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**Unveiling the Signs of *Kaliyuga*: Insights from the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa***

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**Abstract:**

The main endeavor of this article is to unveil the symptoms of the *Kali-Yuga* as depicted in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*. In the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*, the concept of *Kaliyuga* is intricately depicted, portraying an era characterized by moral degradation and spiritual decline. The symptoms outlined in this ancient text paint a vivid picture of societal decay and individual moral erosion. The primary objectives of this article are to explore the central principles of the *Kali-Yuga* manifested in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*, to explicate the symptoms of the *Kali-yuga* described in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* related to the contemporary societal trends and challenges, and to evaluate the symptoms of the *Kali-Yuga* described in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*. The researcher applies Savitri Devi's principles about the *Kali-Yuga*. She argues that the *Kali-Yuga* is a dark age marked by materialism, moral decadence, violence, and spiritual ignorance. The study becomes significant in making humans aware of their misdeeds for the betterment of life and their quest for spiritual realization. The conclusion drawn from this investigation is to remind humans that even in the darkest of times, the light of spirituality can guide us to liberation.

**Keywords:** Deterioration, explication, kali-yuga, śrīmad, symptoms

**Introduction**

*Kaliyuga*, the age of discord and deterioration, occupies a significant place within *Hindu* cosmology, representing the final phase of a cycle of time. Rooted in ancient scriptures such as the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*, the concept of *Kaliyuga* encapsulates a period characterized by moral decay, societal upheaval, and spiritual decline. In this context, Aaron G. L. Adoni (1984) corroborates the thoughts of humans in *Kaliyuga*: "They believe that they have achieved everything when indeed they have achieved nothing" (p. 11). Based on this relation, one argues that the *Kaliyuga* is an age of darkness, where righteousness declines, and humanity is

fraught with ignorance, greed, and conflict. Explaining this statement, Savitri Devi (2017) appraises the activities of humans in *Kali-yuga*. In her words: "while the healthy are made unhealthy through the conditions of life imposed upon them by false civilization" (p. 265). With a similar belief, one claims that traditional social structures and norms break down in *Kaliyuga*

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* discusses *Kaliyuga*, providing insights into its characteristics and symptoms. In this line of thought, Sukadeva Gosvāmī is apt to state: "Then, O King, religion, truthfulness, cleanliness, tolerance, mercy, duration of life, physical strength and memory will diminish day by day because of the powerful influence of the age of *Kali*"<sup>1</sup> (12. 2:1). This evidence confirms that *Kali-Yuga* is an ocean of faults because humans do not follow the path of *sāstras* (scriptures). Traditional teachings and wisdom are marginalized, and humans follow the path of Science, neglecting Science. The extension of this logic can be found in the analysis of Prabhupāda (2012): "Without knowing the Absolute Truth, one cannot clearly understand the real significance or purpose of life merely by amassing huge quantities of relative or hypothetical truths" (p. 29). Providing the ground for interpretation, a reader states that pursuing material wealth and sensory pleasures becomes a prime focus in *Kali-yuga*. Hedonism precedes spiritual values, leading to a shallow and superficial way of life.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī surveys the characteristics of the *Kali-Yuga* from his logic in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*. In his words: "In *Kali-yuga*, wealth alone will be considered the sign of a man's good birth, proper behavior, and fine qualities. Law and justice will be applied only based on one's power"<sup>2</sup> (12. 2: 2). Explaining this statement, one argues that power is the basis for measuring the success of humans. The person with too much wealth becomes the center of attention for everyone. From this standpoint, readers claim that brute strength determines justice and law in *Kali-yuga*. Moving ahead in this line of logic, A. D. Bhattacharya (2010) explicates that justice and law belong to the hands of influential persons (p. 199). This interpretation suggests that in times of moral decay, principles of law and justice are overshadowed by raw power and force. Instead of adhering to ethical codes or legal frameworks, those with superior strength impose their will upon others, shaping society according to their interests rather than principles of equity.

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* discusses the relationship between husband and wife from the different perspectives in *Kali-yuga*. In the prediction of Śukadeva Gosvāmī:

Men and women will live together merely because of superficial attraction, and business success will depend on deceit. Womanliness and manliness will be judged according to one's expertise in sex, and a man will be known as *brāhmaṇa* just by his wearing a thread<sup>3</sup>. (12. 2: 3)

The expression above shows a decline in the sanctity of Marriage and a shift towards more temporary unions driven by physical desire rather than enduring commitment. It indicates that intellectual capacities and qualities are neglected in *Kali-yuga*. The extension of this logic can also be found in Devi Dayal Aggarwal (1999): "There will be love marriages, rather than on consideration of family and

other merits of the boy and the girl (p. 277). This analysis paints a picture of a society characterized by moral decline, materialism, and the erosion of traditional values.

