

Fallacy of the trans-Saturnian Planets

copyright © 1997 by Shyamasundara Dasa

The following article is an excerpt from a work in progress.

Abstract: Now that Vedic astrology has become popular in the West many Western trained astrologers are attempting to fuse the two systems or introduce Western concepts such as the trans-Saturnian planets into the Vedic system. Over the years some Indian astrologers have also attempted to introduce these planets into Vedic astrology. Such attempts are destructive to the internal philosophical consistency and logical structure of Vedic astrology. In addition it undermines the effectiveness of *Jyotisha* while revealing a lack of understanding of the philosophical foundations of Vedic astrology, and the history of how trans-Saturnian planets were introduced. And finally this practice demonstrates a general disrespect for the guru-parampara. If this erosion of Vedic astrology were to continue, then *Jyotisha* would find itself in the same confused state that Western Astrology is in today, culminating in loss of accuracy, loss of respectability and ultimately the destruction of *Jyotisha* as a Vedic discipline.

Graha Versus Planet

There is a fundamental difference between the Vedic concept of *graha* and the Western use of Planets in astrology. *Graha*, by definition, is anything which has the power to seize, grasp or influence. In this case “seizing or influencing the destinies of men in a supernatural manner.”¹ The word for planet on the other hand is translated as *loka* in Sanskrit. Not all grahas are lokas, nor are all lokas grahas. In English, this means that the class of entities or objects which have divinatory significance includes planets, but not all planets have divinatory significance. (We are reminded however that while certain planets may be grahas, in a divinatory sense, they are not causal agents. They do not cause anything to happen. But as mantic grahas they do have the power to be used in a divinatory language to explain the will of God. Just as omens do not cause anything but are divine signs.)

In Vedic Astrology the ten major grahas are: The Ascendant, Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Rahu (North Node of the Moon) and Ketu (South Node of the Moon). Of these ten grahas the Ascendant, Rahu and Ketu are not lokas or planets but rather mathematical points calculated by the astrologer. Though not planets they are of great significance. Vedic astrology also has numerous *upa-grahas* (minor grahas) and *kala-velas* (sensitive points in time). Of these up-grahas and kala-velas, *Mandi* is considered most important and is especially used in Kerala. *Mandi* is definitely not a planet in the Western sense, but it is a graha.

Vedic Astrology is a limb of the Vedas and was revealed to Rishis from a higher source. Ultimately, *Jyotisha* is revealed knowledge coming from Lord Sri Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Thus, the traditional assignments of grahas is not trivial, meaningless or haphazard. We also note the Vedic distinction between the classification of graha (divinatory agent) and loka (planet).

¹ Williams, p. 372.

Western Astrology entirely lacks the concept of graha; they are left only with planets. As a consequence, they assume that simply because something is floating “out there,” whether it be a planet like Neptune, or Ganymede (a moon of Jupiter) or asteroids like Athena; in all cases they should be incorporated into the chart. We suggest that such an attitude creates an incomprehensible hodge-podge which further erodes the axiomatic basis of their school of astrology. (What about comets and meteors? While Vedic astrology doesn’t use asteroids in delineations, it does recognize and use comets and meteors, especially in Mundane astrology and *nimitta*.)

Pandora’s Box

Presently in Western astrology there is a great welter of confusion caused by the introduction of these “planets.” It started with Neptune, Uranus and Pluto but once Pandora’s box was opened they could not stay the flood. Now there are eight Uranian planets (used by the Cosmo-biologists): Cupido, Hades, Zeus, Kronos, Apollon, Admetos, Vulcanus and Poseidon; these planets are not physical entities but fictional. And sixteen asteroids commonly used: Ceres, Pallas, Juno, Vesta, Psyche, Eros, Lilith, Toro, Sappho, Amor, Pandora, Icarus, Diana, Hidalgo, Urania and Chiron. Some authors have written books on individual asteroids and their placement in the chart. Then there is Trans-Pluto, also known as Bacchus, it supposedly lies beyond the orbit of Pluto and has not been discovered yet! But some Western astrologers already delineate Bacchus’s meaning in charts and write books on it. If this assault on our Vedic sensibilities were not enough there is still more. A group of Western astrologers is in the process of cataloging about 2400(!) other “less” important asteroids, calculating ephemerides for them, naming them and giving them meanings. Then there are those who advocate the Vertex (a point calculated by spherical geometry) and such points as the Galactic center. Soon in Western astrology the chart will be so crowded with detritus that it would be more meaningful to scatter a handful of confetti and try to read that. Is this what we want to happen to the discipline of Vedic Astrology?

