

[Time: It's Worth More Than Money](#)

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Editorial

Time: It's Worth More Than Money

the Editor

Pity poor old Bill Gates, Microsoft CEO and world's richest man, worth a mere \$15 billion or so. In his new book, *The Road Ahead*, Bill confesses that he wants more. Not more stocks or yachts. Bill has just turned 40 and wants more time. He confesses that he would even consider an exception to his rigid stand against gambling, if a dance with chance would win him more time on earth.

Being rich has shown Bill one of the great secrets, that time is more precious than wealth. You don't have to be a billionaire to know that, but it may help. I believe that our future will be more precious, more dharmic, more fulfilling if, while adopting much that is exemplary from the West (System 8, not Windows 95), we keep our ancient sense of time.

Unlike money, time is not the same in the two great hemispheres. One is linear, the other circular. One is objective, the other subjective. One is analytical, the other experiential. One is science, the other art. Take for example the Western penchant for timeliness. In the West we are always on time. Not a minute late, no matter what. It is an admirably efficient

trait, but demanding, and often at odds with more important matters.

A Christian missionary recounted to me years back his own collision with time East and time West. He was planning to visit several homes one afternoon, and to be effective felt he had to come and go quickly on a tight schedule. Off he went. A little delayed by traffic, a few minutes over his time budget at the first homes, he began to tighten up, stress out. At each home, he rushed through his introductions, excused himself early, telling his hosts that others down the road were waiting for him, that he was late, and sorry and, whoosh, gone.

The rest of his stay in that village proved useless. He had managed to offend everyone he met that day, some quite deeply. Only months later did one among them confide to him that these families had made elaborate preparation and been prepared to greet him and his wife with the East's well-known hospitality. All for naught. He learned that time is different in the East. More leisurely. More human, perhaps, and certainly less important than people.

Many Hindus are adopting the Western approach to time, rushing to the temple, rushing away. Giving less and less time to family, to children, to their sadhana. The results of the Occidental experiment with time are now in. Proof is there in a million lives that it wreaks havoc with mind and body, tunes the type-A nervous system to a lethal pitch, alienates those close to us and denies us life's unhurried moments.

I know of no studies on the different attitudes of time in East and West, but I have seen both at work and admit each has its strengths. The Western myth is that time is an object, another possession. You've heard the old adage "Time is money." We have X amount of it, and, like money, we "save" it and "spend" it. We want to do more, accomplish more, and time is the

limiting factor, the enemy instead of the ally; with this as our premise, we seek to control time, waste it less, manipulate it more. Time, we perceive, flows like a river from here to there, from birth to death. Our intellect focuses on this linear progression, and knowledge about the past proliferates, as do worries about the future (everyone knows what happens when we run out of time).

The myth of time is different in the East. It is not our possession; we are its! Time is a wheel, and by staying at the center of its cyclical movement we are eternally now. In this centeredness we are more interested in what is than what was or is to be. In this centeredness, there is plenty of time for everything we need, an eternity of time right now. No limits on spending. No tight budgets. No sense of loss if we are enjoying our friends or walking aimlessly in the forest. Time is our friend.

In the West time is small. Our largest measure is the millenium. References to history rarely extend back more than a few thousand years, six max. It's like viewing reality on a 12-inch Sony Trinitron.

In the East, time is projected on the large screen. There are words that communicate a far vaster and more scientifically accurate vision of the extent of time in our universe. We have the four yugas, or ages of man, the shortest being 432,000 years and the longest 1.728 million. Taken together these four make a manvantara, which is 4.32 million years. But that is just a little tick on the cosmic clock. One thousand manvantaras make up half a kalpa, totalling 4.32 billion earth years, which is the duration of one day or night of Brahma. Two kalpas complete the Day of Brahma. In each inconceivably immense cycle of creation, preservation and dissolution, Brahma or God lives for one hundred of His years; the present is sometimes said to be His fifty-first year of life. Time in the East is big, as

big as life.

Time in the East is not neutral, not indifferent to us. Time is more a relationship to man than a thing. Some times of the day and the fortnight and the year are auspicious, while others are not. Some periods are friendly to our enterprises, others are antagonistic. The quality of time thus becomes far more central to human need and effectiveness than the quantity. A one-hour creative firestorm yields a thousand times more than a year in the life of a couch potato. Seeing time thusly, we seek less to master it than to cooperate with it.

Eastern time is based on natural things, on observable cycles. Of course, most Hindus have accepted, out of marketplace necessity, the Western, solar calendar. But the Hindu calendar, called Panchanga, is predominantly lunar, and designed to keep one constantly in sync with stellar movements that affect our being. We follow such a calendar at our Hinduism Today offices. I hope one day Hindus will return to their sacred calendar. The next time you're rushed, stop a moment. Think about our patient path and the old rishis who crafted it.