

# Kali Yuga

***Kali Yuga***, in Hinduism, is the fourth and worst of the four *yugas* (world ages) in a *Yuga Cycle*, preceded by *Dvapara Yuga* and followed by the next cycle's *Krita (Satya) Yuga*. It is believed to be the present age, which is full of conflict and sin.<sup>[1][2][3]</sup>

The "Kali" of *Kali Yuga* means "strife", "discord", "quarrel", or "contention" and *Kali Yuga* is associated with the demon Kali (not to be confused with the goddess Kālī).

According to Puranic sources,<sup>[a]</sup> Krishna's death marked the end of *Dvapara Yuga* and the start of *Kali Yuga*, which is dated to 17/18 February 3102 BCE.<sup>[9][10]</sup> Lasting for 432,000 years (1,200 divine years), *Kali Yuga* began 5,124 years ago and has 426,876 years left as of 2023 CE.<sup>[11][12][13]</sup> *Kali Yuga* will end in the year 428,899 CE.<sup>[14][b]</sup>

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## Etymology

***Yuga*** (Sanskrit: युग), in this context, means "an age of the world", where its archaic spelling is *yug*, with other forms of *yugam*, *yugānām*, and *yuge*, derived from *yuj* (Sanskrit: युज्, lit. 'to join or yoke'), believed derived from *\*yeug-* (Proto-Indo-European: 𐎢𐎠𐎡𐎣, lit. 'to join or unite').<sup>[15]</sup>

**Kali Yuga** (Sanskrit: कलियुग, romanized: *kaliyuga* or *kali-yuga*) means "the age of Kali (demon)", "the age of darkness", "the age of vice and misery", or "the age of quarrel and hypocrisy".<sup>[16]</sup>

A complete description of *Kali Yuga* is found in the *Mahabharata*, *Manusmriti*, *Vishnu Smriti*, and various *Puranas*.<sup>[17]</sup> It is used mathematically in the astronomical texts *Aryabhatiya* and *Surya Siddhanta*.

## Epigraphy

According to P. V. Kane, one of the earliest inscriptions with one of the four *yugas* named is the Pikira grant of *Pallava Simhavarman* (mid-5th century CE).<sup>[18][19]</sup>

Who was ever ready to extricate dharma that had become sunk owing to the evil effects of Kaliyuga.

— Pikira grant of Pallava Simhavarman, line 10 (3rd plate, front)

Other *epigraphs* exist with named *yugas* in the *Old Mysore* region of *India*, published in *Epigraphia Carnatica*.<sup>[20]</sup>

## Start date

According to the *Surya Siddhanta*, Kali Yuga began at midnight (00:00) on 18 February 3102 BCE.<sup>[9][10][21]</sup> This is also considered the date on which *Krishna* left the earth to return to *Vaikuntha*.<sup>[22]</sup> This information is placed at the temple of *Bhalka*, the place of this incident (see photo).

According to the astronomer and mathematician *Aryabhata*, Kali Yuga started in 3102 BCE. He finished his book *Aryabhattiyam* in 499 CE, in which he gave the exact year of the beginning of Kali Yuga. He writes that he wrote the book in the "year 3600 of the Kali Age" at the age of 23. As it was the 3600th year of the Kali Age when he was 23 years old, and given that Aryabhata was born in 476 CE, the beginning of the Kali Yuga will come to  $(3600 - (476 + 23) + 1$  (One year from 1 BCE to 1 CE)) = 3102 BCE.<sup>[23]</sup>

According to K. D. Abhyankar, the starting point of Kali Yuga is an extremely rare planetary alignment, which is depicted in the *Mohenjo-daro* seals.<sup>[24]</sup> Going by this alignment, the year 3102 BCE is slightly off. The actual date for this alignment is 7 February 3104 BCE. There is also sufficient proof to believe that *Vrdhha Garga* knew of *precessions* at least by 500 BCE. Garga had calculated the rate of precession to within 30% of what the modern scholars estimate.<sup>[25][26]</sup>