In 1987–88 when I worked at MATRIX software developing the first professional Vedic astrology software I became very familiar with Western astrology in all its phases. MATRIX had the most sophisticated Western astrology software and those programs contained every conceivable technique known to Western astrology. Some were so bizarre that I was baffled how anyone could possibly take them seriously.

Since MATRIX was in the business of writing software they had to please all their clients and to do so they incorporated all techniques. I once asked the senior astrologer-programmers what methods they used from the welter of “stuff” that they programmed. They replied that they used only transits, not even Secondary Directions (progressed charts) or Solar Returns! Then I asked them if they used the gaggle of asteroid-cum-planets mentioned above. They replied in the negative. They suggested that only “kooks” went in for such things and it was not the domain of serious astrologers. But I countered by saying that if they accepted Neptune, Uranus and Pluto why stop there? Pandora’s box has been opened and pandemonium reigned. Many of the so called New Age astrologers who use all the confetti planets accuse the others of being “fuddy duddies” for their conservative views. If the serious Western Astrologers really want to be consistent they should also give up Neptune, Uranus and Pluto.

MATRIX Software was (is) at the cutting edge of Western Astrology and many famous Western Astrologers would often come and visit. There were also several experienced Western astrologers on the MATRIX staff. Yet with all this talent in Western astrology, it was a tribute to Vedic astrology that all those who sought out astrological advice came to me. When I asked why, my clients said that they didn't feel that Western astrology described them properly, etc. This superiority of Vedic astrology rests on several factors one of which rejects trans-Saturnian planets.

Gimmicks

One senior research astrologer at the AFA (American Federation of Astrologers), who prefers to remain anonymous for obvious reasons, once suggested to me that planets such as Neptune, Uranus and Pluto (what to speak of the confetti planets) were introduced as gimmicks by incompetent astrologers who could not properly read the existing horoscope. There seems to be much truth in what he said. Astrology is considered the most difficult material science, and reading a horoscope is no mean task. To decipher the meanings of the ten significators (Ascendant, Sun, etc.) in the signs and houses taking into consideration all the rules of astrology is a major task even for the greatest minds. If one has not properly understood the meanings of these ten significators then the chart will present mysteries. To bolster the weaknesses in Western astrology (caused by a broken tradition, lack of philosophical basis, etc.) it seems that modern western astrology keeps adding more and more gimmicks. But do these gimmicks really give more information? I think not, they just add to the confusion and loss of discipline.

A competent Vedic astrologer can understand all the features of a person's life simply with the use of the ten significators. There are no mystery areas that require the introduction of ersatz grahas. Who is the better astrologer now by using Uranus, Neptune, Pluto, and the rest? Who, by using these extraneous planets, can claim to be a better astrologer than Parasara or Varaha Mihira? What to speak of these great Vedic astrologers there are many contemporary Vedic astrologers who can masterly delineate a horoscope without need of superfluous planets. Even by Western standards, who among the contemporary Tropical astrologers, by using trans-Saturnian planets, even approaches the expertise of Thrysalus or Bilballus, the court astrologers of the Caesars (these two were before Ptolemy and thus siderealists). Or later Western astrologers such as Placidus de Titi, William Lilly or Morinus; none of whom used trans-Saturnian planets. In the realm of Mundane astrology, probably the most complex field in astrology, no Western astrologer has even come close to the accuracy of B.V. Raman whose reputation was built on his world predictions. B.V. Raman totally eschews trans-Saturnian planets. I am quite certain that myself, or any other qualified Vedic astrologer, can better explain a horoscope without using trans-Saturnian planets and astro-detritus.