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* elucidates *Kali-yuga* as the era of moral decline and ignorant of spirituality. One regards this era as strife, conflict, and widespread suffering, marked by dishonesty, deceit, and disregard for righteousness. The text guides how individuals can navigate difficulties through devotion and spiritual discipline.

### **Methods and Materials**

This research investigates various aspects of the *Kali-yuga* as the problems of study. One sees the reflection of the symptoms of *Kali-yuga* in the works and words of humans. The main problem of this study is to improve the quality of humans from illegal, irresponsible, and immoral activities. This research article has tried to answer the following research questions:

- What are the central principles of the *Kali-Yuga* manifested in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*?
- How do the symptoms of the *Kali-Yuga* described in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* resonate with contemporary societal trends and challenges?
- Why does the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* reveal the symptoms of *Kali-yuga*?

The primary objectives of this research are to examine the central principles of the *Kali-Yuga* manifested in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*, to explicate the symptoms of the *Kali-yuga* described in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* related to the contemporary societal trends and challenges, and to evaluate the symptoms of the *Kali-yuga* described in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*.

This study is based on a qualitative research design. To support the notion of the symptoms of *Kali-Yuga*, the researcher applied Savitri Devi's principles about *Kali-Yuga*. In Savitri Devi's (2017) perspective: "We are living proceeds, darker and darker and fiercer and fiercer year after year, it becomes more and more impossible to avoid using violence" (21). It shows that while the challenges of living in an era of increasing violence and darkness seem daunting, the *Hindu* philosophy offers a message of hope and guidance, emphasizing the power of virtue, non-violence, spiritual practice, and divine grace to transcend the negativity of *Kali-Yuga* and foster a more compassionate and peaceful world.

### **Review of Literature**

Different critical thinkers, writers, and critics have evaluated the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* from the perspective of children's literature. Children literature flourishes from *bāla līlā* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Scholars have expressed their views on *bāla līlās* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa based on the root of children's literature. In it, Śrī Kṛṣṇa performs his activities in Vṛndāvana as a little child. Some prominent critics, researchers, scholars, and writers are actively involved in making the discourse as children's literature. Such foremost commentators are N. Ranganathan, E. M. Forster, Mary Ann Miller, J. Kennedy, Prabhupāda, Jiban Narah, John Stratton Howley, Dennis Hudson, David Kingsley, and Edwin F. Bryant. They have analyzed the *bāla*

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*līlā* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, referring to his pranks and other mischievous activities. Likewise, other commentators are Kamala Subramaniam, Marlene B. Pitkow, Prabhupāda, and G.V. Tagare, who have evaluated children's literature from the manifestation of the character of Pūtanā. His playful activities of childhood become argumentative among scholars and commentators.

N. Raghunathan (1998) stresses on the role of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *bāla līlās* in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*:

The *Bāla Līlās* are so artfully contrived that another miraculous exploit The analyst provides the ground for interpretation in the childish pranks of follows everynew and engaging childish prank or pastime. Moreover, being thus trained to accept and accommodate the charm of the human and the truth of the superhuman, the reader's mind surrenders itself completely and unquestioningly to the denouement, the magic of the *Raasa* dance. (p. xxxiii)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa. They reflect childish activities for entertaining others, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa performs his funny activities in Vṛndāvana. There are other *līlās* of *Bāla Śrī Kṛṣṇa*, but the commentator does not highlight them apart from his funny pranks.

Practical jokes are common in children's literature, and *Bāla Śrī Kṛṣṇa* has a particular interest in them. In the same vein, E. M. Forster(2001) posits that “there is fun in the heaven. God can play practical jokes upon Himself” (p. 280). Practical jokes are the basis of merrymaking for children. However, Foster does not specify the practical jokes of *Bāla Śrī Kṛṣṇa*. He performs his playful activities in his childhood in Vṛndāvana not to please only himself but also to please plants and animals. Love is the base for every child, and the life of Śrī Kṛṣṇa draws attention to other characters. This dealing is based on the idea of children's literature. The argument turns out to be valid when Mary Ann Miller (1964) mentions: “He is deliberately turning for his organizing from war to love, from warrior to lover” (p. 69). The commentator has identified the characteristics of children's literature from the revelation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's actions. However, the critic limits her views only to love and war, excluding Śrī Kṛṣṇa's other activities, such as fun, games, sports, ragging, and stealing *mākhana*.

