satya Yuga. During Kali Yuga, after all, there were a few souls such as Jesus Christ and Buddha whose attainments were of the highest even when the majority of mankind were steeped in matter-consciousness. What determines an individual's level of awareness is not only the energy entering the earth, but also his own refinement, as the instrument receiving that energy.

Old habits are affirmed most aggressively when they are confronted by new alternatives. In Dwapara Yuga, this aggressiveness is animated by the very increase in the intensity of energy. Thus, even though quantitative thinking is on the wane, we have seen in this century an exaggerated emphasis on, and appeal to, mass consciousness in every field: in politics, in social philosophy, in merchandising, in entertainment, in advertising, and even in such fields as education and religion. Nevertheless, the change is inevitable.

The shift toward an emphasis on quality will be like the other side of the coin from the new concentration on the inner man, rather than on man as a social statistic. Even science today says, "The key to the universe is the electron." Modern man will come in time to say, "The key to understanding the universe is, ultimately, man."



## **Unity in Diversity**

Simplicity is fast becoming a must in human affairs. The flood of information has reached a point where mankind feels less and less able to cope with the sheer volume and complexity it encounters in every field.

The discovery of energy as the underlying reality of matter will change our way of processing the flood of factual information. Computers will not, I believe, prove to be the last word in this evolutionary process.

A multitude of phenomena will be seen to be only expressions of a unifying flow. In countless aspects of life, people will come to realize that an understanding of the flow makes it unnecessary for a person to be over-preoccupied with details. For it will become increasingly apparent that, inherent in energy itself, there exists a sort of guiding intelligence that remains untapped as long as a person's attention is absorbed in details, but that is released when his will is engaged in what may be described as the natural rhythms of activity.

The obstructions and problems that arise when dealing with inert matter are transformed into opportunities for success, once a person becomes conscious that he is dealing with the living reality behind that appearance of inertness.

## **Chapter Five: Religion in the New Age**

If religion today no longer commands the high esteem it once did, the reason is not hard to find. Throughout the world, religion has identified itself with attitudes that are being abandoned, as mankind embraces a new, less form-bound and form-conscious age of energy.

Religion, traditionally, has defined itself by its beliefs, not by the dynamic inner experience of peace, of closeness to God that the great Scriptures have held out in loving promise to mankind. Religion has focused its attention on the outer forms of worship to the detriment of the inner spirit which those forms were designed to express.

In the West, religion, taking its bias from Roman rationalism and not from the teachings of Jesus Christ, has frozen that spirit in organizational forms also. But the spirit of religion has suffered everywhere. For even where the forms of organization are less developed, there has been an over-emphasis on religion as a social institution, and an under-emphasis on religion as a guideline to spiritual development.

Of all human institutions, religion has always been the most resistant to change. In conservatism lies its strength, but also its greatest weakness: its strength, because

religious teachings express eternal values; its weakness, because those values are, in a sense, betrayed when they are limited to specific forms of expression. It is right not to interpret those values to reflect merely passing fads. At the same time, to define them at all is already to interpret them. No mere expression of eternal values can be absolute.

Human perceptions of truth change, moreover, while the truth itself remains unchanged. When changelessness, rather than adherence to Truth, is made the guiding principle, dogmas become dogmatism. Deeply rutted habit takes over, and Truth itself is forgotten. Justifications are found ultimately for institutionalizing revelation itself.

The weakness of religion is that, in the name of preserving Truth, it buries it. For it confuses even the most wholesome changes with dilution and heresy.

Religion, in its highest aspect, is God's gift to mankind. It is not merely some wise man's gift to humanity. It is especially important for mankind to be guided by God during times of great change. With such a mission it was that the great spiritual teachers came during other crucial times in human history. Their birth was opportune, but it was also ordained. Buddha, Krishna, and Shankaracharya in the East, Jesus Christ in the West—these men were no accident of history.

In the present, dawning age of Dwapara there is an overwhelming need for some new message from on high. If ever God spoke to mankind through prophets, it is surely time He spoke again. The need is as great as it has ever been. If the Lord truly is our Father, Mother, and Eternal Friend, and if we call to Him as His children, then He must respond to our urgent need. There are limits to how far human intelligence can take our understanding.

Common sense can show us the need to adapt to new realities. Reason can facilitate this adaptive process, by helping us to see how the new discoveries actually support spiritual truths, and in no way undermine them. Our sense of history, applied to the transition from matter-bondage to energy, can show us the probable directions that religion will take in the future, once it has adapted to the insights of the new age. Nevertheless, our faith demands some clear sign from above that our all-too-human understanding is being rightly guided. Without such a sign, and such guidance, the danger of arrogance in our reasoning is simply too great. And arrogance is the death of wisdom.

With or without such guidance, we must still use reason to the best of our ability. The Divine responds only when man does his best with whatever faculties he has, not when he suspends those faculties altogether in the name of a false humility. Wisdom is not for the stupid. Nor is it for those who draw their energy about them fearfully instead of expanding it.

With or without higher guidance, then, let us call on human reason to show us what it can of future trends, that we may do our best, for our part, to adapt to them.

The first point for religion, too, to recognize is that we live in an age of energy. Religion must accept that energy is no passing fad, but is a simple matter of fact. Short of the kind of cataclysm that would bomb us all back to the caves, energy must be classed as permanent human knowledge.

Driving the nail in deeper still, we must accept that energy is the reality; matter, the illusion. Energy is the wave, or vibration, of which matter is only a manifestation. Energy, in other words, is not the product of matter, but its cause.

What does all this mean for religion? The answer forces itself on us relentlessly. For religion's power of influence lies not in its outward forms—its ceremonies, its dogmas, its institutions. It lies in the inherent spirit of which those forms are but manifestations. Truth gave us religion. It was never that religion created Truth.

The holiness of a religious ceremony lies in the energy brought to it by the depth of sincerity in priest and participants. This holiness is not of a type measurable by physical instruments. It is a spiritual energy—not seen, but felt distinctly by anyone who enters deeply into the spirit of the ceremony.

I have seen people in churches praying, but letting their eyes roam restlessly about as they watched others coming and going. I observed a priest once, reciting the office for the dead while cleaning his fingernails. And I attended vedic fire ceremonies in India where the brahmin priests went through the outer motions, and repeated by rote the requisite mantras, while at the same time glancing around them for approval.

The setting sun, as it shines upon the western clouds, irradiates them with brilliant hues. Once the sun fully disappears, however, those same clouds look gray and lusterless. It is the spirit behind religious practices, similarly, and not the practices themselves, that determines their spiritual influence.

