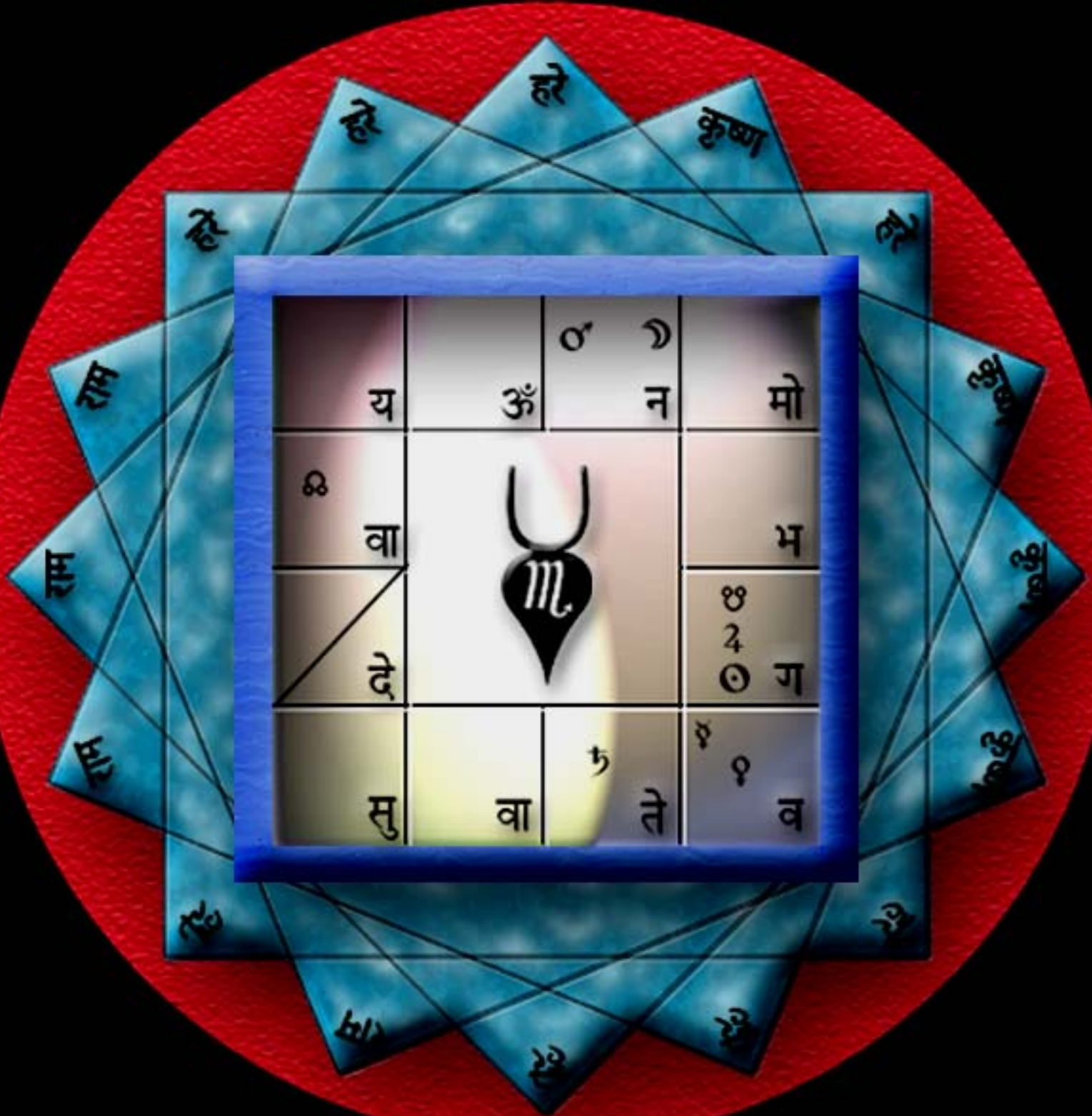


# What is Vedic Astrology?

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Dedicated to:

*Om Visnupada Paramahansa Parivrajacarya  
108 Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada*

By his grace and blessings I discovered Vedic astrology.

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A horoscope in your hands is a map of destiny. The secrets that it contains can be revealed only by a Vedic Astrologer.

Now you may be wondering “What is Vedic Astrology?” You probably have heard of astrology—who hasn’t? Most people know what their Sun sign is in Western Astrology, but very few know about Vedic Astrology, the subject of this report. Even people who have only the slightest smattering of knowledge about astrology want to know what is Vedic Astrology and how it differs from the Western Astrology that they are accustomed to. To answer these questions I would first like to very briefly explain a little about Vedic Astrology and how it is different from its Western cousin.

## Vedic versus Western Astrology

The Vedas are the oldest scriptures known to exist, being well over 5,000 years old. The vast ocean of Vedic knowledge encompasses both material and spiritual knowledge; it is perfect knowledge that was revealed by Sri Krsna (The Godhead) to the Rishis, the sages of Vedic culture. Astrology is part of the Vedic literature, and has been preserved and handed down in the guru-parampara, the chain of apostolic succession, since time immemorial. Vedic Astrology is the original form of astrology that existed thousands of years ago in what is now known as the Indian subcontinent. It gradually spread by diffusion into other cultures such as the Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Chinese, etc. The major differences between Vedic Astrology and modern Western Astrology are threefold:

First of all, Vedic Astrology is technically termed a “sidereal system” whereas Western Astrology is “tropical.” What this essentially means is that up in the sky there are stars which make up the various constellations of the Zodiac such as Virgo, Aquarius, etc. Vedic Astrology is based upon the actual stellar constellations (sidereal), whereas Western Astrology is based on a fictitious zodiac that slowly moves backwards in space as a function of time (“tropic” in Latin means “to turn”). These definitions can be found in any good dictionary. As of this writing (October, 1993), the beginning of the Western imaginary zodiac—their first point of Aries—is at  $6.25^\circ$  of the constellation Pisces. This is called the Age of Pisces in Western Astrology. This first point will move in a retrograde (backward) motion at a rate of about  $1^\circ$  per 72 years until it enters into the constellation of Aquarius. That will be the beginning of the famous Age of Aquarius that we have all heard about. At the rate of motion of  $72 \text{ years/degree} \times 6.25^\circ$  it will take 450 years before the so-called Age of Aquarius takes place. Out of ignorance of astronomy, the New Age community has “jumped the gun” by almost half a millennia in declaring that we are already in the Age of Aquarius.

Secondly, as already mentioned, Vedic Astrology is based on a very old, unbroken tradition since time immemorial whereas Western Astrology has had a very checkered history. Astrology virtually disappeared in the West during the Dark Ages (circa 500-1000AD); it resurfaced during the Renaissance, only to fall out of favor during the so-called Age of Reason. In fact, it totally disappeared from the European continent until the late 19th century. It had been kept barely alive in England during that time.

Western Astrology as we know it today has existed for about 130 years since it began a resurgence in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The point is that the Vedic tradition is very strong and vibrant, with the heritage of many millennia of accumulated knowledge, whereas Western Astrology does not have the advantage of an unbroken tradition.

Thirdly, Vedic astrology, being an appendix to the Vedas, is thoroughly steeped in Vedic thought and philosophy. This means that the practitioner of the science must have earnestly assimilated the Vedic philosophy and lived the life of a Vedic Brahmana, with all its attendant spiritual practices. By contrast, modern Western astrology is a reflection of permissive Western culture, in which “anything goes.” Western astrology has no real or consistent philosophical basis; what passes for a basis is watered down, distorted, third-hand Vedic philosophy. The Western Astrologer has (in comparison to the Vedic Astrologer) no philosophical training, nor does he know what it means to follow a spiritual discipline. The combined effect of genuine philosophical knowledge coupled with an authentic spiritual lifestyle cannot be overestimated when it comes to developing the divine vision and ability that is so necessary for enabling an astrologer to properly guide others.

I have hardly done justice to the subject of comparing-contrasting Vedic and Western Astrology, but hopefully what I have said will give the reader an inkling of the differences. These are not just technical differences but depend on an entirely different worldview. Now that we have completed our digression, let’s return to the main objective of this treatise.

The birth-map, or horoscope, is a symbolic representation of the Earth, planets, and stars at the time of one’s birth. It is a divine language, a mystic cryptogram by which God has communicated what a person’s destiny will be, knowing which a wise person will exercise his free will to optimize the result.

## **Fate Free Will and Vedic Astrology**

The viewpoint of Vedic Astrology is that life is an interplay of both fate and free will—fate being the reaction to our previous exercise of free will. In our lives we are often faced with choices presented to us by our environmental circumstances. We have the freedom to choose “a” or “b,” but once that decision is made we must accept the reaction to our choice. The reaction may be immediate, or it may be delayed by thousands of lifetimes. In any case, the reaction, pleasant or unpleasant, will come at the appointed time determined by higher authorities. As Canakya Pandita says, “Just as a calf can find its mother in a herd of 10,000 cows, in the same way your [re]actions will find you.” The reactions to life’s actions are inescapable by everyone except those who are completely devoted to God (via Bhakti-yoga). When a karmic reaction ripens and fructifies it creates a new situation, a new environment that presents us with more choices upon which to exercise our free will. Thus, life is an interplay of both fate and free will as previously stated.

Let’s consider an example of how this works. Suppose someone is born into a poor family because of his bad karma from a previous lifetime and so is raised in a ghetto

beset with crime and poverty. Let us say, hypothetically, that he has two choices. He can blame society for the evils he faces and thus try to victimize society by taking to a life of crime to acquire wealth; or he can take responsibility for his situation and try to better himself by education and honest endeavor. Suppose he chooses the first option of crime and robs several establishments. Eventually he will get caught (if not killed first) and sent to jail, a natural reaction for his criminal behavior. But even while in jail he still has options, though more limited than those of a free man. He can choose to be a hardened criminal or to be a model prisoner and reform himself. Each choice will have a reaction. Thus we can see that life is an intricate interplay of fate (karma) and free will.

## Astrology as a Language

Getting back to the horoscope: Looking at a chart, the Vedic Astrologer studies the interaction of the planets, signs, houses, and the aspects between them. This is the language of the stars. Everything known is in the portfolio of one or more planets, signs, or houses. And, it is by studying the interactive trends in the chart that the astrologer can ascertain so much information about a person.