Octave Fallacy

As an explanation, Western astrologers claim that Neptune represents a higher octave of Venus, Uranus a higher octave of Mercury, and Pluto a higher octave of Mars. After doing this they then assign to the three planets the co-rulership of the signs Pisces, Aquarius and Scorpio respectfully. All signs are ruled by planets, by

adding these three planets as co-rulers they again disturb the inner consistency of astrology. This idea of “higher octave” is fallacious. All the planets, not just Venus, Mercury and Mars, have their own higher octaves and if the astrologer actually knows the subject he can determine this. It is superfluous and clumsy to assign the higher octave of one planet to another body. Their assignments of Neptune and Uranus as co-rulers of Pisces and Aquarius is also inconsistent. If Neptune and Uranus are higher octaves of Venus and Mercury as Tropicalists insist, then it would be more reasonable and consistent to assume that these two planets would be the co-rulers of signs owned by Venus (Taurus and Libra) and Mercury (Gemini and Virgo). Rather Pisces is ruled by Jupiter and Aquarius is ruled by Saturn, only Pluto is assigned a share with Mars, who is the actual ruler of Scorpio.

Grammar and Syntax

Astrology is sometimes compared to a language, a divinatory language. And like any language there are rules of grammar, syntax, diction, etc., which are codified. Sanskrit, literally means purified language. Its grammatical structure was analyzed and codified by Panini. Sanskrit is the oldest language in the world and is still used today in India and its study is increasing world wide. Some have thought it to be the perfect choice for a computer language because of the mathematical precision of its grammar. Sanskrit is the most sophisticated language ever devised and it is capable of expressing both the simple and the sublime in a beautiful and elegant way. This pre-eminent position of Sanskrit did not come about by haphazardly adding new grammatical rules and letters. Sanskrit has survived to this day precisely because of the fact that its rules cannot be violated. In a similar way the language of astrology has its basic building blocks and it cannot be tampered with.

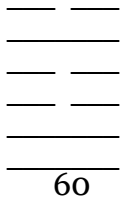
Some may say that this is a rigid view, that languages grow and change. This may be true of spoken languages, but who speaks Chaucerian English now? It is dead. Few English speaking persons consult ancient English books to help them speak modern English. But that is exactly what is done in astrology. Though modern texts and courses may be devised it is always advised to go back to original texts, they are the fundamental references in *Jyotisha*. Nor is it true that this leads to rigidity in the language of Astrology. Sanskrit with its precise rules (which have become the model for the modern science of linguistics) has long been recognized as possessing the most abundant literature on the planet, much of which has yet to be cataloged. There is Sanskrit literature on every possible field of human endeavor. Thus sticking within the Paninian framework has not stifled the creativity of Sanskrit authors. And though Sanskrit is not as widespread as before it is still a living language whose popularity is growing.

We have compared Sanskrit to mathematics. Mathematics also has a certain axiomatic structure and rules of syntax which are actually quite simple. But from these very basic and simple rules great mathematical theories, beautiful in their elegance, can be constructed.

Benefit of Self-Restraint

Vedic astrology is not made rigid by having set rules of grammar but, like Sanskrit, it is made perfect. Like Sanskrit and Mathematics there is plenty of room for innovation and creativity within the framework of Vedic astrology.

Rather than being destructive or inhibiting growth, limitations such as we are now discussing regarding trans-Saturnian planets is actually quite desirable and healthy. (These limitations can also be applied to other areas of astrology as well, not just trans-Saturnian planets. Western house systems, and aspects come to mind and should also be eschewed.) The benefits of such self-restraint are described in hexagram 60, of the *I-Ching*, called *Chieh* or Limitations.



After discussing the nature of the component trigrams (Lake and Water) the judgement and commentary state:

“Limitation. Success.
Galling limitation must not be persevered in.

“Limitations are troublesome, but they are effective. If we live economically in normal times, we are prepared for times of want. To be sparing saves us from humiliation. Limitations are also indispensable in the regulation of world conditions. In nature there are fixed limits for summer and winter, day and night, and these limits give the year its meaning. In the same way, economy, by setting fixed limits on expenditures, acts to preserve property and prevent injury to people.