Religion in the West, and perhaps everywhere in the world, has concentrated more on the numbers of its adherents than on the quality of their worship. Where more encouragement has been given to personal spiritual development, as it has been in India, religion finds it easier to adapt to the growing demand of our age for experience over blind belief. Ultimately, religion everywhere must move toward emphasizing the universal, eternal truths.

The importance of spirit over form, and of experiment (or experience) over dogmatic assertions: These are what must now be emphasized in religion. Unless these principles are allowed to claim their rightful place, religion will become increasingly irrelevant. It isn't likely that it will be able to continue its resistance to these valid expectations much longer, however. For religion is an eternal need of the soul. Without religion of some kind, the human spirit would shrivel and die. Mankind cannot afford to allow that to happen.

When I visited Australia a few years ago, someone approached me after a lecture I'd given, and said, "I'm an atheist. How can you define God in such a way as to make Him meaningful to me?" I thought, then replied, "Why don't you think of Him as the highest potential you can imagine for yourself?" For a moment he looked quite taken aback; then he answered, "I can live with that definition!"

The human spirit would die if it lost every high aspiration. It would condemn itself to apathy and decay. As Voltaire put it, "If God did not exist, man would find it necessary to invent Him."

Since the human spirit cannot live without religion, mankind will have to find some means of living with it. And that entails not rejecting, but exploring and reconciling, the differences between old dogmatic assumptions and new scientific discoveries.

The basic directions of the future—simplicity, an emphasis on quality, and research into the inner man—cannot but become as important in the field of religion as in every other field of activity.

The deepest truths of religion are all of them quite simple. They have been obscured by the outer structures of religion, which have become so complex in religion's struggle against a multiplicity of challenges as to create confusion and divisiveness, not clarity. Of all the institutions of mankind, religion ought to be the most unitive. Yet people fight, persecute one another, and go to war over their religious differences—all these in the name of God who, so all of them claim, is a God of Love.

It is time again to explore man's inner relationship with his Creator. Jesus Christ said, "Behold, the kingdom of God is within you." He said also, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up again in three days." The Bible tells us he was referring not to the temple at Jerusalem, but to the temple of his own body. The inference is obvious. For worship is conducted inside a temple, not outside it. The true goal of pilgrimage, so the Indian Scriptures declare, is within. What matters in religion, then, is not the outer place of worship, nor the outer rituals, nor even the particular system of beliefs (which are, after

all, only definitions formulated by human beings), but a person's own direct, actual, inner experience of God and Truth.

According to every saint who has experienced this sublime awakening, God is simple: Man is complex.

The demands of Truth are that religion become simple once again. Religion must return to the fundamental reality, divine love. It must return to man's need for direct, personal experience of that love.

Divine work is not converting others. It is living and expressing divine love.

A friend of mine in India once spent the summer at a hill station in the Himalayas. In the bungalow next to his lived a missionary lady, the headmistress of a local Christian school. My friend, by nature open-hearted, spoke to her pleasantly on those mornings when they met. She mistook his friendliness for a sign that she might be able to interest him in conversion. In return, therefore, she was all smiles. She invited him to visit her school, introduced him lovingly to her students, and explained to him at length the good work she was doing, and the beauty of the teachings of Jesus Christ. To all these attentions he responded appreciatively.

Gradually, it began to dawn on her that he had no interest in being converted. Her manner then cooled. The smile faded from her lips. At last the day came when she treated him as a stranger. He continued to greet her cordially as before. She, in return, preserved a dignified silence. As a potential convert he mattered to her. As a human being he lost that importance. She had never looked upon him as someone with spiritual needs of his own. Now—such, at least, was his impression—he simply represented for her a disappointing statistic of church membership.

The emphasis during Dwapara Yuga will shift from the quantitative approach to the qualitative. It will shift from the church's desire for more converts to the individual's need for satisfactory answers—even if the questions he asks are "inconvenient" or "difficult."

This shift toward simplicity, toward emphasizing the needs of the inner man over the demands of church and state, and, finally, toward qualitative over quantitative solutions, will create a growing demand that religion meet science with methods of its own for testing and experiencing truth.

Recent centuries have clearly demonstrated the inadequacy of mere belief. They have justified the scientific method of testing the validity of one's hypotheses. People

have assumed that the scientific method won't work in religion, since religion deals with unmeasurable truths. If this be the case, however, science is rapidly disqualifying itself. For how does one measure energy? Measurement has been a useful tool, but when one deals with subjects too subtle for measurement, other standards must be sought.

If religion had nothing more to offer than unprovable beliefs, the only people it would attract would be dreamers. Would anyone go to a gambling casino that had a reputation for never paying its customers? or for fobbing them off with promises of payment after the sky collapses? Despite religion's promises of consolation in the hereafter, it also fulfills very present spiritual needs. If this were not true, people would have stopped turning to religion long ago, even as primitive tribesmen stopped going to their witch doctors once they realized that modern medical doctors did a better job.

Religion offers teachings that uplift and broaden the human mind. Even more than teachings, it offers experience. The inspiration felt in deep prayer and meditation is something living. Great works of art touch on that intensity of inspiration only to the degree that they echo the inspirations of the soul, but religion offers soul-inspiration directly.

An example of the immediacy of the teachings offered in all religions is the simple admonition to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Religion helps us to become sensitive to the truth that we all partake of a greater reality. "No man is an island." No man lives truly alone, except as he isolates himself from others in his own mind.

As the laboratory is the workshop of science, so the human mind is the workshop of religion. Religious ceremonies are only projections of man's longing for inner transformation. It is on his own thoughts, primarily, that he must work. It is his own feelings that he must purify.

Didn't Jesus tell us exactly that? "Blessed are the pure in heart," he said, "for they shall see God." He didn't say, "Blessed are my disciples," or even, "Blessed are those who believe what I say." He made it clear that our salvation depends not on outer affiliation, nor on mere mental acknowledgement of the truth, but on a person's purity before the Lord, whose kingdom is "within."

A great deal of what religion teaches can be tested and verified. Ultimately, it may turn out that all of its claims can be verified. To observe a microbe, what one needs is a microscope. To perceive Truth, what one needs is to calm the mind until it becomes crystal clear.

There are two distinct needs in religion today. One is to test the Scriptures, as the Bible tells us to do. The other is the need to develop practical methods for conducting our tests.