The various elements in the chart—planets, signs, nakshatras (lunar mansions), houses, elements, modalities, polarities, and aspects—are the components of this divine celestial language and act like nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, etc., with rules of grammar and syntax just as in a regular language, but far more complex, as one might assume. To give an idea of what we are dealing with, consider the following very cursory meanings of the planets and houses. And, please note that complete books have been written about any given planet, sign, or house; so what I am presenting only skims the surface yet does give a fair picture of what is transpiring.

The planets represent the following:

**Sun ☉:** Atma (soul), self, self-realization, influence, prestige, power, valor, health, eye, general well-being, heat, splendor, father, king, royalty, royal favor.

**Moon ☾:** The heart, understanding, inclinations, emotions, sleep, happiness, good name and fame, facial luster, mother, royal favor, affluence, travel, water reservoirs.

**Mars ♂:** Stamina, courage, desire, anger, scandal, diseases, enemies, opposition, controversies, weapons, commander of an army, land, immovable properties, younger brother, relations such as cousins.

**Mercury ☿:** Intelligence, discrimination, speech, expression, education, learning, mathematics, logic, astrology, medical knowledge and profession, writing, publishing, acting as a middleman in trade or politics (diplomacy), dancing, mixture of things, leafy trees, testing of precious stones, charms (amulets), maternal uncles, friends.

**Jupiter ♃:** Wisdom, learning, corpulence, acts of religious merit, devotion to God, ancestors and superior beings, holy places, scriptures, proficiency in learning,

philosophy, giving alms or donations, benevolence, wealth, respect, sons, religion, preceptors, fruit, fruit trees.

**Venus ♀:** Spouse, marriage, sexual matters, pleasures of the senses, singing, poetry, scents, ornaments, jewelry, all articles of luxury, cooperation with and from others, flowers, flowering trees, beauty, buying and selling, cows, watery places.

**Saturn ♄:** Longevity, life, death, adversity, calamities, disrespect, diseases, poverty, livelihood, servility, unrighteous conduct, learning of sciences and foreign languages, agricultural pursuits, minerals, oils, things buried deep in the ground and coming out there from, servants (male and female), service, theft, cruel deeds, malice, lameness, very old, persons.

**Rahu ☊ (North Node of the Moon):** Paternal grandfather, fallacious argument, harsh speech, gambling, movement, travelling, outcastes, foreigners, snakes, snakebite, theft, wickedness, widow(er), intrigue with a widow(er), skin diseases, itches, eczema, acute or sharp pain in the body, hiccoughs, swelling in the body.

**Ketu ☋ (South Node of the Moon):** Maternal grandfather, consumption, pain, fever, wound, witchcraft, causing trouble to enemies, horned animals, dog, cock, birds with spots or of variegated colors, philosophy, salvation.

The meanings of the signs of the Zodiac are well known to most everyone and can be researched easily, so we will not explain them herein. The following brief meanings for the twelve houses of the horoscope are suitable for our basic educational purposes:

**First House:** self, head, body, personality, mental temperament, health.

**Second house:** eyes, face, teeth, upper part of the throat, speech, wealth, family.

**Third House:** arms, lower part of the throat, shoulders, brothers, sisters, valor.

**Fourth House:** chest, heart, mother, landed property, friends, conveyances, happiness.

**Fifth House:** stomach, education, intelligence, sons, daughters.

**Sixth House:** the region of the navel, illness, enemies, debts, distress.

**Seventh House:** partnership, sexual relations, spouse, the part of the body below the waist and down to the genitals.

**Eighth House:** genitals, anus, death, legacies.

**Ninth House:** hips, thighs, religion (dharma), devotion to God, prosperity, religious preceptor (guru), father.

**Tenth House:** knees, back, status and position in life, activity, honor from government.



**Eleventh House:** calves of legs, friends, income.

**Twelfth House:** expenditure, loss, sexual enjoyment, left eye, feet, confinement.

The above information is grossly simplified but gives an idea of what we are dealing with. Considering that there are nine planets, twelve signs, and twelve houses, one can easily imagine the extent of possible combinations and permutations of these. (And, this without taking into consideration the individual degrees and divisional charts.) The energies of the planets, signs, and houses interact with each other in myriad ways. By studying the combinations, a well trained astrologer can know an amazing amount of information about the subject of a chart—a remarkable feat, considering that the original input data consisted of only the date, time, and place of birth.

## Natal Reading

The natal chart is the birth chart. The reading of this chart is what most people consider to be the sum total of astrology. With regard to Vedic astrology, the metaphor I like to use is that of photography. In photography there are different kinds of lenses that one can use. A wide-angle lens lets one see the big picture, the whole panoramic view, but will not allow one to see much detail. It does, however, give one the general scenario, from which one can see interesting points. If one wants to scrutinize further, he would use a zoom lens, which focuses on a much narrower field of vision but with the advantage of greater depth and detail. And one could go even finer into detail by using a microscopic lens. Vedic astrology has similar tools that can take us from the macroscopic to the microscopic level of inquiry.

The general reading of the natal chart would be like the wide-angle lens in our photographic metaphor. In it, the astrologer is able to paint your life with broad brush strokes, showing the general aim and trajectory of your destiny, the field in which you will exercise your free will. In this initial reading one should expect to be told who he is, where he has been, what his potentials are, and where his current actions will take him. Depending on what that destination is, one may want to change course.

In truth, most people do not understand themselves, and in fact are quite confused about who they are, how their mind works, why it works that way, etc. The vast majority of people don't really know who or what they are, on either the psychological or spiritual plane. Therefore, the first thing the Vedic astrologer does is analyze the general configuration of the chart. This analysis will give a good indication of the person's psychology, character, and life potential. The astrologer will discuss the person's qualities, intellectual abilities, and aptitude; people skills and relationships with family, friends, and loved ones; financial acumen and status; education; travel; health; etc. Life potential indicates a person's predisposition and predilection in certain areas. For example, a certain combination of planets may indicate a person with acute intelligence and love of knowledge; this would give a strong potential for academic achievement or a career in research, teaching, scholarship, etc.

This initial analysis serves several functions: 1) To bring the seeker a big step closer to achieving the Socratic ideal of “Know thyself.” 2) To verify the accuracy of the birth time and the horoscope. (A good astrologer will be able to paint a picture that should be instantly recognizable by the seeker. The seeker should feel illuminated by the knowledge, as well as secure and confident that he is dealing with a qualified astrologer. This is especially important, since in most cases this will be the first time that the seeker will have met the astrologer.) 3) The astrologer will also understand the psychic nature of the seeker and be better able to guide him.

Depending on the situation and needs of the seeker, the astrologer will usually begin to read the timeline of the person’s life, from birth up to the recent past and on to the present situation which caused him to consult the astrologer in the first place. This will put the original analysis into greater perspective. Then the astrologer will proceed to discuss the upcoming future trends and planetary periods that the seeker can expect to experience, both externally in the world and internally in terms of psychological attitudes. The internal and external realities are both very intimately related, for a negative mental attitude can attract, and often is the precursor to, equally negative experiences in external reality. The converse is also seen, that reverses in life can instill a negative and depressed worldview in the seeker, thus creating a vicious cycle of gloom and doom.

(We should explain that reading a chart is a process of discovery, much like an archeological dig; as we read the chart, planetary combinations representing various things present themselves. As he goes deeper into the reading and becomes more familiar with the terrain, the astrologer gathers more and more bits of information, which he pieces together to solve the puzzle. It will often be that a consistent pattern emerges and that the data reconfirms this pattern. But sometimes new information will present itself, prompting the astrologer to reassess the situation. He may then have to withdraw a previous statement. One should not mistakenly think that the astrologer is contradicting himself– instead, through the process of discovery he has found new information which supplants a previous conclusion.)

This is where the real skill of the astrologer is tested. A real Vedic astrologer doesn’t just make some predictions and then stand aside. Rather, he is a Vedic Brahmana who has been trained in yoga, philosophy, counseling, etc. If he foresees difficulty ahead, the astrologer should be able to provide the seeker with strategies for meeting the difficulties in a mature and wise way. This, after all, is the essential benefit of Vedic astrology and the proper use of our free will: to “act with wisdom,” as opposed to “reacting in ignorance.” Simply knowing that difficulty lies ahead may be sufficient to avert real danger. One might still be influenced by the problem but will know what to do, not taken by surprise. In cliché terms, “Forewarned is forearmed.”

In 1992 Hurricane Andrew destroyed a large area of Southern Florida. There was massive physical damage to property, but considering the horrific nature of the storm, the loss of human life was practically nil. Why? Because the National Weather Service had warned residents of the approaching storm and so they had had sufficient time to prepare for the inevitable. They evacuated dangerous areas, boarded up windows, cached food and water, sought high ground, and took shelter. They acted with

wisdom. We can imagine what the death toll would have been if Andrew had pounced on Florida with no warning at all. The carnage would have been astronomical, and the people would have been reeling from that death blow, not knowing what to do next. That scenario is one of ignorance—that is, reacting to a situation after it has already struck, without foreknowing that it would happen. Generally there are much fewer casualties from hurricanes as compared to earthquakes, because presently hurricanes can be predicted by the weather service whereas no government agency can predict earthquakes—which strike without warning. (There is branch of astrology that deals with weather forecasting as part of Mundane Astrology, it is not much practiced these days because governments no longer patronize such astrologers as the kings of the past once did.)

The above discussion should not unnerve one into thinking that the astrologer will read only dire predictions of impending ruination and existential calamity. This is hardly the case. (We simply have considered a worst-case scenario first.) Just as often, and much easier and pleasant for the astrologer, are predictions of upcoming periods of good fortune and happiness, free of difficulty and full of opportunity. People love to hear about good fortune. And speaking frankly, it is much easier for this astrologer when I have to report predominantly good news. (You perhaps know what would happen in ancient times to the bearer of bad news!)

It is commonly said: “Make the best use of a bad bargain.” Often, hardship will bring the best out of a person. It has been observed that the only difference between the carbon in a diamond and that in a graphite lead pencil is that the former has been subjected to tremendous heat and pressure for a long time, then chiseled and polished to perfection. So while giving people bad news is not so pleasant, they often take it more seriously than when given good news.