J. Kennedy (1983) distinguishes between *Bāla Śrī Kṛṣṇa* and Vāshudeva Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In his finding: “We have a child Kṛishna who is not a nature-god at all, and has nothing in common with the elder Kṛishna except the name” (p. 521). Śrī Kṛṣṇa is fond of living in Vṛndāvana during the time of his childhood. This idea of Kennedy opposes the view of devotees who respect Śrī Kṛṣṇa as a Nature God. By using *Daibi Sakti* (divine power), Śrī Kṛṣṇa kills demons whom Kaṁsa sends in the form of animals (Prabhupada 5). The text reveals Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the god of Nature and establishes him as a character of children's literature.

Prabhupada (2012) writes in confirmation about the birthday celebration of Śrī Kṛṣṇa: “The people of Mathura celebrate the birthday of Kṛṣṇa” (p. 515) for pleasing him. Birthday celebrations are for children, and guardians intend to please particular children. In the same way, birthday celebration in Mathura occurs to please child Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The childhood activities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa draw the attention of beholders. Jiban Narah (2006) claims that Śrī Kṛṣṇa scares other herdsboys from his playful

activities (p.53). Scaring and teasing are the characteristics of children. The above-expressed playful activities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are the roots of children's literature.

John Stratton Howley (1981) shows the mischievous activities of *Bāla Śrī Kṛṣṇa*. The analyst points out the butter prank of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which makes him famous from the name of *mākhan chor* [butter thief]. He provides the essential criteria of children's literature referring to the activities of *Bāla Śrī Kṛṣṇa*: "Kṛṣṇa stealing butter: he lifts it to his mouth and smears it all over his face in one of his most characteristics acts" (p. 427). The *līlā* of the butter prank of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is admirable in which there is an exposition of his mischievous character. He explores that Śrī Kṛṣṇa steals not only the butter but also breaks the butter pots that are hanging (p. 427). There is the manifestation of the creativity of Śrī Kṛṣṇa even in the piracy of *mākhan*. He steals *mākhan* daily from the new style, which surprises the cowherd community. To explain this process further, Hawley (1981) proves that "Kṛṣṇa has stolen their hearts" (p. 428) from the means of butter. He is known as *mākhan chor*, and *chitta chor* [heart thief]. It is human Nature to be attracted to the mischievous activities of children.

Dennis Hudson (1980) presents a similar view referring to the bath of cowherd boys: "If you are going to bathe, let us go" (p. 558). For this reason, general assumptions related to children focus on the fact that children are fond of bathing together. Śrī Kṛṣṇa's bathing activities with his playmates become a part of children's literature. David Kingsley (1998) has a different argument about the childhood activities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa: "Playful activities of Kṛṣṇa and his companions are motivational factors" (p. 157). Thus, different activities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa become the base for children's literature.

Edwin F. Bryant (2016) interprets the childhood of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with the example of what *Bāla Śrī Kṛṣṇa* and his cowherd mates do with monkeys: "Tugging at the young monkeys, they climbed the trees with them. Then, imitating them, they joined them in swinging through the trees" (p. 126). In the childhood days of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, his playmates assist him in the creation of fun. Śrī Kṛṣṇa plays with the monkeys to please them. Children's literature includes their relationship with animals. The friendship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with the monkey friends interrelates his *bāla līlā*. Bryant (2016) explores that Śrī Kṛṣṇa also provides *mākhan* to the monkeys (p. 126). It shows the friendship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with monkeys and his love with animals. One can get the relationship between animals and children in children's literature.

The discussion above shows that children's literature concentrates on children's activities. Those activities are appropriate subject matters for discussion among critics and research scholars. In the same way, the demon Pūtanā plays the role of a witch. The witch is an antagonistic force which brings problems in the life of *Bāla Śrī Kṛṣṇa*. Kamala Subramaniam, Marlene B. Pitkow, Prabhupāda, and G.V. Tagare have arguments about the role of Pūtanā. Kamala Subramaniam (2013) stresses how Pūtanā appears in Gokula to feed her breast to *Bāla Śrī Kṛṣṇa*. In her words: "With her powers of *māyā*, she changed herself into a beautiful woman, and she went to the sacred spot by name Gokula" (pp. 386-87). The commentator points

out how the demoness disguises herself as a beautiful woman to draw people's attention to Gokula.