Obviously, test tubes can't be used in the "laboratory" of the mind. What is needed are methods for calming and concentrating the mind. Meditation is comparable in this sense to the science laboratory. It helps one to achieve that degree of mental clarity which is necessary for this type of research. Truth cannot be perceived so long as the mind is restless, and so long as its attention is directed outward to the senses.

In modern medicine, numerous cures have been adopted from other cultures, where they were known to work. In other fields, too, the discoveries of one culture have helped in the development of others. Throughout the world, in our time especially, the trend toward cultural cross-pollination has been increasing.

In religion, unfortunately, claims of exclusivity have caused people to gaze with open hostility on practices and beliefs even slightly different from their own.

Now, however, in Dwapara Yuga, mankind's search for spiritual understanding will take a new direction. Religion will cease to be dogmatic. Its emphasis will become increasingly experiential, as it concentrates on the spiritual development of the individual. Religion will come in time to include among its practices psycho-physical methods designed to help the individual achieve inner peace and clarity. Thus, yoga in all its branches will come into its own.

Inasmuch as yoga deals not only with mental and physical techniques of self-development, but with direct control of the inner energy (pranayama, or energy control), it will come to be recognized as an actual science of religion. It will, I am confident, become the human science par excellence for the new age. Yoga meditation practices will be used as a means of testing the claims of religion by putting people in touch with their superconscious, and by enabling them to guide their lives by soul-intuition.

The religion of the new age will, as I said, be directed inwardly more than outwardly. The purpose of this inner research will not be to strengthen the ego, but to trace individual self-awareness back to its source in Infinite Consciousness. Inasmuch as the ego's attention is normally directed outward to the body, and to the world around it, its self-definition is derived from these superficial identities. "I am a man (or woman). I am an American (or Frenchman, or Italian). I am...I am." The ego's grip on human consciousness can be lessened only by contact with a higher consciousness. If we hope ever to achieve clear understanding of who and what we are, we must go within and explore a deeper link with the world around us.

Jesus said, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." He meant that our neighbor is, in a deeper, spiritual sense, our true self.

The reality of an island is only superficially the land mass that is visible to our eyes. Its greater mass lies out of sight, beneath the waves. Therein lies its connection to the earth, and to all the other islands in the sea.

The religion of the future will be a religion of Self-realization. It will consist in the realization that the infinite love and joy of God form our own deepest reality, and that God is our true Self. For just as matter is energy, so energy is but a manifestation of thought, thought but a manifestation of consciousness, and consciousness, in its ultimate refinement, but the Divine out of which all things, all beings, and our own selves were created.

## **Chapter Six: Religious Institutions in the New Age**

The fact that matter is energy doesn't relegate matter to non-existence. It only means that there is more to matter than at first appears. Matter has been exalted, like the peasant boy of fable who turned out to have the talent of a great artist. It isn't the task of Dwapara Yuga to overthrow Kali Yuga realities, but only to raise them to higher levels of reality.

Religion, for example, will not be undermined by the discovery that the divine dramas enacted on earth by the great saviors of mankind are limited in scope. Nor will it be weakened by the realization that the Creator of a hundred billion galaxies cannot but be very different from the old man with a flowing white beard that Michelangelo depicted in the Sistine Chapel; that the Lord cannot, in fact, have a human gender at all. Religion, far from being silenced by the discoveries of modern science, will only be translated from an archaic language into one that is living.

People's grasp of morality, too, will undergo transformation. Morality is not dead, as many people imagine. In the first exuberance of people's realization that nothing is absolute, they were quick to conclude that it is perfectly all right to do whatever one likes. They erred in that conclusion, however. If morality is relative, its rules still apply universally to everyone living at specific stages of spiritual evolution. The relativity, in other words, is directional; it is not whimsical. If a lazy fellow were to declare energetically one day, "I'm going to work hard and become a millionaire!" he would be applauded by everyone. If a noble servitor of humanity, however, like Gandhi, were to announce the same intention, his decision would be universally decried as shameful.



With growing emphasis on the inner man, it will become increasingly clear that the principles of morality are rooted deep in the natural order. This subject is one that I've explained at length in my book, *Crises in Modern Thought*; I needn't go into it further here. The point is, our understanding of morality, too, is being broadened and deepened, even if in the process it undergoes a certain confusion. Morality is not out of date. In time it will be seen, instead, to form the basis of a truly effective and happy life.

The same is true for religious organizations. The realization that they are not an absolute good will pass beyond disillusionment to a more mature assessment of the good they can do.

The goal of religious practice is to lift man above dependence on any religious organization. As a saint in India once put it, "It is a blessing to be born into a religion, but a misfortune to die in one!" Nevertheless, religious organizations can—if they are expansive and self-giving, if they don't make contractive demands of their members, and if their goal is to serve others, not to control them—they can, I say, be a force for great good in the world.

In my previous papers I showed that the degree of expansiveness or contractiveness of an organization is what determines its state of health, whether good or bad.

Contractiveness in individuals, and just as much so in organizations, produces an exaggerated state of self-involvement. Self-involved people have no sense of proportion. This is true for organizations, too, since organizations are run by people who project onto them whatever attitudes they foster in themselves. A self-involved leader projects contractive attitudes downward through his organization to the point where the entire work force think less in terms of the good they might be doing in the world, and more in terms of the good they can do for themselves. Their general concern is to create safeguards, that both they and the organization function without serious threats to the status quo. In such an organization, there is a prevalent atmosphere of fear. Initiative is non-existent.

In religious organizations, rationalizations are generally devised to explain away this blatant appearance of selfishness. Thus, if creative innovations are discouraged, it is because "the teachings must be preserved in their pure form." If anyone feels a generous urge to help others, he is urged to curtail his impetuosity because "the organization must be strong so as the better to serve all mankind." (In fact, what is most wrong with him is that he makes others around him look bad.) And, lest the organization lose its precarious sense of balance, suggestions are not even listened to unless they happen to echo already-established policies.

What happens in such religious organizations, of course, is that spiritual vision is lost and forgotten in a bureaucratic fog.

The cure in every case will be found in a change of direction—from a contractive to an expansive flow of energy; from protective attitudes to healthy, sharing ones.

Two principles must be kept uppermost, if spiritual ends are to be served. The first of these principles is, People are more important than things. The second is, Where there is adherence to truth, there is victory.

I first saw this second principle expressed in India, as the motto of the royal family of Cooch Behar. In Bengali it had a special rhythm to it: "Jato dharma, tato jaya."

