

*How to*  
MESS UP  
YOUR LIFE WITH  
ASTROLOGY

# HOW TO MESS UP YOUR LIFE WITH ASTROLOGY

BY SRI

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SRI

*How to*  
MESS UP  
YOUR LIFE WITH  
ASTROLOGY

SRI  
SRIBOOKS



DEDICATED  
TO MY SPIRITUAL FATHER,

**H .H .J ayapataka S wami M aharaja,**

WHOSE LOVING COMPASSION TRANSFORMED  
MANY HEARTS.



# Contents

**Foreword**

**Preface**

**1. How to Mess Up Your Life with Strange Ideas about Astrology . . . . . 19**

- What Is Astrology All About? . . . . . 24
- Astrology and Karma . . . . . 25
- Previous Lives and Present Situations . . . . . 28
- Watch Out Who You Ask for a Reading . . . . . 29
- Overreacting and Getting Carried Away . . . . . 30
- Three Key Dimensions . . . . . 34

**2. How to Mess Up Your Life with Astrologers . . 39**

- Curiosity Is Not Enough to Learn Astrology. 40
- Paranoia-producing Astrologers . . . . . 42
- Breeding Disaster through Data Dump . . . . . 47
- What Are You Looking for? . . . . . 50
- Imposing Arbitrary Values . . . . . 52

- On a Need-to-Know Basis . . . . . 54
- Costly Mistakes . . . . . 57
- Sextrologers . . . . . 58

### **3. How to Mess Up Your Marriage . . . . . 61**

- Trying to Trick . . . . . 62
- Does Divorce Make People Happy? . . . . . 66
- Sad Sisters . . . . . 68
- Act in Haste, Repent at Leisure . . . . . 76
- The Perfect Match Delusion . . . . . 78
- Michelle’s Mishap . . . . . 80
- The Downward Spiral . . . . . 86
- Ethics at Your Rescue . . . . . 87
- The Power of Commitment . . . . . 89

### **4. How to Mess Up Your Life with Your Mind . . 93**

- Mind Your Mind . . . . . 96
- Deadly Greed . . . . . 99
- The American Dream . . . . . 100
- Count Your Blessings . . . . . 106
- Real Wealth . . . . . 110
- Rich People Begging . . . . . 112
- The Mantra for Happiness . . . . . 115

## **5. How Mistakes Can Mess Up Your Life . . . . . 119**

- The Potential for Change . . . . . 121
- Resisting Reality? Not a Great Idea . . . . . 124
- Are You Ready to Learn? . . . . . 127
- Guiding Lights . . . . . 132

## **6. Meet the Protagonists . . . . . 137**

- The Big Picture . . . . . 138
- Sun (Surya) . . . . . 139
- Moon (Chandra) . . . . . 141
- Mercury (Budha) . . . . . 144
- Venus (Shukra) . . . . . 146
- Mars (Kuja or Mangala) . . . . . 149
- Jupiter (Guru) . . . . . 152
- Saturn (Shani) . . . . . 155
- Rahu . . . . . 161
- Ketu . . . . . 163
- Benefic and Malefic Planets? . . . . . 166
- The Safe Way to Empower Your Planets . . . . . 170
- What Would You Choose? . . . . . 174



## **7. How to Mess Up Your Life with the Zodiac . . 177**

- A Case of Mistaken Identity . . . . . 178
- Progress Is Mandatory – Failure is Punished 180
- Moon, Ascendant and You . . . . .181
- Signs and Marriage . . . . .183
- Celestial Territories and Treaties . . . . .185

## **8. Religious Teachers and Astrology**

### **–The Case of Srila Prabhupada . . . . . 191**

- Srila Prabhupada and Astrology . . . . . 195



# Foreword

Astrology is a branch of the Vedas and still continues to be practiced in India with a great number of adherents. Unfortunately the qualifications for practicing have gradually been de-emphasized in the modern world. This gives rise to many irregularities and disturbances in astrologers and their clients. The present book describes some of the misuses and misinterpretations of astrology that have arisen on the part of astrologers and clients. Those who wish to consult an astrologer should read this book in order to prevent disappointment or disturbance in their life.

-Bhanu Swami

# Preface

*How did I get this natal chart?  
I need to look inside my heart  
Choices I made and some were wrong  
For sure some pain will come along  
Some pleasure too will manifest  
But no experience will be best  
Till my true self I do realize  
And my illusion thus pulverize  
Karma began misusing freewill  
I quickly need to pay my bill  
I need to face my lot of pain  
Trying to escape will bring no gain  
From foolish dreams I should refrain  
And start instead to use my brain  
Save me o Lord before I am slain  
By the mind running like a train  
Playing tricks on me, restless and wild  
Make it tamed, obedient and mild  
Your holy name my only hope  
To climb back from the slimy slope  
To find my love my happiness  
And lead my brothers beyond distress.*

Over the years I have met many people who had very wrong conceptions about astrology. Some had very little respect for it, and meddled with astrology as if it were a toy. Some misunderstood and misapplied it, and in the process they ruined their lives. With so many people interested in astrology my challenge has been to explain to all of them what astrology actually is and what it's not.

The meanings of the planetary combinations and the karmic patterns are extremely complex to grasp. Some of the predictions and conclusions supposedly based on the position of the planets are wildly inaccurate. The other day one lady was saying at the dinner table how her rudeness, her selfishness and her overconfidence were all due to the placement of the Sun in her astrological chart, and that there was no need to change because that's how she was born. After a few minutes the conversation shifted and she started talking about how she really wanted her children to study harder, especially math, because they were just into music. I asked, "How come you don't need to change your attitude but your children need to change theirs? Why do you accept some aspects of the personality as fixed and some as changeable?" She had nothing to say. She was an example of the growing number of people who pick and choose from their astrological reading what to accept and what to reject, purely on the basis of convenience.

The other day a man of thirty came to see me and said, "My mother is very much into astrology and she got my chart made by two dozen astrologers; now I would like

you to read my chart.” Two dozen!? I told him that he didn’t need another reading, but he kept saying, no, my mother this, my mother that. I told him, “I can only make a chart for someone who has been *born*; but you are still in the womb of your mother. Come to see me once you come out.”

There are others who like to morbidly dig into the negativities of their charts to have an escape route from responsibility. And then there are those who imagine being very special beings and that whatever their chart says must have some esoteric, mystical meaning underlying their greatness. Of course often these “special beings,” as soon as they notice something unpleasant, start running from astrologer to astrologer to mitigate their insecurity.

Often the astrologers project their priorities and their values, even if skewed, upon the poor clients, misleading and confusing them. It might happen for instance that before the marriage a heavily chauvinistic astrologer might see in the chart that the wife will obtain a higher position than the husband and tell the prospective husband that this woman is “horrible” – even when there is nothing wrong with her. These kinds of readings may unnecessarily cause a lot of pain and blockage. I see more and more the need to counsel clients who have been victimized by unqualified astrologers, who created disturbances and phobias. Seeing these distressed or confused clients makes me heartbroken.

If you don’t believe in astrology because of meeting some quack, be careful not to throw the baby out with

the bathwater. Vedic astrology belongs to a much larger body of knowledge which sheds light on the nature of Reality. You might have had a bad experience, but real astrology is very scientific, and aims at something higher than what people think. There is therefore an urgent need to clarify the basic foundations of how astrology works and how dabbling with it inconsiderately can cause a lot of damage to all involved.

In this book I explain how to focus on and use what you have and how to stop brooding about things you don't have. You can benefit from this book whether you believe in astrology or not. If you believe in astrology, and if you are similar to most of the people I know, you may be making one or more of the following mistakes:

1. Having false expectations from astrology.
2. Not understanding the philosophy behind astrology.
3. Consulting unqualified and misleading astrologers.
4. Forfeiting your personal power, responsibility and freewill.
5. Misusing astrology to get what you want and not what you need.

If you don't believe in astrology, reading this book can be a good chance to:

1. Enlarge your worldview.
2. Challenge your assumptions about the universe and its laws, even about yourself.
3. Become a better person.

In any case, if you read this book with an open mind and a sincere heart, you can gain many insights on your personal potential, your real identity and your place in the totality of existence – and you can learn to have a balanced approach to astrology.

May the Supreme Lord, who owns and controls everything, bless and illuminate your path.

SRI 



Names of people and places were changed to protect the identity of the individuals whose vicissitudes are mentioned in the book. Any resemblance of the fictitious names to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.



1.

**How to Mess Up Your Life  
with Strange Ideas about  
Astrology**

*Insanity: Doing the same thing over and over again  
and expecting different results.*

–Albert Einstein

“My son is hopeless,” Uma said, holding back her tears, “he has made my life a living hell!”

Uma was a doctor; she and her husband owned a private dental clinic, a newly built complex – quite impressive for the small town of Tamil Nadu, in South India, where they lived. It looked like a booming practice, with dozens of people waiting and a big advertisement board outside, with a large photo of the couple with a famous local actor.

“God has given us everything,” Uma said, “but my child gives me so many problems!”

“What’s the matter with him?” I asked. From Uma’s tone I thought that perhaps the boy had some incurable disease or a major physical handicap. But she wasn’t being specific. At one point she blurted out, “How can I make

him study hard and make him become an engineer? I would do *anything* for this.”

An *engineer*? I was surprised and relieved; so, after all, the boy was OK; it seemed that he had no mental disorders or life-threatening diseases. It started dawning on me that perhaps the problem was with the mother more than with the son... “Can you help?” Uma asked, “Can you do anything?”

“Let me check his astrological chart.” I said, but Uma wanted some solution immediately, “Please prescribe some ritual, some gemstone that he should wear...” I told her that first of all I should study his natal chart. The idea is that the unique configuration of stars and planets at the moment of birth is like a photo of one’s karma, something like a score-card from previous lives. Analyzing the complex pattern of universal influences according to Vedic astrology reveals the psychology and the tendencies of the individual, and allows insights to the future prospects and potential of that person.

After examining the chart of this child I became a bit perplexed. First of all he was only eight years old – a bit young for studying engineering – and secondly, everything in the chart indicated that he was perfectly normal, actually remarkably smart and creative. I told Uma that I had to see him in person, and she invited me to come the next day, but before parting she kept lamenting her fate, sharing her worries and fears for the future of her “useless” son.

Around noon the next day I was at her home when the child, Ram, arrived. He entered the compound by jumping over the small gate; “Hmm, quite a lively child,” I thought. Uma started screaming at him, “Ram, why are you running?” Why didn’t you change your clothes? Why is your shirt full of ink spots?” and then more questions, “What homework have you got today? Have you brought back your lunch-box?” I thought, “What a warm welcome... Does this happen every day?”

Uma opened Ram’s schoolbag and pulled out many crumpled sheets of paper, filled with different drawings. Uma started weeping and said, “Everyday he just draws these stupid things and wastes notebooks; and he hides these stupid drawings inside his pockets, under the bed and everywhere. I am tired of these useless drawings! He keeps drawing and drawing but doesn’t do his homework.” I picked up a few sheets and was impressed at the artistic talent. For an eight year old he was quite good; the images showed teachers at the blackboard, children inside the school-bus, mountains, hills... one was a drawing of Radha and Krishna, the quintessential manifestation of divine beauty.

With a dejected, disturbed look on her face, Uma sat near me and said, “I can’t sleep at night thinking of what will happen to my son; I only want to see him happy and well situated.”

“Uma, your son is a natural artist,” I said, “just look...” I showed her one of his art pieces, “Ram will be just fine.”

She shrugged and said, “I don’t want him to be an artist. That would be a failure in life.”

I asked, “What about the big board outside your clinic, with you, your husband and the actor? You don’t seem to consider that actor a failure.”

“That’s only for business.” She retorted. Still, it wasn’t clear why it would be a problem if Ram became an artist. I told her, “Uma, your son is intelligent; he is a creative person. He is not the engineer type. There is nothing to be sad about. He will be happy as an artist; he has natural skills in painting, singing and dramatic performances.”

She was almost desperate, “Are you saying that he can never be an engineer?” she said, “Then he cannot become happy. All the children of all my relatives are studying engineering; if my son doesn’t, it will be a shame!”

It was quickly becoming clear that her fears weren’t really about Ram’s happiness. I had to tell her, “So, Uma, it’s not really his future that you are worried about, it seems that all you care about is your social prestige, your reputation among your relatives. If Ram doesn’t become an engineer they will criticize and blame you, and this is what you are really afraid of.”