## **Results and Discussions**

### **Shortened Lifespan and Physical Weakness**

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* discusses the shortening of lifespan and the physical weakness of humans in Kali-Yuga. The life span of humans in the Kali-Yuga is shorter than the lifespan of people in Krita-Yuga, Tretā-- Yuga, and Dvāpar-Yuga. In this connection, Śukadeva Gosvāmī proffers: "The maximum duration of life for human beings in Kali-yuga will become fifty years"<sup>4</sup> (12. 2:11). To strengthen the argument, one clarifies that human life decreases. This statement is understood as symbolic rather than literal. The argument turns out to be valid when Prabhupāda (2012) corroborates that the maximum duration of life in Kali- Yuga, being fifty years, is often cited in texts and discussions about Hindu cosmology (p. 41). This explanation further supports the fact that the lifespan of humans in the Kali-Yuga is short, and they may die for different reasons at any time. It is difficult for them to live for a long time. From the above evidence, one argues that the lifespan of humans will be shortened during the middle and ending time of the Kali-Yuga.

Basing his argument on such an idea, Śukadeva Gosvāmī presents evidence about the sizes of creatures at the end of the *Kali-Yuga* in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*. In the perspective of Śukadeva Gosvāmī:

By the time the age of *Kali* ends, the bodies of all creatures will be significantly reduced in size, and the religious principles of followers of *varṇāśrama* will be ruined. The path of the *Vedas* will be completely forgotten in human society, and so-called religion will be mostly atheistic.<sup>5</sup> (12. 2: 12)

From such a perspective, creatures diminish their vitality and strength, both physically and spiritually. The *Vedas* are ancient scriptures that form the basis of *Hindu* religious and philosophical thought. Forgetting the path of the *Vedas* suggests a loss of spiritual knowledge and guidance, leading to moral and ethical confusion. Concerning such an argument, C. L. Goswami (2014) debunks, "When through the evil effect of *Kali*, the bodies of men get reduced in size" (p. 673). In that line of thought, one claims that the end of *Kali-Yuga* is characterized by an increase in negative qualities and a diminishment in the size of humans and other creatures.

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* discusses the size and qualities of women in the *Kali-Yuga*. According to the scripture:

Women will become much smaller in size, and they will overeat, have more children than they can adequately take care of, and lose all shyness. They will always speak harshly and will exhibit qualities of thievery, deceit, and unrestrained audacity.<sup>6</sup> (12. 3: 34)

The evidence presented in the stanza above shows that the size of women decreases, but they do not care about morality and perform shameful activities. It reveals that societal attitudes and behaviors towards women reflect the decline in moral and ethical standards. With this conditioning, Ramesh Menon (2007) investigates: "Women will be short, gluttons, shameless, sharp-tongued, promiscuous, thieving, brash and rash, and without character, chastity or purity of

any kind" (p.1401). This analysis examines the fact that women of the Kali-Yuga do not follow the *Vedic* path. They prioritize their rights over the random sensibilities of the house and society.

The above exploration of humans' shortened lifespan and physical weaknesses in *Kali-Yuga* unveils that this *yuga* is the era of faults. Humans in this age focus on the fulfillment of their senses and selfish desires, which lead them to a decline in spiritual awareness and ethical conduct. The analysis clearly shows that the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa's* portrayal of the *Kali-Yuga* serves as a warning about the consequences of straying from virtuous living and the importance of cultivating spiritual consciousness and ethical behavior in the face of societal challenges.

### **Mental and Spiritual Degradation**

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* highlights the mental and spiritual degradation of humans during *Kali-Yuga*. The most agreeable factor concerning the matter is that humans have mental and spiritual degradation in the *Kali-Yuga*. In this context, it is essential to note the view of Śukadeva Gosvāmī:

A person's spiritual position will be ascertained merely according to external symbols, and on that same basis, people will change from one spiritual order to the next. A person's propriety will be seriously questioned if he does not earn a good living. And one who is very clever at juggling words will be considered a learned scholar.<sup>7</sup> (12. 2: 4)

Elaborating on this argument, one states that this prophecy exposes the superficial Nature of the *Kali-Yuga*. The text implies that people frequently change their spiritual allegiances, seeking benefits from different spiritual orders based on societal trends or personal convenience rather than genuine devotion or seeking truth. In this connection, Swami Ranganathananda (2002) inspects: "Love for spirituality, and love for the nation, can bring a change in character. But love for oneself can bring only moral ruin" (p. 55). Moving ahead in this line of logic, one explicates that love rooted in selfishness and self-interest can lead to moral degradation and harm to oneself and others.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī postulates the bad qualities of *Kali-Yuga* in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* to reveal mental and spiritual degradation. In his view:

Because of the bad qualities of Kali's age, human beings will become shortsighted, unfortunate, gluttonous, lustful, and poverty-stricken. The women, becoming unchaste, will freely wander from one man to the next.<sup>8</sup> (12. 3: 31)

The above argument rests on the vices of the *Kali-Yuga*, which refer to the selfish activities of humans. In the age of *Kali*, it is believed that humanity experienced a decline in moral and ethical values, leading to various negative qualities and behaviors. Keeping it at the center of attention, Kamala Subramaniam is apt to state that none of them has any control over their senses or tongues (p. 698). In this context, it is essential to remember that there could be an emphasis on sensual pleasure and sexual indulgence, often without regard for moral or ethical considerations. This may lead to a breakdown in traditional family structures and relationships.