The opposite of “Make the best use of a bad bargain” is “to squander a good opportunity” or “to rest on your ‘future’ laurels.” Surprisingly, people often think that if good times are ahead they don’t have to do anything. Wrong. When an astrologer indicates that there is smooth sailing ahead, it is not time to take it easy but rather to strive harder. Because resistance is lower, one is more likely to succeed; yet he must still endeavor with determination, although now the going will be easier. And who knows the cycle may change. So it is the practice of a wise astrologer to advise his client to maintain and even increase his momentum in good times. In that way, if events should turn for the worst, the seeker will easily be able to overcome the problem. (For example, if one is driving on the flats and approaching a hill, he speeds up; the momentum of the car will carry him over the top with less effort.)

The usual situation among the vast majority of people is that their future karma will be a mixture of good and bad. So it is up to the astrologer to sort out, as much as possible, which is which, and then advise how to minimize the negative and maximize the positive with suitable strategies.

The process described above is how the astrologer tells the seeker “who he is,” “where he has been,” and “where he is going.”

## How Long Will it Take?

You should be prepared to spend from one to three hours (or in some cases longer) with your astrologer for the initial reading. The length of time will be determined by the subjects covered, questions asked, and the intricacy of the case. I have described a general first reading. Sometimes a person has a specific problem he wants to deal with, such as career, marriage, health, etc. The astrologer should adjust to fit the needs of the seeker. In so doing, however, several of the items described above may be omitted.

If the birth time is not accurate or is unknown, the astrologer may have to rectify it by asking certain questions and adjusting the time according to the answers. This requires extra time. Another factor that will vary the length of the reading is the particular kind of reading the seeker wants: predictive, spiritual-psychological, or a combination of both.

### Predictive Reading

In this kind of reading the emphasis is solely on prediction, without any explanation as to underlying spiritual or psychological causes that may exist. This is most useful to people who just need to plan for the future.

### Spiritual-Psychological Reading

In this type of reading we try to understand more about the mentality of the individual, why he is the way he is, and also the deeper, esoteric meaning of why he has taken his present birth and what he is meant to learn in this life. Each element of the horoscope—sign, planet, house, etc.—has a deep spiritual significance. By analyzing these elements the astrologer can help the seeker to understand what it is he should learn in this lifetime, and how he must act to accomplish that mission. This kind of reading is most useful for those who are on a spiritual quest, trying to find a deeper meaning to their life, seeking self-understanding, etc.

### Predictive and Spiritual-Psychological Reading

This is a combination of both types of reading, predictive and spiritual; it is a much more complex and lengthy reading, because both elements are combined. It is also the most useful of all.

## Your Part

Thus far we have discussed procedures that the astrologer is likely to employ, and what subjects he will speak on. But what about you? What should you say or do? Should you say anything, or just listen? The following recommendations will help you to benefit the most from your reading:

Before going to the astrologer find out if he is going to record the session. If not, request permission to record it yourself. Bring at least two C-90 tapes to adequately cover the meeting.

Before starting the session pre-arrange with the astrologer to turn off the tape recorder when you make a particular signal; this indicates that you wish to discuss something not to be recorded.

It is good to prepare any questions or aspects of your life that you want covered in the reading. It is generally best to let the astrologer know this in advance so that he will be able to focus extra attention on those areas. Some topics may require extra research.

Avoid breaking his train of thought while the astrologer is speaking. Bring a note pad, and if you have a question write it down; if it isn't resolved in the course of the reading, then you should ask it at the end. Breaking the astrologer's train of thought will cause digression; similarly, asking another question before the previous one has been answered will be distracting. Of course the client should offer feedback, both positive and negative, so that the astrologer knows that he is on the right track. Astrology is, after all, a difficult science. If the astrologer makes a mistake, let him know—he will adjust his calculations. If he is right, confirm it by a nod or simple gesture so that the astrologer may continue in confidence. Whatever the case, don't just sit there like a piece of wood. Interact. But do so in such a way as is conducive to the reading. This may mean that you have to go into a long explanation of your situation, or it may mean that you simply listen while he explains. The point is that both of you should stay on track.

Be honest with your astrologer. You wouldn't lie to your physician, would you? If you don't feel comfortable telling the astrologer the truth about your situation then find an astrologer whom you can trust. Misleading your astrologer could have serious consequences. And don't try to trick or test him. If you intend to have a long-standing relationship with anyone, what to speak of your astrologer, it wouldn't be good to start out on such a footing. The astrologer will be able to tell that there is something afoot, and that will only hamper the process.

What has been said about your part in a natal reading similarly applies, with specific adjustments, to other kinds of readings.

## Chart Updates

Previously we used the metaphor of photography in regard to astrology and said that the general natal reading was like using a wide-angled lens. Once one has got a general idea of where his life is going, he may want to "zoom in" on a particular time frame to get more details. This is called an "update reading."

A person's life cannot be encapsulated in a few hours. Because it is impossible to do everything in one sitting, people often have follow-up readings that cover certain time frames. People usually ask about what the next six months or one year will hold in store for them. Many people have their charts updated around the beginning of the New Year, or near their birthday, and thereby have a report for the upcoming year. One may want a chart updated because of contemplating a new business, changing his residence, having marital, legal, or health problems, etc. There are no hard-and-fast rules regarding when or why to have a chart done, or for what span of time. One's needs should be the guideline for this.

Follow-up readings are almost exclusively predictive in nature. They will reveal in greater detail the types of situations, both physically and mentally, that you one will find oneself in—times of strength or weakness, happiness and sadness, romance, love, health, illness, travel, education, etc. This type of reading is quite popular with business people, executives, and anyone (that includes you) who needs to have the best information available for decision-making and planning. These kinds of people know the value of a good advisor who can suggest strategy for progressing in material or spiritual life.

Closely related to update charts but of generally longer duration are charts that focus on a particular planetary period or sub-period. These will normally cover time frames of several years in duration. It is advisable for anyone who had such a longer forecast done to have his chart updated at least annually, if not every six months. The reason is simple: the shorter the span of time investigated, the more detail revealed.

## The Need For Counsel

Now we shall briefly diverge and take a glimpse at what Vedic thinkers have said about the need of good counsel; then we shall return back to the topic. Since ancient times, good astrologers have been recognized as among the best of advisors. Canakya Pandita (circa 1550 BC) has said that every king should have ministers to guide him:

“One without an adviser has no certainty of counsel.”

“All things begin with counsel.”

“The country prospers by proper ministerial counsel.”

“Through ministerial eyes others’ weaknesses are seen.”

“Counselors (ministers) are the ones who see the true implications of what ought to be done and what ought not to be done.”

“Governance is possible only with assistance. A single wheel does not move. Hence ministers should be appointed and their counsel listened to.”

Of the many ministers to the king, Canakya explains that:

“The royal astrologer should know reading, writing, and arithmetic, explain well and interpret the secrets of the planets.” And, “The brahmana who knows mathematics, interprets scripts, is interested in the ancient scriptures, and is able to interpret the secrets of planets, is worthy of worship like a god.”

And finally Varaha Mihira said: “There is no better boat than a horoscope to help a man cross over the troubled sea of life.”

Though you may not be a king, you can still avail yourself of good astrological counsel to help you plan your life.

## Jataka-Vicara Compatibility Charts

The potential of the natal chart has not been exhausted yet; it can also be used to determine marriage compatibility.

It is said that “Marriages are made in heaven.” And the cynics have added: “But often end in hell.” The situation is common: you meet someone, you are attracted, become attached, get into the relationship, but after sometime find out that it is not right for you—usually after much pain. There must be a better way. There is!

It is a time-honored tradition in India to compare and match horoscopes of prospective marriage partners. This is usually done by the parents (who were detached from the effects of their offspring's hormonal interactions.) Not surprisingly, the guidance of good astrologers has resulted in a high marital success rate for happy marriages.

A main problem is that many Vedic astrologers nowadays don't know how to do compatibilities correctly. They rely on a very simplistic system called the Kuta method. In the Kuta method the Moons in both charts are compared by a set of twelve criteria based on their position in Nakshatra and Rasi (lunar mansion and sign of the zodiac). Points are allotted for each of the twelve criteria. The maximum value theoretically possible is 36 points, yet in practice no two Moons can get a compatibility rating of more than 33 points out of 36. There are tables available which give the result of all possible combinations. (I once taught a non-astrologer how to do this Kuta method of chart compatibility in 15 minutes. It is that simple, yet many astrologers are charging \$50-\$60 for this service, which is little more than looking up a number on a table.) I have recently seen a website that does a computerized version of this service for \$4.95. It should not be surprising to discover that this method has a high failure rate.

Astrologers using this method will simply calculate the charts, look up the lunar positions, look at the table, and then declare that the couple has X% marital compatibility. For example, if the boy has got his Moon in Scorpio in the nakshatra Vishaka, and the girl has got her Moon in Sagittarius in the nakshatra Purvashadha, then according to the Kuta method the table says that they have only 16 points out of a possible 36, or only a 44% compatibility.

Before having a compatibility reading done, ask the astrologer if he uses the Kuta method. If he says yes, then avoid him.

A well trained and experienced astrologer employs a system that thoroughly examines the two horoscopes on three tiers: 1) The general strength of each chart individually, with special attention paid to capacity for relationship and marriage; 2) A detailed examination of compatibility between the two charts based on all the planets, not just the Moon; 3) Calculations to determine the durability of the relationship. (Many couples are attracted and seem compatible but later end up in divorce court, giving rise to the saying: "Marry in haste; lament at leisure.")

For persons who are capable of maintaining a relationship (for it will be impossible to match up someone whose karma is not to marry), this Vedic method of horoscopic matching is quite useful. It saves the client much time, energy, and money, and protects sensitive emotions from unnecessary pain. One needs to know only the date, time, and place of birth of the subjects.

So be sure that the astrologer you are considering to do a compatibility reading is experienced in this area and that he uses a sophisticated technique such as outlined above.

Though compatibility studies are generally done for prospective marriages, they are not limited to this use. For example, the same principles can be adjusted and utilized in conjunction with other astrological techniques to develop an excellent method for choosing personnel.