Feeling exposed, she said, “Well, you know, every mother has a dream for her child...”

I thought, “Is her dream to ruin Ram’s life?” and so I said, “Do you want your son to be happy? Or do you just want him to make you accepted among your relatives, even

if that means forcing him to do something completely against his nature?” She replied, “But he can be happy only if he becomes what I want him to be, an engineer.”

This was getting hard. It didn’t make any sense – there was no logic in her words. I wondered how an educated woman could think like this. And what’s so special about being an engineer? There are millions of engineers in India, many of them unemployed. To become engineers they had to live for years in cramped, impersonal hostels, always under pressure for marks and exams. Once graduated, many work fifteen or sixteen hours a day because the competition is so stiff. Some accept miserable living conditions abroad just to get a job... Why should this lady, a doctor, have such dreams for her son? I have nothing against engineers and in fact among them I have quite a few friends; but I just *cannot* accept this social hallucination that every child should become an engineer!

For a few minutes Uma – who had a severe case of this hallucination – kept trying to get some “astrological solutions” from me, but there wasn’t any problem to fix; Ram’s chart was very good, showing that he could become successful and wealthy if he pursued an artistic career.

“I went to an astrologer,” Uma continued, “and he said that he could do a ceremony, a fire sacrifice, to make my son become an engineer; it would cost 150,000 rupees.” That’s about three thousand dollars, “He also said that an emerald ring would make him study harder. I already

bought that.”

I thought, “This woman is really determined to ruin her son’s life, and obviously she finds people eager and ready to make money out of her twisted desires.” She wasn’t getting the point of astrology. I told her, “Look Uma, it’s not about turning him into what you want. Don’t make your son’s life miserable by trying to change his nature to satisfy your unintelligent plans.”

I was there in that South Indian town for three days; each day I spoke with Uma trying to change her mind – mostly because I couldn’t bear seeing Ram’s life ruined. I left hoping that Uma would follow my advice to leave the boy alone.

As an astrologer I often see that people don’t understand what astrology is all about.

### **What Is Astrology All About?**

Vedic astrology (known in Sanskrit as *Jyotish*) is an ancient Indian science of karmic analysis to change ourselves for the better. The aim is to get in touch with all the natural and sublime qualities of the soul, regardless of our present conditioning, and reestablish our relationship with God. Some people think that Vedic astrology is some sort of fortune telling—predicting an unchangeable future. Others take astrology as some form of black magic – a tool to get what they want. Others take it simply as a technique for describing different personality types. Actually Vedic





astrology is transformational in nature, concerned with aiding the process of growth, of overcoming limitations and of evolving in consciousness.

Life is full of miseries. As Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-gita*, this world is a place of suffering, where everything is temporary. Therefore there will always be some distress indicated in our astrological charts. These miseries are meant to wake us up to the reality that we cannot be permanently happy in this world. Therefore in all genuine traditions of knowledge there are illuminated teachers that tell us not to put all our hopes in the mundane sphere but aim for something higher. As Jesus Christ said: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” This heavenly dimension, this realm of pure bliss can be found also in our hearts. And the best utilization of Vedic astrology is to help discover this treasure-trove of inner happiness.

### **Astrology and Karma**

Vedic astrology should be based on the understanding of the law of karma, of how every action has a reaction that binds us. It's a great behavioral and psychological science, known to but a few and often misunderstood. Most do not grasp the truth that life is difficult. They keep on complaining about their responsibilities as if life *should* be easy. They always ask “Why me?” They go on moaning

and mourning that their difficulties are unfair and should somehow disappear. Whatever unpleasant happens to them, to their family or to their nation, they consider it unwarranted, unjustified and unfair. According to Vedic cosmic chronology we are living in *kali-yuga*, the age of quarrel and hypocrisy, and the general trend is to perform activities that generate more confusion and misery. Thus their attempts at removing pain only end up creating more complex problems and heavier karma.

But before delving into Vedic astrology – or any form of astrology – we need to address a few crucial questions; otherwise we might be studying a leaf with no idea of what a tree is. Why does astrology work? What is karma and, more importantly, what is its purpose? Why does karma exist in the first place? What is “destiny”? Is it something unchangeable? And what is freewill? How do freewill and destiny coexist? What is the role of celestial bodies – stars, planets, etc. – in the bigger picture? Are their influences inescapable?

Actually you have freewill, the power to make personal choices. If you didn't, you could not be held accountable for your actions. When your astrological chart foretells a certain “destiny,” it displays the results of your own free choices. Understanding this concept is essential. Freewill and fate – choice and destiny – have a relationship of cause and effect; they are two points of the same continuum, two faces of the same coin. The whole “system” is what is known as karma. Karma includes the ability to make personal choices and the consequences of those choices.



Who is holding us responsible? Ultimately it's the Supreme Controller, who established the laws of behavior and who manages this world through His appointed universal agents. Such administrative cosmic leaders include those who rule stars and planets – powerful psychosomatic influences on human beings. That single divine personality, God, who witnesses all our actions, is the one who created the arrangement of rewards and punishments. It is He who established the laws, who enunciated the correct parameters of behavior, and who arranges for the whole universal administration that enforces those laws.

There is a subtle educational process in play; its culmination is the realization of love. But to achieve this lofty goal we have to be warned that acting as a slave to lust, anger and greed is not favorable to our well-being. We have lost our rudder and need direction. Part of that direction is the bestowal of rewards for meritorious acts and the imposition of punishment for self-destructive ones. We, conditioned souls, have lost our identity and now think ourselves to *be* a physical body of flesh and bones. We are torn between heaven and earth, between the lower, animal instincts and the most sublime and generous sentiments.

Our desire to enjoy in this world is a perverted reflection of our deepest desire to love. The universe is telling us – through the workings of karma – that we are not well situated; that there is something that needs some radical change, starting with our idea of who we are and what will make us happy. We are similar to a teenager who doesn't know where he truly belongs. Father God and Mother

Nature help us to grow up and find our true place in Existence. We constantly receive reminders that this is not our real home and that our desires need reorientation.

Karma allows you to create your own future, but it also gradually encourages you to evolve. How does karma do that? By rewarding your more selfless deeds, and punishing the more selfish ones. Can you change your fate? This might be an odd question: Who else but you yourself has created your fate in the first place? Planetary astrological influences don't *create* your fate; they simply enforce and manifest it. Although their power may appear insurmountable, planets *impel* rather than *compel*. By using your freewill you shape your future. Some aspects of the destiny you have created might not be changed, but how you react to what comes your way will determine your growth. The more you react to your circumstances in enlightened, God-conscious ways, the more your future will be bright and auspicious.

### **Previous Lives and Present Situations**

You might look at your astrological chart and wonder: "How did I end up with the planets in this particular position?" It's because you designed it. Once you understand this fact, it becomes easier to transform and upgrade your existence. Astrology is not just about this body. The features of your body – its looks, its place of birth, its father and mother – have roots beyond and before this lifetime; we are talking about reincarnation. To



understand reincarnation we first of all need to understand that we are not this body, we are transcendental selves, souls, who inhabit the psychophysical structure. For the soul the changing of bodies is like the changing of clothes. And the main reason behind a particular birth is the mentality accumulated in previous existences. To become free to the bondage of birth and death, we have to work on our minds, on the contents of our consciousness. But we cannot get free from the clutches of death without the help of the saintly persons. Therefore the Vedas teach us that one *must* accept a spiritual master, a guru, by surrendering to him, serving him and enquiring from him about the devotional science. The Vedic astrologer should act as an assistant to the spiritual teachers, helping his clients to align with the higher harmony of the universe.

### **Watch Out Who You Ask for a Reading...**

Unless the astrologer is also enlightened, his knowledge might turn dangerous and affect the growth of his clients. Some astrologers appear simply eager to impress or to please their clients. If they are greedy and unqualified, instead of being representatives of universal wisdom, they end up as hired word-jugglers and amulet marketers. If they don't intend to help their clients to walk on the path of righteousness, these astrologers should rather choose a more honest profession than playing around with other people's karma. It might be tempting for astrologers to try to set themselves apart, presenting themselves as possessing the mystical skill of predicting the future; but

in this way they may neglect the most important aspect of Vedic astrology, teaching us to align our behavior with the will of God.

Let's ask ourselves some key questions: When an astrologer looks at a client's chart and speaks about the future and what will happen, does this really help the client? Is it really useful and productive if, say, the client hears that her son will die from an accident in a few years? Doesn't this simply create a sense of fear, of morbid expectation and pervasive sadness? And often such foreseen events don't even happen – because the calculations were faulty. I know of a case in which someone's son was “destined” to die at seventeen of an accident; but the son is now thirty-five – and the accident never occurred.

I also observed that when people consult an astrologer before marriage, they rarely take the astrologer's words seriously when they hear, “This is not a good match. It may not work.” But when the same people decide to break up the marriage, they then take shelter in astrology, running here and there until they find an astrologer who will confirm and justify the decision. In this way they feel free from responsibilities, “Well, the astrologer told me to do it...” Besides the fault of the astrologer, sometimes it's also the client that's too easily influenced – or willfully puts words in the mouth of the astrologer.

### **Overreacting and Getting Carried Away**

Which brings to mind the case of Mrs. Green, a young

woman from Ireland, who was both too impressionable and too quick to inflate what she heard. She came to see me a few years ago, and she was depressed. Why? Because one astrologer had said that her father did not give her enough love when she was a child. She was thirty years old when she heard this; till then everything was fine with her father, but then she started to torture him, complaining about his neglect, blaming him for any problem she ever faced.

In fact in that session I mainly had to counsel her, trying to dispel the false impression created by that irresponsible astrologer. Actually her father had given her all facilities and had always tried his best to make her happy; but because an astrologer said something she almost destroyed her relationship with her father. In fact she eventually married someone her father did not approve of.

Mrs. Green came to see me a second time a few months after her marriage. She was thrilled about her new status as a married woman. I advised her to keep calm and to carefully protect this new relationship. But again she went to see some astrologer, and this time she heard that she had made a big mistake by marrying this man, and that she would face many problems due to the marriage. Mrs. Green right then started to assume and imagine that whatever wasn't perfect in her life was due to the malefic influence of her husband. She went around badmouthing him and accusing him of having all sorts of faults.

The third time she came to see me, Mrs. Green had a little daughter. "I found the solution to all my problems!"

Mrs. Green said, “The astrologer helped me immensely by identifying the root cause of all my problems, the fact that I married this man. I just have to divorce him and everything will be fine!”

I strongly objected to her “solution.” I explained to her the real meaning of marriage and the serious consequences of breaking up a family; I told her how much her daughter would suffer. Her husband was a nice man after all. I told her, “You are a religious woman; you must pray for strength; after all he is not beating you; and he is not a drunkard or a drug-addict. He might not always behave the way you want him to, but instead of meditating on negativity, try to work things out.”

She started screaming, “You just don’t know what kind of a person he is. You don’t know what it’s like to be married to someone like that, who doesn’t listen to you. After all I’m only thinking of leaving him after a year and a half of marriage, but you wouldn’t stay with him even for a day!”

This was the first time she spoke to me in this way. “What’s the matter with her?” I wondered, “Is it just that she believes whatever any astrologer says? Why does she have to keep going here and there, asking all these quacks?” As we spoke her husband was actually at a distance taking care of the child. He was not the passionate kind. He remained mostly to himself, taking care of the little girl. Actually Mrs. Green had told me how they had married impulsively, against the wishes of her father and her spiritual guides. And here was that



same impatience, talking about leaving him. Mrs. Green's attitude was also due to the company she was keeping. She was hanging around with friends who were divorced. These were her "marriage experts" and they were instigating her to follow in their footsteps.

Since she wasn't ready to listen, I shifted to reflective listening, a powerful communication skill in which one doesn't object, agree, argue, advise or defend; but rather listens very carefully to the person's feelings and the content of their words, and then repeats the content and identifies those feelings for the person.

So I relaxed and told her, "So you feel frustrated and angry dealing with your husband. You consider him unmanageable and intolerable. You feel burdened and think that he's the cause of all of your problems. And you feel confident that divorcing him is the best thing to do because an astrologer told you so."

After a few more exchanges it became clear that the astrologer only told her, "Your marriage is causing you trouble." She was certainly turning that reading into reality; but he didn't tell her to end her marriage!