The first of these principles has been stated many times and in many ways. It was expressed by Jesus Christ when he said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

The second principle is more difficult for worldly minds to understand. People tend, foolishly, to see high principles as stumbling blocks to success. As the father of a friend of mine told him, no doubt wanting to share with him the garnered wisdom of a lifetime, "Son, no one ever grew rich by being too honest." Yet every time that same man had amassed wealth by trickery, he lost it again.

Practicality is essential, of course. Many people, however, oppose every expansive idea with the explanation, "I'm only being practical." Such people, if they find themselves at the head of an organization, condemn it to mediocrity.

## **Organization in Nature**

An excellent way to learn how to run an organization is to study Nature's way of doing it.

Consider the human body. Like a well-run institution, the body has a chain of command. The ego, working through the will, issues directives through nerve centers in the brain and the spine.

For the body to thrive, its ruling ego, like the chief executive officer of a corporation, must listen to its needs, and respond to them sensitively.

Again, for the body to thrive, its various parts must feel nourished and respected by their "superiors"—the ego, and the energy in the nerve centers. The body languishes when it is drained of energy by wrong living.

The ego must have a healthy, expansive relationship with the body and, through it, with the world around it. It must aspire to serve a higher purpose in life than the mere fulfillment of its selfish desires.

The entire universe manifests the same unifying principles. The mechanistic laws of physics are rooted in spiritual Truth. Gravity is a reflection of the principle of divine love. Newton's law of action and reaction is a reflection of the law of compensation, which in India is called the law of karma. The very ebb and flow of the ocean tides is a manifestation of the primordial principle of dwaita (duality), which, according to Indian teachings, forms the basis of universal creation.

## **The Universal Key**

The master key to the laws of the universe is love.

Swami Sri Yukteswar wrote of love's effect on the human body in his book, *The Holy Science*: "When love, the heavenly gift of Nature, appears in the heart, it removes all causes of excitation from the system and cools it down to a perfectly normal state; and, invigorating the vital powers, expels all foreign matters—the germs of diseases—by natural ways (perspiration and so forth). It thereby makes man perfectly healthy in body and mind, and enables him to understand properly the guidance of Nature."

Sri Yukteswar explained further the effects of love on human understanding: "When this love becomes developed in man it makes him able to understand the real position of his own Self as well as of others surrounding him."

Paramhansa Yogananda, Sri Yukteswar's chief disciple, taught that the only way to understand others truly is by holding deep compassion for them in one's heart. Psychoanalysis is of the intellect; by itself, therefore, it can provide only superficial insights into human nature. Deep insights are possible only with love.

That is why, when Paramhansa Yogananda was asked once, "What can take your place after you leave this world?" he replied with a loving smile, "When I am gone, only love can take my place." Love, he meant, not only for God, but for God in others, in mankind, in all beings. As we contemplate Dwapara Yuga, love alone can help us fully to absorb its energies.

Jesus, too, stressed this principle. The Bible, in Mark 3:1-5, mentions certain orthodox people who watched him critically to see if he would break the Judaic law and heal a man on the Sabbath. The account then tells us that Jesus "looked round about him with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts."

Again, in John 13:35, he says, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

## **The Principle of Love in Human Institutions**

In a healthy organization, every member is considered, and considers himself, important to the whole, whatever his position in the "pecking order." Even if the organization appears somewhat cavalier with respect to procedural norms, it will function relatively smoothly and well as long as its energy is expansive, and as long as its workers are concerned with serving others rather than with protecting themselves from the wrath of their superiors.

The leaders, too, in a healthy organization are concerned first for the well-being of their subordinates, and only secondarily for whatever work they can get out of them. Greater concern is felt at all levels for the well-being of society as a whole than for that society as a source of benefit to the organization.

A spiritually unhealthy organization, on the contrary, like an unhealthy ego, is contractive in its energy. Its workers fear for their jobs. Its leaders fear for their authority. The work itself is motivated more by a fear of failure than by any particular expectation of success. Leaders and workers alike are indifferent to one another's needs, though they disguise their indifference, like icing a cake, with high-sounding principles.

In contractive spiritual organizations, one often hears the disclaimer, "Only the goals of the work are important"; or, "Only God's will matters" (people, in other words, are not important). Far from revealing high idealism, however, such disclaimers are evidence, merely, that the disease has reached an advanced state, which in this virulent form might be termed, "galloping contractiveness." In such organizations, any lingering self-confidence or enthusiasm is feared, and may be actively discouraged.

Every auto mechanic knows the importance of treating his tools with respect. He must clean and oil them regularly and place each one carefully where it belongs. If he fails to take good care of his tools, it may be safely assumed that he is a bad mechanic.

An organization, similarly, thrives when its members feel respected, cared for, and, in a sense at least, loved. If it is seen that the organization fails to take proper care of

its own, no further diagnosis will be necessary. We may, without fear of contradiction, assume the worst.

Religious organizations in Dwapara Yuga will be guided more sensitively. The best leaders will look upon their organizations as examples of universal law in action. Energy-consciousness, as opposed to matter-consciousness, will create a shift in emphasis from outer forms to their inner, motivating spirit.

The defects of Kali Yuga organizations in general, and of church organizations in particular, are these:

- 1) the delusion that form can serve as a substitute for truth;
- 2) the delusion that more can be accomplished by power than by love; that imposed control is more effective and more reliable than love;
- 3) the delusion that the leaders at the top are qualified to understand everything;
- 4) the delusion that many rules, rigidly adhered to, are necessary for developing the right spirit;—and, finally:
- 5) the delusion that dogmas, not charity, are the essence of religion.

In Dwapara Yuga, if one bothers to study these alternatives at all, he will see them from a diametrically opposite perspective. For Dwapara helps people to see that:

- 1) a truth can assume many forms;
- 2) love is the greatest power; the changes it effects are from within, and are, therefore, lasting;
- 3) wisdom is not a human property. It depends not on talent or intelligence, but on a person's openness to receive understanding "from above";
- 4) the right spirit flourishes in simplicity of heart. Too many rules, too rigidly adhered to, produce a calculating, contractive mind, and make one capable of deviousness, deceit, and subtle ambition;
- 5) dogmas are the body, but charity is the life of the body. Dogmas are the definition of religion, but charity is its living expression.

In my last paper I wrote that, if the choice for appointment to an administrative post should happen to lie between someone who is deeply spiritual, but who lacks experience, and another person who is worldly minded, but experienced, the decision would obviously have to go to the worldly one with experience. This is, however, the Kali Yuga way of thinking. It is a way that views the outer forms of things as their reality, while all but ignoring their inner essence.

