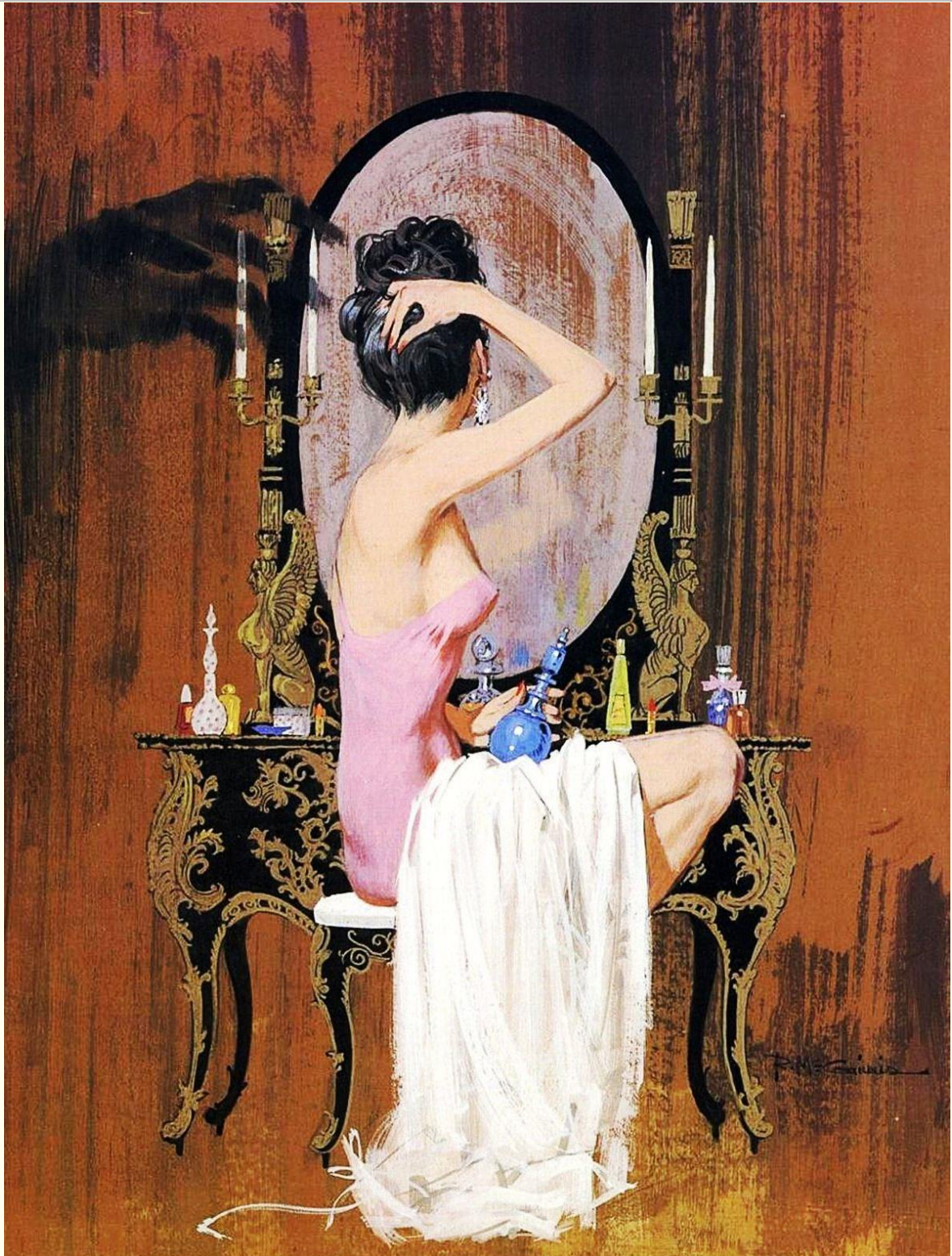


*That which is false  
can only be known by truth*



## Questions and answers on Kali Yuga, the black and fatal age we live in.

First published in *The Path*, New York, Vol. III (Nos. 1-6), April, May, June, July, August, September, 1888, pp. 17-21, 54-58, 94-96, 125-29, 160-63, and 187-92 respectively. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (CONVERSATIONS ON OCCULTISM – THE KALI-YUGA) IX pp. 99-104. Frontispiece: False scent, by Robert McGinnis.