She calmed down but she continued talking nonsense. Her main excuse was that she was a very religious lady who didn't drink or smoke, while the husband would occasionally smoke or drink. So what? She knew about that before marrying him. It was really a lame excuse for getting a divorce. She even quoted a scriptural passage that said that a woman could leave a fallen husband, but she "forgot" the

second part of the passage, which said that after leaving a fallen husband the woman shouldn't remarry. In any case, how did this apply to her husband? He wasn't "fallen." Fallen from what? He had been faithfully taking care of his family.

Mrs. Green said that she wanted a more spiritual husband, but how spiritual was her desire to divorce? I said, "Recently your daughter was sick and you tried to cure her, you didn't reject her. Your husband has some personal challenges and he needs your help and patience, not your rejection." And so we went back and forth. Whatever complaint she shared was certainly not sufficient to break up her young family.

I do not know what Mrs. Green finally decided. I hope she found the inner strength to save her marriage and do her duty as a loving mother and a tolerant wife.

In this and many similar cases, if the people involved are sincere, God will help them to improve their lives, without drastic and unrighteous steps, like divorcing. Actually, as I will discuss later, even empirical research shows that many unhappy marriages can turn around in a few years when the spouses stick together. A famous Christian formula for marriage says "Till death do you part." It doesn't say "till the first rough patch do you part" or "Till the first irresponsible astrologer do you part."

### **Three Key Dimensions**

I have many stories to tell, but there are three concepts we

must first touch upon. The first is dharma. This Sanskrit word has been translated in many ways in English but basically means the set of behaviors that are in line with universal law. Dharma refers to our personal duty and obligations, our righteous vocation. It encompasses all activities that are proper and appropriate for our situation, aligned with divinely instituted order and justice. Those who perform their dharma are on the path of progress; their loyalty to their duty and their morality make them happier, productive, peaceful and more fulfilled. Dharma also protects them from psychological problems; they develop clearer and stronger minds. This sense of harmony spreads to every aspect of their lives, including their personal relationships.

The second fundamental concept is karma, the laws of action and reaction. Whatever we do has a consequence, which often gets carried over into our next life. Planetary positions indicate your dharma and karma in this life; they can show you the dharma that you must perform and the lesson that you must learn, and how you can improve your karma by good deeds. Of course there will be a balance of good and bad actions. Imagine a serial killer who contributes to improve the city's landscape by planting trees. He may plant a whole park and that's to his credit, but he's still a serial killer! The two things don't wipe each other out.

Finally, we must consider the fickle nature of the mind, always dancing between acceptance and rejection, liking and disliking. The mind's functions are thinking, feeling and willing, and the progressive person must learn to

control the mind's activities. It's amazing how powerful the mind can be! You are not the mind, and you need to choose your thoughts very carefully. You are not your television, and the stream of programs is not you. Similarly you are not your mind, and you are not the stream of thoughts and emotions that cross your mind. Just as you choose what TV channels to watch, you need to decide which thoughts and feelings to cultivate and which ones to reject.



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2.

## How to Mess Up Your Life with Astrologers

*The great thought, the great concern, the great anxiety  
of men is to restrict, as much as possible, the limits  
of their own responsibility.*

—Giosué Borsi

People tell things to astrologers that they don't tell anyone else. Opening up to a reliable advisor can be of great help, but here is a list of things you should avoid:

1. Going to an unqualified astrologer.
2. Asking the wrong questions.
3. Misquoting the astrologer.
4. Misinterpreting what the astrologer said.
5. Not following good advice from the astrologer.

Almost everyone is interested to know about the future, therefore some people take up astrology as a profession although they are not qualified. This gross misuse and abuse contributed to the fall of astrology into disrepute. This situation is compounded by the absence of

certification and quality control; anyone can call himself “astrologer” and run the risk of ruining people’s lives. Some of these astrologers are so obviously unprepared that after a few minutes with them someone who knows a little about astrology may regret having gone to see them. Other clients, more ignorant or gullible, may never realize how dangerous these consultants are and carelessly take their conclusions as valid. There are also astrologers who might have studied – having done their homework so to say – but are incapable of practically helping their clients, as they are lost in their mathematical calculations without the expertise and the sensibility to relate what they see on the chart to the life of the person in front of them. There is another category of astrologers who really have no idea of the purposes of astrology and the consequences of misusing it.

Having said this, there are also a rare few astrologers who are indeed qualified: They know the science, they have a natural inclination for the practice, and they are expert in tactfully conveying what the clients need to hear. Again, these are rare, but they do exist. I wish to go on record as offering them my respects. They are true friends of the distressed and help people find their path in life. When you go to see them, don’t waste their time simply asking *what* will happen; try to learn *why* things happen.

### **Curiosity Is Not Enough to Learn Astrology**

First of all, since the astrological chart reveals the psychology and aptitude of a person, we can expect



that a good astrologer's natal chart will show particular symptoms, revealing that he has acquired the necessary karmic assets. In other words the blessings of the planets would be evident in his horoscope. I meet many people who tell me that they want to become astrologers, but not everyone can become one, just like not everyone can become an opera singer or a university professor. If you are thinking of learning astrology or are already dabbling in it, consider the following general prerequisites:

- Clear and strong mind.
- Good speaking ability.
- Good power of intuition.
- Good counseling skills.
- Training under a qualified astrology guru (who has checked the chart of the candidate and considered him fit for learning).
- Proper grasp of the methodology (without whimsically mixing and matching different systems and techniques).
- Strong ethical and moral principles.
- Ability to discern the proper path within complex situations.
- Wisdom and philosophical insight supported by bona fide holy scriptures.

Many people have interest in mystical and esoteric subjects, but interest and curiosity are not enough. Some people become astrologers because they have psychological problems that they want to solve. They get involved in the hope of finding their own solutions, but in reality they end up only causing problems for others. They often project their psychological disturbances on others by focusing on the challenging, “negative” aspects of their clients’ charts.

### **Paranoia-producing Astrologers**

One morning I was in the temple room praying, and one of my clients came in. She is a young lady named Mrs. Pink. As her name suggests, she is often dressed in pink. She also likes wearing heavy makeup – today, her green eyes were colored with bluish-silver eye shadow and black eyeliner. To accompany this, she had brown mascara and dark pink lipstick. I could tell by her hurried demeanor that something was on her mind.

I had met her five years before, when she had come to me for a consultation. Now she was married and had a cute little daughter. Pink had been talking to lots of people, including other astrologers, about her marriage problems.

She said to me, “I need to talk to you! Another astrologer did my astrological chart and it said there were terrible things in my future! When you did my chart did you see these terrible things?”

I had been praying and the scene was very tranquil. Now it was like I was being bombarded with rapid machine-gun fire from her pink lipsticked mouth. I told her that I hadn't seen terrible things in her future.

She reloaded and started firing again. "Didn't you see that I will have several diseases attacking me? You never mentioned any of this! The astrologer said my future is really bad and it will take many, many rebirths until I can become liberated! But doesn't that depend on Krishna?"

She was blinking her eyes so fast it was scaring me. While she continued her furious babbling and blinking, I started thinking. Why do people go to astrologers? And, if they have to go, why don't they stick to just one astrologer and relax? Do they want to do something about their problems or do they just want to hear about them? Don't they want peace? Why do they expect that their future will be a bed of roses? This woman was married, had a wonderful daughter and had plenty of money. She was also living a spiritual life, learning to depend on God and surrender to her mission in life. Why did she want to complicate her life by running to all of these astrologers?

I can confidently say that in this case the astrologer was mistaken; first of all the chart did not indicate the type of terrible health problems he had predicted. Second, even if it were so, what was the use of telling her such disempowering and depressing information? If I see a chart that indicates serious disease I would simply advise the client to focus on healthy habits such as good food and exercise; I would also help to build awareness of the

nature of this world, where disease and death come to everyone. What on earth was this astrologer's business in giving her this information? This became revealed as the conversation with Pink progressed.

When the torrent of rapid-fire words ceased, I said to her, "Look, I don't know what this astrologer told you or why he told it to you, so I can't tell you what he meant. But birth, death, old age and disease are inevitable for everyone."

"But he said it's going to be terrible! He said I have terrible planets in the house of health and that this would destroy my health and marriage. He said it'll be especially devastating for me emotionally. I'm really scared!"

She went on talking, mostly repeating over and over again what the astrologer had said, while blinking her eyes like crazy. This gave me more time to think. Unless this astrologer she'd seen was clearly unqualified, I could see no reason why he would mislead her. Maybe he was telling her things about the astrological planets as if reading from a textbook, with no sensitivity for her feelings, and this naturally scared her. An astrologer's job requires great sensitivity. What he tells the clients can influence them for the rest of their lives. A real astrologer doesn't just say what he sees. He must understand the psychology of his clients and tell them what they need to hear to improve, change and move on in life. He must be wise, cautious and helpful, encouraging people to perform their dharma and explaining what needs to be changed to achieve this.

I interrupted her a moment, “Pink, what was the astrologer’s name?”

She said, “His name is Ron Ded. Maybe you know him? Is he a good astrologer? Do you see the same things he sees? He saw terrible things in my chart! And he asked me to buy these gemstones for which I have paid a fortune.”

“Aha!” I thought, “Gemstones; of course – especially expensive ones... I see... was this the reason to scare this poor lady? To sell her a few stones and make a few bucks?”

Yes, I knew Ron Ded. He had actually come to me for counseling a few years before, in Europe, at one time when his life was in a mess. He had just ended his marriage and abandoned his family to marry again, but then he broke up with the second wife as well. When he came to me for a reading he was struggling and his reputation was in ruins, although he was still “counseling” others and teaching them astrology. In his chart and palms I unfortunately saw no sensitivity or wisdom and I wondered how he could be an astrologer. How could he interpret and deliver astrological information to people in a helpful way? His life was in a shambles, how could he help others?

After the reading, I had advised Ron, “Be careful in telling others about their karma and their dharma because you aren’t performing your own dharma very well. You may end up absorbing the bad karma of the people who seek your help.” It seems that Ron didn’t change his ways, and was now trying to squeeze money from this

impressionable young woman by selling some gemstones through scare-tactics.

I didn't tell any of this to Pink, she was too caught up in her imaginary calamities. Plus, I knew that there was more going on inside her than what she was telling me. I told her, "Well, I don't know much about his astrological competency, but what I see in your chart is that you need to work on yourself emotionally by doing meditation, and gain strength both mentally and physically. As I told you at our previous consultation, you should perform exercises everyday and also honor Lord Narasimhadeva [the Lord and controller of Mars] by circumambulating His temple twenty-one times a day. The exercising can help you utilize your passion in a productive way and maintain good health. Approaching the Lord can solve deeper issues and build your relationship with and dependence on Him. It's all about relationships and it's all personal. Dear Pink, astrological solutions are not about stones; the power behind the stones – or behind anything else – are these personalities. They control the planets. So, when we endeavor with faith and determination to modify our mentality for the good, the planetary dignitaries notice our change and clear the path before us towards perfection. They are also not like machines into which we throw coins and we get back some gift. It's about loving dealings with the persons around and above you. They don't need the ceremonies we might offer them – the plate of food, or the lamps – what you're really making is an offering of love."

Somehow Pink was partly relieved of her imaginary

worries about terrible health problems, but I knew that fear still lurked in the back of her mind. Ron Ded was dead wrong. He made serious mistakes in his calculations (in reading the chart he missed some important positive influences that counteracted the negative ones); he was wrong in telling horror stories about future illnesses thus creating unnecessary nervousness; and of course he was unethical if he did that only to sell some astrological merchandise. Better to never meet such an astrologer.

### **Breeding Disaster through Data Dump**

I have met so many people who were misled by astrologers. They were told to do things that no true astrologer would ever advise – such as whimsically dumping their spouses or perform (costly) rituals to change a child's nature (as if a simple ceremony could change the mindset accumulated in thousands of lifetimes...). In these cases, when the clients later consulted me, I was left with a huge mess to clean up; many strange ideas to correct and many false assumptions to remove. Sometimes I felt like having moved into a house that had been trashed by the previous occupant. An unqualified astrologer can truly sow the seeds of destruction in the minds of people. One astrologer told a woman that her second marriage would be better. Because of this, she began neglecting her present marriage and letting it go. This then caused nothing but pain and trouble for all involved.

In the ancient scripture known as the *Garuda Purana* it is said that someone who misleads others shall be born

blind in the next life.