## Duration and structure

*Hindu texts* describe four *yugas* (world ages) in a *Yuga Cycle*, where, starting in order from the first age of *Krita (Satya) Yuga*, each *yuga*'s length decreases by one-fourth (25%), giving proportions of 4:3:2:1. Each *yuga* is described as having a main period (a.k.a. *yuga* proper) preceded by its *yuga-sandhyā* (dawn) and



Information kiosk at *Bhalka*, the place from where Krishna returned to his heavenly abode

followed by its *yuga-sandhyāṁśa* (dusk), where each twilight (dawn/dusk) lasts for one-tenth (10%) of its main period. Lengths are given in divine years (years of the gods), each lasting for 360 solar (human) years.<sup>[11][12][13]</sup>

*Kali Yuga*, the fourth age in a cycle, lasts for 432,000 years (1,200 divine years), where its main period lasts for 360,000 years (1,000 divine years) and its two twilights each lasts for 36,000 years (100 divine years). The current cycle's *Kali Yuga*, the present age, has the following dates based on it starting in 3102 BCE.<sup>[11][12][13]</sup>

#### *Kali Yuga*

Part	Start (– End)	Length
<i>Kali-yuga-sandhya</i> (dawn)*	3102 BCE	36,000 (100)
<i>Kali-yuga</i> (proper)	32,899 CE	360,000 (1,000)
<i>Kali-yuga-sandhyamsa</i> (dusk)	392,899 CE – 428,899 CE	36,000 (100)
<b>Years: 432,000 <u>solar</u> (1,200 divine)</b>		

(\*) Current.

<sup>[14]</sup>

Mahabharata, Book 12 (Shanti Parva), Ch. 231:<sup>[27][c]</sup>

(17) A year (of men) is equal to a day and night of the gods ... (19) I shall, in their order, tell you the number of years that are for different purposes calculated differently, in the Krita, the Treta, the Dwapara, and the Kali yugas. (20) Four thousand celestial years is the duration of the first or Krita age. The morning of that cycle consists of four hundred years and its evening is of four hundred years. (21) Regarding the other cycles, the duration of each gradually decreases by a quarter in respect of both the principal period with the minor portion and the conjoining portion itself.

Manusmriti, Ch. 1:<sup>[28]</sup>

(67) A year is a day and a night of the gods ... (68) But hear now the brief (description of) the duration of a night and a day of Brahman [(Brahma)] and of the several ages (of the world, yuga) according to their order. (69) They declare that the Krita age (consists of) four thousand years (of the gods); the twilight preceding it consists of as many hundreds, and the twilight following it of the same number. (70) In the other three ages with their twilights preceding and following, the thousands and hundreds are diminished by one (in each).

Surya Siddhanta, Ch. 1:<sup>[29]</sup>

(13) ... twelve months make a year. This is called a day of the gods. (14) ... Six times sixty [360] of them are a year of the gods ... (15) Twelve thousand of these divine years are denominated a Quadruple Age (caturyuga); of ten thousand times four hundred and thirty-two [4,320,000] solar years (16) Is composed that Quadruple Age, with its dawn and twilight. The difference of the Golden and the other Ages, as measured by the difference in the number of

the feet of Virtue in each, is as follows : (17) The tenth part of an Age, multiplied successively by four, three, two, and one, gives the length of the Golden and the other Ages, in order : the sixth part of each belongs to its dawn and twilight.

## Characteristics

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Hinduism often symbolically represents morality (*dharma*) as an Indian bull. In the Satya Yuga, the first stage of development, the bull has four legs, which is reduced by one in each age that follows. By the age of Kali, morality is reduced to only a quarter of that of the golden age, so that the bull of Dharma has only one leg.<sup>[30][31]</sup>

## References in the *Mahabharata*

The Kurukshetra War and the decimation of Kauravas thus happened at the *Yuga-Sandhi*, the point of transition from one yuga to another.<sup>[32]</sup> The scriptures mention Narada as having momentarily intercepted the demon Kali on his way to the Earth when Duryodhana was about to be born in order to make him an embodiment of arishadvargas and adharma in preparation of the era of decay in values and the consequent havoc.

