



Time in Hinduism

September 25, 2019

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Hinduism is known for its absurd units of time. Because of the extensive span of Hinduism and Hindu mythology, time can become increasingly complex and enigmatic. Just as there are multiple systems of measuring time today, there are multiple Hindu systems as well. I have chosen the most comprehensive one. Let us start with the smallest unit of time and move forward:

The Smallest Units of Time

The smallest unit of time in Hindu mythology is known as **Alpakala**. If two leaves are placed on top of each other and they are pierced by a needle, the time required for the needle to pass from the first leaf to the second leaf is known as Alpakala. The next units of time are pretty simple:

1. **Truti**: Thirty Alpakalas make up one Truti
2. **Kala**: Thirty Trutis make up one Kala
3. **Kastha**: Thirty Kalas make up one Kastha, which is also known as a Nimisha, Noti, or Matra
4. **Ganita**: Four Kasthas make up one Ganita

5. **Netuvirppu**: Ten Ganitas make up one Netuvirppu
6. **Vinazhika**: Six Netuvirppus make up one Vinazhika
7. **Ghatika**: Sixty Vinazhikas make up one Ghatika

Now, this is where it became confusing for me, especially with the obscure wording of the Bhagavata Purana. Sixty Ghatikas comprise one **Ahoratra**, which is one 24-hour day for regular human beings. Fifteen days (ahorstras) constitute one **Paksha** and two Pakshas constitute a **Chandra masa**, which is a 30-day lunar month. Twelve **Chandra masas** (lunar months) make up one **year** for human beings.

Human Years vs. Deva Years

We are now going to move away from the human scale and transitioning to the godly scale. One year for human beings (twelve Chandra-masas) is equivalent to one ahoratra (one day and night) for the devas! 360 deva-ahorstras form one year for the devas. A deva-year is known as a **Deva-Vatsara**, also known as a Divya-Vatsara.

The Yuga Scheme



This post might not have been very interesting so far. But this is when it gets really fascinating. 12,000 Deva-Vatsaras make up one **Chaturyuga**, also known as a Divya-yuga or Mahayuga. A Chaturyuga consists of 4 Yugas: **Kritayuga** (Satyayuga), **Tretayuga**, **Dwaparayuga**, and **Kaliyuga**. Kritayuga is 4,800 Deva-Vatsaras, Tretayuga spans 3,600 Deva-Vatsaras, Dwaparayuga is 2,400 Deva-Vatsaras long, and Kaliyuga is 1,200 Deva-Vatsaras long.

Thus, if the calculations are performed, Kritayuga lasts approximately for 1,728,000 human years. Tretayuga lasts for 1,296,000 human years. Dwaparayuga lasts for 864,000 human years. And Kaliyuga lasts for 432,000 human years. Those are enormous numbers! Thus, a Chaturyuga lasts for 4,320,000 human years.

Kritayuga is known as the Golden Age as it is the best Yuga. During Kritayuga, there is no crime and everybody is righteous. All men resemble religious saints. The weather is always pleasant during Kritayuga, there is no mining or agriculture because the Earth produces its own resources, and there is an absence of disease. Everybody is gigantic and big-built, but also virtuous and honest. Everybody lives on for thousands of years.

Treta Yuga is next Yuga. During Treta Yuga, humans become slightly less virtuous and righteous. Violent kings are born and cause bloody wars. The weather starts becoming extreme and humans start mining and farming.

The third Yuga is Dwapara Yuga. During this time period, humans, in general, become less strong and able. Diseases become common and humans start fighting each other for power. The average life span is reduced to a couple centuries.

Kali Yuga is the final age. "Kali" means "dark", so it an age of darkness and ignorance. It is the opposite of

Kritayuga. Humans become dishonest sinners and commit unbelievable sins. Knowledge is disregarded as useless and the scriptures fade into the past. The wealth and strength of humans are lesser than the previous Yugas. By the end of Kali Yuga, humans have ruined the environment and their average lifespan is merely 20 years.

Manvantaras and the Time Scale of Brahma

Now, there are 71 Chaturyugas in a **Manvantara**. Thus, a Manvantara lasts for 852,000 Deva-Vatsaras, or 306,720,000 human years. Every Manvantara has a new **Indra**, a new group of gods, and a new Manu. This is when we must understand that the terms “Indra” and “Manu” are just positions, not names of specific people. Every Manvantara, the Manu is the one who is the progenitor of the human race and is the first man on Earth. Each Manvantara also has a new group of Saptarishis (seven great sages).

There are 14 Manvantaras in a **Kalpa**, which is one day-time of the creator god, Brahma. Before the first Manvantara, after the last Manvantara, and between all the Manvantaras, there are periods called Sandhikalas. A Sandhikala is essentially a transitional period during which the Earth is submerged in the Garbodhaka ocean. There are 15 Sandhikalas and each Sandhikala has the same duration as a Kritayuga (4,800 Deva-Vatsaras, or 1,728,000 human years). If we add up all of the Sandhikalas and all of the Manvantaras, we get 4,320,000,000 human years, or 12,000,000 Deva-Vatsaras.