There is a certain etiquette that astrologers must follow. Culture is one important factor. They must understand the social structure and etiquette of the client's culture. Otherwise, the information they tell the client can be easily misinterpreted and misapplied. The astrologer's role is not just to impart information, he must also understand the mentality of his clients and strive to help people benefit and keep their commitments in life.

An American astrologer, Brown Warner, told a client, an Indian lady, Puja, that her nature was to be very independent-minded and violent, not caring for the pain she caused. Puja was already struggling in her relationship with her husband and children due to her becoming angry very often. Until she consulted Brown, Puja was only a little independent and mildly aggressive, but Brown's reading emboldened her; now she seemed to believe that unrestricted defiance and uncontrolled rage were her true dharma! Puja started throwing frying pans at her husband at the slightest disagreement; she started beating her children for minor mistakes. That astrologer didn't bother to indicate how she could productively channel her energy. Brown just reinforced her destructive tendencies and promoted a false identity centered on fury. If astrologers can't give positive advice then it's better to at least avoid telling something that pushes clients to assume a wrong sense of self. The clients then rationalize, "The astrologer told me so; you know, it's in my chart." Sometimes people develop warped attitudes even if they didn't have them before.



Internet astrology readings, which are done without much prior information about the client's situation and psychology, can also lead to many misunderstandings. Personal dealings are always the best.

Of course, even if the astrologer has the person's best interests at heart in advising, the suggestions can be easily misinterpreted. Many people are foolish and ill-motivated, even if the astrologer tries to warn them, they tend to make things up and prefer to take the warning as a firm prediction. One very humble and saintly astrologer once told a client, who was struggling with his marriage, "Bruno, you have to be careful; you have two marriages indicated in your chart." That was it. Hearing that he would have a new, different wife, Bruno was in ecstasy, and immediately started looking for another woman. The astrologer's intent was to save Bruno's marriage, but he shared what he saw in the chart without understanding Bruno's hidden motivation and his eagerness to find an escape route from a difficult situation. Bruno swiftly dumped his wife and children. Later he tried to get a court order to have the children back, but the court regarded him as irresponsible for having abandoned them in the first place and ruled against him. Bruno and his family had to go through so much anxiety and pain, which perhaps could have been avoided by presenting the reading in a more tactful, experienced way.

## What Are You Looking for?

Some people keep jumping from one astrologer to the next. Once in Mexico, a lady, Lydia, came for a consultation. She told me that I was the 28th astrologer she had seen. I wondered, “What does she want to know that the other 27 couldn’t tell her? And how many more will she see after me?” She was looking for direction from a hodgepodge of astrology, New Age, Feng-shui, Christianity, local shamanism and so on. Despite being filled with a heap of healers, priests, astrologers and other colorful characters, her life was miserable and her problems seemed to increase every day. She was going nowhere. Lydia was into all things Indian (besides being into all things Chinese, Andean, and so on); she asked me if she could take birth in India in her next life. I thought, “In India where? In what family?” She seemed to think that everyone in India was enlightened or something. I told her, “Lydia, if you want to find water you should dig in one place and keep digging. If you dig here, there and everywhere, making only very shallow progress, you will never find water and your thirst will never be quenched.” Poor thing. She was a sweet lady, but so scattered and confused.

Another tendency I have found in clients is that of misquoting the astrologer; they twist and turn the words of the astrologer to support their own preconceived ideas and plans. In this way they mess up their lives by not really listening to any good advice. Sometimes clients

unjustifiably blame their problems and their decisions on the astrologer. Two types of people tend to do that: Firstly, those who blindly follow whatever the astrologer says without ensuring that they're legitimate. Many unqualified astrologers roam the world, dispensing foolish advice, and it's the responsibility of the seeker to discern good astrologers and bad ones, and to recognize productive suggestions and destructive ones. The second type are those who approach astrology with a fixed objective and motivation; they want to believe in something, and they will somehow get to the point of "hearing" what they want to hear from the astrologer – and of course they disregard the big picture, picking and choosing only those words that confirm their views. As drug-traffickers exist because there are drug users, there are so many frauds because there are many insincere people.

Sometimes astrologers, the trained ones, become very proud of their knowledge and the mathematical accuracy of their calculations. They might start sensing and enjoying the power they wield over the lives of others. They may start relishing the influence they have built up over a certain public, but they should always remember that Vedic astrology (or *Jyotish*) comes ultimately from God and He should receive the glory of its accuracy and utility. We astrologers only use the science given from above, passed down through chains of realized teachers. We cannot claim any ownership; and if we become puffed-up we are only showing off borrowed plumes.

As human beings we tend to forget the details of our lives. You probably can't remember what you ate four

days ago for breakfast, or what clothes you wore a week ago. How can you expect to remember all you have done in this life? And what about what you have done in previous lives? How can you remember all that has contributed to your current karma? There is nothing that an astrologer can tell about you that you are not responsible for. We must understand that our past choices have brought about our present. Likewise, how we react to our present circumstances will bring about our future. The word karma simply means “action.” Every action creates a reaction. When we act with a pure motivation, basing our desires and hopes on the holy scriptures, the action creates a better future, a better person. If we are willing to tolerate the unpleasant aspects of our situation, willing to learn from it and to analyze ourselves with the aim to improve, this will help us to transcend the material problems we face today. How we react to what happens is more important than what happens.

### **Imposing Arbitrary Values**

Another mistake astrologers sometimes make is to project onto the client their ideas of what is important in life. Just as in the case of Kuldeep, a young man from Delhi. The astrologer had told his parents that Kuldeep’s life would be full of troubles, and that he could not become successful in anything; on top of that, his marriage would be a disaster. This made the whole family feel miserable. When he came to see me, Kuldeep was going through a particularly difficult time. It was a fact that he did not

have a great chart in terms of material prosperity but there were positive elements. He could participate in significant projects by assisting others. The chart showed that Kuldeep possessed beautiful qualities like selflessness, gratitude and humility. I encouraged him to focus on taking minor roles assisting someone successful and to do them well. I explained to him that prayer, worship and devotional service will actually change karma.

I was somewhat pleasantly surprised at how seriously he took my advice. Kuldeep started practicing *bhakti-yoga*, the path of devotion, and after three years his life changed considerably. He is now employed in a large temple, and is in charge of the finance department – a position given him due to his loyalty and sincerity. I should say that because he changed his outlook on life, his life also shaped accordingly. Externally things didn't change much, but his attitude transformed and Kuldeep found his internal peace and satisfaction. The astrologer was looking in Kuldeep's chart for signs of fame, money and prestige – things that apparently were vital to the astrologer – but forgot to recognize Kuldeep's wealth of unpretentious but precious characteristics. In this way the astrologer discouraged Kuldeep and his whole family. What was the use of his reading? Astrologers must encourage people to be the best they can and build on their strengths. Everyone has some useful traits. Astrologers should not project their ideas of success on people. If an astrologer values intellectualism over everything, he might tell someone with a simple mind that his life is useless. One who values money may tell someone with not much wealth in his

chart that his life is useless. Another may think health is the most important thing, and if he sees sickness he may say that the chart is useless. Actually it might simply be that these astrologers are themselves useless.

### **On a Need-to-Know Basis**

Discrimination is also essential: Not all that an astrologer sees in the chart needs to be told; not everything is useful for the client to know. For example Jana Jiva, an Indian astrologer, seems to like telling everything about the future of his clients, whether they asked for it or not, and whether it would be helpful for them or not. He told his South African client Manas, for instance, that his father would die in less than five years. Manas's mind was already prone to agitation and anxiety, after hearing that prediction he lost his sleep and became always apprehensive. At that time Manas was newly married; both his wife and his mother were of strong character and naturally they didn't get along. Manas lived in a different city than his parents, but due to his trepidation for his father, he would often visit them in Johannesburg, bringing his wife along. The wife hated these visits as every time sparks would fly between her and her mother-in-law. But Manas kept pushing her to comply with his mother's wishes. Actually at that point, among the family members, only Manas knew of the prophecy of the astrologer; Manas was thinking, "Since my father will die within the next five years, my mother will come to live with me. So my wife must now change her attitude and become totally

subservient to my mother.”

Things got badly tense between Manas and his wife. He now wanted to move back with his parents; his wife unwillingly followed him but Manas’ mother demanded more and more submission. Manas kept supporting his mother, thinking, “She is soon going to be a widow, we should be kind to her...” The home was becoming a pressure-cooker, with the two women increasingly getting on each other’s nerves. Even when the mother’s demands were objectively too much, Manas still went along, forcing his wife to tolerate. When Manas told me the whole story it was almost too late. I explained to him that we should not allow the predictions of the future to exaggeratedly affect our present. Manas confessed that he kept consulting the astrologer Jana Jiva for every single decision he had to make. He had become an astrology-junky, a common condition among people with weak minds. He believed the astrologer knew the outcome of every decision (although Manas could see that the situation at home was worsening by the day).

Following my advice, Manas is now trying to resolve his addiction to predictive astrology; he is working on building the courage to take responsibility for his choices, and raise his level of faith in God. He had become obsessed with asking “What will happen? And what will happen next? And next?” and his life had become increasing complicated – to the point of almost breaking up his marriage. (In fact his wife went back to her parents for a few months – unable to take the dictatorship imposed by Manas’ mother – but she’s now back with her husband.)

You might be wondering what happened to Manas' father; did he really die as predicted? Actually that prediction is only three-years old, and so – even if accurate – there are still a couple of years to go. In any case what's important to know is that sooner or later we will all die, as the death of this body is inevitable. In this case though, Manas' father is already seventy-eight, so it's nothing too surprising if an eighty-year old man passes on. Why should such a lackluster prediction be allowed to affect one's life so deeply?

The standard etiquette, we could call it a professional norm, is that an astrologer should not tell the client more than a certain percentage of what he sees – say about fifty percent. He must see how much the client can process. Will the client – as in the case of Manas – overreact to a prediction? Another reason is that clients tend to pick and choose – as if an astrological reading was a chocolate box – and only take what they like. The wise astrologer should only tell them what they need to hear.

It sometimes happens that a client gives an incorrect time of birth; the chart then describes something different than the karma of the client and the reading is wrong. At other times the astrologer may make a mistake in calculation and then offer a mistaken analysis. In that case the predictions are erroneous and the client may get stuck with statements based on a bogus reading. Often the client identifies with the wrong reading and turns the forecast into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Many, many risks are involved in an astrological session.





## Costly Mistakes

Bill, a young Australian man, dreamed of having lots of money. He consulted an astrologer who told him, “A great time is ahead of you to make money! But that time is short and after it’s gone it will be very difficult for you to make money, for the rest of your life. So make sure you make a lot in this period.” It appears that Bill got excited at hearing about the “good time” part. Actually according to his chart Bill was prone to cheating. He started enticing people to invest into a Ponzi scheme, a fraudulent operation paying returns from the investors’ own money and the money paid by subsequent investors, rather than from any actual profit. He organized an ad campaign, promising great gains, and quickly attracted dozens of gullible people, eager to get unusually high interests. Money started flowing in. Bill wanted to know what to do with that money so as to make more and more, and so one of Bill’s friends brought him to see me. What I saw in his chart was that actually this was not at all a good time for him, but a very risky time. He could easily end up in jail. It appeared as a karmic trap, a test of his willingness to be honest or give in to his deceitful side.

I explained the dangers in detail, but Bill didn’t like my reading. He kept asking, “Tell me how I can get away with this thing, without losing money or getting caught.” I told him, “You cannot get away from God’s laws – sooner or later the consequences will catch up with you.” Actually I could see that his Jupiter could prevent him from going to jail (at least in this life), but there was a strong indication about loss of money. I didn’t tell him

about his Jupiter, because that would have encouraged him to continue cheating. I told him that he had reactions from his bad karma coming up soon; if he stopped these illegal activities he could be saved, and might also get a chance to make money legally. I told him to return the money to the investors. He did not listen. In one year he had lost everything. He had also lost his credibility and respect among his friends.

Some astrologers don't act in their clients' best interest. They may lack the proper understanding of the forces involved, or they might simply be eager to please their clients. For whatever reason, bad astrological advice can go a long way in messing up a person's life. It's the astrologer's duty to make sure their clients act according to dharma – which in the long run is always in their best interest. But what to speak about inspiring his clients to follow their dharma; sometimes the astrologer himself is a sinful and corrupt rascal.