Let's say you are prepared to pay someone a salary of \$50,000 or \$100,000 (or more) per year. It would be wise to hire someone who not only presented a good resume (which could have been forged) but who fits the job, fits in well with the others on your team, and, most importantly, works well with you. An astrologer could easily determine if the candidate is honest or a cheater, and if he has the capacity to fulfill

the position. And by comparing his chart to the others he would be interacting with, it could be quickly determined with whom he would get along well and with whom he would not. If he fits in with most of your people, you could decide to take him on the team but being careful to minimize his interaction with those whose charts showed a negative reaction. Thus by nicely harmonizing workers into an effective team, *esprit de corps* is instilled, and competitiveness is greatly enhanced.

## Parent-Child Relationships

Parents often consult astrologers to find out how they can best guide their beloved children. Astrology can point out what the compatibilities and incompatibilities are between parent and child. An astrologer can suggest strategies for dealing with problem areas in the parent-child relationship, and can guide the parents in understanding the nature of their child, what the child's creative potential is, what areas should be encouraged, or what areas may be problematic.

## Mundane and Financial Astrology

An expansion of astrology from the personal to the global level is mundane (or political) astrology. This is a complex and enthralling system that uses various astrological methods to track the horoscopes of countries, institutions, and political leaders. On the Machiavellian side, astrology has been used to track business and political competitors, and to know their weak points and how to take advantage of them. I'll give you an example of this by recounting an anecdote from my own practice:

Several years ago when I was living in Manhattan, New York, some clients of mine wanted to do business with David Rockefeller, President of the Chase- Manhattan Bank. My clients had never met Mr. Rockefeller and knew practically nothing about him—what he liked or disliked, what were his quirks, what was the best way to approach him, or which of the men among my clients, if any, would get along well with him. Since they didn't have the financial resources of either the CIA or FBI, with which to create an in-depth dossier of Mr. Rockefeller, they approached me instead. The leader of the consortium asked if I could fill in their gaps of knowledge and reveal the essentials traits of Mr. Rockefeller, in order to ensure a most successful first meeting with him.

I accepted the challenge. My only significant problem was to find out Mr. Rockefeller's birth data. First I called the NYC Public Library reference desk. They could not give me his birth data but did give me the telephone number of his private secretary at the Chase Manhattan Bank; this man was delightfully cooperative and supplied all the details I required. With that information I drew up his chart and made a report for my clients. They later told me that the information greatly helped them to assess Mr. Rockefeller and then formulate a plan for dealing with him.

So one can understand that a large volume of vital information can be derived from the few bits of information that are required to erect a horoscope. (Throughout history and up to modern times, the leaders of India have had court astrologers to help them form policy.)

A sub-branch of mundane astrology is financial (or stock market) astrology. The super-wealthy industrialist J.P. Morgan is quoted to have said: "Astrology is not for millionaires—it's for billionaires." But the caveat emptor is that there are many who claim ability to predict the market's fluctuations (i.e. when the prices of oil or gold will go up or down), while their actual success rate remains unknown (one would have to



take their word for it). This is not to say that there are no astrologers who can predict market fluctuations—just that one must be careful, especially when it comes to investing big money.

What most people, including some astrologers, don't realize is that the personal chart contains information about one's financial success or failure; therefore all the "hot tips" in the world will not help one whose karma is not to be wealthy in this life. Better than going to someone who claims to know how the market will turn, and then investing accordingly, is to consult a good astrologer to have one's own chart read, to see what economic opportunities reside in the future. If from one's chart it is seen that finance and fortune shine brightly, then one can safely invest in anything according to his inspiration, and most particularly in those items found via the chart to be lucky. If on the other hand destiny is against one, then no matter what he may do, his investment will go bad; it would be wiser in such situations not to gamble on the stock market. To illustrate, let me give an example from my days as an astrology student in India.

I was studying prasna (which will be explained later) in South India with my teacher Sashi Kant Jain. I was training under the supervision of Mr. Jain's fourth son (he had five astrologer sons), Dr. S.K. Jain (who is now a very famous astrologer in South India with his own TV program in Bangalore). One day a successful businessman came to us with a problem. (Let's call him "Mr. Patel.") Mr. Patel had somehow become involved in "playing the ponies" and had lost about 200,000 rupees (which in India in 1982 was a significant sum). His plea to us was to help him win back his money. If he could recoup his losses, he would quit gambling. I told him that now he should just cut his losses by not playing anymore. "No!" He insisted that we use astrology to help him win back his money. On taking up his chart, it became very clear that he didn't have the necessary karma to win by gambling; so again I advised Mr. Patel to quit now and lose no more. But he wanted to proceed. Since he didn't like the advice I had given him, he went to my astrology teacher's second son, Chandru (now deceased), who specialized in gambling- astrology.

Chandru had the ability to pick at least six winning horses from a total of eight races. He was so good that he himself didn't even bother to bet. Gamblers would come to see him, and Chandru would tell them which horses to bet on. Invariably they would win and then come back and give him a good percentage of the winnings. (He acquired many rupees in this way!)

Mr. Patel approached Chandru and apprised him of his problem. Chandru consoled him and gave the names of several horses to bet on at the races. Next day, Mr. Patel was about to wager on the horses that Chandru gave him, but at the last minute a wave of doubt overcame him and he chose different horses, none of which even placed. Needless to say, most of the horses Chandru picked won their races. Hopefully, now you understand what I meant by "unfortunate in gambling." But the story does not end there....

Chastened by this experience with Chandru, Mr. Patel came back to ask me to help him recoup his lost fortune. I tried to dissuade him, but he would not relent. We took up the prasna chart for the time he had approached us; and upon examining it, I could see that at the next day of betting he would win but then again lose. What to do? Since he insisted on gambling to win back his money, I gave him the second best advice I could. (I had already given him the best advice, to quit.) I now advised him to bet 1000 rupees on the first race. After winning, which I knew he would, he should keep that original money aside and not touch it, but just play with his winnings. I told him this because I knew he would lose in the end; but that way, at least, he wouldn't lose the original 1000 rupees.

Two days later he came back with a very sad face. He had followed my advice, taken the 1000 rupees, bet, and won big! He had put the original money aside and played only with the winnings and had continued to win! By this time he was overcome with betting fever, and so at the last race he calculated that if he bet all his money, including the 1000 rupees, he would be able to recoup his losses from previous days. He therefore bet all the money...and lost.

After this debacle he no longer came to Chandru or myself for advice, nor would I have given him anymore. What was the use? But eventually, after losing about 400,000 rupees, Mr. Patel finally realized the wisdom of my first advice and thereby quit gambling. If he had listened to me initially, he would have saved himself 200,000 rupees.

While this example is not about stock markets per se, nevertheless day trading, commodities, and other short-term investments are very high-risk endeavors and are in every way like gambling, especially for the uninitiated. What this example illustrates is that no matter how determined one may be to win at gambling (or market speculating)—even through astrology—he will not be successful if it is not his destiny to acquire money in that way.

Another example is of a man who was actually a broker in the stock market business. From his chart I could see that he had tremendous insight into the trade, but because of a slight flaw in his horoscope he would be unsuccessful no matter what he did. For example, he would tell his broker to do something and there would be some confusion, and so the deal would fall through. He was practically in tears, because he was doing all the right things and picking all the right stocks yet never realizing any success.

Another stockbroker client of mine had the knack to always pick winners and do things right. He was so successful that he eventually quit to enroll in medical school, his true aspiration. To pay for his schooling he would do a market trade or two and reap piles of cash. His chart showed that he would be fortunate in such endeavors.

One final example of business and astrology: In 1990 Doctor Manohara called me (he has given me permission to use his name and is available as a reference). He wanted to buy a small hospital and set up a special clinic. To do so he would have to borrow \$900,000. He had already consulted another astrologer who told him to proceed, but Dr. Manohara wanted a second opinion. I studied his birth chart, and also used prasna (explained later), and concluded that it would not be a good idea for him to buy the hospital; because later he would have financial troubles and then this huge debt would be a serious problem for him. After hearing my response, he told me that both his banker and accountant also thought it was a bad idea. In 1994, with the downturn in the California economy and the revolution that is still going on in the health-care industry, he was very happy to not owe \$900,000.

Dr. Manohara recently (1999) called me and said that at the time of his original consultation with me, he had followed one piece of advice but ignored another. The first had concerned the loan discussed above, but he had ignored advice regarding a potential business partner. I had warned that the potential partner was not trustworthy, and therefore would cause much trouble. Dr. Manohara told me that he had stubbornly ignored my advice (we had just met) but that the future had proved me right. In 1998 Dr. Manohara had to file suit against his former partner, because it was discovered that he had been stealing millions of dollars over the years. Now, for over the past ten years of our relationship, Dr. Manohara has come to rely on my advice for making business decisions. He has had many consultations with me. Throughout that time only once was my advice wrong, for which I offered him a refund but which he refused, saying, "You have been right so often. Even we doctors in

our medical practice don't have such success rate. We don't give refunds if we go wrong—why should you?" Since we are now on the subject of medicine, this leads us to our next topic:

## Medical Astrology

Another derivative of natal astrology is medical astrology. While much medical information can be acquired through natal astrology and prasna, i.e. probable times of sickness, susceptibility to certain diseases, weak constitution, proneness to accidents, exposure to venereal disease, when to perform surgery or give medicine, choosing a physician, etc., medical astrology is actually strictly the domain of Ayurvedic physicians, who have the natural opportunity to thoroughly study so many medical cases.

Medical astrology is the full-blown investigation and diagnosis of medical problems via astrology. It was once very much in vogue. Even today in India, Ayurvedic doctors are urged to study astrology. But the difficulty is that to properly practice medical astrology one must be a qualified physician. It is a valuable tool of the astrologer-physician, but few astrologers fall into this category.

Unless the astrologer is also highly trained in medicine, he should limit his medical advice and refer the patient to a health professional. And likewise in other spheres—such as law, financial planning, and marriage counseling—the astrologer does his part, then refers the seeker to the appropriate specialist to continue to pursue the problem. It is not expected that the astrologer should be an expert in all fields. He should be very knowledgeable, but he should know his own limitations; and for the sake of his client's benefit, he should refer him to proper sources of help when needed, rather than venture outside of his field of expertise.