“. . . A lake is something limited. Water is inexhaustible. A lake can contain only a definite amount of the infinite quantity of water; this is its peculiarity. In human life too the individual achieves significance through discrimination and the setting of limits. Therefore what concerns us here is the problem of clearly defining these discriminations, which are so to speak, the backbone of morality. *Unlimited possibilities are not suited to man; if they existed, his life would only dissolve in the boundless.* To become strong, a man’s life needs the limitations ordained by duty and voluntarily accepted. The individual attains significance as a free spirit only by surrounding himself with these limitations and by determining for himself what his duty is.”²

The principles elucidated above are as equally applicable to Vedic astrology as they are to an individual. By adhering to the principle of limitation, in this case the defining axioms of Vedic Astrology, as given to us by Lord Sri Krsna via the Rsis, Vedic Astrology will remain a strong discipline. Otherwise Vedic Astrology will go the way of Western Astrology. It will become a hodge-podge. Anything goes, everyone makes their own rules. In such a condition there are no rules, no laws, only anarchy. It will be devoid of discipline and standards. No astrologer will be able to communicate with another because they will speak a different language.

It should also be noted that not all Western astrologers are enamored by the trans-Saturnian planets. Michel Gauquelin, the famous researcher in Western

² Wilhelm/Baynes, pp. 231-232.

Astrology, claimed that he found no astrological effects arising out of the placement of the trans-Saturnian planets in a person's horoscope.

The Argument of "Results"

It may be argued by some, that they get "results" by using ersatz planets. So why not use them? For the sake of argument we will accept the possibility that this can happen. But it is not Vedic astrology. You can use other languages to describe a phenomena but by doing this you interfere with the process of gaining mastery of Vedic astrology which doesn't depend on the needs of another language. If you contaminate the system by adding planets you will never really understand or master the original Vedic system. And by adulterating the system you offend the previous gurus, thus blocking your perfection in the art and science of *Jyotisha*. No one has ever mastered a Vedic science by disobeying the previous acaryas. The devotees of Lord Krsna regularly recite the list of offenses against the Holy Name of the Lord, enumerated in the *Padma Purana*. The third offense against the Name of God is to disobey the order of the spiritual master. This applies equally well to the Vedic science of astrology. It is offensive to the previous acaryas to tamper with and pervert their original teachings.

On the other hand, it may also be argued that the addition of extra planets not only does not give results but, may cause mistakes. Also, it would be difficult to attribute a specific result to utilization of the extra planets without taking into account the true divinatory grahas. Thus, so-called successful results based on the extra planets may actually be attributed to factoring in effects from the divinatory grahas. I have yet to see true results which could not be as easily or usually more easily arrived at by using the standard Vedic planets.

Deviation From Guru-Parampara

In an attempt to appear modern, some practitioners of Vedic astrology began to slavishly imitate their Western counterparts. Thus in some modern books, on so-called Vedic astrology, you will find reference to Neptune, Uranus and Pluto. We warn the student to be very careful of such authors who deviate from the guru-parampara. The writings of such dubious self-proclaimed gurus and Veda-acaryas are probably infected with many other heterodox ideas and should especially be avoided by beginners or risk confusion. There are so many good books on Vedic astrology translated into English that one can easily get along without those that utilize the bogus planets. The heterodox astrologers give the impression that many Vedic astrologers in India use extra planets or other Western methods. The fact is that the vast majority of astrologers in India still follow the Vedic tradition.

Of the modern Western writers on Vedic astrology, most have had the good sense to present the Vedic tradition regarding planets as it is, without changes. However, some don't care for the guru-parampara and are so-called modernists. They claim that many Vedic astrologers add Uranus, Neptune and Pluto to their systems of interpretation. To introduce them is irresponsible, and to claim that many Vedic astrologers use them is far from the truth and misleading. It again gives the impression that Vedic astrology is not a discipline with its own set rules. Those who break these rules are not Vedic Astrologers. They may be using some Vedic techniques, but they are not Vedic astrologers and should not falsely call themselves as such.