## Prophesied events

A discourse by Markandeya in the Mahabharata identifies some of the attributes of people, animals, nature, and weather during the Kali Yuga.<sup>[33][34]</sup>

## 10,000-year Golden Age

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The Brahma Vaivarta Purana (related to Rathantara kalpa) mentions a 10,000-year period, starting from the traditional dating of the Kali Yuga epoch, during which bhakti yogis will be present.<sup>[35]</sup>

## In Sikhism

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Guru Granth Sahib on Ang:1185 says:<sup>[36]</sup>

Now, the Dark Age of Kali Yuga has come. Plant the Naam, the Name of the One Lord. It is not the season to plant other seeds. Do not wander lost in doubt and delusion.

## References in the *Dasam Granth*

In the "Nehkalanki Avatar" section of Chaubis Avatar, Guru Gobind Singh describes the characteristics of the Kali Yuga before the incarnation of Kalki, the twenty-fourth avatar of Vishnu. The author details various attitudes and actions that he perceives to be adharmic becoming increasingly prevalent among humans, including irreligion and engrossment in kama (sexual pleasure).<sup>[37][38]</sup>

In the "Bridh Naraaj" stanza of "Nehkalanki Avatar", the author states:

ਸੁਧਰਮ ਧਰਮ ਧੋਹਿ ਹੈ ਪ੍ਰਿਤੰ ਧਰਾ ਧਰੇਸਣੰ ॥ ਅਧਰਮ ਧਰਮਣੇ ਪ੍ਰਿਤੰ  
ਕੁਕਰਮ ਕਰਮਣੇ ਕ੍ਰਿਤੰ ॥੨੭॥

The kings of the earth will do the work of destroying  
*dharma*.

The life of *adharma* will be considered authentic, and  
the bad actions will be considered worth doing.<sup>27</sup>.

- Dasam Granth, 555.<sup>[39]</sup>



Guru Nanak, Mardana, and Bala  
meet Kalyug's physical form. Art  
from a *Janamsakhi* manuscript.

## Other usage

The Kali Yuga is an important concept in both Theosophy and Anthroposophy,<sup>[40][41]</sup> and in the writings of Helena Blavatsky, W.Q. Judge, Rudolf Steiner, Savitri Devi, and Traditionalist philosophers such as René Guénon and Julius Evola, among others. Rudolf Steiner believed that the Kali Yuga ended in 1900.<sup>[40]</sup>

## See also

- Hindu eschatology
- Hindu units of time
  - Kalpa (day of Brahma)
  - Manvantara (age of Manu)
  - Pralaya (period of dissolution)
  - Yuga Cycle (four yuga ages): Satya (Krita), Treta, Dvapara, and Kali
- Historicity of the Mahabharata
- Itihasa (Hindu Tradition)
- List of numbers in Hindu scriptures
- Puranic chronology

## Notes

- The Bhagavata Purana (1.18.6),<sup>[4]</sup> Vishnu Purana (5.38.8),<sup>[5]</sup> Brahmanda Purana (2.3.74.241),<sup>[6]</sup> Vayu Purana (2.37.422),<sup>[7]</sup> and Brahma Purana (2.103.8)<sup>[8]</sup> state that the day Krishna left the earth was the day that the Dvapara Yuga ended and the Kali Yuga began.
- Calculations exclude year zero. 1 BCE to 1 CE is one year, not two.
- Chapter 224 (CCXXIV) in some sources: *Mahabharata* 12.224.