### **Sextrologers**

Once at a convention in North America, someone introduced me to an “astrologer.” He had long hair, tied into a pony-tail, and an artificially warm mannerism. For a couple of minutes we spoke about our experiences in that part of the world but very soon he turned flirtatious and said something like, “Those pearls look so good on you.” It was a totally inappropriate remark and I cut him off immediately. I left him standing on the spot and joined another conversation. But this short exchange gave me a

hint of how he would deal with other women.

The next day two ladies came for a consultation and expressed how they were cheated in love. After some dialogue they revealed that the “astrologer” from the previous day had slept with both of them. One of them said, “He read me so accurately that I immediately got captivated by his interest in me and my life. When I consulted him I was looking for peace as I was stressed. I fell into his trap. He seduced me by telling me that some sexual therapy would make me feel better. But I feel much worse and I deeply regret it.”

What can I say? This immoral, filthy “sextrologer” allures unchaste and cheap women who easily fall into his trap. Such “astrologers” might know something about planets and signs, but their dirty motivations and unrestrained sensual appetites push them towards a very dark future.





### 3.

## How to Mess Up Your Marriage

*Divorce is an embarrassing public  
admission of defeat.*

–Tracy Letts

For this chapter I chose this painting – The Marriage of the Virgin, by Raphael – to emphasize the sacredness of the marriage vows. This depiction of the wedding of Mary and Joseph can help us remember that when a man and a woman unite in holy matrimony, their commitment to each other transcends the mere confines of their relationship, binding them into a covenant witnessed by the community, the whole universe and first and foremost by God.

Unfortunately the commitment isn't always honored as seriously as it should be, and I am pained to see how many people try to use astrology as a pretext or justification for breaking their marriage. As an example I want to tell you the story of Agata, a Swedish woman who had been consulting me, on and off, for six years. She kept asking me to fix her problems, but without following my advice on how to do it and without taking responsibility for her

actions. She kept making up her own conclusions; she kept extrapolating her own concocted meanings, and kept blaming karma – as if karma were something that casually fell from the sky.

### Trying to Trick

On the first consultation Agata was very eager to get married. She asked me how her marriage would be, and whether she would be happy. I told her: “According to your karma you will have a loyal and honest husband. He will be scholarly, but not rich – there is no wealth indicated for you in this life – but he will love you and your children to the best of his ability and provide all your basic needs. If you are patient and kind with him, and accept this situation, then you can be very happy – but striving for contentment is the key to your success.”

Agata said: “Oh, I have always been poor and so I don’t mind; I only want a nice man who is also famous.” But I knew that she wasn’t telling me everything. I had also noticed how her Venus was causing excessive imagination and that her Moon was in the house of speech, which in her case indicated that she would have the tendency to speak harshly. I told her: “Be careful what you imagine *fame* to be, and be kind to your future husband.”

At our second appointment – with Agata still unmarried – it became obvious why she had readily accepted the idea of marrying someone popular but not rich. She had made up a theory that a popular man would also surely

become rich. In this way she was scheming to trick the law of karma and have a famous *and* rich husband after all. After searching here and there for that special person Agata was becoming desperate. She rejected many boys who were suitable for her, but who had simple jobs and therefore not much in the way of income. Finally she chose Verner, a young man who was renowned in his circle for his scholarship and his intelligence.

Soon after the marriage Agata realized that her concocted theory (that any man of renown would eventually build up a big bank account) was not working. Verner wasn't becoming any richer. In fact part of his attractiveness was that he was unattached to making money and people therefore tended to trust him. Agata poured out her lamentation to me; she felt cheated by karma and believed that through astrology she could get what she wanted. I consoled her, listing the many good things she had achieved by marrying Verner; I advised her to be satisfied with her scholarly but penniless spouse, "Above everything," I warned her, "do not become a sharp-tongued wife, one always eager to point out mistakes and casting bitter criticism." She listened – or at least she *heard* what I said – but at that time her pressing question was: "When will I have a child?" Her new plan was clear to me: She wanted to make Verner a father and, using the child as a pretext, push him to work hard to earn more money. I told her that this plan was not going to work either.

After the child was born and the attempts to pressure Verner into becoming wealthy did not work, Agata assumed a frustrated, angry attitude and started going

around bad-mouthing her husband and complaining about him, poisoning the mind of whoever she met. She then started contacting whoever she knew, begging them for financial help. Obviously Verner did not approve of this: They weren't rich, but food, shelter and basic needs weren't lacking.

Through her scheming and begging Agata's economic condition did improve a little; but in the process she destroyed the peace at home, creating so much tension with her constant complaining. Now Agata was contemplating divorce, hoping the next husband would be better (in the sense of "better off"). She again started to harass me with questions such as: "When can I find another man?" "Is this person the man for me?" "What about this other one? Is he my next husband?" I wasn't even answering her queries, they were simply immoral and illegitimate, but she kept bothering me. One day she asked: "Please tell me what to do. I cannot live with Verner, he is too detached, too poor to provide me with luxury, too much into his books..." blah, blah, blah; she went on and on. Since all my previous experiences with her indicated that she was not interested to listen to me and since I could not support – in any way, shape or form – the idea of her divorcing and remarrying, I simply told her: "Please ask your spiritual preceptor and do what he says."

Initially she was reluctant, knowing that it was a tough call to get a green light for divorce from a religious teacher. She didn't really like my advice, but finally she relented and approached her mentor. The day after she spoke with him she appeared very confident, almost radiant.



She told me that now she was really sure that she should divorce. I wondered how that would be possible; but it turned out that all her preceptor told her was: “Do what is best for your son.” I was so disappointed and upset with her. Any honest person with half a brain would clearly understand that for her little son the divorce could be devastating, a psychological trauma with life-long consequences. Any person interested in doing the right thing would understand the advice as an instruction to remain as a loyal wife to her present husband and a caring mother to her child. But not Agata, she spun a convoluted conclusion: “Because Verner is not a good father for the child – because of not providing us with much needed opulence – the best thing for the child is that I divorce Verner and marry a more materialistic man, one who will provide more material things for us.”

I was disgusted at her stubbornness, bordering on cruelty – disgusted, but not surprised. As a last-ditch attempt at inspiring sanity I told her to be careful, that her karma was strong and that *whoever* she married, her fate was to have only little luxuries. Again she didn’t listen. Actually she was already secretly in touch with another man and this unlawful relationship had already turned her into an anxious wreckage of a woman. Despite Agata’s hopes in this “savior,” this man suddenly ran away with another married woman, never to be seen again. As this book goes to print Agata is still legally married to Verner, but she is wiggling and twisting, and still planning to divorce.

## **Does Divorce Make People Happy?**

Besides the considerations of karma and dharma, virtue and sin, social, psychological and economic aspects of this issue, I would like to share with you the results of a study on unhappy marriages; you might find it surprising – but highly encouraging:

Call it the “divorce assumption.” Most people assume that a person stuck in a bad marriage has two choices: stay married and miserable or get a divorce and become happier. But now come the findings from the first scholarly study ever to test that assumption, and these findings challenge conventional wisdom. Conducted by a team of leading family scholars headed by University of Chicago sociologist Linda Waite, the study found no evidence that unhappily married adults who divorced were typically any happier than unhappily married people who stayed married.

Even more dramatically, the researchers also found that two-thirds of unhappily married spouses who stayed married reported that their marriages were happy five years later. In addition, the most unhappy marriages reported the most dramatic turnarounds: among those who rated their marriages as very unhappy, almost eight out of 10 who avoided divorce were happily married five years later . . . The study found that on average

unhappily married adults who divorced were no happier than unhappily married adults who stayed married when rated on any of 12 separate measures of psychological well-being. Divorce did not typically reduce symptoms of depression, raise self-esteem, or increase a sense of mastery. This was true even after controlling for race, age, gender, and income.

Even unhappy spouses who had divorced and remarried were no happier on average than those who stayed married. . . . Why doesn't divorce typically make adults happier? The authors of the study suggest that while eliminating some stresses and sources of potential harm, divorce may create others as well. The decision to divorce sets in motion a large number of processes and events over which an individual has little control that are likely to deeply affect his or her emotional well-being. These include the response of one's spouse to divorce; the reactions of children; potential disappointments and aggravation in custody, child support, and visitation orders; new financial or health stresses for one or both parents; and new relationships or marriages.

Vedic astrology can help to understand how unhappy marriages get happier: People go through different periods of planetary transit. Depending on each individual chart, some of these periods can be very destabilizing in various areas of life, including relationships; but as implied in the word *transit*, these periods come and go.

After a challenging time follows a more rewarding one; for instance after the Rahu period (which is taxing for most people), the naturally beneficial Jupiter period comes. Those who endure the time of pressure and stick to their commitments, including marriage, find that their relationships improve tremendously.

### **Sad Sisters**

Sometimes I see women with wonderful husbands create imaginary problems and ruin their lives completely. In other cases, some women have fine husbands, exactly what they deserve, but they think that's not enough for them. To illustrate this, I'm going to tell the stories of two sisters from England, Christie and Maggie.

When I first met them eight years ago, in Italy, Christie was married to a Norwegian man named Sunny and they had a cute little daughter. During the consultation Christie told me that she was very sad; she wanted to know how she could become happy. She said, "I wanted so badly to be married, and when I got married, I wanted to have a child, and now I have one. I wanted to travel the world, and now that's what I'm doing. So what more do I need to be happy?"

I told her, "You know, there's a permanent kind of happiness that's beyond everything in this world. The Vedic literature shows us that eternal service to God can give us unlimited happiness."

Her sister Maggie had been married for four years to a man from Scotland named Dan, but now they were divorced. Dan was soft-spoken and gentle, and Christie had no idea why Maggie had divorced him. But I was afraid that Christie, by always talking with Maggie, would somehow compare her own situation with Maggie's, and be influenced to see divorce as a way out of her doldrums. I advised Christie to avoid any rash decision and not listen to her sister.

After five years Christie showed up at my door in India. "Christie!" I said, opening the door, "So good to see you!"

Before even one word could come out of her mouth, she burst into tears. She said, "You warned me about not creating problems! You told me that my husband was the best I could have! I listened to my sister and I left him, and now I'm heart-broken!" What I had feared had happened – she and Sunny had divorced. Christie had come to India with her daughter and she was now standing at my door in tears.

I invited her in and, between sobs, she began telling me her story. She said, "After we divorced, I went looking for adventure. I began seeing a Nepali boy, Kapish. We've been seeing each other for a while but he doesn't want to marry me. Sometimes I feel used by him. I really need your help. Please do my chart again and tell me what I should do."

I knew this Kapish. I had met him before and I had

noticed that he had no heart line at all on his palm. He was certainly peculiar. He was always thinking about how to get something out of others. My impression was that he was like a leech living off others.

She went on, “We’ve been living together in his house, but he charges me rent. And sometimes he asks for money from me, and he never tells me why!”

“Kapish charges you rent on the house he owns?!” I said incredulously.

“Yes.”

“Christie,” I said, “This relationship is bad for you on all levels – physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. You’ve got to get out of it. Where is Sunny now?”

“Sunny?” She said as if the name were a distant memory. “He lives in a house nearby. You see, my daughter is very attached to him, so we thought he should stay in her life. Oh, leaving him was the biggest mistake in my life! I cheated myself with Kapish and my daughter is suffering for all of this too. I’m sadder now than I’ve ever been!”

And now a whole new torrent of tears came pouring out. She cried bitterly while her daughter looked at the floor, saying nothing.

Christie was into practicing yoga and that’s why they were here. They had all come to India to live, but not to live together. I knew Sunny, and I knew that he was a gentle soul who was ready to take her back if she would make amends.

After I consoled her and her crying subsided, I said, “Christie, I advise you to go back to Sunny and talk to him about getting back together. I believe it would be the best decision for both of you and your daughter. You can regain that former happiness.”

“I don’t know,” she said bitterly, “he’s with a German woman now.”

I was trying to be comforting as a friend, but I had to raise my voice a bit to get my point across. “Come on, you did much worse than that! At least he waited a few years after *you* left him! How can you be bitter with him? Anyway Christie, I really think you can all be happy again. And you won’t have to put up with Kapish and all of this suffering anymore.”

The first time I had met Christie and her sister Maggie, in Italy, it was at a yoga center located in a beautiful farm thirty minutes outside of Florence. It was amazing that even at such an opulent, calming and serene place these women still could have no peace or calm. They both had one thing in common – lamentation. Christie was sad because she had everything, and Maggie because she had nothing, having just divorced Dan. Maggie went around desperately looking for her second husband. And anyone would do, even if he had a wife and family already. She had begun seeing a man there and she asked me to do a reading for her to see if he would marry her.

