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Hindu Concept of Time

The modern concept of time presently used by the world is more or less based on the Christian thought. The Christian or the Gregorian calendar is linked to the birth of Lord Jesus Christ and is based on the concept of linear time going forward in a straight line. Hence the Christian philosophy and the concept of linear time suggests a unique appearance of human beings, a unique history of salvation and a unique conclusion in the form of a last judgement. The modern science also shares this basic Christian concept of linear time. The universe began with a unique occurrence (Big Bang Theory) and humans evolved thereafter on the basis of Darwin's Theory of Evolution. In contrast, the Hindu concept of time, as told in the Puranas and Itihasas, is that the time is cyclic and hence endless. There is no beginning, middle or end. This view of cyclic time was shared by the early thinkers of Europe, such as Plato and Pythagoras but lost favour with the advent of Christianity.

The Vedic concept of time involves cycles of Yugas :

1. **Satya** (or Krita) Yuga lasted 1,728,000 years
2. **Treta** Yuga lasted 1,296,000 years
3. **Dvapara** Yuga lasted 864,000 years
4. **Kali** Yuga, lasts 432,000 years

These four comprise a Yuga Cycle called **Divya Yuga** and totals 4.32 billion years. One thousand of such Divya Yugas (i.e. 4.32 billion x 1000 years equal to 4320 billion years) make up one day of Lord Brahma. At the end of the day of Lord Brahma there is annihilation and during the night (which lasts as long as the day) the material universes are devastated and plunged into darkness. When another day of Lord Brahma begins, life manifests again.

Lord Brahma lives for 100 years. Hence the life time of Lord Brahma is typically 100 x 360 x 8640 billion i.e. 311040000 billion years. Each day of Lord Brahma (equivalent to 4320 billion years) is divided into 14 **Manvantara** periods. Preceding the first and following each Manvantara are **twilights** numbering 15 in total. Each Twilight is 1,728,000 years long (length of a Satya yuga). Each Manvantara comprises 71 Yuga cycles. Typically, each Manvantara period ends with a partial devastation.

We are now in the **28th Yuga cycle** of the **seventh Manvantara**, (called Vaivasvata Manu) period of the present day of Lord Brahma, which means that we are in the 52nd Century of the Kali Yuga, which lasts 432,000 years.

This method of calculating time is known as **Kalagnana**, which is based on astronomical calculations. Kala or time is an eternal phenomenon stated by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita (11.32): 'Time I am, the great destroyer of the worlds' Hindu Kalagnana starts with the smallest unit of time, **Truti** which is part of a second and ends up with the longest possible unit, life. Using this method of measuring time, it may be easy to calculate the age of creation and the dissolution of the world and also of the Vedic revelation. Knowing that God revealed the Vedas through Agni, Vayu, Ravi and Angirasa the Vedas may indeed be much older than what the present western historians have us believe.

The Hindu Six Seasons

The Hindu year is divided into six seasons. To understand how a basic knowledge of the Hindu calendar is necessary, it is a calendar based on the phases of the moon; hence it is a **lunar based calendar**. The Gregorian calendar (used in Britain etc) is a **solar calendar**.

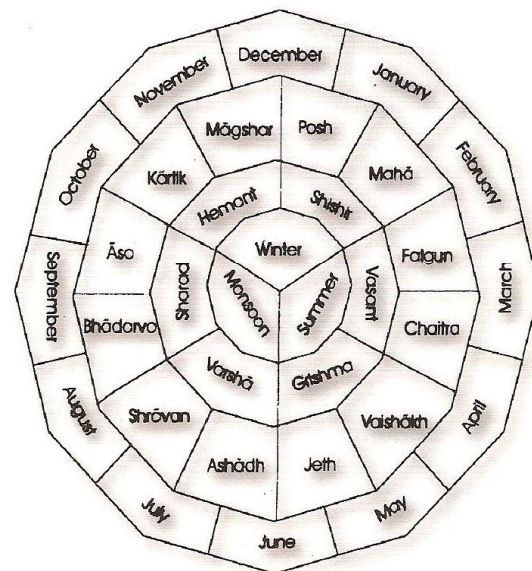
Each Hindu year comprises of 12 months, each of 30 days – Hence 360 days in a year. Each month is divided into two equal halves of 15 days. The first half, **sud paksh** (bright half) represents the 15-day period from the new moon to the full moon. The second half, **vad paksh** (dark half) is the period from the full moon to no moon (amas)

After every 32 months, an extra month, **adhik mas** is inserted into the Hindu calendar. This ensures that the seasons and the Hindu celebrations fall at around the same time every year.

Currently, the six seasons of the Hindu calendar are identified as

1. **Vasant**
2. **Grishma**
3. **Varsha**
4. **Sharad**
5. **Hemant**
6. **Shishir**

The diagram below will help in visualising how the Hindu and the Gregorian calendars relate to each other.



Article supplied by Dr Chandrakant M Thanki