Some popular astrologers claim that there is a Nadi-grantha which mentions that in the future people will use other planets (Neptune, Uranus and Pluto?) for prediction. First of all, we would like to see proof of the existence of such a text. Aside from that, simply because the text predicts that in the future people will use other planets in Jyotisa doesn't mean it should be done. The sastras make so many predictions about how degraded Kali-yuga will be, this doesn't mean that the sastras endorse the sinful activities of the Kali-yuga. Considering that Vedic astrology has been famous for its accuracy for thousands of years without the addition of trans-Saturnian planets. And that all the Vedic texts and previous acaryas up-hold the tradition of using only the visible planets. We conclude that this far outweighs any apocryphal statement of an obscure Nadi which may not even exist. We should also note that none of the known Nadi works use these extraneous planets.

Tropical Definition of Trans-Saturnian Planets

Another point to consider is the following: What the so-called Vedic astrologers, who use them, forget is that Neptune, Uranus and Pluto have been given their definitions and attributes by Tropical astrologers **not** Vedic astrologers. What the Tropical astrologers did was to study the past history of Europe and America only (basically ignoring the rest of the world) and then try to correlate cycles of historical change with the transit of these planets through the *tropical signs not the sidereal signs*. In other words, it is a lot of guess work based on the speculations of a few imperfect Tropical astrologers at a time when Tropical astrology was very weak. Tropical astrology was practically extinct between 1700–1900³. Only Pluto (discovered 1930) was found at a time when Tropical astrology was making a come back.

The implication is that even if, for the sake of argument, these planets did have meaning, it would be scientifically unacceptable for a Vedic or Western Sidereal astrologer to accept the attributes of the trans-Saturnian (and confetti planets) based on their transit through Tropical signs. This is the last word in absurd inconsistency. And certainly doesn't indicate that the Eastern (we shall not call them Vedic) astrologers who promote or use these planets did much careful thinking on the matter. We should also note that the definitions of the traditional planets used in both the West and East were all originally used in a sidereal system, it was only later (5th century AD) that the Western astrologers deviated under the lead of Ptolemy (it took several hundred years for them to convert from Sidereal to Tropical).

In 1939 Shil Ponde⁴ complained that even though Pluto had only been recently discovered, enterprising Western Astrologers had already written books delineating the effect of this planet. He argued that since Pluto took about 360 years to complete a circuit of the Zodiac, then if Pluto actually had any effect it would take many times 360 years to determine, statistically, what those effects might be. This is standard statistical procedure. To determine if a coin will land 50% of the time "heads" and 50% of the time "tails," you would have to toss it more than twice. In fact, you would have to toss it at least 100 times to see the pattern. Suppose the coin was weighted so that only 1% of the time it landed

³ See Ellic Howe.

⁴ Shil Ponde pp. 47–48.

“heads” and 99% of the time it was “tails.” If you tossed it 50 times it would only come up “tails” and you might conclude that it would come up “tails” 100% of the time. Even if you tossed it 100 times it might still only come up “tails.” To be able to observe the 1% probability of it coming up “heads,” you would have to observe many 1000s of tosses. Thus, to scientifically determine the effect of Pluto, assuming there was any, it would have to be observed for thousands of years.

The method used by the Western Tropical astrologers to assign meanings to the trans-Saturnian planets thus appears to be hampered by intrinsic imperfections. In contrast, Vedic Astrology is a Vedanga, a limb of the Veda. This knowledge was revealed to the holy Rsis by divine revelation. It is stated in Visnu Purana (2.5.26) that Gargarsi became a seer of astrology after many years of doing tapasya and worshipping Anantaseshanaga. Garga and other Rsis to whom the knowledge of astrology was revealed, established schools of astrology and this knowledge has been handed down since then. In the intervening millenia direct observation has confirmed the truths given us by the Rsis.

