

Omens Discussion

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by Jagadisananda Dasa, Nikhilananda Dasa and Shyamasundara Dasa

editing: bh. Jan

Text 339649: 03-Jan-94 Nikilananda (das) ACBSP (D)

Subject: Omen

I followed your discussions with interest. There were questions by Bhakta Brian and Dave on omens: whether omens are influences which may not always apply for devotees and may even confuse them.

I have been very interested in this particular topic for the last 14 years, having seen a book on omens from Vedic Scriptures in 1980 in India. I learned Vedic Astrology in 1980 and studied about 65 Sanskrit translations and other books on the matter since then. I do not give astrological counseling, leaving this to full-time astrologers but gave a few seminars on Vedic Astrology and Cosmology in Germany which proved to be a helpful little tool for attracting friends of Krsna. My main point is to have a good understanding myself because it helps if we devotees can offer a more encompassing understanding of the realities in this universe and how it is connected 1.) to consciousness, 2.) to Krsna.

In this light Vedic astrology is truly a divine science and it helps to bring out sattvic, godly qualities when studied. So it is no coincidence, that a number of pure acaryas in our line learned this science.

First of all, omens apply to everyone, even the pure devotees, as seen in the description of Rukmini's trembling of left side found in the Bhagavatam. The difference is that their good and evil is always connected with Krishna, so it is transcendental. By knowing the omen you do not get "crazy" as was proposed but you get good indications for the right time of doing things. Just like Srila Prabhupada would not travel at certain times. So omens are not the influences but rather indicators. Any type of true knowledge may be confusing in the beginning but when it is mastered it offers tremendous help, used for the right cause. Those who prefer ignorance have the right to chose so.

After observing omens described in the sastras carefully over the years, I can only confirm that they are true in each and every case. The clearest omen I observed were usually the movements of birds while going out to accomplish a task. For example, the sighting of noble birds like falcon etc. sitting or

sailing on the right side of the road is always a sure sign that the objective of the journey will be achieved even under adverse circumstances. This happened to me about 10 times. On the other side, for example, a swarm of ugly black crows almost hitting your car from the left front is a sure inauspicious sign. Certain inauspicious omens save you a lot of time if you turn around right away. The science of prophecies from the movement of birds was once highly developed here in Northern Germany at Germanic time and it was also known to the Roman priestly class. I would be interested to know what the observations of others are, provided they know Vedic astrology and omens. I would also be interested in exchange of other more practical details with experienced astrologers.

Understanding these things helps us overcome our gross mechanistic views of reality which due to our upbringing and lack of higher knowledge still tinges our understanding. Part of Bhagavatam knowledge is how God and soul's consciousness are subtly connected to this world. This is part of a way of thinking that is foreign to our impersonal civilization which has no idea that all things can only be defined from their connection to the spiritual person and its subtle, materially tinged perceptions in this world. Therefore it is stated in Caitanya-caritamṛta's purport that the ultimate goal of astrology is to ascertain the position of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. To realize God we also must have knowledge of how He is connected to our present world.

How is it now that the passing of a cat, empty buckets and other inauspicious things do foretell bad outcome of events? One explanation for me is that, as elaborately described in Srimad-Bhagavatam 3rd Canto, our material reality and the perception of events by sight, smell, taste etc. develop from subtle states of mind successively into gross matter when the soul absorbs its consciousness into material energy by dint of the false ego meaning that we are indeed in a kind of dream state in material existence. Just as in a dream a beginning nightmare first indicates itself by observation of inauspicious things in the dream, so our perceived reality indicates a beginning karmic nightmare by certain inauspicious phenomena. Certain subtle thoughts or events lead to certain gross events. Absorption into tamoguna results in tamasic effects and so on. All this is based on perception first, i.e. we are all in a kind of meditation. Auspiciousness means mainly sattva-guna or sattvic, pious karmic results. How the modes mix and thereby manifest certain symptoms connected to certain events, omens are a science to be studied.

Of course, full absorption in Kṛṣṇa consciousness means everything becomes highly auspicious as confirmed in many slokas. Still, some previous reactions like our present body, old age, influence of time etc. remain. Even as devotees it is wise to know that if our stomachs make certain sounds we have to adjust our eating etc. even if we eat only prasadam.

In the same way it is wise to know to some extent the meaning of omens. As devotees we can do things thoughtlessly and suffer disturbances or try to do things expertly, considering time, place etc. To what degree we use intelligence is up to us and how much we can take advantage of Vedic culture. In both cases if we surrender, we can go back to Krsna with or without this expertise - by simply trying to serve wholeheartedly the bona-fide spiritual master.

However, some devotees find such expertise helpful in their service while others find it in their practical context confusing. Amongst brahmanas I would say: Everyone of us has some opinion on topics like astrology or omens. Why not base this opinion on authorized research of sastra so that we actually know what we talk about?

I also found that certain strong omens may override other, less important omens. Observation of the inner state of mind at the start of an undertaking, the movement of breath (as in Swara cintamani) are also very important omens to be taken into account. For example, a very strong, confident, enthusiastic mood when going out on a mission and, in specific, clear and easy remembrance of Krishna and also Garuda, can override small inauspicious omens for sure and lead to final success (although it may mean certain impediments have to be overcome on the way). Seeing it in this context, the science of omens makes perfect sense also for devotees. It does not contradict or hamper any of our devotional doctrines but rather is in perfect harmony with it. It should be learned only from qualified full-time Vaisnava-astrologers like Shyamasundara Prabhu. Life-member Ashutosh Ojha also seems to be competent. Does anyone have experience with him?