“Okay, what’s his name?” I asked her.

“His name is Mauro.”

I thought for a moment and said, “Do you mean the Mauro who works here on the farm?”

She gave me a bright smile, “Yes, that’s him!”

“Mauro who is married and has a son!?”

“Yes,” she said again, and a little bit of the brightness faded from her smile.

“Maggie,” I said, “how could you ask such a thing? Even if he says he likes you, do you expect him to leave his family for you? And if he did that, what kind of a husband would he make?! He’ll do the exact same thing to you, won’t he? How could you ever trust him?”

She wasn’t smiling now. She said, “Just do the reading please.”

“No, I won’t.” I told her, “I don’t want any part in your immoral plans for snatching a married man and breaking a family.” Like Christie, Maggie was practicing yoga. Isn’t the entire foundation of all yoga systems morality, loyalty and following the path of dharma? I wonder how much she was getting out of it.

After six years I saw Maggie again, this time in India. Her sister Christie had told me that she had married again (without breaking any family) and she had a little daughter. Maggie came right up to me and said, “I want an appointment with you!”

I told her, “You are married now to a loving husband. You have a beautiful baby daughter. You don’t need astrology





anymore. But I can make a chart for your daughter if you'd like me to."

I am well aware of how people find creative ways of ruining their lives with astrology. I wasn't eager to see her do it.

She said, "Oh no, I know it may not seem like it, but I have terrible problems in my marriage. I think I want to leave my husband."

Her second husband's name was Jeff, an American. He wasn't interested in yoga practices like she was, but he was a very straightforward man who had a sincere love and affection for his wife.

Maggie said, "I married Jeff, but I'm into practicing yoga. I want to live a clean life, but he smokes. I practice meditation but he likes to watch TV. I like it to be quiet and peaceful at home, but he is often talking loudly... When I try to force him to do meditation and give up smoking, he gets angry. I want to follow the yoga system and have a pure life. But Jeff irritates me and we end up fighting and shouting at each other. Please look at my chart and tell me when this marriage will end."

I was wondering, "Why isn't she asking when will my marriage be fixed instead?" She had known everything about Jeff's lifestyle in the beginning itself, they got to love each other and they had married; his smoking or his lack of interest in yoga wasn't an unexpected change of behavior. What could I say to her? Would trying to persuade her to save her marriage make any difference?

Even though she was practicing yoga and meditation, she completely missed the point. Living a clean life comes from having a clean mind. Since it comes from within, it doesn't matter if the husband smokes or watches television. Besides that, you can't *force* someone to meditate or practice yoga. The motivation must come from within. She wanted a pure life; but what's pure about breaking another marriage and divorce from the father of her little daughter?

Maggie said, "My husband is not spiritual, not Vedic. I can't live with him anymore. I want someone more spiritual."

"But Maggie," I said, "according to traditional yoga practice you shouldn't divorce. You should know that we get what we deserve in this life according to our karma."

Since we were in Mayapur, the place of the appearance of Lord Chaitanya – the most merciful manifestation of Lord Krishna – Maggie played the "God is forgiving" card.

"I know," she said, "of course it's a sin for me to leave him. But Lord Chaitanya is so merciful; won't He forgive me and send me a better husband?"

But Maggie could've said, "Lord Chaitanya is so merciful; won't He help me fix my marriage?" Why wasn't she thinking like that instead?

Lord Chaitanya's mercy was so encompassing that he had delivered two infamously sinful and violent brothers,

Jagai and Madhai, and bestowed upon them pure love of God. From this point on, they never harmed another living thing, not even an insect. These two great sinners then became outstanding devotees of Lord Chaitanya, became purified of all their bad karma and spent the rest of their lives as saints.

Maggie continued, “There is already another man I have in mind, and he’s so peaceful. Please, tell me if I’ll get him!”

I thought to myself, “Ah, so this is the catch, should I laugh or just walk away? She is already thinking of getting a third husband and she is giving all these ‘yoga excuses.’ And she wants the support of Vedic astrology to mess up her life and destroy her family...” I kept my cool and told her, “Dear Maggie, you have already divorced once; your first husband, Dan, was a good man. There was no reason to divorce him but somehow you did it. That was wrong and totally foolish. Now you also have a daughter and your husband is a dutiful man who is honestly taking care of your family. You should model the yoga ethics you are talking about and stick with him. And be kind to your daughter and spare her this trauma.”

Maggie went to see other astrologers till she found one – a particularly irresponsible one – who supported her idea of divorcing. She left Jeff but could not yet find someone who would marry her.

Christie now would like to go back with Sunny, but there are obstacles. She was married to him before and she

destroyed the marriage on a whim, following the foolish advice of her reckless sister Maggie. I pray these two sad sisters learn their lessons in life as soon as possible, so as to avoid creating more bad karma for themselves. The principles of yoga should teach them satisfaction with their lot in life, not restlessness and immorality.

### **Act in Haste, Repent at Leisure**

Usha had been a friend of mine since school. She always had an impulsive nature. When she was nineteen she married Pradeep, a sweet young man. At the time of their marriage, she was in her Moon period and he was in his Sun period. Their charts showed good compatibility, but I was worried about her impulsiveness. “Usha,” I told her, “Although you two are compatible, you must be careful. Make sure you are always tolerant and communicative.”

“It’s alright,” she said, “We have 97 percent compatibility so everything will be fine!”

I asked her, “What about that 3 percent?”

Here were two young people rushing headlong into marriage. They were both terribly in love and their charts were compatible, but Usha’s immature confidence and impulsive nature scared me. Good compatibility is not enough by itself; we also need common sense and patience to make a relationship work.

Soon enough, there was trouble. She wanted a child – IMMEDIATELY. I had foreseen that this might be a

problem and I had told her to be patient in the matter of having a family. Being in her Moon period, Usha was naturally attracted to family and children. But Pradeep was at the peak of his Sun period, with its focus on career and prestige. I recommended to her to wait to have children, but this went unheeded.

Things got ugly fast. He was saying, “I want to have kids, but not now. I still don’t have a fixed job. I don’t have money and we don’t have a home. We’ll settle down first, and then have a family.”

Usha would retort, “You don’t really want to have children! If you really wanted a family, you wouldn’t care about all of that career stuff. This is just an excuse. We’ll have a child right now or I’m leaving.”

Pradeep was extremely attached to her and he wanted with all his heart to make her happy. He told her, “Alright, to show you that I want to have children, I’ll agree to it. Just give me one and a half years more. If we’re not settled by then, we’ll just have a child anyway.”

This sounded like a reasonable compromise, but it wasn’t enough for Usha. She said, “If you love me, give me a child now or else you’ll lose me!”

I thought she was being irrational and told her so, “You’re not being logical. Why not wait? If you wait, you get a child and you keep a good husband; if you leave, you lose both.”

Here is what she had to say: “My astrologer, Mr.

Purnanand, told me that I'd be unwise in my marriage. And just as he said, I chose the wrong man.”

“No,” I told her, “you chose the right man; the reason for your problems is that you're being unintelligent and short-sighted *now*. You're talking about breaking up a good marriage that can give you great happiness for the rest of your life.”

The end to this story isn't a happy one. Usha ignored my advice, as well as the advice of her family and other elders. She was determined to believe that Pradeep's refusal to immediately have children showed that he wasn't a family man after all. And thus, he wasn't the right one for her.

It has been four years since she left him. Now, she has no child and no husband. Her pride and her assumptions have destroyed her life. And she doesn't have astrology to blame for it. There was an astrological warning about her impulsive nature and she didn't heed it. Astrology told her that she'd have a child, and maybe many children, if she would only wait. But instead, she twisted the reading and lost all she had.

### **The Perfect Match Delusion**

Astrology is often used for matchmaking. But according to how it is used, it can bring two compatible people together into a loving relationship, or it can utterly destroy a perfectly good relationship. For example, in rare cases astrology may show a hundred percent compatibility



between a man and a woman, a “perfect match.” Even if they are a good match, this doesn’t mean that they don’t have their faults and differences or that there won’t be tensions and disagreements. It simply means that they can allow each other to learn the right lessons.

Often in a couple, especially when there is apparent incongruence between the two zodiacal signs, the tendency is to think that what is not working is the other person’s fault. It’s very common to expect our spouse to change and refuse to do so ourselves. We demand that the other change his thinking to align with our views. Add to this the fact that men and women fundamentally think differently, and you’ve got lots of opportunities for trouble.

We also need to take a much broader view of what zodiacal signs mean. For example, let’s say that someone you are considering marrying is a Leo but you’re a Taurus. If you look in a typical book on astrology, it will tell you that Leo and Taurus are not compatible. If you believe this, it will work as a self-fulfilling prophecy and cause problems in your relationship. However, instead of looking at the negatives, you could choose to see the positives. It’s not simply that Leo and Taurus don’t work well together. Leo is a natural leader. Taurus is often more relaxed. As a Taurus, you can let him take the lead and you can follow. This makes it an easier job for you anyway! Every relationship has its strengths and weaknesses.

Here is another example. Your husband is a Leo and you’re a Scorpio. Scorpios like to take charge, but Leos are

natural leaders. In astrology there is no certainty that your relationship won't work based on these characteristics. It simply explains your relationship better to make you more aware of your differences. As a Scorpio, you can at least understand that your Leo husband won't change. Then, you won't be expecting him to.

Astrology is meant to help you understand yourself better so that you know how to deal with things and you know where you must change. It's not for manipulating others and creating more complications in your karma, which will have to be worked out later. It is also not for demanding change from others because of their astrological signs. Rather, it teaches you how to work on yourself.

### **Michelle's Mishap**

I met Michelle for the first time in Paris, France. She exuded an air of friendliness and a happy mood. She was married and had three children. While we spoke the husband was outside, watching the kids while they played in the garden.

At one point Michelle changed her expression into a secretive one, leaned in to me and started to whisper into my ear, "My husband is a very bad man," she said, "he wants to sleep with me every week and he threatens that if I don't then he will sleep with the maid. He has lots of money, but he's not interested in beautiful things like spirituality. I heard that you are an astrologer. I want to divorce him and take my children to another country. Can



you tell me if I can win a case against him in court? If I can't take them all, will I be able to take just my youngest? I love him dearly and my husband isn't a good influence on him."

"I'll save you the expense of the consultation," I told her, "instead of giving you a reading, I'll give you some common sense advice. Your husband is rich and powerful. You will lose the case against him in court. You are impulsive and childish, and it is wrong to divorce your husband. I don't need to see your chart to tell you that."

Michelle acted as though she hadn't heard a word of what I had said. She pressed on, "Please see my hand and tell me what my future holds!"

"This is going to be a long afternoon," I thought to myself. I took Michelle to my room and there started explaining the essence of the Vedas and the essence of yogic practices. I was trying to get her to understand how tolerating life's circumstances is the first step in successfully performing yoga, and it's not just about mantras and exercises.

However, Michelle kept on pressing me to look at her hand, and it occurred to me that if I went along, maybe I could give her a good warning. She was listening with rapt attention to what I was talking about, so maybe she would listen to my advice. I took a good look at her hands. Their texture was smooth and her thumb was flexible – signs of a flickering mind. The line of the head, which indicates rationality, was weaker than the line of the heart, which

shows emotionality (no surprise there!). Her palm was full of worry lines – unnecessary, imaginary preoccupations.

She said to me, “What can you tell me? Do I have a bright future? Will I travel to India? Will I have a nice life? Will I get rid of this terrible man? He says he loves me, but he only controls me! Like, I have to have sex with him whenever he wants. Will my kids be alright?”

I told her, “Like everyone else, you have a small challenge facing you. The challenge is that you must put up with your husband. Peace and calm come from within; they don’t depend on external circumstances. The purpose of the mantras you chant is to bring peace to your heart and soul, not to change your external situation. Besides all of this, you must understand that your husband is going through a tough time. You told me that his business is losing money, so he is stressed about that. Be patient, relax and things will change. Practice mantra yoga and follow its philosophy.”

“But that isn’t practical,” Michelle insisted, “if he is stressed now, that means it’s the perfect opportunity for me to file for divorce. With all of his money problems, he’ll give up the fight and I’ll win!”

Her hand had told me that there wasn’t a better life waiting for her around the corner. This life is what she deserved. I told her, “Don’t fight with your husband. If you try to fight him in court, you’ll lose everything. Please don’t do it. Try to work things out in a reasonable, intelligent way.”