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* incorporates the solution to the mental

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and spiritual degradation of humans in the Kali-Yuga. In this context, Śukadeva Gosvāmī informs Mahārāja Parikṣit about the solution of mental and spiritual degradation:

My dear king, although *Kali-yuga* is an ocean of faults, there is still one good quality about this age: Simply by chanting the *Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahāmantra*, one can become free from material bondage and be promoted to the transcendental kingdom.<sup>9</sup> (12. 3:51)

The statement above reflects the spiritual optimism inherent in the prophecy of the scripture and broader tradition of *Bhakti yoga*, emphasizing the accessibility of spiritual liberation even in the most challenging times through chanting the Hare Krishna Mantra. In the same line of argument, Benjamin Preciado-Solis (1984) contemplates that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is a "protector and a savior" (p.124). The statement asserts that despite the challenges of Kali-Yuga, one can attain spiritual liberation by chanting the *Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahāmantra*.

To support the prophecy of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*, one claims that *Kali-Yuga* implies a significant degree of mental and spiritual degradation within society. In *Hindu cosmology*, *Kali-Yuga* is characterized by a decline in moral values, increasing materialism, and a general sense of spiritual ignorance. This degradation manifests in various ways, including dishonesty, greed, violence, and a lack of empathy. However, amidst this degradation, the statement highlights a ray of hope: the efficacy of chanting the *Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahāmantra* as a means to transcend the limitations of *Kali-Yuga*. It suggests that even amid mental and spiritual degradation, individuals have the potential to elevate their consciousness and attain spiritual liberation through devotional practices.

### **Falsehood and Deception**

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* depicts Kali-Yuga as an era characterized by rampant falsehood and deception, among other negative attributes. *According to Hindu scriptures*, *kali-Yuga* is the final of the four ages and is believed to be an age of moral and spiritual decline. On this ground, Śukadeva Gosvāmī elucidates:

A sacred place will consist of no more than a reservoir of water located at a distance, and beauty will be thought to depend on one's hairstyle. Filling the belly will become the goal of life, and one who is audacious will be accepted as truthful.<sup>10</sup> (12. 2: 6)

The text analysis discussed in this context shows a pessimistic view of potential societal trends, where materialism, superficiality, and opportunism overshadow spirituality, authenticity, and deeper values. It serves as a cautionary reflection on the dangers of losing sight of what is truly meaningful in life. Responding to such claims, C. L. Goswami (2014) evaluates that "filling one's belly will be the end of human pursuit" (p. 672). This explanation supports that the focal point of the *Kali-Yuga* is the gratification of the senses. It indicates a society where the pursuit of wealth, comfort, and consumption takes precedence over spiritual fulfillment.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī portrays the climax of the exploitation of humans by



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robbers in the *Kali-Yuga* in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*. On this ground, the narrator confirms:

Thieves will dominate cities, speculative interpretations of atheists will contaminate the Vedas, political leaders will virtually consume the citizens, and the so-called priests and intellectuals will be devotees of their bellies and genitals.<sup>11</sup> (12. 3: 32)

The above thought depicts a bleak vision of societal decay and moral decline, where different individuals are corrupted due to the breakdown of law and lack of security and criminal activities control over urban areas in the *Kali-Yuga*. Keeping it at the center of attention, Devdutt Pattanaik (2018) appraises: "Human beings divide the world into mine and yours" (p. 268). This standpoint justifies that the relationship between rulers and the populace will be predatory. It warns against corruption and selfishness, emphasizing the importance of upholding moral principles and integrity in individual and societal life.

