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# 1. PROGRESS OR THE "*KALI-YUGA*"?

Everywhere in the world today, men's aspirations are directed towards what is known as "progress". Though insuperable international dissensions and cruel regional wars have sown anxiety in the heart of man, they have not come near to shaking his belief that "man is progressing" and that "man must progress". That this should be so, in spite of world cataclysms, is not entirely surprising. Progress is looked on by most as being a matter of liberating the oppressed, feeding the hungry, healing the sick—and it is not strange that men should believe that anyone who might appear to oppose such endeavors must necessarily be a knave. Progress, however, is far from simply being age-old charity in modern dress; and while ideologists unremittingly expound the gospel of progress in all its myriad forms, many "simple" people know in their hearts that something has gone wrong.

But what is it that has gone wrong? If a man has a fever, who would deny him penicillin? If a man has a tumor, who would deny him surgery? But these questions by no means exhaust all aspects of the matter. There are not only antibiotics and anesthetics: there are also nuclear weapons and totalitarian oppressions.[1] All are the products of modern science, and all are the results of progress. Not even the most committed ideologist can separate the "good" effects from the "bad" and convince us that the former alone are progress, whereas the latter are not. The advances of scientific progress are "advances" which simply do not take man's comforts, wishes—or deepest needs—into account. Medicine and bombs, optimism and *Angst*, apparent freedom and real tyranny, are indissociable; the "good" and the "bad" aspects are thrown up *together*, willy-nilly. It is intellectual dishonesty to allege that man has it in his power to choose only the "good" effects and to reject the "bad", and it is self-deception to believe, against all probability, that the "good" effects will some day, somehow, outnumber the "bad".

[1] Characterized by universal thought-control by modern mass media (originally radio, and now television); technological surveillance (together with ruthless intimidation); mechanized weaponry (not swords or bows-and-arrows, but chemical and bacteriological warfare and machines of death). The least that can be said is that, qualitatively, the modern totalitarianisms are completely different from the ancient empires.

What is it then that has gone wrong? A hint is provided by the fact that progress, everywhere and always, is exclusively *material* progress. Contemporary reality is there to prove that collective "moral progress" is a cruel joke. In spite of organized schemes for social betterment, never has there been less virtue, less self-abnegation, less sanctity than today. It is true that in the world there are still some saints—more and more hidden, however, and alarmingly fewer than of old—but in any case what is decisive is that today neither the eyes of government nor of the masses are directed towards them. It is "clever" economists, false prophets, and populist politicians (be they "democratic" or "fundamentalist") who enjoy the limelight, and to use the word "virtue" in their regard is simply a mockery.

The gospel of "progress" rests on the belief that by means of natural sciences, intrinsically divorced from supernatural realities and revealed religion, man can improve the lot of his fellows. One might have hoped that more would see that this is a recipe which can only produce ever more numerous problems and drive human society deeper and deeper into turmoil. The worse our condition becomes, the more "science" is applied; the more "science" is applied, the worse our condition becomes. As the vicious circle turns, delinquency, anxiety, and discontent grow apace.

These words are not written in the belief that one day the majority of men will see the error of their "scientific" ways and, on taking thought, will set things right. Hindus understand why this cannot be so, for they know that we are living in the "Dark Age" (the *Kali-Yuga*),[2] and that the gravitational or "entropic" descent which we see everywhere around us and which stems from our blindness to supernatural reality, will continue inexorably till the cycle itself comes to its cataclysmic conclusion. This is the event which Christianity calls "the end of the world".

The clock cannot be turned back, and the world will continue its downward rush to its fearful doom. But whoever is capable of understanding the falseness of the progressivistic current around him, thereby liberates himself inwardly from the thraldom of a mortal error, even though outwardly he may not, any more than his fellows, escape its physical effects.

The Scriptures of all religions contain prophecies about the days when men will turn away from divine revelation and "Platonic" intuition alike, and put their faith instead in the shallow and shifting

[2] Indeed, the last phase of the *Kali-Yuga*!

notions invented by men. The Christian Gospel says: "It is impossible but that scandal will come"; and, lest anyone should regard the "scandal" with complacency, or even lend it his cooperation (as some woefully mistaken fundamentalists, rashly impatient for Armageddon, appear to do), it immediately adds: "but woe to him through whom scandal cometh"; those who are the agents of "progress" will not be held guiltless. In Islam, a counterblast to the doctrine of progress is to be found in the saying of the Prophet Mohammed: "No time cometh upon you but is followed by a worse." It is the opposite that is propagated by the media and taught in our schools. The Buddhist Scriptures and the traditions and prophecies of the Indians of North America likewise foresee man's collective falling away from religion, his ever increasing materialism in the latter days, and the fearful doom which lies ahead. But perhaps the most explicit intimation of the *Kali-Yuga* is to be found in the Scriptures of Hinduism. A well-known passage from the *Vishnu Purâna*, codified in the 3rd century A.D., reads like a description of the world around us and strikingly reveals the emptiness and hypocrisy of those who in the midst of increasing distress still talk about progress. For those with "eyes to see and ears to hear" this passage is a recall from illusion to reality and from falsehood to truth:

> Riches and piety will diminish daily, until the world will be completely corrupted. In those days it will be wealth which confers distinction, passion will be the sole reason for union between the sexes, and lies will be the only method for success in business. The earth will be valued only on account of the mineral treasures which it contains, disloyalty will be the means universally employed for continuing to exist, a simple ablution will be regarded as sufficient purification. . . .
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> The observance of castes, laws, and institutions will no longer be in force in the Dark Age, and the ceremonies prescribed by the *Vedas* will be neglected. Women will obey only their whims and will be infatuated with pleasure. . . . Men of all kinds will presumptuously regard themselves as the equals of *brahmins*. . . . The *vaishya*s will abandon agriculture and commerce and will earn their living by servitude or by the exercise of mechanical professions. . . . The path of the *Vedas* having been abandoned, and man having been led astray from orthodoxy, iniquity will prevail and the length of human life will diminish in consequence. . . . Then men will cease worshiping Vishnu, the Lord of sacrifice, Creator and Lord of all things, and they will say: "Of what authority are the *Vedas*? Who are the Gods and the *brahmins*? What use is purification with water?. . ." The dominant caste will be that of *shûdra*s. . . . Men, deprived of reason

and subject to every infirmity of body and mind, will daily commit sins: everything which is impure, vicious, and calculated to afflict the human race will make its appearance in the Dark Age.

Progress or the "Kali Yoga"?

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