

Is Vedic Astrology Mechanistic?

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Text 358226: 01-Mar-94 jagadish@aol.com
Subject: B.V. Raman

Shyamasundara prabhu, there's this astrologer named Jai Maharaja posting many things relating to Vedic astrology on the Internet. Are you familiar with him? This is an article he posted by B.V. Raman. Do we agree with Raman's understanding of the influence of the planets on our bodies? Didn't you say that the planets don't have influence but rather indicate an influence?

Excerpts from a lecture delivered by Dr. B.V. Raman at the Apollo Hospital, Madras, on September 5, 1991. The world-renowned prediction scientist is addressing a gathering of medical doctors, scientists, researchers and members of the international press.

"Nature seems to play heads and tails with our physical and mental qualities. Western astronomers competed with one another in proclaiming that this Universe was beyond any scale of man's. How could it ever be imagined that the puny insignificant man comprising of scraps of flesh and blood stuck to our tiny globe due to gravity, be influenced by the celestial bodies?

On the other side, geneticists claimed to have discovered a strange incredible world in the gene and they thought that they had given an answer to the question of our fate, that is to say, heredity. They said that Nature decides, at the moment of conception, our physical and mental qualities. All the information stamped on our genetic code can be deciphered which means we can also decipher our future. It is all there - our physical strength, our weaknesses, character pre-disposition and intelligence - even to the moment when this mysterious machine, namely, our body becomes disordered and breaks down finally.

Dr. Kallman of the Psychiatric Institute of New York says, "Every being has inside him a clock set at the moment of his birth which predetermines particular illnesses and accidents." Whether the hands on the clock can be read correctly is of course a different matter.

The gap between astronomers - those who wanted to know what the Universe was

made of - and geneticists - those who wanted to know what man was made of - became a yawning gulf. The sky of the astronomers was not connected with man's future and man as revealed by the biologists had no need of the sky to know his destiny. This was the confusion in the thinking of Western scientists.

But the thinking of our Sages was on a different level. Their approach to man and the Universe was holistic. Man and the Universe cannot be separated from each other. Therefore they were the first to bridge the gulf between astronomy and biology with the great discipline of Astrology.

In ancient India, Astrology and medicine were intimately connected. An Ayurvedic or medical doctor was required to be an astrologer too. But with the introduction of Western Allopathy into India, largely backed by the missionaries, the importance of Astrology, as a diagnostic test, was reduced for a time.

But now a reaction appears to have already set in largely due to the fact that a handful of leading medical men in Europe and America and in India also have been experimenting with medical Astrology.

Doctors are becoming intensely interested in the correspondence between solar activity and the number of heart strokes, hypertension cases, nerve diseases and even the harmless appendix trouble.

An experienced astrologer can indicate the predisposition of a person towards heart trouble, high blood pressure, cancer, etc. with considerable accuracy."

CONTINUED IN PART 2

Text 358337: 02-Mar-94 Shyamasundara.ACBSP@com-link.org
Subject: B.V. Raman

Since I subscribe to astrological magazine I am familiar with Raman's views (he is the editor). He seems to be reacting to the Western scientists who are detractors of astrology in India. Thus he tries to beat them at their own game.

It is well known that people are affected by full and new moons. As for the sun's effect, just stay out all day in the sun and you will get burned. These are exoteric effects. It would be hard to explain the esoteric effects of the planets based on a mechanistic view.

What exoteric effect could be assigned to the other planets Mercury, Venus,

Mars, etc. whose position is so far away that it would be difficult to even measure an effect of gravity as in the case of the moon which affects our tides.

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Shyamasundara Dasa

Text 358338: 02-Mar-94 Shyamasundara.ACBSP@com-link.org
Subject: Causal/Non-causal

Hare Krsna

This is an excerpt from the Philosophy and Research Group report to the GBC of 1992. It explains the non-causal nature of astrology.

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Shyamasundara Dasa

WHAT IS ASTROLOGY?

As previously explained astrology is a limb of the Vedas, literally the 'eye of Vedas.' Now we shall investigate what astrology is and how it works.

Astrology is essentially a language, a mystical cryptogram created by Sri Krsna. Each of the planets according to Srila Parasara Muni, father of Vyasadeva, is intimately connected with one of Krsna's avatars and ultimately is a manifestation of that particular avatara*. As any language has parts such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, etc., astrology is no different except that in this language the parts are planets, signs, houses, aspects, etc. It is the language of time.