Even though I was angered by her childish, selfish way of thinking, I truly wanted to help her. I didn't want to see another life ruined by bad decisions. Her hand said that she was going through a difficult time with her family. All she needed to do was tolerate things for a while. But there was nothing I could do about her freewill; Michelle could do anything she wanted and it would create a new future for her.

Finally, I told her, "If you choose the path of tolerance and patience, then your turbulent existence will become normal again. You'll always have small challenges to face like your responsibilities at home and a husband that's not as sensitive as you would like him to be. Because of your karma from the past, your task in this life is to learn patience."

I met Michelle again after a couple of years, this time in South India, at a traditional medicine institute in Kerala. She came to me crying and said, "Please! You've got to help me! I should've listened to you. I lost everything – my husband, my children, my money and my freedom."

She went on, "After my divorce I got married again to an Italian. He cheated me! He was never sexually intimate with me. He said that sex is too sacred, so finally I left him and now I'm alone. Please tell me if I'll marry again. Will it be soon?"

At that moment I thought of what the Vedic texts say, that a woman should always be protected; first by her father, then by her husband and finally by her children. Otherwise, they become a burden to society – like this woman standing

before me.

She cried like a small child and was so pathetic that I had no choice but to continue talking to her. Of course I had compassion for her. But all of the terrible things she told me were due to her foolish actions in the past. As she talked, I got the impression that she was hiding some important detail from me. Finally it came out. She said, “Please don’t tell my friends and the other students here. I’m having an affair with the main teacher here. I hope to marry him...” It had taken thirty minutes of drama and histrionics for Michelle to finally tell me this!

I was born and raised in South India and I knew the teacher she was having an affair with. He was an elderly man who was married to a very nice lady. Eventually, he and his wife began living as a retired couple, *vanaprastha* in Sanskrit, which means that officially he was now a celibate. But now he was cheating this foolish French woman who believed that he would marry her.

But he never would. He was in charge of a massive construction project here in which millions of dollars were invested. He would be famous when the project was completed and there was no way he would jeopardize his reputation by marrying Michelle. And anyway, he’d already gotten her to sleep with him, so what more could he want from her? Young women often don’t understand this.

After I explained this, she became angry. She said, “Why is it that I don’t deserve a good relationship? Why do we

have to sneak around?”

I said, “Wasn’t your complaint about your first husband that all he wanted from you was sex? What’s the difference? This teacher is doing the same thing!”

“But he does it with love,” she said.

“Then why doesn’t he marry you? That’s what people in love do.”

“I know he loves me because I feel it!”

“And that’s the whole problem right there,” I said. “You’ve been feeling things all along and that’s what’s led you to this point. You must break it off with this teacher immediately.”

“But I can’t live without sex!” She replied.

“Then why did you leave your first husband?”

“Well,” she said, “that sex was different. He didn’t do it with love or speak sweetly to me.”

I shook my head in disgust. How little she knew! I said, “This man speaks sweetly to you because he’s using you. It’s not that hard to speak sweetly. Your first husband gave you three children and was giving you anything you needed and wanted. That is commitment, that is love.”

When people have a perverted mind, desires that are out of control, and ridiculous ideas about astrology, there is nothing even the world’s best astrologer can do for them. All we can do is pray for their vision to become clear

about karma, dharma and astrology. This knowledge is actually easy to acquire.

Michelle kept coming to me a couple of times asking advice, which I gave, but out of which she followed none and kept messing up her life, going from one man to another and one astrologer to another. I pray to the Supreme Lord to bestow her some intelligence and protect her – from herself.

### **The Downward Spiral**

The stories of Michelle, Maggie, Christie and many others show that as soon as someone – man or woman – starts contemplating an alternative to marital loyalty, a degrading psychological mechanism sets in motion. The *Bhagavad-gita* (6.62-63) illuminates this dynamic:

While contemplating the objects of the senses, a person develops attachment for them, and from such attachment lust develops, and from lust anger arises. From anger, complete delusion arises, and from delusion bewilderment of memory. When memory is bewildered, intelligence is lost, and when intelligence is lost one falls down again into the material pool.

As soon as the idea comes in the mind – “Perhaps I will be happy outside this marriage” – the thought grows and takes shape, almost as if developing a life of its own. The “victim” (who is actually the prey of his own thinking



process) starts *feeling* the option. The idea gets surcharged with fresh waves of emotion as the person contemplates the possibility – “Yes... freedom, adventure, pleasure... a new LOVE” – the notion snowballs into one’s head into a heavenly vision. Unfortunately it’s all false, a mere chimera, like seeing water in the desert. When the ethics of commitment are weak one invests hopes for future happiness into such fantasies. Day by day the alternative to matrimonial fidelity appears more and more realistic, and starts looking as an inevitable development, almost a mandatory step.

### **Ethics at Your Rescue**

Remember the study I mentioned earlier in the chapter, the research showing that two-thirds of unhappy marriages had become happy after five years? The researchers followed up by interviewing fifty-five husbands and wives who had turned their unhappy marriages around. Many of these couples, currently happily married, had experienced prolonged periods of marital unhappiness, often for serious reasons such as infidelity, alcoholism, verbal abuse, emotional neglect, depression, illness, and work setbacks. How were they able to save their marriages? What made them stick through thick and thin and succeed? Let’s look into the findings:

Spouses’ stories of how their marriages got happier fell into three broad headings: the marital endurance ethic, the marital work ethic, and the

personal happiness ethic.

In the marital endurance ethic, the most common story couples reported to researchers, marriages got happier not because partners resolved problems, but because they stubbornly outlasted them. With the passage of time, these spouses said, many sources of conflict and distress eased: financial problems, job reversals, depression, child problems, even infidelity.

In the marital work ethic, spouses told stories of actively working to solve problems, change behavior, or improve communication. When the problem was solved, the marriage got happier. Strategies for improving marriages mentioned by spouses ranged from arranging dates or other ways to more time together, enlisting the help and advice of relatives or in-laws, to consulting clergy or secular counselors, to threatening divorce and consulting divorce attorneys.

Finally, in the personal happiness ethic, marriage problems did not seem to change that much. Instead married people in these accounts told stories of finding alternative ways to improve their own happiness and build a good and happy life despite a mediocre marriage.





## The Power of Commitment

Those interviewed generally didn't think much of divorce; they saw it as a failure, not as an attractive option. They also had friends and relatives who kept encouraging them to stay together. These couples were so committed to their marriage that they were able to endure and overcome whatever challenge showed up in the relationship. And this is a key difference: They entered marriage thinking: "This is it; there is no way back. For my whole life this is going to be my spouse." Not like so many people today, who get married saying, "Let's see if it's going to work out..." and then falter and flicker at the first sign of distress.

My mother-in-law told me a story. She used to paint fine artworks on porcelain and ran a workshop in Rome. One day an American lady ordered a big, expensive hand-painted vase; she explained, "This is for my son's wedding. As this is his first marriage, I want to gift him something special; but for his next marriages I won't spend this much!" My mother-in-law, a woman of healthy traditional values, was shocked. She thought it was weird that this lady was nonchalantly expecting the failure of her son's marriage, as if it were the most natural outcome.

Other research also demonstrated the influence of commitment on marital happiness. The couple staunchly committed to the institution of marriage, and reluctant to divorce, build happier bonds. Some people think that

to avoid divorce, the marriage must be happy; but it's the other way around: To get happier, unhappy couples must first avoid divorce and shun the very idea of it. Researchers also reported that: "unhappily married adults who divorced were no more likely to report emotional and psychological improvements than those who stayed married." In other words they gained *nothing*. "In addition, the most unhappy marriages reported the most dramatic turnarounds: among those who rated their marriages as very unhappy, almost eight out of 10 who avoided divorce were happily married five years later."

Therefore, stick to your marriage and things will change, because this is the nature of everything in this world; the spouses will burn the karma that is making them experience difficulties; the planetary positions will transform and the tough planets will reward you for sticking to your dharma and learning your lessons.

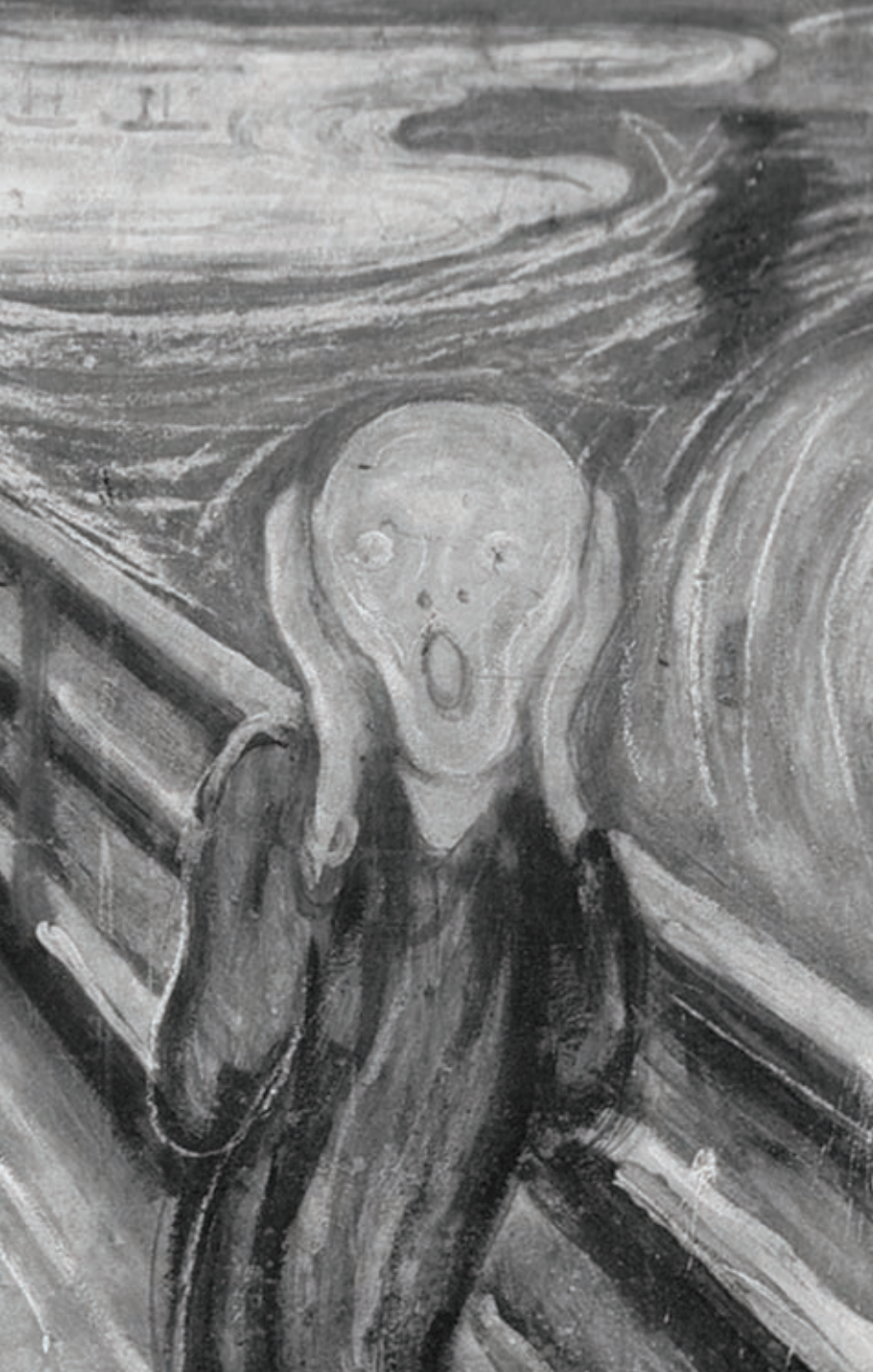
And be careful, because in that study, "The vast majority of divorces (74 percent) involved adults who had been happily married when they were first studied five years earlier." The wheel of change works both ways; unhappy marriages become much better, but happy marriages may start sputtering. You can't have just spring and summer; autumn and winter will also come. Therefore it's your values that will protect you, not just the external transformations and permutations. If your marriage is happy but you don't follow your dharma and don't commit to it with all your determination, there will come a time when all that happiness will appear to you as a



dream from the past. The first thing is the sense of duty, not how much pleasure you experience.