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* incorporates the symptoms of *Kali-Yuga* in the activities of servants, masters, and the condition of cows. Based on this idea, Śukadeva Gosvāmī corroborates:

Servants will abandon a master who has lost his wealth, even if that master is a saintly person of exemplary character. Masters will abandon an incapacitated servant, even if that servant has been in the family for generations. Cows will be abandoned or killed when they stop giving milk.<sup>12</sup> (12. 3:36)

When a master loses wealth, servants may be frightened for their livelihoods and future security. The norms of society in the *Kali-Yuga* reinforce the idea that individuals should prioritize their well-being, even if it means abandoning a benevolent but impoverished master. To strengthen the argument, Purnendu Narayan Sinha (1950) is apt to state that the people of the *Kali-Yuga* believe in their benefits (657). It further proves that there may be a stigma associated with disability, leading masters to distance themselves from incapacitated servants to preserve their social standing.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī further clarifies the falsehood and deception of humans in the *Kali-Yuga*, referring to the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*. In his perspective: "In *Kali-Yuga*, men will develop hatred for each other even over a few coins. Giving up all friendly relations, they will be ready to lose their own lives and kill even their relatives"<sup>13</sup> (12. 3: 41). This condition shows that humans will forsake relationships and ethical values for personal gain. The deterioration of social bonds and the rise of greed and violence are signs of the *Kali-Yuga*. Moving ahead in this line of logic, Savitri Devi (2017) proffers that "violence, under one form or another, is unavoidable" (p.19). This analysis suggests that the prophecy about *Kali-Yuga* is a cautionary tale about the dangers of unchecked greed, selfishness, and moral decay. It highlights the importance of cultivating virtues such as compassion, empathy, and ethical integrity to counteract the opposing forces that can arise in times of moral decline.

In *Kali-Yuga*, the prophecy indicates that deception and falsehood will be pervasive, contributing to the moral decay of society. In this age of moral decline,

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honesty and integrity are replaced by deceit and manipulation. Individuals, driven by selfish desires and material pursuits, resort to falsehoods to achieve their goals, even at the expense of others. Trust and sincerity diminish as people become adept at deceit, undermining the foundations of society. It proves that humans in the *Kali-Yuga* intend to sacrifice their lives for trivial gains. This indicates a complete breakdown of familial bonds and the erosion of empathy and love within families.

#### **Lack of Respect for Authority**

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* surveys the attributes of the *Kali-Yuga*. The text foretells a period of profound moral degradation and societal upheaval. Central to this depiction is the erosion of respect for authority and traditional values, emblematic of the broader breakdown of social order and ethical principles. As humanity descends further into this age, reverence for established institutions, cultural norms, and moral guidelines diminishes, giving way to a culture of skepticism, rebellion, and disregard for authority. This shift undermines the stability of social structures and erodes the foundations of collective morality and ethical conduct.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī highlights the problems created by rulers for citizens in the *Kali-Yuga*. In Śukadeva's words: "Losing their wives and properties to such avaricious and merciless rulers, who will behave no better than ordinary thieves, the citizens will flee to the mountains and forests"<sup>14</sup> (12. 2: 8). Elaborating this argument, one explicates a breakdown of governance and societal order, where citizens face economic exploitation, personal loss, and insecurity. When rulers behave like criminals, citizens lose trust in the institutions protecting them. They feel betrayed and abandoned if they perceive that the government is only interested in personal enrichment at their expense. In support of this idea, N. Krishnaswami (2017) argues that rulers do not have mercy on citizens in the *Kali-Yuga* (p. 105). This dealing is based on the idea of the characteristics of the *Kali-Yuga* portrayed in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*. This analysis shows a bleak picture of a society suffering under the tyranny of corrupted rulers. It suggests that citizens may feel compelled to abandon their homes and seek refuge in the wilderness rather than endure further exploitation.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī predicts the symptoms of *Kali-Yuga* to Mahārāja Parikṣit in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*. According to him: "The kings will mostly be thieves, the occupation of men will be stealing, lying and needless violence"<sup>15</sup> (12. 3: 12). Commenting upon this argument, one clarifies that there will be a complete breakdown of traditional notions of leadership and governance, where rulers are expected to uphold justice and protect their subjects. These activities represent a range of antisocial behaviors contributing to social order deterioration. Stealing deprives others of their rightful possessions, lying undermines trust and integrity, and needless violence creates an environment of fear and insecurity. Concerning such an argument, Prabhupāda (2012) debunks that the above verse "describes many unsavory symptoms of the age of *Kali* (p. 44). The occupation mentioned here is not one of legitimate work but rather criminal activities such as stealing, lying, and engaging in needless violence. This paints a grim picture of the state of society, where

moral values have eroded, and illegal behavior has become the norm and values.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī points out the miserable condition of humans in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* from selfishness and irresponsible activities of rulers in the *Kali-Yuga*. The narrator demonstrates the dejected conditions of the citizens: "Harassed by famine and excessive taxes; people will resort to eating leaves, roots flesh, wild honey, fruits flowers, and seeds. Struck by drought, they will become completely ruined"<sup>16</sup> (12. 2:9). The most agreeable factor concerning the matter is that this analysis underscores the devastating impact of famine, excessive taxation, and drought on vulnerable populations, highlighting the urgent need for effective governance, sustainable agricultural practices, and humanitarian assistance to mitigate suffering and prevent widespread ruin. On this ground, Ramesh Menon (2016) argues that "deception and dishonesty" (p. 1401) prevail everywhere in the *Kali-Yuga*. Due to the rulers' deception and dishonesty, citizens will surely die of starvation in the *Kali-Yuga*.