Definition of the Rasis Tied to the Planets

The definitions of the Rasis are also very ancient. Yet advocates of the trans-Saturnian planets say that the modern planets Neptune, Uranus, and Pluto are prime factors for giving Pisces, Aquarius, and Scorpio their meaning. They will say that Pisces has its unique nature because it is ruled by both Jupiter and Neptune, meaning that Pisces has both Jupiterian and Neptunian qualities. However, the meanings of all the signs are based on a combination of factors associated with each sign: the four elements (fire, earth, air, water), three modalities (chara, sthira, ubaya—movable, fixed, common), two genders (male or female), and planetary rulers (excluding Neptune, etc.). Using these four classes in various combinations yields the meanings of the signs. Thus Scorpio has its nature because it is: female gender, water element, fixed modality, and ruled by Mars. This is necessary and sufficient to define the meaning of Scorpio. There is no need to introduce Pluto into the equation. By using such first principles, the meanings of each and every Rasi can be delineated. In this way for thousands of years astrologers have understood the meanings of all the Rasis including Scorpio, Aquarius, and Pisces. It was not that astrologers had confusion about the meaning of these three signs which were only vanquished with the introduction of the trans-Saturnian planets. Rather, they perfectly understood the meanings of all the signs. It is truly circular reasoning by the advocates of trans-Saturnian planets to say that these planets are at the basis of the meaning of these three signs (Scorpio, etc.) when in fact, the meanings existed thousands of years before the trans-Saturnian planets were discovered. In other words, the trans-Saturnian planets have nothing to do with the meanings of any signs and are of no divinatory value.

Regarding the *I Ching* or “Book of Changes,” which we mentioned earlier. It is a sophisticated system of divination based on the construction of six lines into a hexagram. The *I Ching* has been in use in China for at least 5,000 years. The philosophical basis of the *I Ching* has literally been the foundation of Chinese civilization to this day. We could compare the addition of trans-Saturnian planets to Vedic Astrology with the hypothetical addition of extra lines to the *I Ching*, or adding extra letters to the Sanskrit alphabet. Such tampering would effectively destroy both the *I Ching* and the Sanskrit language. Do the “Eastern Astrologers” (as distinct from Vedic Astrologers) also endorse the addition of new lines to the *I*

Ching and thus create heptagrams or octograms? Are they more qualified than the Maharsis and the Guruparampara that they have the authority to add new planets to Vedic Astrology and consequently change its axiomatic foundations? Especially planets whose attributes are defined by Tropical astrologers in Tropical signs of the zodiac, and which, even in Tropical astrology, take away from the logical and philosophical elegance of that system.

Planetary Diameters in the *Surya-siddhanta*

Dr. Richard Thompson⁵ has discovered in *Surya-siddhanta*, evidence which strongly suggests that this text was based on advanced astronomical knowledge. We shall not discuss his work in great detail, readers are invited to read it, we shall simply touch on cogent points.

His paper discusses a rule given in the *Surya-siddhanta* for computing the angular diameters of the planets (Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus and Saturn). By combining these angular diameters with the circumferences of the planetary orbits listed in the text, it is possible to compute the diameters of the planets. When these computations are carried out, the results agree surprisingly well with modern astronomical data. He discusses several possible explanations for this and hypothesizes, that the angular diameter rule in the *Surya-siddhanta* may be based on advanced astronomical knowledge which was developed in ancient times but has now been largely forgotten.

In *Surya-siddhanta* 7.13 the following rule is given for calculating the apparent diameters of the planets Mars, Saturn, Mercury, Jupiter and Venus:

“The diameters upon the Moon’s orbit of Mars, Saturn, Mercury and Jupiter, are declared to be thirty, increased by half the half; that of Venus is sixty.”

The meaning is as follows: The diameters are measured in a unit of distance called a *yojana*, which in the *Surya-siddhanta* is about five miles. The phrase “upon the Moon’s orbit” means that the planets look from our vantage point as though they were globes of the indicated diameters situated at the distance of the Moon. (Our vantage point is ideally the center of the earth.) Half the half of 30 is 7.5. Thus the verse says that the diameters “upon the Moon’s orbit” of the indicated planets are given by the series 30, 37.5, 45, 52.5, and 60 *yojanas*, respectively. The next verse uses this information to compute the angular diameters of the planets.

Thompson goes on to explain how this generates a new series of numbers 2, 2.5, 3, 3.5 and 4, which represent the angular diameters of planets according to *Surya-siddhanta*. These numbers do not agree well with modern measurements of the angular diameters, but Thompson convincingly demonstrates that these numbers can be interpreted in another way with the aid of other verses in the *Surya-siddhanta*, namely verses 12.85–90. These verses give the circumferences of the planetary orbits. Using this information Thompson is able to generate the diameters of these five planets. On comparison of the values generated by the *Surya-siddhanta* with that of modern values he found that they agree very well, much more than one would expect by chance.