**Student** I am very much puzzled about the present age. Some theosophists seem to abhor it as if wishing to be taken away from it altogether, inveighing against modern inventions such as the telegraph, railways, machinery, and the like, and bewailing the disappearance of former civilizations. Others take a different view, insisting that this is a better time than any other, and hailing modern methods as the best. Tell me, please, which of these is right, or, if both are wrong, what ought we to know about the age we live in.

**Sage** The teachers of Truth know all about this age. But they do not mistake the present century for the whole cycle. The older times of European history, for example, when might was right and when darkness prevailed over Western nations, was as much a part of this age, from the standpoint of the Masters, as is the present hour, for the Yuga — to use a Sanskrit word — in which we are now had begun many thousands of years before. And during that period of European darkness, although this Yuga had already begun, there was much light, learning, and civilization in India and China. The meaning of the words “present age” must therefore be extended over a far greater period than is at present assigned. In fact, modern science has reached no definite conclusion yet as to what should properly be called “an age,” and the truth of the Eastern doctrine is denied. Hence we find writers speaking of the “Golden Age,” the “Iron Age,” and so on, whereas they are only parts of the real age that began so far back that modern archaeologists deny it altogether.

**Student** What is the Sanskrit name for this age, and what is its meaning?

**Sage** The Sanskrit is “Kali,” which added to Yuga gives us “Kali-Yuga.” The meaning of it is “Dark Age.” Its approach was known to the ancients, its characteristics are described in the Indian poem the *Mahabharata*. As I said that it takes in an immense period of the glorious part of Indian history, there is no chance for anyone to be jealous and to say that we are comparing the present hour with that wonderful division of Indian development.



Student What are the characteristics to which you refer, by which *Kali-Yuga* may be known?

*Sage* As its name implies, darkness is the chief. This of course is not deducible by comparing to-day with 800 A.D., for this would be no comparison at all. The present century is certainly ahead of the middle ages, but as compared with the preceding Yuga it is dark. To the Occultist, material advancement is not of the quality of light, and he finds no proof of progress in merely mechanical contrivances that give comfort to a few of the human family while the many are in misery. For the darkness he would have to point but to one nation, even the great American Republic. Here he sees a mere extension of the habits and life of the Europe from which it sprang; here a great experiment with entirely new conditions and material was tried; here for many years very little poverty was known; but here to-day there is as much grinding poverty as anywhere, and as large a criminal class with corresponding prisons as in Europe, and more than in India. Again, the great thirst for riches and material betterment, while spiritual life is to a great extent ignored, is regarded by us as darkness. The great conflict already begun between the wealthy classes and the poorer is a sign of darkness. Were spiritual light prevalent, the rich and the poor would still be with us, for Karma cannot be blotted out, but the poor would know how to accept their lot and the rich how to improve the poor; now, on the contrary, the rich wonder why the poor do not go to the poorhouse, meanwhile seeking in the laws for cures for strikes and socialism, and the poor continually growl at fate and their supposed oppressors. All this is of the quality of spiritual darkness.

Student Is it wise to inquire as to the periods when the cycle changes, and to speculate on the great astronomical or other changes that herald a turn?

*Sage* It is not. There is an old saying that the gods are jealous about these things, not wishing mortals to know them. We may analyse the age, but it is better not to attempt to fix the hour of a change of cycle. Besides that, you will be unable to settle it, because a cycle does not begin on a day or year clear of any other cycle; they inter-blend, so that, although the wheel of one period is still turning, the initial point of another has already arrived.

Student Are these some of the reasons why Mr. Sinnett was not given certain definite periods of years about which he asked?

*Sage* Yes.

Student Has the age in which one lives any effect on the student; and what is it?