Medical astrology is a conglomerate of many branches of astrological knowledge, and we shall mention the medical uses of other branches when appropriate. As has already been mentioned, from the natal chart the general health of the individual can be determined, periods of stress and disease can be seen, etc.

## Relocation Astrology

Have you ever wondered if life would be different in another city or state, or even another country or continent? Well before you pack up your bags for Bali or the Italian Riviera, check with your Vedic astrologer. On the basis of your natal chart plus other methods specific to relocation astrology, he can advise you best where to live.

The approach that I use is two-tiered. First, I use a special computer program to generate various maps of the world with planetary lines on them based on the birth chart. Then, by analyzing the chart I determine which lines are most favorable. This is the more general approach, and it is useful in analyzing large geographical regions. To narrow down to a particular city, I would use a relocation chart for the particular city one is interested in. I would also use prasna (explained later.)

Relocation astrology is a very powerful and accurate technique which has become popular since the 1980s. This method can be used to find the best place in the world to make money, study, write a book, find a spouse, etc.

## Muhurta

So far, we have talked about ascertaining the future from the time of birth. But suppose one is planning an important event or project and especially wants it to be successful. Logically, he should choose the best time available within a particular “window of time,” to get the best results. This is called muhurta (or electional) astrology. Basically it is the science of timing, choosing the best time to start something in order to get the best result. There are certain events in life that we would especially like to see turn out successful, such as a business or marriage. If one has undergone all the trouble to match charts for compatibility, then he should also choose a good muhurta for the wedding, in order to neutralize any defects that there may be in the match.

With a little imagination, we can expand the possibilities for muhurta astrology well beyond these two items, business and marriage: When to build a house, make a significant purchase, start any important project like writing a book, when to release a book or movie, or when to begin a long journey. Vedic Kings would consult their astrologers regarding when to begin a military campaign or sign a peace treaty. Vedic parents would consult as to when to conceive a child and when to perform the child’s samskaras (sacraments). Gurus and acaryas (great spiritual leaders) would choose auspicious muhurtas for conducting an initiation ceremony, installing a Deity, or laying the cornerstone of a temple (Example: Solar and lunar eclipses are considered very good for initiations.) Vaidyas (Ayurvedic physicians) would choose auspicious times for performing surgery or beginning a regimen of treatment (Example: Since the moon rules over fluids, it is considered very undesirable to have surgery near the full-moon day, because of the tendency for excessive loss of fluid and danger of hemorrhaging.)

Here is an example of a practical application of muhurta astrology. In 1992 some clients of mine had to make an important presentation to the board of directors of an important spiritual organization. By studying the charts of the men involved and the time slot available, I chose what I considered to be a perfect time. They had previously wanted a much later time, but I put pressure on them to accept the date that I had chosen. Somehow they were able to arrange their presentation for the appointed day, and it went off perfectly. They later told me that in the days following their presentation, the mood of the directors had changed drastically, so had they waited until the time originally planned for making the very same presentation, it was very doubtful that they would have been able to carry it through.

## Prasna

I have saved one of the most useful and dynamic branches of Vedic astrology until last—that being prasna, which literally means “question.”

We again remind you of the metaphor of photography, in which natal chart reading is like using a wide-angle lens. One gets the full view, but it seems far away, and one cannot see all the details. To get more detail one could zoom in and look at a smaller segment of time, say, the duration of a planetary major period or, even smaller, the planetary sub-period, or perhaps a year or six months. The real close-up shot or microscopic view would be to focus just on one question for a specific period of time. This is prasna.

Imagine parents of a traditional Indian household, who meet a particularly qualified girl who perchance is the perfect match for their son. But they don’t want to make any commitment just yet or reveal their intentions; thus they certainly don’t want to jeopardize their interest by directly asking for the girl’s birth particulars. What to do?

After suitably pondering the situation, they would ask a Vedic astrologer the question: What will be the result for my son if he marries girl X? The Vedic astrologer notes the time the question is asked, calculates the chart, analyzes it, and then gives a scientific answer.

How does it work? The conception of a question is the thought which enters one's mind. Pondering, worrying, and brooding over it is the gestation period. And asking is the birth of the question. You might be surprised to learn how accurately a trained astrologer is able to zero in on the correct answer.

Of course prasna is not limited to romantic ponderings, but can be applied to almost any situation wherein humans have questions. The following list is a small sample of the thousands of questions I have been asked in the course of my practice. I have chosen them to show the wide variety and almost endless application that is limited only by one's own imagination and personal experiences:

Which of the following three places, A, B, or C, is the best place to sink a well?  
My daughter is missing. Is she all right? When will she return?  
Who murdered the victim; what can you tell me about the murderer?  
What shall be the result for me if I move to Los Angeles next month?  
Should I file a legal suit against X?  
Will the IRS come after me?  
My health isn't good. The doctor recommended some treatment; should I do it?  
I have lost my wedding ring; will I recover it?  
What is the sex of my unborn child?  
Should I take [spiritual] initiation from X?  
Should I purchase the land in India?  
What will be the result for me if I marry X?

Many people have heard of prasna and its power; but unfortunately they cannot always take advantage of it for two reasons:

- Prasna is very difficult to perform, and it requires extensive special training. Even an astrologer capable to adequately read a natal chart will not be able to do a prasna chart properly unless trained to do so, because there are special rules in prasna that are not applicable to natal astrology, and vice versa.
- The person fails to ask the question properly. Even a properly trained astrologer will not be able to answer an ill-conceived question.

In the first case, the seeker should carefully ascertain if the astrologer he is dealing with has had any special training in prasna. If he has not had this special training yet is consulted, the results could be disastrous. I know of one case in which a woman asked a well regarded West coast astrologer the question: "Should I approach the man I am interested in?" The untrained (in Prasna) astrologer told her yes. But it was likely the worst mistake of her life; it led to a major scandal, forcing her to leave town in a rush, hurriedly giving away all her possessions. The astrologer was untrained in prasna, so he did not charge her much; but it turned out to be a very costly consultation indeed. It cost her thousands of dollar plus the complete ruination of her reputation. The pity was that when she showed me the prasna chart, it was obvious that she should not have gone forward.

The second case simply requires some basic training on the part of the seeker as to how to ask a prasna.

## How to Ask a Prasna

I have done literally thousands of prasnas since 1981 and the results are amazingly accurate (I have a 95+% success rate), provided the seeker follows a few simple rules when asking a question. The importance of correctly formulating a question cannot be overstated. In ancient Greece, the Oracle of Delphi was famous for giving accurate answers. But sometimes the answers were so enigmatic that no one could understand them, the reason being that the question itself was unclear. The astrological texts also state that the questions of certain persons should not be entertained:

- One who asks in a casual manner
- One who uses abusive language while asking
- One who is a heretic or atheist
- One who comes empty-handed
- One who is proceeding on a journey
- One who is answering the calls of nature
- One who asks questions at dusk
- One who does it in a nonchalant manner

For formulating a question to get a clear unambiguous answer, consider the following guidelines:

- Pray to God that He will reveal His answer to you through the astrologer.
- Keep your mind clear, and meditate on your question. If your mind is confused and you are thinking of many different questions at once, then the chart will reflect your nebulous state of mind and be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to answer. This can be likened to a woman who gives birth to five or six children at one time; the survival of any of them is doubtful.
- Ask only one question at a time. If you have other questions, keep your mind clear and ask them only after you have received an answer to your first question.
- Don't ask more than three questions in one day. (Brghu Muni says that it is best to approach the astrologer with only one question, of an auspicious nature.)
- It is necessary to formulate a clear, truthful question in one's mind, getting right down to fundamentals and leaving out irrelevant details which can be added later if necessary, possibly by asking further questions. Decide exactly what it is that you wish to know. The clearer the question, the clearer the answer will be. A vague or ambiguous question will be reflected in the prasna chart, and it will be impossible to answer.
- Always write your question before asking the astrologer. This forces you to think clearly and concisely. The question should be formulated into one sentence—not a novel.

- Don't ask convoluted questions. Keep them as straightforward as possible.
- Ambiguous, "either/or" questions must be avoided; otherwise, one cannot know which part of the question has been answered. Better to divide into two or more questions and ask them at separate intervals, as mentioned above.
- Similar to the "either/or" question is the "if/then" question; it also must be avoided.
- To avoid confounding the meaning of an answer, one should be careful to ask questions in the positive, rather than the negative, attitude. For example:

Correct way

Question: "Should I visit Mr. X?"

If the configuration of the chart is positive, then the answer will be yes—otherwise it would be no.

Incorrect way

Question: "Should I remain at home and not visit Mr. X?"

If the configuration of the prasna chart is positive, does it mean that you should stay at home? Or does it perhaps mean that you should actually go to visit Mr. X? Which is correct? Or if the configuration were negative, does it mean that you should not visit him? Or does it perhaps mean that you should not remain at home? Which is correct?

An example of a convoluted question that would be impossible to answer is as follows: "Should I get into the herbal import business? If not, then should I get into real estate, or move back to England?"

The above example uses the "either/or", "if/then," and negative attitude. It should be divided into a series of questions, beginning first with, "Should I get into the herbal import business?" Depending upon the answer, the person would then ask the next question. In any case, one should not jumble so many questions into one.

- Do not ask the exact same question within a three-month period; allow time to act. Sometimes people don't like the answer they get, so they keep asking the same question hoping that they'll get a better answer. Or they are impatiently waiting for results to arrive. This is actually disrespectful to God. Don't forget that we are doing divination, that is, approaching God for our answer through the astrologer. (It is also very irritating to the astrologer.)
- If your mind is set upon getting only a certain answer, then you should wait before asking the question. In other words, if you want only a "yes" and not a "no" to a question, then you are not really prepared to receive the mercy of God via the astrologer's reply. You must realize that which ever answer He gives (through the astrologer) is in your best interest, even a "no." If you are attached to receiving only one answer, then you are not really open to divine guidance. And the answer which you want could actually lead you to disaster.
- Some questions may have options which appear to be like multiple questions but are actually only one question. Suppose a person wanted to move to a different location and had several different options in mind. The questioner should try to narrow his choices as far as possible, with the understanding that he is allowed up

to three options. Then he should write on paper: Should I move to 'A', 'B', or 'C' (where A, B, and C represent the names of the places he is considering)?