⁵ Thompson, 1996.

How was it possible for the ancients to so accurately calculate the diameter of the planets? The *Surya-siddhanta* value for the diameter of Saturn is 73,882.09 while the modern value is 72,000 a difference of only 2.61%. We agree with Dr. Thompson that such accuracy implies that the *Surya-siddhanta* is based on advanced astronomical knowledge which was later forgotten.

The point of bringing this up in a general discussion of the use of trans-Saturnian planets in astrology is as follows: It would certainly appear from Thompson's discovery that ancient peoples had more knowledge of celestial mechanics than we give them credit for. To be able to accurately determine the physical diameter of the most distant of the visible planets, Saturn, is an accomplishment of relatively modern times, the 18th century.

It seems intuitive that if the ancients could so accurately measure the diameters of the visible planets, feats only accomplished in recent times, then they must also have been aware of Neptune, Uranus and Pluto⁶. But there is no indication of this anywhere in astronomical or astrological texts. Dr. Thompson personally showed me that if one tries to extend the rules given in the *Surya-siddhanta* to cover Neptune, Uranus, and Pluto they fail miserably. This suggests that the reason ancient Vedic astronomical texts focused on the visible planets was because these planets were of importance for astrology, not others. And, in fact, until modern times astronomy was pursued *solely* for the sake of astrology, therefore, it would make sense that if you only considered certain planets of significance in divination, then you would only need to calculate the position of those planets and not others.

Fallacy of Excessive Hypothesis

In summary we can say that the introduction of the trans-Saturnian planets and other space-detritus violates Occam's Razor: *Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*. "No more things should be presumed to exist than are absolutely necessary." Thus, the Western astrologers are guilty of the fallacy of excessive hypothesis. This fallacy of excessive hypothesis has arisen because Western astrologers, and those who slavishly follow them, have not understood the fundamental Vedic concept of graha (divinatory agent) as distinct from loka (physical planet). There is a beautiful simplicity, internal logical consistency and elegance in the philosophy of Vedic astrology that the introduction of other planets would destroy. The assignment of planetary periods, Lordships of signs, aspects, etc., the whole axiomatic base of Vedic astrology, would all be askew by tampering with the divinatory mechanism. Just as the addition of new letters to Sanskrit, or the addition of lines to the original six of the *I Ching* is unthinkable, it is absurd, unnecessary, and irresponsible (some would say criminal) to add additional planets to Vedic Astrology. The addition of extra planets violates the guru-parampara. It is the prime directive of a bona fide disciple to uphold the teachings of the guru-parampara. In practice, it is found that no advantage accrues by adding extra planets. The only thing that increases is confusion. The traditional Vedic school is based on a logical system of limited axioms. Whereas the Western school whimsically adds things without concern for the welfare of the internal consistency of their system. If someone really feels the need for more

⁶ For a discussion of ancient Vedic knowledge of other planets see Thompson, 1993, and the works of Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

planets in Vedic astrology, then they should employ the *upa-grahas* and *kala-velas*. Those who feel compelled to use the trans-Saturnian planets should not call themselves Vedic astrologers, for by doing so, they do a dis-service to serious Vedic astrologers and bring disrepute unto a venerable tradition.

References:

Howe, Ellic, 1984, revised edition, *Astrology and the Third Reich*, UK: The Aquarian Press.

Ponde, Shil, 1939, *Hindu Astrology, Joytisha[sic] Shastra*, New York, NY: Larwood Publishers.

Thompson, Richard, 1993, *Alien Identities*, San Diego: Govardhan Hill Publishing.

Thompson, Richard, 1996, *Planetary Diameters in the Surya-siddhanta*, Journal of Scientific Exploration.

Wilhelm/Baynes, 1950, Third Edition 1967, reprinted 1984, *The I Ching*, Bollingen Series XIX, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Williams, M. M., 1899, second reprint 1981, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.

website www.ShyamasundaraDasa.com