It will become more or less obvious during Dwapara Yuga that the effectiveness of an organization depends on its spirit, not on its efficiency. Efficiency, while always desirable, is of little use if the spirit is weak. Efficiency can be learned, but right spirit can never be taught; it can only be inspired.

In Dwapara Yuga, the emphasis in spiritual organizations will be increasingly on fostering understanding and love. Efficiency will be valued, but not at the expense of right spiritual attitudes. True insight will be perceived as coming from God, not from human authority. If one priest is found to be more saintly than others, his example will be seen not as a threat to uniformity, but as a blessing on the whole church; not as an embarrassment, but as something for all the other priests to live up to.

The lines of authority, likewise, will not be kept so rigid that spiritual principles are sacrificed to organizational convenience. If someone in the lower echelons of an organization feels misunderstood by his immediate superior, those even higher up, while giving all possible support to that superior, will listen charitably also to his subordinate's complaint. A sufficiently clear understanding of the need for lines of authority will make it possible to by-pass those lines out of consideration for the individual, without thereby weakening those lines in a normal context.

In all these last considerations, however, we reach a level of understanding where mere reason is insufficient. Intuition alone can guide human understanding wisely, where reason stumbles. We return, therefore, to a point I raised earlier, namely, that some form of revelation is needed at this time for mankind to be guided infallibly into the new age.

Let us consider whether such guidance is in fact available to mankind. If so, how can we best take advantage of it? Surely what is needed is not outward conversion. The change needed everywhere is within the individual. It must be a conversion to his own higher self.

## **Chapter Seven: Dwapara Yuga Guidance**

Sri Yukteswar prayed, shortly before committing himself to writing his book, *The Holy Science*, that the advances being made by mankind in this new Dwapara Yuga,

owing to the discoveries of science, might receive the guidance of divine wisdom. In answer to his prayer, God sent him an enlightened soul to be prepared for such a mission.

Paramhansa Yogananda was that student. A great master, his role was, in part, to bring the ancient wisdom to the West in its pure essence, and in part also it was to show how to make those truths practical in modern times.

Paramhansa Yogananda's mission was not only qualitative, to a few disciples. It was also quantitative, to an entire age. He was sent to be a way-shower for all mankind, as civilization enters the as-yet-unexplored terrain of Dwapara Yuga.

One of the patterns of living that Yogananda came to establish for the new age was the founding of "world-brotherhood colonies," as he called them: communities where people could bring these new, high concepts to a focus on a practical level, and, subsequently, offer them to mankind as workable, not as merely theoretical, models.

I, personally, enter this picture because it fell to my lot to establish the first of these world-brotherhood colonies. Ananda World-Brotherhood Village is located in the Sierra Nevada foothills of northern California, near the twin towns of Nevada City and Grass Valley. In the present year—293 Dwapara—it has six branch communities: in Seattle, Washington; Portland, Oregon; Palo Alto and Sacramento, California; Dallas, Texas; and near Assisi, Italy. Our total resident membership is somewhere around 800. The original community rests on some 900 acres of land, and is home to about 400 members.

True to Dwapara Yuga principles, size is not our objective. Our objective is to inspire individuals—even large numbers of individuals—with new clarity, and with more focused dedication to their own inner unfoldment. These ideals we seek also to inspire in others elsewhere, regardless of their outer religious affiliations. As Paramhansa Yogananda often said, "I prefer a soul to a crowd, and I love crowds of souls!"

To put a still finer point on it, we try not to be goal-oriented. As a saying of ours puts it: "The goal of life is to stop being goal-oriented and expand one's sense of BEING to Infinity."

I came to Yogananda in 1948, after reading his book, *Autobiography of a Yogi*. I sought him out for my own salvation. I also sought him in consequence of a deep concern that I myself had felt for the future of mankind. For I had come to realize that without divine guidance, the human race had entered, in this century, upon so vast a territory of new developments that the chances of its losing its way had become astronomical. After

reading his book, I understood that here was the message that could guide mankind past the pitfalls of modern times.

Inspired by the vision of spiritually focused communities in the new age, I founded Ananda in 1968—twenty-five years ago, and twenty years after I first met Yogananda.

In developing Ananda, I did my best always to draw lessons from his example, and from his way of teaching and guiding others. I wrote books to show the relevance of his teachings to numerous aspects of modern life: marriage and loving relationships, child raising, education, business, leadership, the arts, architecture, philosophy, communities—indeed, in a sense, to the whole spectrum of life. I wrote songs and instrumental music—nearly 300 pieces in all—to help people to sense the consciousness behind his message. I helped establish schools and businesses to give these concepts a more concrete foundation.

In one important respect, I confess, it seemed to me that Yogananda had not given us adequate guidelines: for the formation of organizations in the new age. Until the actual writing of this paper, nearly forty-five years after I first came to him, I still believed that he considered organizations a necessary evil. Some of this belief influenced what I wrote in the first two of this series of papers. In an early draft of this third paper, I stated:

"As if to emphasize the importance of consciousness over form, [Paramhansa Yogananda] himself never actually gave much energy to organizing his work. Its overriding reality was the vigorous expansiveness of his spirit.

"Sister Gyanamata, his chief woman disciple, predicted, 'You will never be able to organize this work so long as he is alive.' Yogananda himself said, 'You all will have to work hard to organize the work after I am gone.'"

In everything I have done in my adult life, I have pondered the things he said and did, even to little hints he gave, with a view to drawing from them their full meaning. As the founder of Ananda, I have felt that my role, personally, was insignificant. My job was to transmit to others the message I had received from that great world teacher.

While writing this paper, therefore, I meditated again on the examples he had given us as the founder of an organization (Self-Realization Fellowship). And all of a sudden I understood this aspect of his life as I had never understood it before.

His mission covered a broad range of activities, such that it would have been impossible for him to limit himself to the usual role of an administrator. Nevertheless, he



gave us the guidance we needed to carry on his work along Dwapara Yuga lines. More than that, he actually set an ideal example of Dwapara Yuga-type management by trying to inspire us to rise to his meaning, instead of beating us on the head, so to speak, with what he wanted us to do.

His own firm commitment to the spirit of his work, rather than to its form, was necessary to establish in us a more fluid, more loving approach to organizing than the rigid forms on which, from childhood as Westerners, we'd been raised.

It was we, steeped as we were in the customary patterns of thought born of our Western heritage, who were not yet ready for his sort of leadership.