- When asking the astrologer, he needn't even reveal the actual names of the places, as long as he knows what they mean. But this method of using options can be used only when A, B, and C represent the same category of entity (in this case, locations). If the seeker has more than three options, then he will have to ask more than once in order to cover all the options.
- You don't have to directly name an object or person you can just call it or them "X" to maintain confidentiality.
- If you are consulting by mail, write each question on a separate piece of paper, fold it, and then number the questions consecutively. Maximum of three.

With these simple pointers, you now know how to ask questions properly in order to get a clear answer: perfect questions, perfect answers.

## Example of Prasna

Before we leave the subject of prasna, I would like to give an example from my files as to how it is used.

In December of 1988, I received an urgent call from a friend. His mother-in-law had just been rushed to the hospital to undergo emergency surgery for diabetes-related problems. The woman, an aged, traditional Indian lady, would not sign the consent forms until I was consulted and had given approval. I had noted the time of the call, so with that I began my calculations. My conclusion was that her condition was serious but not life-threatening. My client then conveyed this report to his wife and mother-in-law. But soon after, I received another call from my client: "Are you sure? The condition is very serious, and my wife is doubtful." To alleviate her anxiety, I called the hospital emergency room to ask the wife why she was doubtful. She answered that the doctors had privately told her that her mother had less than a 5% chance of survival; naturally she had trouble reconciling this with my assurance that the surgery would be successful. I looked at my calculations again and saw no indication of death. So I told her, "If your mother dies during or because of the surgery, I will not be able to explain it astrologically. If that happens, I will give up the practice of astrology." I was serious. My conviction was so firm that the wife's mother then signed the consent forms and underwent surgery. Later that day when I came back to my apartment, I found a message on my answering machine: "Shyama, you don't have to give up astrology; my mother survived and is doing fine."

## How to Choose an Astrologer

"Astrology is perfect, astrologers are not." Shyamasundara Dasa

If this essay has been even somewhat successful, you now basically know what astrology is and what it can do for you. But best is to experience astrology first-hand, through a good astrologer. Only then will you realize how powerful a tool astrology is and how it apply it practically in your life; that will be possible only if you consult a good astrologer.



## **The good the bad and the ugly—How to differentiate the good astrologer from the bad?**

Unlike doctors, dentists, engineers, architects, or other licensed professionals, presently there is no regulating body for Vedic astrologers such as the AMA, which polices allopathic physicians. (Of course quack doctors still exist, and some people scorn the entire enterprise of allopathic medicine; but at least, to be a licensed MD the license-holder has had to pass specific criteria of rigorous educational training spanning several years.) Vedic astrology is just now becoming popular in the West; unfortunately this has given rise to a number of poorly trained persons claiming rights to the title of Vedic astrologer, and in the process giving Vedic astrology a black eye. Typically, such pretenders have read one or two books and then claim to be astrologers, or are dilettantes who have dabbled in it for years but never undergone any serious training.

I once saw an advertisement by a Vedic astrologer whom I didn't know, and because I knew most of the contemporary practitioners, I was curious as to who he was. So I telephoned him and asked if he was interested in the astrology software I had written. During the conversation I asked him whom he had studied under and for how long. I was stunned when he said that he had never learned from any teacher; he had read an astrology book only a year prior and now considered himself an astrologer. And his is not a unique case. Some tyros have even written popular texts on Vedic astrology, more like "cookbook" astrology, with no realizations included therein. (How could there be? They had just come in contact with the science only a year or two before.) Therefore it is essential for the seeker to actually find a master astrologer, not a beginner; for it is an observed phenomenon that most people when first seeking astrological consultation are very much psychologically susceptible, credulous, and impressionable to whatever the astrologer will say. The novice astrologer can thus harm the seeker and thereby bring disrepute upon the science. To aid your search for a good astrologer, I offer the following guidelines and questions that you should ask before consulting a given astrologer:

### **Q. How long has he studied astrology? Was it continuous study or sporadic?**

Like medicine, mathematics, engineering, or any other science, astrology is very technical, complex, and subtle, with many branches and sub-branches. In fact, the Vedas say that astrology is the most complex science of all, because of its unique interdisciplinary nature. It requires at least five to seven years of intense, rigorous, full-time study under qualified teachers. Therefore, you should be doubtful of any astrologer with less than five years of training. And we must emphasize the important distinction between years of experience, and years of training. An astrologer may have ten years of experience, but that tells nothing of his training. (He may have studied for seven years and practiced for three years, or vice versa.) While field experience is very important, it is no substitute for a solid astrological education; the benefit derived from experience will be vastly different for an educated versus an ignorant astrologer.

Regarding the untutored astrologer, often the case is one of "re-inventing the wheel." He will make many mistakes, with you as the guinea pig. For the learned astrologer, experience brings polish and elegance—he also expands his knowledge, but not at your expense.

There are also persons who claim to have studied astrology for twenty years. But further inquiry reveals that twenty years ago a friend read their chart, and that over the years they developed an interest in astrology, reading a book here and there, having a chart done here and there. This rather spastic, unsystematic method of study should make you cautious, at the very least. This is like someone who had his tonsils removed when a child and then developed an interest in medicine; over the years,

between occasional visits to the family doctor and reading a few elementary medical books, he decided that he was now competent to practice medicine. Would you want to be treated by such a person? Of course not. Then why consult the astrological equivalent?

Furthermore, any reputable educational institution sets time limits on its courses of study, to ensure that education is continuous, that the student is meeting course requirements timely, and that he is maintaining maximum retention of the study material. For example, if a four-year course is spread over ten or fifteen years, then by the time the student has finished he will likely have forgotten what he learned in the beginning. (This is especially true in doctoral programs.)

### **Q. Where did he study? Who were his teachers?**

India, especially South India, is the land of Vedic astrology. There one will find at least some recognized astrological organizations sponsoring astrological study, and some universities offering degree programs in astrology. But the best way to study astrology is the old, traditional way of guru-sisya (teacher-disciple); this is a very personal and intense way of learning from a master astrologer. While not every astrologer in India is worth studying under, still there are many eminent panditas who are recognized by their peers for their accomplishments as actual scholars and masters of astrology. Noted astrologers have written learned books on this science and/or are sought out by the elite and their own peers. Of course, being Indian is no guarantee that an astrologer is competent. There are literally millions of astrologers in India, but only a fraction of them are accomplished.

If an astrologer says that he is self-taught from a book, then remember what the wit said: “One who teaches himself has a fool for a student.” And we might add that he also has “a fool for a teacher.” Yes, there are many books on Vedic astrology, but they can never replace a living teacher. Vedic astrology books were meant as mnemonic guides to help the student remember lessons taught by the guru. As Varaha Mihira, a famous astrologer, has said: “Little is written but much is meant.” In other words there is even more information, not in books, that can be taught only personally. And, there is also so much information within books that cannot be understood properly without the help of a guru.

It is also important to consider if his astrology teacher was himself a successful astrologer or an amateur. If the teacher could not support himself by doing astrology how good could he have been?

At this time there are very few qualified teachers in North America, but this is gradually improving. There are even some accredited, degree granting institutions that are developing courses in Vedic astrology, e.g. the Bhaktivedanta College (BVC), [www.Bhaktivedantacollege.org](http://www.Bhaktivedantacollege.org). The Bhaktivedanta College takes the traditional approach to teaching astrology.

In summary, if an “astrologer” says he has no teacher, is self-taught, or has never been to India, you should be doubtful of his qualifications.

### **Q. How many branches of Vedic astrology did he study?**

There are six branches of Vedic astrology: gola (astronomy), ganita (mathematical astrology), jataka (natal astrology), prasna, muhurta, and nimitta (omens). A good astrologer will have studied five of these branches. These days, with the advent of

computers and ephemerides, few astrologers study gola. Expertise in ganita, jataka, and prasna are essential. Training in muhurta and nimitta is strongly recommended.

If the astrologer knows only natal astrology he is probably self-taught. Or even if properly schooled, he will likely be of limited use, for he will be lacking in versatility. Obviously the more knowledge and expertise, the better.

### **Q. How much experience does he have?**

Generally, more experience is better. But suppose you have a choice between one astrologer with little or no formal training but ten years of experience, and another astrologer with five years of formal training and only two or three years experience. The astrologer with the formal training is most sure to be in a superior position of knowledge. Consider this: as a serious student of astrology, as he progressed to higher levels of knowledge he may have studied under two or three astrology teachers, each of them having had perhaps 50 years or more of training and experience. In other words, the formal training he has received is the distilled essence of 150 or more years of his teachers' combined experience. Also, the training period includes apprenticeship in which the student practices astrology—it is not just theory. Of course if the astrologer has both real formal training plus long experience, so much the better. But be careful of those who count their years of self-study as experience—that is not strictly honest, just as no one would count years spent in college as work experience. So when inquiring about an astrologer's experience, be sure to determine if it is experience after formal study with a teacher, after self-study, or a combination of both study and active practice time.

### **Q. What is the astrologer's background education?**

A. Traditionally in India there was a natural screening process that allowed only the most gifted intellects to study astrology. First of all, the person had to master Sanskrit in order to read mathematical texts. After mastering mathematics, the student mastered astronomy in order to be able to calculate the planetary positions. (In those days there were no ephemerides, calculators, or computers—only good brains.) Then only, at the culmination, would the student study astrology.

Even today in India I have seen that the most respectable and able astrologers are scholars in fields other than astrology. I have met astrologers who were high-court judges, doctors, engineers, Sanskritists, etc.—men eminent and learned in several fields. For example, my astrology teacher from Calcutta, the late Harihara Majumdar, aside from being an author of several astrology books in English and Bengali, was also a barrister and Sanskritist. And, my astrology teacher in Bangalore, Sashi Kanta Jain, was truly a versatile genius who could: read, write, and speak at least ten languages; was a qualified Ayurvedic physician; was learned in mantra-sastra, philosophy, and the Vedas; and knew mathematics and Vedic astronomy; as well as being a first-class astrologer. And, Krsnan Potti of Trivandram, with whom I studied prasna, was a well-known scholar and author of over a dozen books. So it is important to know the background of the astrologer. Is he a scholar and deeply learned? If so, this indicates that most likely he is also a scholar of astrology.