*Sage* It has effect on everyone, but the student after passing along in his development feels the effect more than the ordinary man. Were it otherwise, the sincere and aspiring students all over the world would advance at once to those heights towards which they strive. It takes a very strong soul to hold hack the age's heavy hand, and it is all the more difficult because that influence, being a part of the student's larger life, is not so well understood by him. It operates in the same way as a structural defect in a vessel. All the inner as well as the outer fibre of the man is the result of the long centuries

of earthly lives lived here by his ancestors. These sow seeds of thought and physical tendencies in a way that you cannot comprehend. All those tendencies affect him. Many powers once possessed are hidden so deep as to be unseen, and he struggles against obstacles constructed ages ago. Further yet are the peculiar alterations brought about in the astral world. It, being at once a photographic plate, so to say, and also a reflector, has become the keeper of the mistakes of ages past which it continually reflects upon us from a plane to which most of us are strangers. In that sense therefore, free as we suppose ourselves, we are walking about completely hypnotized by the past, acting blindly under the suggestions thus cast upon us.

Student Was that why Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, *for they know not what they do*"?

Sage That was one meaning. In one aspect they acted blindly, impelled by the age, thinking they were right.

Regarding these astral alterations, you will remember how in the time of Julian the seers reported that they could see the gods, but they were decaying, some headless, others flaccid, others minus limbs, and all appearing weak. The reverence for these ideals was departing, and their astral pictures had already begun to fade.

What mitigation is there about this age? Is there nothing at all to relieve the picture?

Sage There is one thing peculiar to the present *Kali-Yuga* that may be used by the Student All causes now bring about their effects much more rapidly than in any other or better age. A sincere lover of the race can accomplish more in three incarnations under *Kali-Yuga's* reign than he could in a much greater number in any other age. Thus by bearing all the manifold troubles of this Age and steadily triumphing, the object of his efforts will be more quickly realized, for, while the obstacles seem great, the powers to be invoked can be reached more quickly.

Student Even if this is, spiritually considered, a Dark Age, is it not in part redeemed by the increasing triumphs of mind over matter, and by the effects of science in mitigating human ills, such as the causes of disease, disease itself, cruelty, intolerance, bad laws, etc.?

Sage Yes, these are mitigations of the darkness in just the same way that a lamp gives some light at night but does not restore daylight. In this age there are great triumphs of science, but they are nearly all directed to *effects* and do not take away the *causes* of the evils. Great strides have been made in the arts and in cure of diseases, but in the future, as the flower of our civilization unfolds, new diseases will arise and more strange disorders will be known, springing from causes that lie deep in the minds of men and which can only be eradicated by spiritual living.

Student Admitting all you say, are not we, as Theosophists, to welcome every discovery of truth in any field, especially such truth as lessens suffering or enlarges the moral sense?

*Sage* That is our duty. All truths discovered must be parts of the one Absolute Truth, and so much added to the sum of our outer knowledge. There will always be a large number of men who seek for these parts of truth, and others who try to alleviate present human misery. They each do a great and appointed work that no true Theosophist should ignore. And it is also the duty of the latter to make similar efforts when possible, for Theosophy is a dead thing if it is not turned into the life. At the same time, no one of us may be the judge of just how much or how little our brother is doing in that direction. If he does all that he can and knows how to do, he does his whole present duty.

Student I fear that a hostile attitude by Occult teachers towards the learning and philanthropy of the time may arouse prejudice against Theosophy and Occultism, and needlessly impede the spread of Truth. May it not be so?

*Sage* The real Occult Teachers have no hostile attitude towards these things. If some persons, who like theosophy and try to spread it, take such a position, they do not thereby alter the one assumed by the real Teachers who work with all classes of men and use every possible instrument for good. But at the same time we have found that an excess of the technical and special knowledge of the day very often acts to prevent men from apprehending the truth.

Student Are there any causes, other than the spread of Theosophy, which may operate to reverse the present drift towards materialism?