I remember one disciple telling me, almost with a tone of bewilderment, how the Master had tried for a long time to interest him in helping in organizational matters. Finally the young man, under the impression that he'd at last understood how to proceed, came to the Master with a program for spreading the work. The Master, exasperated over the young man's having mistaken a need for order and simplicity for a need to hustle, brushed away his entire program with the words, "When we are ready, God will send us those whom He wants to help."

It was not the Master's way to dot every i and cross every t. If he saw that the recognition of a truth was simply lacking in a person, he dropped the subject. In this respect, too, he demonstrated one of the principles of Dwapara Yuga leadership: never to impose, but to try, rather, to inspire others from within to develop their own understanding.

Here's an example of how he worked: In 1949 he put me in charge of the monks. A year later, he asked me to organize them. Until then, the monks had never been organized.

One might assume that hours were devoted, thereafter, to instructing me on how to organize them. Instead, as in fact he usually did in such matters, he relied on my attunement with him to perceive his wishes and to carry them out. From time to time he would make a few suggestions, or utter a brief cautionary remark. Occasionally he would correct me, if he saw that I hadn't understood him in some particular. Otherwise, he simply kept an eye on what I was doing, every now and then expressing satisfaction, otherwise leaving it to me to do as I felt guided from within.

Most of his training of us was on an intuitive level, from within. It was enough, in my organizing of the monks, that I had grasped the spirit of what he intended, and was in

tune with his inner guidance. From that level of understanding, the details would, he knew, follow as a natural consequence.

What I have come to realize, then, while writing this paper, is that organization was important to him, but in a lesser sense than the spirit of his teachings. That was why he waited until near the end of his life to ask that the monks be organized, and perhaps also why it was my lot to come towards the end of his life, to help with that aspect of his mission. It was why he said, "You all will have to work hard to organize the work after I am gone." He set the tone for how to organize, but he gave primary emphasis throughout his life to the spirit behind the form.

Again, the reason it was my lot to come to him in the last years of his life (I came in 1948; he passed away in 1952) was, I believe, because my sense of discipleship was centrifugal, not centripetal: It was directed outward, from a center of attunement with him toward helping him with his mission, rather than centered primarily in him, as the teacher.

His guidance of me, too, was focused on making me an instrument through which he could help others.

One day I fell into a mood. When next he saw me, although the mood by then had evaporated, he said, "No more moods, now. How else will you be able to help others?"

Always, his guidance focused on the inner spirit of anything we did. Even when lecturing, he said, "concentrate on giving your audience your vibrations. Don't concentrate only on the thoughts you are expressing."

There was a time at Mt. Washington when we badly needed a skilled worker for the print shop. Since this had been a subject of discussion for some weeks, it was with a glow of triumph that I approached the Master one day with the news, "Sir, we have a new man for the print shop!"

"Why do you say that?" he demanded. "First, see if they have our spirit. Then look to see where they will fit into our work."

On one occasion I accepted for residence in the monastery someone who even I knew was not ready for our way of life. The man desperately needed a spiritual boost, however, and seemed determined to do his best. The Master, seeing him for the first time one day, remarked to me later, "I am going to have to give you intuition!"

This principle of doing things by intuition, rather than by reason alone, became important to me in the founding of Ananda. I had, of course, to use common sense also. It

became increasingly clear to me, however, that without intuition nothing major can ever be accomplished.

One of the instructions Master gave me was, "Don't make too many rules. It destroys the spirit." From this instruction, if from no other, I understood his view that organization is a flow rather than a crystalline structure.

In looking to Yogananda's example for how a Dwapara Yuga institution ought to be run, we must, as I stated earlier, look to the direction of energy, and not to what people commonly describe as the "nuts and bolts" of the organizing process. In this regard, Paramhansa Yogananda fulfilled in many ways the requirements for the leader of an organization in Dwapara Yuga.

First and foremost, there was his expansiveness. In most people, some conflict may be observed between their expansive and their contractive tendencies. In the Master I observed no such conflict. To the rest of us, his expansiveness was a constant inspiration. It was also, for us, an unceasing challenge.

One of the proofs of an expansive nature is that it is solution-oriented, and not, like a contractive nature, problem-oriented. Problem-consciousness, like contractiveness, is a symptom of Kali Yuga. Solution-consciousness, like expansiveness, is a mark of Dwapara Yuga.

During World War II, official restrictions were placed on any new buildings in Los Angeles. The Master wanted to construct a new church in Hollywood. Because of the restrictions, however, he was told he couldn't do so.

Instead of concentrating on what he couldn't do, therefore, he determined that there must be something that he could do. Soon, the solution suggested itself to him.

For restrictions hadn't been placed on remodeling already-existing structures. The Master searched for, and eventually found, the shell of an old building of just the right dimensions for what he wanted. It was moved onto the Hollywood property, and there he proceeded to remodel it.

The neighbors—problem-oriented, like most people!—on seeing that gutted shell out there on an empty lot, complained vociferously. Somehow, they couldn't see its artistic possibilities! Gradually, however, to their amazement, this decrepit ruin was transformed into the lovely jewel that, for fifty years now, has been Self-Realization Fellowship's Church of All Religions in Hollywood.

Expansiveness. Solution-orientedness. Judging people's fitness for position by their spirit more than by their abilities. Encouraging subordinates to develop their own intuition, attunement, and understanding, rather than carefully spelling out for them every move. Giving them a chance to learn from their mistakes. Reviewing actions after the event, rather than fretting in advance over everything that might conceivably go wrong. Supportiveness. Love: These were a few of the ways in which Paramhansa Yogananda pointed the way to enlightened management in the new age of Dwapara.

He showed his command of the needs of management in this age of energy in other ways also. He placed primary importance on serving others. And he dealt with everyone impartially, with divine love, bowing equally to all, in God.

His concept of spiritual management was top-downward—not in the usual managerial sense, but rather in the sense that he gave first priority to Truth, then to the high concepts that best express truth, then to people as recipients of the truth, and only finally to the organization as a vessel for containing that truth and as a vehicle for spreading it.

People, to him, were more important than the organization, or church. The teachings were more important than people in the sense that he would not compromise Truth to accommodate people's delusions. And eternal Truth itself, finally, was more important to him than any specific formulation of it.

## **Chapter Eight: Ananda—A First Step**

I have done my best to follow Paramhansa Yogananda's example while creating Ananda, to make it a laboratory for testing and developing his ideals. It isn't that these ideals themselves are unprecedented, any more than Truth itself is unprecedented. Other people have expressed the same thoughts many times before, and in many different ways. What is new now is that these concepts have been offered as central during a time when the general consciousness is becoming ready to embrace them.