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* displays the ultimate exploitation of rulers against women, children, cows, and *brāhmaṇas*. In Śukadeva's words: "These barbarians in the guise of kings will devour the citizenry, murdering innocent women, children, cows, and *brāhmaṇas* and coveting the wives and property of other men"<sup>17</sup> (12. 1:39). This highlights the brutality and disregard for life exhibited by these rulers. The inclusion of specific groups such as women, children, cows, and *brāhmaṇas* suggests that no one is spared from their violence. Responding to such a claim, Tagare (2007) incorporates that the rulers "will murder women, children, *brāhmaṇas*, slaughter cows" (p. 2129). The statement conveys a sense of outrage and moral indignation towards rulers who abuse their power and inflict suffering upon their people. It reflects a desire for justice and accountability and a recognition of the need to resist tyranny and uphold principles of compassion, fairness, and respect for human rights.

In various narratives within the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*, rulers who abuse their power or fail to uphold *dharma* (righteousness) are condemned for their actions. These rulers are often depicted as acting contrary to the values and principles advocated by the *Purāṇa*. They are criticized for their oppression of the innocent, exploitation of resources, and disregard for the well-being of their people. It highlights the consequences of such behavior, illustrating how rulers who deviate from their duties ultimately face downfall and suffering. Conversely, it praises leaders who govern with wisdom, compassion, and a sense of duty towards their subjects.

### **Decline in Family Values**

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* discusses a significant decline in family values in the *Kali-Yuga*. Materialism, selfishness, and moral degradation become more prevalent. Family ties weaken, leading to fragmentation and discord within households. Respect for elders diminishes, and individuals prioritize personal desires over familial responsibilities. Keeping it at the center of attention, Śukadeva Gosvāmī intensifies in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*:

Men and women will leave together merely because of superficial attraction, and business success will depend on deceit. Womanliness and manliness will be judged

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according to one's expertise in sex, and a man will be known as a *brāhmaṇa* just by his wearing a thread.<sup>18</sup> (12. 2:3)

This standpoint justifies that the relationship between men and women will be based on superficial attraction rather than deeper emotional connections or shared values. The same idea is ascertained by Jīva Gosvāmī (2014) from his logic. The critic argues that there is no faith between a husband and his wife in the *Kali-Yuga* (p.203). From this standpoint, what he argues seems to be plausible and believable. This reflects a shift from the traditional emphasis on mutual respect, compatibility, and relationship commitment.

Verbal agreement in Marriage symbolizes trust and commitment between partners. They represented a mutual understanding and willingness to uphold promises made to each other and the community. Based on this idea, Śukadeva Gosvāmī explicates in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*: "Marriage will be arranged simply by verbal agreement, and a person will think he is fit to appear in public if he has merely taken a bath"<sup>19</sup> (12.2:5). In this context, it suggests a departure from elaborate ceremonies or legal formalities of Marriage. Similarities are drawn by Ravi Gupta and Kenneth R. Valpey (2017). The critics argue that the humans of the *Kali-Yuga* are not severe in their Marriage and other activities (p. 192). With the support of this idea, one explicates that the humans of the *Kali-Yuga* believe in simplifying the marriage process, potentially reflecting a desire to streamline cultural practices from bureaucratic complexities.

The concept of a man controlled by a woman in the *Kali-Yuga* is found in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*. According to Śukadeva Gosvāmī:

In *Kali-Yuga*, men will be wretched and controlled by women. They will reject their fathers, brothers, other relatives, and friends and instead associate with their wives' sisters and brothers. Thus, their conception of friendship is based exclusively on sexual ties<sup>20</sup>. (12. 3:37)

The statement above corroborates that men will be wretched and controlled by women, rejecting their familial and social bonds in favor of relationships centered on sexual ties in the *Kali-Yuga*. The rejection of fathers, brothers, and other relatives in favor of relationships with the sisters and brothers of their wives suggests a breakdown of traditional familial and social structures. Supporting Śukadeva Gosvāmī's argument, Pushpendra Kumar (2009) writes ahead: "Men will abandon their parents, brothers, friends, and relatives and establish their friendliness on a sexual basis" (p. 1408). The portrayal of women as controllers reflects a reversal of traditional gender roles, where men are typically depicted as dominant. It suggests a commentary on power dynamics and how societal roles are redefined during moral decline.