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4. "Skanda I, Ch. 18: Curse of the Brahmana, Sloka 6" (<https://archive.org/details/BhagavataPuranaMotilalEnglish/page/n141/mode/1up>). *Bhagavata Purana*. Vol. Part I. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited. 1950. p. 137. "On the very day, and at the very moment the Lord [Krishna] left the earth, on that very day this Kali, the source of irreligiousness, (in this world), entered here."
5. Wilson, H. H. (1895). "Book V, Ch. 38: Arjuna burns the dead, etc., Sloka 8" (<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.47536/page/n73/mode/1up>). *The Vishnu Purana*. S.P.C.K. Press. p. 61. "The Parijata tree proceeded to heaven, and on the same day that Hari [Krishna] departed from the earth the dark-bodied Kali age descended."
6. "Ch. 74, Royal Dynasties, Sloka 241" (<https://archive.org/details/dli.bengal.10689.12922/page/n238/mode/1up>). *The Brahmanda Purana*. Vol. Part III. Motilal Banarsidass. 1958. p. 950. "Kali Yuga began on the day when Krsna passed on to heaven. Understand how it is calculated."
7. "Ch. 37, Royal Dynasties, Sloka 422" (<https://archive.org/details/the-vayu-purana-part-2-ancient-indian-tradition-and-mythology/page/824/mode/1up>). *The Vayu Purana*. Vol. Part II. Motilal Banarsidass. 1988. p. 824. ISBN 81-208-0455-4. "Kali Yuga had started on the very day when Krsna passed away."
8. "Ch. 103, Episode of Krsna concluded, Sloka 8" (<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.98294/page/n285/mode/1up>). *Brahma Purana*. Vol. Part II. Motilal Banarsidass. 1955. p. 515. "It was on the day on which Krishna left the Earth and went to heaven that the Kali age, with time for its body set in."
9. Matchett, Freda; Yano, Michio (2003). "Part II, Ch. 6: The Puranas / Part III, Ch. 18: Calendar, Astrology, and Astronomy" (<https://books.google.com/books?id=SKBxa-MNqA8C&pg=PA390>). In Flood, Gavin (ed.). *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*. Blackwell Publishing. p. 390. ISBN 0631215352. "The [Kali yuga] epoch arrived at ... was midnight of February 17/18 in 3102 BC according to the midnight (*ardharatika*) school, and the sunrise of February 18 (Friday) of the same year according to the sunrise (*audayika*) school."
10. Burgess 1935, p. 19: The instant at which the [kali yuga] Age is made to commence is midnight on the meridian of Ujjayini, at the end of the 588,465th and beginning of the 588,466th day (civil reckoning) of the Julian Period, or between the 17th and 18th of February 1612 J.P., or 3102 B.C. [4713 BCE = 0 JP; 4713 BCE - 1612 + 1 (no year zero) = 3102 BCE.]
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\* HINDUISM: Myths of time and eternity: ... Each yuga is preceded by an intermediate "dawn" and "dusk." The Krita yuga lasts 4,000 god-years, with a dawn and dusk of 400 god-years each, or a total of 4,800 god-years; Treta a total of 3,600 god-years; Dvapara 2,400 god-years; and Kali (the current yuga) 1,200 god-years. A mahayuga thus lasts 12,000 god-years ... Since each god-year lasts 360 human years, a mahayuga is 4,320,000 years long in human time. Two thousand mahayugas form one kalpa (eon) [and pralaya], which is itself but one day in the life of Brahma, whose full life lasts 100 years; the present is the midpoint of his life. Each kalpa is followed by an equally long period of abeyance (pralaya), in which the universe is asleep. Seemingly the universe will come to an end at the end of Brahma's life, but Brahmas too are innumerable, and a new universe is reborn with each new Brahma.