At Ananda there are few written rules. We try, rather, to work with people as they are, not as an artificial prescription says they ought to be. "People are more important than things." It is for people's sake that rules are originally made.

I have tried always to follow Yogananda's charitable approach to organizing. If a job needs doing, no matter how important it is, our first concern is for the people; it is only secondarily for the work. For spiritual institutions exist to help you, me, and everyone who sincerely reaches out to them for guidance and inner strength. They are meant for those who can stand and be counted, and not for an amorphous humanity "out

there" who might, perhaps, benefit someday, if only we can squeeze Joe and Mary meanwhile for everything they can give.

At Ananda, if doubts arise as to whether a person under consideration for a position would benefit from it spiritually, we seek other candidates, even if less suitable for the job, who are more likely to be helped by it. We'd rather see a project fail than succeed at the expense of any individual. Our projects, consequently, have not failed. Indeed, Ananda has flourished in a field (communities) where the rate of failure, so far, is close to 100%.

In 1980 we bought East West Books, a metaphysical bookstore in Menlo Park, California. The person I put in charge of the store remonstrated with me, "But I don't know anything about selling books!"

"Never mind," I consoled her. "Be a friend to everyone who comes. You will learn about books in time. Your customers will be glad to tell you about them in return for the spiritual nourishment they feel when they come here. Serve them and love them in God."

Today, East West Books is in the top one percent of metaphysical bookstores in the entire country, and is the second-largest-selling bookstore of its kind on the West Coast—all because of our principle of placing the highest priority on the spirit with which people work there, rather than on worldly competence. The competence has followed as a matter of course.

Another example of relying on the spirit first, rather than on material realities, occurred in 1976. In that year a forest fire destroyed 450 acres at Ananda, and twenty-one Ananda homes. It might easily have sounded the death-knell for our community. There were no financial reserves from which to rebuild, and Ananda had no insurance. Though generously assisted by donations from friends and from other organizations, it took us years to pay off the loss. With a lot of hard work, however, with joyful faith in God, and with His grace we did rebuild at last, better than ever.

During the early stages of the rebuilding process, we faced a moral dilemma. Before the fire, a couple had decided to move away from Ananda. We'd promised to buy their home whenever funds became available. When this home was destroyed, along with the others, there was, of course, nothing left for us to buy back. Donations were coming in at a trickle, not in a flood. We had the rebuilding of the other homes to consider. Were we still obligated to buy that (now) non-existent building? If so, how soon ought we to do so?

After consulting the resident members' feelings in the matter, we decided to pay off that couple's home first, out of the initial donations received. "Jato dharma, tato jaya: Where there is adherence to truth, there is victory." Our hearts rejoiced in the realization that our homes, and Ananda itself, belong to God and Guru, not to us.

Our belief, inspired by Master's example, is that the whole world, not Ananda alone, is our community. Here's an example of the practical consequences of that belief.

The cause of the fire was later discovered to have been a faulty spark-arrester on a county vehicle. This meant we could sue the county for damages. Our neighbors, who also had lost their homes, sued and collected. When the news first came out of the county's liability, some of those neighbors phoned us and said excitedly, "You'll be able easily to get two million dollars for your losses!" Ananda had been the biggest loser in the fire. Two million dollars would have enabled us to rebuild our homes, and to redevelop the devastated land as well.

Instead, we wrote to the county supervisors that the county, not Ananda, was our larger community. We would not, I said, be taking our bad luck out on other members of that community.

Ten years later, many neighbors were still bemoaning the losses they'd sustained in the fire. At Ananda, the very day after the fire we were already pitching in joyfully to clear the land and start building again. Joy never left us. In many ways, the fire proved one of the greatest blessings we've ever had.

Our deep conviction has been justified again and again over the years. It is that, if the spirit is truly expansive and self-giving, then God—perhaps through the Intelligent Cosmic Energy—will always provide.

My very decision to found Ananda was made during a period of my life when my income was not even \$400 a month. Friends and relatives wrote off my scheme as absurd. The energy, however, felt right to me. My own part of the "scheme" was only to put out the highest energy of which I myself was capable.

The inspiration for this decision was, again, Paramhansa Yogananda. One day, he was asked by a visitor, sneeringly, "What are the assets of this organization?" "None!" was Master's vigorous reply. "Only God!"

To raise the money I needed for starting Ananda, I traveled daily from town to town giving yoga classes. Mindful of Master's reluctance, years earlier, to charge for his classes, but recalling how he said he'd done so once he realized that people appreciate

what they receive only when they give something in return, I charged a token \$25 for a six-weeks course. If anyone complained that he couldn't afford even that amount, I let him perform some small service in exchange for the lessons: set up chairs, perhaps; or, after I'd acquired the first Ananda property, work there on a weekend. (Strange to relate, it turned out in every case that people who claimed they couldn't afford to pay could in fact have done so easily. Nevertheless, I preferred to let them determine their own priorities. My responsibility was for my own spirit of service.) As things turned out, God always sent me the number of paying students I needed to meet my land and construction costs. Never more than that amount, but always enough.

## **Enlightened Discipline**

I have already discussed in sufficient detail for the purposes of this paper the way we have sought to grow by putting principles first, and by keeping always in mind that people are more important than things. One of the aspects of community life that might seem especially difficult to develop along charitable lines is that of discipline.

Yet a certain amount of discipline is necessary in any institution. Anarchy is not freedom. The more such discipline proceeds from within an individual, however, instead of being imposed on him from without, the better, both for the organization and for the individual himself and for his relation to the organization.

Paramhansa Yogananda set the tone in this respect also. He once said to me, "I only like to discipline with love. I just wilt when I have to discipline in other ways."

He also gave supreme importance to the individual's free will. "I only discipline those who want it," he said, "never those who don't."

One might think it necessary sometimes to put organizational needs ahead of personal ones—to say, "Do it, or else!" I never knew Paramhansa Yogananda to do so.

On one occasion before my arrival, a grand opening was planned at the SRF colony in Encinitas, California. Everyone concerned felt great pressure to finish up everything for the occasion. The public and the media had been invited. Rev. Bernard, one of the ministers (who told me the story), was responsible for plastering the all-important towers. Several times he had worked through the night to meet the approaching deadline.

One final push was needed. Bernard's presence was crucial to the job's completion. On the final day, however, he failed to show up. When finally he did appear, the Master demanded of him, "Where were you?"

"Sir," replied the young man, "I was meditating."

"Oh," said the Master, instantly mollified. "Why didn't you say so?"