If on the other hand an “astrologer” is devoid of scholarship and mathematical ability, or his other interests center on activities such as playing in a rock ‘n’ roll band, surfing, or some other incompatible activity, you might want to reconsider before having him do your chart. He doesn't exactly fit the prototype of the learned Brahmana astrologer, which might even be grounds to question his competence to perform the mathematics involved in astrology.

### Q. Is he an intuitive or psychic astrologer?

If he answers yes, then be careful. These days, people who are too lazy to undergo the hard work necessary for studying astrology often present themselves as “intuitive” or “psychic” astrologers, which simply means that they speak whatever notions enter into their minds—wild guessing, you might say. Would you go to an “intuitive” mechanic or dentist (a dentist who doesn’t take X rays to see if you have cavities—he just drills)?

If an astrologer has undergone the austerities required of him, then naturally he develops a feel for his art. In very rare cases one may be a prodigy with a gift for such things, but they are quite rare indeed. Even these gifted persons improve still further with training. A gifted student will aspire for a gifted teacher who can inspire him to become even better; there is always more to learn. And besides, it is the Vedic tradition for everyone to accept a master as teacher.

### Q. Does he recommend wearing jewels?

If so, then maybe you should look elsewhere. Recommending and selling gems as an astrological remedial measure has become one of the biggest scams in the astrological world. The theory is that if some planet in your chart is giving you trouble, then, to mitigate the effect, you should wear the appropriate gem that will appease that planet. This is a bogus idea, unsupported by any authority in astrology—neither Brghu, Parasara, Varaha Mihira, etc. Gems do have power, and the scriptures speak of the good and bad effects of gems, but never in astrological terms. The fallacy is in thinking that by wearing a particular gem one will neutralize all the negative karma associated with the corresponding planet. But planets are not causal agents; they merely indicate where troubles in life originate, they don’t cause trouble. In its portfolio, a planet has countless items including gems, trees, herbs, metals, fruits, flowers, directions, etc. By the above theory, a person should be able to neutralize negative planetary effect by utilizing any or all of the items associated with the planet, many of which are much cheaper than costly jewels. If a person is having problems with a weak Sun in his chart, for example, the theorized remedy is to simply plant a thorny tree (ruled by the Sun) in his yard, to help boost the solar energy.

Classical astrological texts do give remedial measures, but they do not include wearing jewels. In his book, “Parasara Hora Sastra,” Parasara Muni has explained the perfect method for alleviating afflictions indicated by planets, and that is by the sincere worship of God. He writes that the planets are created by Krsna, and that each planet is a manifestation of a particular avatar of Krsna. So if a planet is signifying problems in one’s life, then he should worship the particular avatar who controls that planet. The avatars are as follows: Rama controls Sun; Krsna, Himself—the Moon; Nrsimhadeva—Mars; Lord Buddha—Mercury; Vamanadeva—Jupiter; Parasurama—Venus; Kurma—Saturn; Varahadeva—Rahu; and Matsya—Ketu.

Actual remedial measures include fasting, chanting of mantras, worship of the cow, giving in charity, performing various sacrifices, etc. In relation to the appropriate avatar, this is a highly effective method. (By this is meant that the type of remedial measure will be different according to the situation and planets in question.)

Prescribing of gems for astrological purposes is fallacious at best, or at worst, even harmful. It is fallacious because there is no scriptural authority to confirm the use of gems for such purposes. And besides, where do gems get their powers, if not from Krsna (God)? Then there is the expense. To get actually good effects from gems, one must use only the very best quality, which in the case of jewels like ruby, diamond,

emerald, blue sapphire, and cat's eye, cost a small fortune. Or, if the stones are inexpensive, that means they are flawed, chipped, discolored, and in many ways unsuitable for therapeutic use. In fact, the scriptures say that they will create negative effect. So unless you are willing and able to pay \$20,000 for a two-carat "pigeon blood" ruby, don't bother. Better to spend your money, time, and energy for worshipping Krsna or one of His avatars.

It may seem that I have contradicted myself by saying that gems have powers, but I have not. All items under the jurisdiction of a planet have some effect. For example, a poorly placed Sun or Mars conjoined with Saturn could give indigestion, because of Saturn's suppressing the heat represented by these planets. A gem-prescribing astrologer would direct the subject to wear a ruby or red coral, to increase the power of Sun or Mars, respectively. But actually no such benefit would result. There might be some other benefit associated with these gems, as mentioned in Garuda Purana or Brhat-samhita, but not the improvement of digestion. A much simpler, effective, and inexpensive prescription would be to take more ginger, or chilies and hot spices, in one's food, eat only foods that are hot in temperature, avoid cold foods, etc. These are practical measures to counteract the cold effect of Saturn. And to effect Sun and Mars on the astrological level one could, if his health was bad enough to warrant the extra effort, worship Sri Rama or Sri Nrsimhadeva in a prescribed manner as recommended by the learned astrologer.

I'll give an example of the efficacy of sage Parasara's methods of dealing with the negative karma represented by the planets:

Once, while I was visiting some astrologers in South India, a gentleman came to us with a serious problem concerning his aunt who lived in Bombay. Apparently she had a wrong-headed landlord who wanted to evict her from the apartment in which she had lived for many years; and she was neither financially or physically able to search for another apartment. What should she do in order to keep the apartment?

After examining the chart of the woman and doing a prasna, the senior astrologer suggested a remedy: a yantra (talisman) should be made and special tantric mantras invoked into it. It should then be placed under the doormat of the landlord. When the landlord would step over the yantra, his mind would become changed. (In performing prasna there are ways to determine if a particular remedy will work. On applying the test, it was found that the yantra would not work.) Other remedies were suggested, including wearing jewels and making a special fire sacrifice, gathering the resulting ashes, and mailing them in an envelope to the landlord. On opening the envelope, the landlord would necessarily spill some ash on himself, and by the power of the sacrifice his mind would change. But all of these various potential remedies failed the test and so were abandoned.

Finally, after seeing the failure of the other astrologers, I offered a suggestion based on Parasara's advice. I reasoned that since the problem indicated in the chart was caused by Saturn, the prescribed solution was to worship Kurmadeva, the avatar of Krsna associated with Saturn. My recommendation tested perfectly—the best possible combination, indicating the infallibility of the solution. But what happened next both surprised and disappointed me. Even after having passed the test with flying colors, my suggestion was rejected. Very dubious reasons were given; then I understood that had my suggestion been followed, the astrologer—who was also a tantric—would make no profit. The aunt needed only to worship Kurmadeva on her own; she wouldn't need to buy a gem from the astrologer, or have him perform an expensive fire sacrifice or make a costly yantra. So the astrologer kept trying to find other more complex, self-serving ways to help the lady.

### Q. Does he sell jewels?

Worse than the astrologer who recommends gems is the one who sells them too. He who only recommends gems may merely be ignorant of philosophy and advanced astrological theory, whereas the one who also sells jewels is often a total scam artist out to swindle credulous people who have misplaced their faith in him. Often such crooked astrologers work in cahoots with a jewelry store. In fact, tantric astrologers started this misleading practice, and jewelers support it. Low-level tantrics began this to deviate persons from worshiping God; and jewelers support it because it increases their business.

In India, particularly in a tantric-center like Bengal, if one enters a jewelry store, therein he will likely notice many small offices full of palmists and astrologers who read charts for a modest fee and then recommend an expensive stone to counteract troubling planetary influences. The customer buys the gem from the shop, and the astrologer gets a commission. If the astrologer both recommends and sells the jewel, he makes a sizable profit.

I know of a few so-called astrologers of very limited talent who specialize in reading innocent persons' charts, saying all kinds of ominous things to scare the heebie-jeebies out of them, then calming and assuring the client that all will be fine if he just wears a ruby or pearl or some other stone. Of course, it just so happens that he has some gems with him (usually inexpensive and of low quality), which he is willing to sacrifice for a handsome price to this now-relieved sucker-relieved of money as well as anxiety.

Before moving on to the next point I would like to clarify that some gems do have potency, and that in some rare instance they may perhaps be useful as a remedial measure. The point is that it must be ascertained through Prasna that that particular remedial measure, whether it be gem stone or whatever, must be guaranteed to work. This can only be found out by using techniques from Prasna before trying the remedial measure. My main complaint is that in a mercenary and mercantile way simply motivated by profit an astrologer will sell or recommend a gem without even knowing if it will work as he claims it will. I seldom recommend jewels, not because I am against them but because when I ever I have tested to see if a gem will decrease the problem I very seldom get a positive answer. I have nothing to gain on this point, unlike those who sell or recommend jewels.

**Lesson:** Don't trust any astrologer or palmist who sells jewels. They are more likely interested in increasing their bank balance than in truly helping you.

### Q. Does he recommend the worship of demigods such as Siva, Durga, Ganesha, Skanda, or planets like Saturn, Mars, etc.?

(See previous answer in reference to wearing jewels.) Any person serious about advancement in spiritual life will spurn such practices. The planets and demigods are order carriers of the Supreme Lord, Sri Krsna. One need only take shelter of Him.

### Q. Does he tell you about your past life?

I know of one astrologer who always tells his clients that they were exalted personalities or beings from celestial planets in their previous lives. The fact is that one's past life is practically impossible to verify. Although it is possible to learn about past and future lives through astrology, it is well known in astrological circles that to do this with certainty is generally only possible for the greatest of the great astrologers-

-risis like Bhrgu, Vasista, and Parasara. General texts of this age give some clues for determining past and future lives, but the science is not well developed. And even if an astrologer were to tell something about a past life, how could the seeker verify it? The subject can test the veracity of everything concerning this life as told by the astrologer; but regarding past lives of which one remembers nothing, it is impossible to know whether the reading is real or concocted. Astrologers who routinely discuss past and future births are generally sensationalists. I know of very few responsible astrologers who do this, other than in special cases that warrant such investigation. Only astrologers with access to nadi-granthas such as *Bhrgu-samhita*, *Vasista-nadi*, etc., can make accurate predictions about other lives, via the help of those great sages.