Nikhilananda Dasa

Text 340670: 06-Jan-94 Dave@com-link.org
Comment on: Text 339649 by Nikilananda (das) ACBSP (D)
Subject: Omen

Thank you for your explanations and realizations of how we can make practical use of basic omens. I am very ignorant by nature, and thus I require practical examples of how to apply these very sublime topics, otherwise my feeble mind becomes confused by the complexity of the various issues involved and I end up feeling quite overwhelmed by it all.

Your examples have helped me to see how we can sometimes determine what Krsna's will is in a given situation by simply being observant and using common sense. I realize that every leaf which falls, each and every breath we

take has meaning, but do not have the necessary brain power (or time) to undertake a thorough study of such things. As it is, I can barely understand the importance of spiritual life, being pulled by the senses at every moment. What to speak of the more subtle realm you speak of.

But after all, since Krsna is wholly spiritual, with not the slightest tint of material qualities, and everything emanates from him, then there is nothing else! It is merely our materialistic thoughts/desires which color the world around us to appear material. Like the nightmare you describe, we end up in the most hellish of conditions simply by not carefully training our mind and desires and thus maintaining our purified consciousness.

Thanks again for sharing your realizations. You have opened my mind to a fresh, new way of looking at the world around me, and made a very complex issue a little easier to understand.

your servant, dave

Text 340671: 06-Jan-94 Shyamasundara.Dasa@com-link.org
Subject: Mechanistic thinking

Nikhilananda Prabhu brings up very good point that astrology, omens and divination in general help us to break out of our godless mechanistic world-view. Anyone who accepts astrology must accept that there is a higher intelligence in control and that this intelligence is communicating to us. Is it any wonder that materialistic scientists profoundly detest astrology? No less than 35 Nobel laureates signed a document stating that astrology is pure humbug.

This is a very good observation by Nikhilananda. I also like the point he makes:

"As devotees we can do things thoughtlessly and suffer disturbances or try to do things expertly, considering time, place etc."

One of the 26 qualities of a devotee is that he is expert at everything.

Regarding Ashutosh Ojha: while I have never met him I have seen the work that he does (his father also wrote several books). He was one of the main astrologers in Delhi that the devotees would go to see. And several devotees brought Srila Prabhupada's chart for him to study. He was quite accurate in his forecast of Srila Prabhupada's chart (by the way he got Capricorn rising for Prabhupada's chart). However it should be noted that he does use Neptune,

Uranus, and Pluto in his charts (to what degree he uses them in his delineations I don't know), and he also uses the Tajika system. So he is an eclectic astrologer. He also recommended that Prabhupada perform mrtyunjaya homa to Lord Siva for longevity (Prabhupada refused that).

He may be a life member but that doesn't mean he is a devotee, or well-versed in Vaisnava philosophy. I had discussions with one life member, Sri Kulkarni, a professor of history, about Sankaracarya. This life member is a firm follower of Sankaracarya and cannot believe that Srila Prabhupada, or Lord Caitanya were against the Mayavadi teachings of Sankaracarya. Most Indian life members are Hindus, but with proper guidance and the mercy of the devotees they can become devotees.

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Shyamasundara Dasa

Text 341452: 09-Jan-94 01:08 GMT /19 lines/ Internet: jagadish@aol.com
Reply-To: <jagadish@aol.com>
Receiver: Vedic Astrology (Symposium hosted by Shyamasundara Dasa) <143>
Subject: omens

I very much appreciated Nikhilananda's comments regarding omens and astrology.

Nd>However, some devotees find such expertise helpful in their service while others find it in their practical context confusing. Amongst brahmanas I would say: Everyone of us has some opinion on topics like astrology or omen. Why not base this opinion on authorized research of sastra, so that we actually know what we talk about?

Hare Krsna!! All glories to intelligence. Down with godless mechanistic world views. I guess I'll have to give up fixing cars. Only kidding. Nikhilananda, welcome to the astrology conference. I hope you'll be contributing more in the future.

Jagadisananda das

Text 341529: 08-Jan-94 Shyamasundara.Dasa@com-link.org
Subject: Nikhilananda's comments

Another thing that I just thought of while reading Jagadish's comment on Nikhi's quote is that the subject of astrology and other methods of divination is essentially a brahminical subject. A serious study of divination, of which

astrology is the King, attracts the most gifted people.

This is not astrologers patting themselves on the back but something I realized after reading anthropological studies on divination in Africa (see previous reference in past posting). It was the unanimous conclusion of all the anthropologists that good diviners were always the most intelligent, wisest, sensitive, pious, etc., people in the tribe. Basically your Bhagavad-gita description of a brahmana. Rigorous training coupled with suitable personality led to good diviners. Not everyone can do this, nor do they even want to. Some people even saw the calling of being a diviner as a curse. There is some justification in that, as seen in the life of Cassandra, and the lives of Nadi readers.

But I digress, I'll elaborate on that later. Anyway as Nikhilananda so tactfully put it, "Brahmanas have opinions on such subjects, but others are confused." (paraphrased)

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shyama