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* discusses that men may not fulfill their responsibilities towards their elderly parents, children, and wives in the *Kali-Yuga*. In the words of Śukadeva Gosvāmī: "Men will no longer protect their elderly parents, children or respectable wives. Thoroughly degraded, they will care only to satisfy their bellies and genitals"<sup>21</sup> (12.3:42). The most agreeable factor concerning the matter is that men, traditionally seen as the protectors and providers within the family

structure, will neglect their duty to care for their elderly parents. This neglect implies a breakdown in the intergenerational support system, a cornerstone of many societies. Commenting upon this argument, Prabhupāda (2012) argues that "it is tough nowadays for parents to morally guide their children" (p.94). The analysis of the statement underscores the complexities and challenges parents face in navigating the moral landscape of modern society. In an increasingly secular and pluralistic world, traditional moral frameworks may be questioned, leading to a lack of clear guidance for parents in instilling moral values in their children.

### **Conclusion**

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* explores the characteristics and challenges associated with the *Kali-Yuga*. The analysis underscores the acknowledgment of moral degradation, societal decay, and spiritual decline as fundamental aspects of *Kali-Yuga*. Through the lens of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*, it provides valuable insights into the moral, social, and spiritual decline believed to characterize this epoch. Despite the bleak portrayal of *Kali-Yuga*, the conclusion may also offer a message of hope, suggesting that spiritual enlightenment and moral integrity are still attainable even in the face of adversity. It encourages individuals to seek solace and guidance in spiritual teachings and practices to transcend the challenges of the age. It serves as a reminder of the enduring relevance of ancient wisdom in navigating the challenges of contemporary life.

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## Appendix

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†ataścānu-dinaṃ dharmāḥ satayam śaucam kṣamā dayā

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*kālina balinā rājan nañksyaty āyur balaṁ smr̥tiḥ*

2

५

*vittam eva kalau nṛṇaṁ janmācāra-guṇodayaḥ  
dharma-nyāya-vyavasthāyām kārṇaṁ balaṁ eva hi*

३

४

*dāmpatyē 'bhirucir hetur māyaiva vyāvahāhārike  
vṛtṭve puṁstve ca hi ratir vipratve sūtram eva hi*

4

५

*trīṁśad vimśati varṣāṇi paramāyuh kalau nṛṇaṁ*

5

६

*kṣyamāṇeṣu deheṣu dehinām kali-doṣataḥ  
varṇāśramavatām dharma naṣṭ veda-pathe nṛṇaṁ*

6

७

*hr̥asva-kāyā mahāhārā bhūry-apatyā gata-hriyaḥ  
śūsvat katuka-bhāsinyaś caurya-māyuru-sāhasāḥ*

७

८

*lingam evāśrama-khyātāv anyonyā-kāraṇam  
bhṛtyā nyāya-daurbalyam pāṇḍitye cāpalam vacaḥ*

८

९

*vasmāt kṣudra-dṛśo martyāḥ kṣudra-bhāgyā mahāśanāḥ  
kāmino vita-hīnāś ca svairiṇyaś ca striyo 'satīḥ*

९

१०

*kalera doṣ-nidhe rājann asti hy eko mahān guṇaḥ  
vṛtanād eva kṛṣṇasya mukha-saṅgaḥ param vrajet*

१०

११

*śūre vāry-ayanam tīrtham lāvaṇyam keśa-dhāraṇam  
vādarām-bharatā svārthaḥ satyatve dhārṣṭyam eva hi*

११

१२

*śaśyūtkṛṣṭā janapadā vedāḥ pāṣaṇḍa-dūṣitāḥ  
prajānaś ca prajā-bhakṣāḥ śiśnodara-parā dvijāḥ*

१२

१३

*patim tyakṣyanti nirdravyam bhṛtyā apy akhilottamam  
bhṛtyam vipannaṁ patayaḥ kaulam gās cāpayasvinīḥ*

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१४

*|| ३४ || (12. 3: 34)*

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□□□ |

*prajā hi lubdhai rājanyair nirghṛṇair dasyu-dharmabhiḥ*

*ācchīna-dāra-*

*kalau kākiṇike 'py arthe vigṛhya tyakta-sauhṛdāḥ*

*tyakṣyanti ca priyān prāṇān haniṣyanti svakānapi*

□

□

*prajā hi lubdhai rājanyair nirghṛṇair dasyu-dharmabhiḥ*

*ācchīna-dāra-draviṇā yāsyanti giri-kānanam*

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