The horoscope and the zodiac belt are often referred to in the literature as the kala chakra, wheel of time. The horoscope is like a big clock, except that while we are familiar with clocks that have three hands, the horoscopic clock has ten hands made up of the Ascendant, Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Rahu, and Ketu. And while the clocks of normal experience measure in hours, minutes, and seconds; the hands of the kala chakra measure much longer spans of time. A complete cycle of the ten hands from the Lagna (ascendant) to Ketu take respectively: one day, one year, 27 days, two years, one year, 12 years, one year, 30 years, 18 years, and 18 years. A complex

clock indeed - one only Sri Krsna could create. To create a horoscope requires the exact date, time and place of birth. The reverse is also true; given a chart, a learned astrologer can tell the date, time, and place of birth. This time-keeping feature of astrology is used today in archeology and history to date personalities and events based on recorded horoscopes or other astronomical observations such as eclipses and comets.

We have introduced two analogous systems with reference to astrology: astrology as language, and astrology as a super clock. We have done this to illustrate the neutrality or non-causal nature of astrology. Just as a language can be used for good or bad; to create edifying literature such as the Srimad Bhagavatam or a mundane novel with zero spiritual merit. In the same way, astrology can describe any phenomena that exists, whether it be divine, such as Sri Krsna or the life of an insignificant entity like me. A clock doesn't cause the sun to rise, but I know that on March 18, 1992, in Mayapura at 5:46 AM the sun will rise, and that at 5:43 PM it will set. Thus the planets do not cause the events that take place in a person's life but they are capable of describing, measuring and timing them. This is possible only because of the Lord's supreme will.

Another way to look at astrology is as a sophisticated and systematic science of lakshanas; that is, symptoms or signs. There are numerous examples from the sastra where omens and physiognomy are used in relation to Sri Krsna. The science of omens or nimitta is directly a branch of astrology**. The study of physiognomy or bodily symptoms [lakshana] is called Samudrika-sastra, after Samudraraj, the lord of the sea who, from his vantage point, was able to study the perfect bodily construction of Sri Sri Laksmi Narayana. Hasta Samudrika, the science of palmistry is a specialized sub-branch of Samudrika-sastra. It should be remembered that astrology, palmistry, and physiognomy are all intimately related.

The point that I am making is that astrology and related subjects are valid sciences applicable to both the divine and mundane sphere because they are non-causal, rather they are symptomatic of higher laws.

Some relevant quotes:

CC Adi 17.109

[The astrologer said] "You are now the same Personality of Godhead that You were in Your previous birth. Your identity is inconceivable eternal happiness."

Purport. By the power of astrological science one can even ascertain the position of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Everything is to be identified

by its symptoms.

Room Conversation with Latin Professor, Los Angeles, December 9, 1973

So every knowledge is there in the Vedas. There are so many Vedas. Even for our ordinary dealings, just like Ayur-veda. Ayur-veda means medical science. Similarly, Dhanur-veda, military science. Similarly, Jyotir-veda, jyotis, the astronomical science. And those who are, mean, accustomed with Vedic knowledge, it is so nice and, I mean to say, perfect that... Take, for example, that Ayur-veda, medical science. Their process is that this body, the physiological condition, is depending on three things, tri-dhatu, kapha-pitha-vayu: mucus, bile and air. And the air is felt by the pulse beating. So they learn how to examine the pulse beating, the heart beating. And they have got description. Just like the sparrow walks, the crow walks, so in this way they have given the example, "If the pulse is beating like the walking of the sparrow, walking of the crow, then his health, his condition, is like this, and the symptoms will be like this." So the physician first of all studies the pulses, and he remembers the symptoms, and he corroborates, asking the patient, "Do you feel like this? Do you feel like this? Do you do this, like this?" If it is corroborated, then his diagnosis is given: "He has got this disease." So similarly, in Jyotir-veda they have got similar symptoms: "If such and such stars are now nearer to this star" - they have got this calculation - "then the position is this." So they learn very quickly. Indian brahmanas, they learned Jyotir-veda, Ayur-veda, very quickly. Because brahmanas are meant to go to every house to inform the date, the everything. So generally people are inquisitive about the health. So they ask, "Now I am feeling like this." So they give medicine. And they give some astrological hint also. So in this way people gave them some contribution. That is their livelihood. So this... All the systems were made very easy on account of this Vedic injunction. So therefore we take Vedic knowledge as perfect, and we understand everything by Vedic knowledge about God, about His place, about His activities.

* In *Brhad Parasara Hora Sastra*, 2nd chapter; Rama-Sun, Krsna-Moon, Nrsimha-Mars, Buddha-Mercury, Vamanadeva-Jupiter, Parasurama-Venus, Kurma-Saturn, Varaha-Rahu, and Matsya-Ketu.

** There are six branches of astrology: Gola, astronomy; Ganita, calculations based on planetary position; Jataka, birth horoscope; Prasna, answering specific questions; Muhurta, choosing a time to start something; and Nimitta, omens.