God-communion was our very reason for living there. Never would the Master give precedence over that highest priority to any outward project, no matter how urgent.

At Ananda, again following the Master's example, cooperation is emphasized over obedience. If anyone shows himself unwilling to do anything that is asked of him, our practice is simply to ask someone else.

If he refuses a second or a third time, he probably won't be asked to do anything else in future unless and until his attitude changes. For if he won't accept responsibility for disciplining himself, there is little to be gained from imposing discipline on him from without.

When external discipline comes by persuasion or force, it only weakens people by making them dependent, or, alternately, it confuses them by making them rebellious. Clarity of mind, and inner strength: Both are necessary in a strong organization, even if, in the short term, unquestioning obedience often seems more convenient.

It is important, also, to see the organization and the individual's place in it in terms of energy. Energy creates a vortex. Once a positive vortex is created, negative energy becomes either converted and drawn in toward the center, or else dissipated and repelled.

There are times, and there have been such times at Ananda, when negative energy has to be combated. In such cases, it is better to affirm positive energy, thereby giving it strength, than to energize a negative vortex by allowing oneself to show anger over it, or to denounce it.

## **Involvement Management**

An unusual feature of Ananda, and one that I feel may become widespread someday, is our practice of managing by direct involvement rather than from positions of general responsibility.

We call this process, "Involvement Management." It is something that has evolved over a period of years here, through trial and error, and not by any a priori theory on the matter. There were no models for us to study—or none, at any rate, with which we were familiar. To me, "involvement management" suggests an important direction for other organizations to consider as we advance into Dwapara Yuga.



For a long time prior to my founding Ananda, I studied other organizations, and observed their ways of functioning. I observed that high position was generally presumed to demonstrate a person's competence to make important decisions in all fields. Who said a thing was considered much more important than what was said.

I also assisted at meetings where those who knew the least about a project often did the most talking about it—as if to show that they, too, took their responsibility seriously as members of a decision-making body.

It is important for there to be positions of leadership, of course. But when only those in high positions do all the deciding, inevitably their expertise is often unequal to the task of making wise decisions. High positions, moreover, invite ambition, envy, and feelings of self-importance.

At Ananda we have a few people in key management positions, but meetings are more frequently held at levels where everyone responsibly involved in a project gets to participate.

The important thing is that the energy in all segments of the work be directed in a unified spirit. Otherwise, nothing will prevent the different committees from scattering off, each in its own direction, in the process destroying the coherence that is so essential to every work.

Paramhansa Yogananda tried to get people to understand management by involvement, and leadership by attunement with the source. Too many people, when he placed them in such positions, failed to realize with what a spiritual powerhouse they were living. Often, therefore, they tried to do things according to their private lights, without bothering greatly about attuning themselves to him. Those whom he had teaching the teachings too often viewed their role as an opportunity to present altogether different teachings of their own.

In a work of this spiritual importance, it is necessary to understand that God has sent a divine message to earth through this line of great masters. The more purely we can transmit that message to others, the more certain it will be to reach mankind as those masters, inspired by God, intended.

No work can flourish with a multiplicity of guiding spirits. Hence the truth of Emerson's saying, "An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man." The logic of that statement, applied to Paramhansa Yogananda's work, is irresistible: The mission he created will not flourish unless he himself is maintained, in spirit, at its head.

He knew that, after his death, his disciples, each of whom naturally was able to perceive him in only some, but not in all, of the many aspects of his many-sided nature, might be disposed to take his work in a multitude of different directions. He therefore said, "Only love can take my place." Not, "The memory of me," or, "Your attunement with me," or, "The rules I have written," but even more important, love, as the guiding principle regardless how differently we perceived him and his mission.

Today, therefore, when any two disciples interpret his teachings and guidance differently, they must give the highest priority to love: to demonstrating their love for him, and their attunement with him, by the love they have for one another.

Must they always agree? Preferably so, of course. Given the fact, however, that people sometimes cannot help seeing things with different eyes, they must at least love one another.

Must they, then, shelve their differences in the name of harmony? If possible, again, of course. If, however, the differences are so fundamental that it would entail offending against their understanding of the truth itself to set aside their differences for the sake of harmony, then what choice have they but to agree to differ? In this case, at least they can still love.

Love is a gift. It cannot be imposed by any rule. It cannot be demanded by one person of another. It must be given freely or not at all.

Master showed this spirit in his own life. And he showed how the spirit of love can reign supreme in an organization: by the complete absence of self-assertion; by seeing God in all; by not making the organization an extension of anyone's ego, but seeing all mankind equally as brothers and sisters; by judging no one; and by emphasizing a spirit of service rather than that spirit which is so often encountered in organizations: a struggle to the death for positions of authority.

At Ananda, we have succeeded to a gratifying extent in curbing personal ambition by the simple expedient of emphasizing function, and minimizing position. A person may be relatively new at Ananda and yet find himself participating in meetings, and helping to make decisions on basic issues, if he happens to be directly involved in the matters at issue. By the single device of involvement management we have eliminated perhaps eighty percent of the infighting and competition that are so commonly encountered in organizations.

Along with grassroots decision-making, there is always a need for guidance from above. The two flows of energy—from above downwards, and from the grassroots

upward—need to be held in constant balance. If decisions were made only at a grassroots level, homogeneity would be lost. So common is it for people to get caught up in details, to the point of losing touch with the deeper purpose of what they are doing, that we have created a safeguard at Ananda against this tendency: In addition to a general manager, who is responsible for the hows of a decision, we also have a spiritual director, who is responsible for the whethers.

The spiritual director's job is to make sure the spirit of Ananda flows from attunement with Master's teachings and inner guidance, and never from expediency alone. No decision is given full sanction unless it is felt to proceed from the Divine, through the special ray of God's grace that is the work of our line of gurus.

The need for attunement with their work is kept paramount. Ananda is part of that work, but the work as a whole is much broader than Ananda as we presently define our church and community. The work is to reach out with love everywhere, not limiting itself by the forms love can take, but concentrating rather on love itself, and asking that that love flow outward into the world, and energize from within all whom it touches.

Ananda exists in order to serve the larger community of mankind by serving first its own members, then those everywhere who turn to Ananda for help, then those whom it is in a position to help in practical ways, and finally everyone, for whom it can at least pray.

In Dwapara Yuga terms, religious organizations will be more strongly motivated than they have been in the past by the spirit of love. The emphasis, so common in the past, on power and control will be replaced by a loving desire to serve all, to embrace all mankind in a spirit of kinship in God, and to bless everyone, everywhere, with His love.