\* YUGA: Each yuga is progressively shorter than the preceding one, corresponding to a decline in the moral and physical state of humanity. Four such yugas (called ... after throws of an Indian game of dice) make up a mahayuga ("great yuga") ... The first yuga (Krita) was an age of perfection, lasting 1,728,000 years. The fourth and most degenerate yuga (Kali) began in 3102 BCE and will last 432,000 years. At the close of the Kali yuga, the world will be destroyed by fire and flood, to be re-created as the cycle resumes. In a partially competing vision of time, Vishnu's 10th and final AVATAR, KALKI, is described as bringing the present cosmic cycle to a close by destroying the evil forces that rule the Kali yuga and ushering in an immediate return to the idyllic Krita yuga."
13. Gupta, S. V. (2010). "Ch. 1.2.4 Time Measurements" (<https://books.google.com/books?id=pHiKycrLmEQC&pg=PA7>). In Hull, Robert; Osgood, Richard M. Jr.; Parisi, Jurgen; Warlimont, Hans (eds.). *Units of Measurement: Past, Present and Future. International System of Units*. Springer Series in Materials Science: 122. Springer. pp. 6–8. ISBN 9783642007378. "Paraphrased: Deva day equals solar year. Deva lifespan (36,000 solar years) equals 100 360-day years, each 12 months. Mahayuga equals 12,000 Deva (divine) years (4,320,000 solar years), and is divided into 10 charnas consisting of four Yugas: Satya Yuga (4 charnas of 1,728,000 solar years), Treta Yuga (3 charnas of 1,296,000 solar years), Dvapara Yuga (2 charnas of 864,000 solar years), and Kali Yuga (1 charna of 432,000 solar years). Manvantara equals 71 Mahayugas (306,720,000 solar years). Kalpa (day of Brahma) equals an Adi Sandhya, 14 Manvantaras, and 14 Sandhya Kalas, where 1st Manvantara preceded by Adi Sandhya and each Manvantara followed by Sandhya Kala, each Sandhya lasting same duration as Satya yuga (1,728,000 solar years), during which the entire earth is submerged in water. Day of Brahma equals 1,000 Mahayugas, the same length for a night of Brahma (Bhagavad-gita 8.17). Brahma lifespan (311.04 trillion solar years) equals 100 360-day years, each 12 months. Parardha is 50 Brahma years and we are in the 2nd half of his life. After 100 years of Brahma, the universe starts with a new Brahma. We are currently in the 28th Kali yuga of the first day of the 51st year of the second Parardha in the reign of the 7th (Vaivasvata) Manu. This is the 51st year of the present Brahma and so about 155 trillion years have elapsed. The current Kali Yuga (Iron Age) began at midnight on 17/18 February 3102 BC in the proleptic Julian calendar."
14. **Godwin 2011**, p. 301: The Hindu astronomers agree that the [Dvapara Yuga ended and] Kali Yuga began at midnight between February 17 and 18, 3102 BCE. Consequently [Kali Yuga] is due to end about 427,000 CE, whereupon a new Golden Age will dawn.

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18. Kane 1936, p. 4: Among the earliest is the Pikira grant of Pallava Simhavarman where we have the words 'Who was ever ready to extricate dharma that had become sunk owing to the evil effects of Kaliyuga.'
19. The Pikira grant inscription has the word "kaliyuga" on line 10 located on 3rd plate, first side. — Hultzsch, E., ed. (1981). *Epigraphia Indica and Records of the Archaeological Survey of India* (<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.56654/page/n208/mode/1up>). Vol. VIII — 1905–06. Bombay: Education Society's Press. p. 162.
20. Each term has an index of volumes:
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  - \* p. 301: Kali-yuga, age of Kali
  - \* p. 364: Kritayuga, age; Kritayuga, do.— Krishna, Dr. M. H. (1934). *Mysore Archeological Survey: Epigraphia Carnatica* (<https://archive.org/details/p1epigraphiacarnat13myso>). Vol. XIII (Part I): General Index. Bangalore: Government Press. pp. 177 (<https://archive.org/details/p1epigraphiacarnat13myso/page/177/mode/1up>), 301 (<https://archive.org/details/p1epigraphiacarnat13myso/page/301/mode/1up>), 364 (<https://archive.org/details/p1epigraphiacarnat13myso/page/364/mode/1up>).
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## Further reading

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## External links

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 The dictionary definition of *Kali Yuga* at Wiktionary

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