Thus, one day-time of Lord Brahma lasts for 4,320,000,000 human years (12,000,000 Deva-Vatsaras). Obviously, after every Kalpa (day-time of Lord Brahma), there is a night-time of Lord Brahma, which is known as a **Brahma-Ratra**. The Brahma-Ratra is the same length as a Kalpa. Thus, one full day of Lord Brahma consists of a Kalpa and a Brahma-Ratra and is 8,640,000,000 human years (24,000,000 Deva-Vatsaras). Just think about that for a second!



The Creation and Destruction Cycle

At the beginning of every Kalpa (day-time of Lord Brahma), **the entire universe is created by Lord Brahma**. He creates the aspects of nature, immovable objects, qualities of beings, rishis, devas, etc. Throughout the Kalpa, life exists in the universe. In every Manvantara of the Kalpa, a new Indra and group of gods, a new Manu, and new Saptarishis are born. At the end of the Kalpa, the lower ten realms of the universe are destroyed. Spiritual beings transcend to higher realms or to the spiritual Vaikuntha planets which are outside the material universe. Others who aren't free from the bonds of materialism perish and are reborn in the next Kalpa. Then, during the Brahma-Ratra, the universe is dark and nothing exists. During the Brahma-Ratra, Lord Vishnu sleeps on Ananta-Sesha in the Garbodhaka Ocean. Soon enough, the Brahma-Ratra is over and the Kalpa cycle starts again.

Thirty days (Kalpa + Brahma-Ratra) of Brahma make one month and 12 months make one year. Thus one year of Brahma is 360 days of Brahma, or 3.1104 trillion human years (8,640,000,000 Deva-Vatsaras). A year of Brahma is known as a **Brahmavarsha**. Brahma lives for 100 years. Thus, the lifespan of Brahma, known as the **Mahakalpa** consists of one hundred Brahmavarshas. A Mahakalpa is 311.04 trillion years (864,000,000,000 Deva-Vatsaras)! At the beginning of the Mahakalpa, Brahma is born and at the end, Brahma passes away.

These numbers just make us realize how insignificant we are in the grand scheme of things. A mayfly's lifespan of just 24-hours is minuscule compared to our lifespan. Similarly, our lifespan is insignificant when compared to the lifespan of the devas. But their lifespan is atomic when compared to the lifespan of Lord Brahma.

Where are We?

You are probably wondering: Where are we in this endless expanse of time?

Our Brahma is currently 51 years old. We are living during the first day (Kalpa) of his 51st year. The previous Kalpa was known as the Padma-Kalpa. The current day of Brahma (Kalpa) is known as the Shveta-Varaha Kalpa. Within this Kalpa, six Manvantaras have already passed and we are living during the seventh Manvantara, known as the Shraddhadeva Manvantara, also known as Vaivasvata Manvantara. The name of our Manu is Vaivasvata Manu, the son of Surya and Sanjana. The name of our Indra is Purandar. Our Saptarishis are Kashyapa, Atri, Vasistha, Vishwamitra, Gautama, Jamadagni and Bharadvaja.

Within this Manvantara, we are currently in the Kali Yuga of the 28th Chaturyuga. This Kali Yuga is said to have begun at midnight of 18th February, 3102 B.C.E. in the Julian calendar. Thus, 5,121 years of this Kali Yuga have passed and 426,879 years are left till the end of this Kali Yuga.

As stated above, there are 14 Manvantaras in the Kalpa. The Manvantaras of our Kalpa are:

1. Swayambhava Manvantara
2. Swarochisa Manvantara
3. Uttama Manvantara
4. Tamasa/Tapasa Manvantara
5. Raivata Manvantara
6. Chakshusa Manvantara
7. Vaivasvata/Shraddhadeva Manvantara (*current*)
8. Savarni Manvantara
9. Daksha Savarni Manvantara
10. Brahma Savarni Manvantara
11. Dharma Savarni Manvantara
12. Rudra Savarni Manvantara
13. Rauchya/Deva Savarni Manvantara
14. Indra Savarni Manvantara

You now know about all 14 Manvantaras of our current Kalpa. Below is a chronological timeline of notable events that have taken place in our Kalpa:

Beginning of Swayambhava Manvantara: **Brahma creates the Universe, Vishnu takes Matsya Avatar and kills the demon Hayagriva, Vishnu takes Varaha Avatar and rescues the Earth**

Swayambhava Manvantara: **Story of Dhruva**

Tamas Manvantara: **Lord Vishnu saves Gajendra**

End of Chakshusha Manvantara: **Matsya Avatar saves King Satyavrata**

4th Treta Yuga of Vaivasvata Manvantara: **Narasimha kills Hiranyakashipu**

7th Treta Yuga of Vaivasvata Manvantara: **Vamana seizes the land of the asura king Bali**

10th Treta Yuga of Vaivasvata Manvantara: **Birth of Dattatreya**

15th Treta Yuga of Vaivasvata Manvantara: **Reign of King Mandhata**

19th Treta Yuga of Vaivasvata Manvantara: **Parshuram annihilates Kartavirya Arjuna and other Kshatiyas**

24th Treta Yuga of Vaivasvata Manvantara: **The Ramayana**

End of 28th Dwapara Yuga of Vaivasvata Manvantara: **The Mahabharata**

End of 28th Kali Yuga of Vaivasvata Manvantara: **Kalki Avatar**



Penance of Dhruva