*Sage* The spread of the knowledge of the laws of Karma and Reincarnation and of a belief in the absolute spiritual unity of all beings will alone prevent this drift. The cycle must, however, run its course, and until that is ended all beneficial causes will of necessity act slowly and not to the extent they would in a brighter age. As each student *lives* a better life and by his example imprints upon the astral light the picture of a higher aspiration acted in the world, he *thus aids souls of advanced development to descend from other spheres* where the cycles are so dark that they can no longer stay there.

Student Accept my thanks for your instruction.

*Sage* May you reach the terrace of enlightenment.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (CONVERSATIONS ON OCCULTISM – THE KALI-YUGA) IX pp. 99-104

## That which is false can only be known by truth.

Knowing is the first principle and fountainhead of writing well.  
— QUINTUS HORATIUS FLACCUS<sup>1</sup>

[Through Socrates] Plato here teaches how to write, and what the mode is of writing and speaking well or ill, making the problem more universal and scientific, after having referred the whole beginning of the discourse to the Muses and the Gods. But as that which is distorted is judged of by a rule, and that which is not straight by the straight, so that which is false can only be accurately known by truth. Hence, he says, in speaking or writing well, it is necessary that truth, and a knowledge of the subject, should precede as the leaders. For he who does not know the truth of a thing speaks conjecturally about it. Three things, therefore, are said to be present with those who speak or write.

First, a knowledge of the truth.

In the second place, an ability of making one thing many, which is the business of the divisive method: for by this we know the various significations of the thing proposed, if it should happen to be many, whether it is homonymous or synonymous, whether genus or species, and the like. There must necessarily, therefore, be the divisive method.

In the third place, the many must be collected into one, which is the business of the analytic and definitive methods: for to be able to collect many things into one sentence, is to give the definition of a thing.

Afterwards, the composition and ornament of the discourse must succeed. These, then, as the instruments of speaking and writing, ought to be known before everything, *viz.* the nature and the essence, or, in other words, the truth of a thing. For thus we shall know how we ought to proceed, whether through such things as are true, or through such as are assimilated to the truth. For he who does not know the truth, but only has an opinion concerning it, like those who possess popular rhetoric, will often persuade his hearers to the contrary of what he wishes.<sup>2</sup>

### The true student is susceptible to slander.

The true student has ever been a recluse, a man of silence and meditation. With the busy world his habits and tastes are so little in common that, while he is studying, his enemies and slanderers have undisturbed opportunities. But time cures all and lies are but ephemera. Truth alone is eternal.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Ars Poetica*, lines 309-10; [Scribendi recte sapere est principium et fons.]

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Taylor (*tr. & Annot.*). *The Works of Plato*. Vol. III of a set of five volumes. (Vol. XI of The Thomas Taylor Series) From: The Prometheus Trust, 1996. Endnote 31, pp. 420-21, being Taylor's Additional Notes on Plato's *Phædrus*. [Westerink line 259e, p. 374]

<sup>3</sup> *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (WHAT ARE THE THEOSOPHISTS?) II p. 105

### Fools alone rush in where angels fear to tread.<sup>1</sup>

. . . even a bad person may, by a study of the Sacred Science, be redeemed and stopped on the path of destruction. But unless he is in thorough union with his Higher Ego, he may repeat it, parrot-like, ten thousand times a day, and the “Word” will not help him. On the contrary, if not entirely at one with his higher Triad it may produce quite the reverse of a beneficent effect, the “Brothers of the Shadow” using it very often for malicious objects; in which case it awakens and stirs up only the evil, material elements of nature. But if one’s nature is good, and sincerely strives towards the HIGHER SELF, *which is that “Aum,”* through one’s Higher Ego, *which is its third letter* (Buddhi being the second), there is no attack of the Dragon Apophis which it will not repel. From those to whom much is given much is expected. He who knocks at the door of the Sanctuary in full knowledge of its sacredness, and after obtaining admission, runs away from the threshold, or turns and says, “Oh, there’s nothing in it!” and thus loses his chance of learning the whole truth — can but await his Karma.<sup>2</sup>

### Study and you will believe!

Far from me, though, the idea of disparaging in anyone the laudable impulse to search ardently after Truth, however arid and ungrateful the task may appear at first sight; for my own principle has ever been to make the Light of Truth, the beacon of my life. The words uttered by Christ eighteen centuries ago: “Believe and you will understand,” can be applied in the present case, and repeating them with but a slight modification, I may well say:

Study and you will believe.<sup>3</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> [Quoting Alexander Pope’s *Essay on Criticism*, 1711]

<sup>2</sup> *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (E.S. INSTRUCTION No. III) XII p. 639; [on the “two kinds of *soulless* beings on earth: those who have lost their higher Ego in the present incarnation, and those who are born *soulless*, having been severed from their Spiritual Soul in the preceding birth. The former are candidates for Avichi; the latter are ‘Mr. Hydes,’ whether *in* or *out* of their human bodies, whether incarnated or hanging about as invisible but potent *ghouls*.” Consult “Woe for the living dead,” in our Constitution of Man Series. — ED. PHIL.]

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, (FROM MADAME H.P. BLAVATSKY TO HER CORRESPONDENTS) I p. 127

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- A DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO LORD LYTTON
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- A LAY CHELA ON THE SECRET DOCTRINE
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- BLAVATSKY DEFENDS THE KEY TO THEOSOPHY
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- DE ZIRKOFF ON THREE EMINENT THEOSOPHISTS
- DE ZIRKOFF ON WILHELM HÜBBE-SCHLEIDEN
- DE ZIRKOFF RECALLS HIS FORMATIVE YEARS IN RUSSIA
- EASTERN LIGHT SHINES ON WESTERN MINDS
- EASTERN THEOSOPHY IS NEITHER A CREED, NOR A RELIGIOUS BODY
- ESSENTIAL THEOSOPHICAL DOCTRINES
- HARTMANN ON HOW TO ENTER THE PATH TO INFINITE LIFE
- HARTMANN ON THE HARMONICAL SOCIETY
- HOW THEOSOPHY REKINDLED TRUE BROTHERHOOD IN INDIA
- HUMANITY SEEMS TO PROGRESS BY INVENTING ONE DISCOVERY AFTER THE OTHER
- IMPORT AND POTENCY OF NUMBERS AS SYMBOLS
- IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT
- ISIS UNVEILED IS THE MAJESTY OF TRUTH UNVEILED
- JUDGE AND DE ZIRKOFF ON GEORGE MEAD
- JUDGE ON THE HEART DOCTRINE
- JUDGE ON THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT
- JUDGE ON THE TRUE THEOSOPHIST'S PATH
- JUDGE ON THEOSOPHICAL STUDY AND WORK
- KEYS TO THE MYSTERY LANGUAGE
- LET THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY PERISH, THAN FORSAKE THE CAUSE OF TRUTH
- MYSTERY IS NOT UNREVEALED KNOWLEDGE
- OCCULT TRUTH IS NATURE WITHOUT THE ILLUSORY VEIL OF THE SENSES
- OUR GOD IS HUMANITY AND OUR CULT THE LOVE OF OUR FELLOW-MAN
- OUR ONLY DELIVERER AND SAVIOUR
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- THE SUN OF TRUTH FEARS NO LIGHT AND NEEDS NO LIES
- THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IS NOT A NURSERY FOR BUDDING ADEPTS
- THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ARCANE TERMS
- THEOSOPHIA - FOUNTAIN, PERSPECTIVES, PRACTICE (DRAWING)
- THEOSOPHIA: INNER WISDOM
- THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT, THE GREAT MORAL BUT SILENT FORCE
- THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY - ESOTERIC SECTION (LETTERHEAD)
- THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY - MISSION AND FUTURE
- THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY - MONOGRAM 1 (LOGOTYPE)
- THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY - MONOGRAM 2 (LOGOTYPE)
- THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY - OBJECTS AND EARLY ACCOMPLISHMENTS
- THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY - SEAL 1 (LOGOTYPE)
- THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY - SEAL 2 (LOGOTYPE)
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- WHY PAGAN SYMBOLISM IS INDESTRUCTIBLE?
- WILDER ON THE WISDOM RELIGION OF ZOROASTER