**Q. Does he use the planets Neptune, Uranus, or Pluto in his calculations? Does he mix Western astrology with Vedic?**

If he uses Neptune, Uranus or Pluto in his calculations, he is not practicing Vedic astrology but hodgepodge astrology. One should not debase Vedic astrology by mixing it with Western astrology and still call it Vedic astrology. Anyone who does so is falsely claiming to be a Vedic astrologer and is, at best, dishonest.

**Q. Does the astrologer have references?**

To be sure that the astrologer is reputable, you should ask him for a list of references, including competent professionals and educated persons whom you would expect to have sufficient integrity and powers of discrimination to be able to determine the astrologer's level of expertise. Call several of them to make sure that they are not just friends planted as decoys. Ask them if the astrologer is professional in his dealings. Does he give good advice? Do his predictions come true? Is he honest? Is he a scholar? Is he versatile? Does he become too familiar with the opposite sex beyond professional necessity? See if their answers tally with what the astrologer told you.

**Q. Does he follow spiritual practices and observe the life style of a Vedic Brahmana?**

Just as you should be leery of a self-taught astrologer, you should beware of an uninitiated astrologer with no spiritual master. Spiritual discipline as prescribed in the scriptures purifies the consciousness and gives the astrologer heightened astrological powers and increased wisdom through which to guide the seeker. Shun the astrologer with no authentic guru, or one having a guru but not following the discipline of the guru. Reject those who are non-vegetarian; who drink, smoke, or take intoxicants; or who lust after women, have affairs with their clients, or are generally immoral and dissolute.

**Q. Does he do consultations by telephone, by mail, or only in person?**

This won't indicate how good an astrologer is, but it will tell what options are available, especially if you don't live in the same area as the astrologer. Obviously it would be more convenient if you could meet the astrologer in person and have personal interaction, but that is not always possible. I have clients that I've never met, in several foreign countries. I do all my astrological work for them on tapes, either through the mail or over the telephone (I record the phone conversation and mail it to them). Over the years I have done many consultations in person and also many via tape recording which I mail to the client. They both have their advantages. If you are in person you can correct the astrologer if he makes a mistake, as well as ask questions. But I also find that when I do taped readings I do more than I would if the client were

there. I will stop and do some research on a point. Or, I will do more intricate calculations to see how long the person will live etc. Things I would feel uncomfortable doing with someone looking over my shoulder. I also give the client the option that after listening to the tape if they have any questions that need to be clarified they can ask. This seems to equalize the fact that they were not there with me in person for the reading.

**Q. Does he provide a printed copy of his reading?**

Again, this gives no indication about his quality or training, but rather the extent of the service he provides. Most persons are satisfied with tapes and even prefer them to typed documents; they just don't have the time to read, so they listen to the tapes while driving or doing other things. But there are some who do prefer a printed report which they can study (and perhaps mark with highlighters) and refer to on a continuing basis. For these persons, the astrologer should provide an option, so that for an additional typing fee the seeker can have a printed report. The fee should just cover typing charges and not include profit. In this way the astrologer provides an extra service to those who desire it. But if a good astrologer does not provide typed reports, one can give the tapes to a secretarial service and have them transcribed. (A note of caution: Give duplicate tapes, not the originals, and only to persons who will protect your confidentiality.)

**Q. Does he guarantee your satisfaction?**

This says a lot about the skill and confidence of the astrologer. He should offer to make sure that you are satisfied with the "quality" of the reading. He can't guarantee that you will be "happy" with the reading, but you should at least be satisfied with the professional way in which the reading was conducted and the level of accuracy and expertise. I always tell my clients "If you are satisfied with reading then please tell everyone. But if you are not satisfied with the reading, for whatever reason—you are the judge and only your criteria matter, then do not tell anyone else but be sure to tell me and I will do whatever it takes to satisfy you."

**Q. Does he wear a big beard or wear his hair long?**

This may seem like a strange question but I have noticed a growing trend in recent years, especially in the West, of astrologers trying to "imitate" the way certain yogis behave without having the attainments of the yogis. One "luminary" in the Western Astrological world directly told me that he wore his hair long and grew a beard just to impress people. I was not impressed. It takes more than a lot of hair to be a good astrologer. You may deem it wise to avoid hirsute astrologers.

**Q. Is he able to support himself as an astrologer?**

This can be a good indicator of the competence and expertise of the astrologer. An astrologer who gets many return clients or clients recommended by others is obviously good and will be able to support himself and family adequately. Be distrustful of part time astrologers or those who have other jobs to supplement their income. This suggests that they are not committed to their science or are not good at it. There is one proviso to this: if the astrologer derives a sizable amount of his income from dealing in gems then stay away because it indicates that he will probably convince you to buy a gem you don't need.



## Guidelines

Aside from the above questions, here are a few guidelines to help you find a good astrologer:

A good Vedic astrologer is characterized by a strong spiritual side, possessing: integrity, good character, honesty, and Brahminical initiation into a bona fide sampradaya (Vedic apostolic succession); he maintains good sadhana (spiritual regimen) and follows the regulated principles of freedom (pure vegetarianism, abstention from intoxicants, etc.); he is a scholar in philosophy and yoga, and practices them; he is devoted to God and lives a godly life, etc.

On the astrological side: he is a savant who has studied long and diligently with accomplished astrology masters (preferably in India), is versatile and shows dexterity with the many branches of astrology, has been in practice for some time, has several good references, does not sell jewels or recommend you to purchase them, etc. The readings he gives are truthful, balanced, and without self-motivation. His mood is to sincerely help you. These are some of the prominent characteristics of a qualified astrologer. The following are some questionable types.

### Dr. Doom and Gloom

Some friends of mine told me of a man who moonlights as an astrologer. They call him “Dr. Doom and Gloom,” because he has the habit of homing in, like radar, on any negativity that might exist in a chart, no matter how slight. Once discovering something even remotely adverse, he would distort it and magnify it to awesome proportions, and then take Mephistophelean delight in mellow-dramatically describing all the odious implications this had for the seeker. His readings were reminiscent of “hell-fire and brimstone” and could be recommended only to those of a masochistic nature or seeking reasons to commit suicide.

### The Flatterer

Another dangerous type is the flatterer. He tells everyone: “I’ve never seen such a good chart as yours.” He tells you only good things (that sound too good to be true!) He continually praises you and tells what a great person you are. He may say you were some great or famous person in your previous life. He always paints a rosy picture of your future, although it never manifests. People are only too happy to give this person money, because he always gives them what they want. (For people who want to be cheated, there are those ready to cheat.)

### The Exploiter

This person uses his knowledge of your chart to get you to do things that you would not ordinarily do. This exploitation of your trust may be in the form of borrowing money from you, or getting you to invest in a business venture with him after building up your self-confidence for success in such enterprises. I know of one astrologer who tried to convince a person to give up his present occupation and instead dedicate himself to managing the astrologer’s rock ‘n’ roll band. The client was keen enough to see through this abject attempt at manipulation. (Any astrologer attached to becoming a rock ‘n’ roll star is likely full of internal conflict and not sure about his own path in life, no less others’.) And some exploiters specialize in seducing their clients; indeed I

know one so-called astrologer who simply uses astrology as a ploy to meet a woman, seduce her, and then proceed on to the next one.

## The Blabber

This person can't keep a secret. No matter how delicate the subject discussed, this person seems unable to keep his lips buttoned up. He always talks about So-and-so's chart, how it is like this or that, and how he was told such 'n' such. An astrologer who readily discusses other people's charts with you, will no doubt discuss yours when you are absent. So unless you want everyone to know your business, avoid this person like the plague.

One exception to the above is discussion of public figures who are not an astrologer's clients; another is to give anonymous examples from other clients' charts, either for astrological instruction or for the edification of a particular seeker. In both cases, the subject of the example chart must be kept anonymous. Strict confidentiality is the sine qua non of a good astrologer.

## Abuse and Misuse of Astrology by the Client

We have described how some unethical astrologers misuse this celestial science, but can a seeker misuse astrology? The answer is yes. People can be strange; some can find a way to misuse and abuse just about anything, no matter how good it is. They figure that "if it's worth doing, it's worth over-doing."

God has given us intelligence and discrimination, which we can and should use as much as possible. But there will come times when we are puzzled, dazed, or confused—not knowing what we should do, even after fully applying our reasoning capabilities. And some situations intrinsically are not amenable to our perception. In these situations, a person with good sense consults an astrologer.

A seeker's misuse of astrology is when he gives up using his God-given abilities of logic, reason, and discrimination, and simply consults astrologers in the hope that one will tell him what he wants to hear. It is inappropriate to expect astrology to do our thinking for us. Astrology is a wonderful tool for forming policy, but it is not a substitute for responsible thinking. Astrology is an adjunct to life, not a substitute for living.

### **How does one know if he has digressed from the judicious use of astrology into the realm of abuse?**

If you find yourself consulting an astrologer for insignificant matters that previously you were able to cope with yourself, you are in trouble. If you avoid today's grocery shopping because you've read in the newspaper that it's a bad day for you, you are in trouble. If you wear a different astrological gem on each finger, you are an astro-junkie. (Some people who know little about astrology think that I calculate my own future down to the most auspicious time to go to the rest room. This is ridiculous.) Unfortunately, there are people who live in such an astrologically calculated world; practically speaking they have developed a mania for astrology. No responsible astrologer will let a client go to such extremes as these; but persons who abuse astrology generally go to many different astrologers, thus making it difficult for the individual astrologer to control. And as was discussed earlier, unethical astrologers take advantage of such persons, at the very least, getting as much money from the client as possible.

I would also suggest that you find one or two astrologers who you trust as being competent in their science as well as ethical, and stick with them. A typical sign of someone who misuses astrology is that they may go to a very good astrologer, but then if they don't like what he says they keep going to other astrologers until they find someone who will tell them what they want to hear. This is the last word in foolishness. They are either paying a person to lie to them or shelling out money to successively more incompetent astrologers who cannot read properly. This is guaranteed to wind the self-deluded person into a world of trouble.

## Conclusion

We have given a brief survey of what Vedic astrology is, in contradistinction to its Western cousin; the Vedic view of fate and free will; the components of the language of astrology; the various branches of astrology and how they are used; how one can optimize his reading; hints for choosing an astrologer; what kinds of questions to ask; what types of astrologers to avoid; and the potential for abuse and misuse of astrology.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me via the information provided on the front page.

Shyamasundara Dasa