Astrologically speaking, I have seen people with charts showing a tendency to infidelity but who were able to overcome those tendencies by sticking to their higher values, by adhering faithfully to their culture, their dharma. Remember, planets *impel* but don't *compel*. Unfortunately I have also seen people with no indication in their charts that they would act immorally, but due to the company they kept and due to their meditating on unrighteous options, they slid down to disaster.

The point is that according to your karma you will have to face *some* difficulty; it will happen anyway, either you stay married or you divorce. But when you tolerate the difficulties while following your dharma and honoring your marriage vows, you burn that karma and you accumulate the results of pious deeds; you become more powerful and cleansed; things will improve and you move on in life, having learned your lessons. But if you try to escape your karma and to avoid the pain you are experiencing you break your marriage vows, you violate the law, and the universe will make sure you suffer much more in the future, because of complicating your karma tenfold. You might say, "No, my case is different..." No, it's not. You are not beyond karma; you are not beyond dharma.





## 4.

# How to Mess Up Your Life with Your Mind

*According to one's mental composition, one can understand what the living entity was in his past life as well as what kind of body he will have in the future. Thus the mind indicates the past and future bodies.*

—Narada Muni, *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 4.29.66

In Spain, a woman named Monica came to me for a consultation. She was chubby and wore expensive designer clothing. As she sat down, her eyes scanned the room nervously. She had the look of a child who knew that she had done something wrong and was expecting to be scolded. I also noticed that her purse was full of old movie tickets, which told me that she preferred living in a dream world.

She had been married to her husband Juan for four years. When I asked what the problem was, she told me, “He doesn’t make enough money. And I’m also not sure I still love him the way I did when we first met.” When I asked her about everything else in their relationship, she told me that everything else was wonderful. “Then why is his

salary such a big deal?” I asked. She said, “If he really loved me, he would make an effort to earn more and show me his love in that way.”

Monica was considering a divorce. Why on earth would this one dissatisfaction lead her to consider ending her marriage? Aren't there more serious issues that we face in a relationship? She seemed to consider this the most serious issue in the world.

Since I have some experience dealing with the tricks of the mind, I pressed her further; as I expected, she revealed something else to me: While she hadn't left her husband Juan quite yet, she had already begun seeing another man, Carlos.

I thought to myself, “Aha! They're having money problems and she's using it as a pretext for pursuing an extramarital affair!” I asked her, “So, you're romantically involved with a wealthier man?”

She looked down and said, “Not really.” The truth, she then explained, was that Carlos was a factory worker who made around a quarter of what her legally wedded husband earned. And furthermore, Carlos was a drunkard, which her husband was not.

At this point, I thought that Monica might be insane. Perhaps like a moth is attracted to flames, she's compulsively drawn to disastrous situations; but a close look at her chart revealed the whole picture completely. Her chart showed that she would never have a great deal of money in this life, but she would always have enough

to live comfortably. In fact, her karma was such that whomever she married would actually lose some of his wealth in the process. Indeed, this is what had happened to Juan.

Her chart also showed that she would have enduring love and affection from her husband. Everything indicated that she would have a loving husband and would in fact love him. Nowhere did it say that she would be restless in love or that she would be unsatisfied with her husband. Everything that was happening was entirely her choice, not her karma. This observation threw some light on the situation and allowed me to probe further into it.

It seems that Juan was surrounded by friends who were wealthier than he. This made Monica dizzy with jealousy and made her push him to earn more. However, Juan was completely content with his daily comforts and not interested in acquiring more wealth to impress others. So, Monica's angst raged within her and pushed her to seek out Carlos and his friends, who were poor and uneducated. Hanging around with them made her feel better about herself.

As we spoke, Monica was surprised to learn about her own feelings. How immature and downright foolish she'd been! And as our conversation progressed, she began to talk more and more negatively about Carlos. In her estimation, Carlos became a low-class drunk and gambler who wasted whatever little money he had, while Juan became more and more virtuous. He was quickly becoming the ideal husband!

Monica was receiving her karma not to have much money, but because she failed to accept this and she had allowed her mind to dictate to her, she had been on the brink of losing her life's assets and happiness, and perhaps also her balance. She had allowed her mind to dwell on adulterous thoughts; she had let her mind brood on envious feelings, and she had permitted her mind to hatch self-destructive plans.

What can we learn from Monica's story? All people, but especially women, tend to be emotional, sentimental and illogical. Unless we control the mind through spiritual intelligence and personal discipline, our minds will trick us into bad decisions and sinful activities that will cause us more and more trouble. The *Bhagavad-gita* explains that lust, anger and greed are three doors that lead to a hellish condition and every sane person should give them up to avoid degradation. When we face karmic conditions we should not foolishly try to escape them by taking shelter of irrational behavior – certainly leading us to a worse situation in the future.

### **Mind Your Mind**

Training in spiritual life is so essential. Spiritual activities are meant for the elevation of the soul. They put the self back in the driver's seat, without letting the mind go helplessly here and there, taking the soul for a ride down a slippery slope. Spiritual training helps to manage the mind so that we don't get caught up in its network of tricks; it's the cycle of following the mind's demands that





makes us more and more entangled in the web of karmic reaction. Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-gita* (6.5-6):

One must deliver himself with the help of his mind, and not degrade himself. The mind is the friend of the conditioned soul, and his enemy as well. For him who has conquered the mind, the mind is the best of friends; but for one who has failed to do so, his mind will remain the greatest enemy.

The mind must be so trained that it will not be attracted by the glitter of mundane aspirations. The astrologer's duty is to protect people from the tricks of their own minds. An astrologer must not only understand their horoscopes and address their questions, but must also reveal their own mind to them. A good astrologer acts as a counselor and a psychologist, armed with the information about the mind of the person provided by the astrological chart. Therefore the astrologer shouldn't pamper the hopes and dreams of the client; often the astrologer will have to warn and admonish, "You don't want to go there. That will bring you down!" To do that the astrologer needs to be familiar with the path of dharma – progressive duty – and with the workings of the client's mind. In Monica's case, I simply helped her to realize the workings of her mind.

Another important point regarding Monica was that her chart showed that Venus had a great influence on her life. Venus was in what we may call a "favorable position." However, this can be very misleading, and it even leads

many astrologers to give the wrong advice. Venus may be in its favorable position, but not in a favorable position for you. The nature of Venus is the desire for enjoyment and pleasure. This includes the facilities for enjoying money, the opposite sex, comforts and whatever else is pleasurable in life. This is a good thing, isn't it? Well, it isn't always. When it comes to married people, it can be very destructive. The quest for pleasure isn't good for one's chastity, fidelity or peace of mind.

One of the tricks Venus plays on us is that it makes us think there's more to be enjoyed somewhere else. When it comes to a marriage, it can make a person feel that the marriage isn't working well or it isn't fulfilling. The next one might be better. And when that one doesn't work out, the next... and then the next... and so on. This is a trick of Venus – an illusion. Many astrologers don't warn about this trap of Venus. This is usually because they're focusing on helping the person get the most fulfillment and enjoyment out of this life – which is temporary and fleeting. Seeking fulfillment in this one small lifespan prevents you from seeking the ultimate fulfillment of all, which is attained by transferring yourself to the world of unlimited pleasure, the kingdom of God. The drive for more and more sense gratification, the desire for more and more possessions, can truly spoil our human existence and turn it into a total waste.



## Deadly Greed

There was once a wealthy landowner. When a new neighbor moved onto the land next to him, he offered him a deal as a gesture of goodwill and friendship. He said, “I will give you all the land that you can walk around in one day. The only condition is that you must be back at the starting point at the moment of sundown.”

The neighbor gladly accepted the challenge and he went to sleep thinking about all the land he was going to get the following day, absolutely free of charge. He made some mental calculations and decided that he could cover six square miles.

The next morning he skipped breakfast and didn’t even take the time to say “hello” to anyone. He began walking. He covered the ground very quickly; so quickly, that he decided to make his six square miles into nine. Then, it became twelve and finally fifteen. This meant walking sixty miles before sundown!

By noon, he had covered thirty miles already. He realized that he would easily have his fifteen square miles before sundown. However, he was growing hungry and weak. He did not stop to eat or drink and took no rest.

About two hundred yards from the finish line, he saw that the sun was going down quickly. There were only a few minutes left! Although weak and tired, he put all of his remaining energy into walking that last stretch. He made it across the finish line just as the sun slipped below the horizon. The land was his!

He then fell down into a heap on the ground. His heart had stopped and he was dead. In the end, the only land he got was a plot of six by two feet for his grave, having died of greed.

Often, clients who come to me do not understand the importance of satisfaction. They don't realize that one must be content with what one has, and not let one's mind dictate foolish desires.

### **The American Dream**

A couple of years ago a friend, Priya, took me to a village in North India, Rampur, where she had relatives. There I got to know Sita, a 23-year old girl. Sita was unusual in that rural part of the country because she dressed in fancy clothes like the women in Indian movies. She often wore a red glittering party sari with a blouse that was barely held on by thin shoulder straps. Even though she always dressed like she was going to a Bollywood party, she actually stayed at home every day, milking cows and taking care of her in-laws. I was staying at the house of the relatives of my friend, and this girl Sita, a neighbor, came running over, as she had heard that I was an astrologer. She came into the room singing a song from a Hindi movie in a sweet and affected voice; the lyrics went something like this: "Oh my love, my heart yearns to see you in the full moon... being in love with you is what I always want..."

What a pity, I thought; I had heard that her uncle was

a professional singer of Indian classical music, known in the area for his expertise at traditional melodies and songs that glorify God; and here she was, stuck on cheap Hindi movie songs – the exact opposite!

After making her grand entrance she thrust her hand at me and said in a voice that was much more ordinary and like the other people of the village, “Please, sister! Please read my hand. How is my chart? Is there any hope for me to be rich and happy?”

I took this strangely charming child’s hand in mine and read her chart for her. I told her everything I could about her – her temperament, her husband’s physical features, the type of work he did, what kind of in-laws she had. I ended by saying to her, “You have a good life. It seems to me that you are already rich.”

With a surprised expression, she said, “Everything you said was absolutely true! Except for the part about us being rich.”

“You know so much about me from my chart,” she said. “now, can you tell me if I will go to America? Will my children go to America?”

“Is that all you want to know?” I asked her. I was disappointed by this because she came from a very spiritually enlightened family. Surely they must have taught her about the true purpose of one’s life. Why did she want to know such a mundane detail?

I said, “You can go to the spiritual world, to heaven if

you want to. Why stop at just going to America? It's just another country in this temporary material world. Why go traipsing all over the world when you'd be better off staying and helping your family. You have a wonderful chart, a peaceful environment and an opulent life with many servants and animals. You have a good husband, lots of land for growing food, and you've even got the karma to build your own temple!"

She said, "Oh no, you don't understand. What you say is true; I do have all that, but not a good life, it's not an opulent life. My husband is good, but he isn't like the neighbor's son who went to America twice and has a motorbike."

I learned that this boy was of a romantic disposition while her husband was hardworking and down-to-earth. She was basically uncomfortable in her comfortable life, and yearned for a complicated life. She went on to show me her many creams and lotions. "To be beautiful a woman must be fair," she explained. She was working hard to become the feminine image she saw on TV and in magazine advertisements. She had been brainwashed to buy all those useless products in an attempt to make her complexion more whitish. Sita was so innocent and I was shocked at how easily the images from the media and entertainment world had captivated her with their illusions.

"That model probably doesn't use any of that cream," I said pointing to an advertisement for a skin-bleaching cream in one of her many magazines, "and she doesn't

look like that at home and... Sita, you must stop watching all of this TV and forget all these foolish dreams! You have a good life and a good chart. Just be patient and follow your dharma as a wife, and all of your desires will be gradually fulfilled.”

Here was Sita, a girl from a family with traditional, devotional values, led astray by the influence of a westernized, commercialized culture. While she had a good family, lots of land and a wonderful life, she admired the boy next door who had nothing but a motorbike. How could I explain to her that her karma was better than his? After I tried my best to explain this to her, she became downcast. She asked, “Are you saying that I should never become like the boy next door? That I can never be cool and modern, and that I should never go to America? Or can I?”

“Sita,” I said, “how can it be good karma to work in a factory in a polluted, crowded city, getting paid just the minimum to survive? And to depend on someone employing you in order to eat? You don’t have to do any of that here. You depend on yourselves and have all that you need. Isn’t it better to have your own land, animals and servants?”

But she was dead-set on going to America, and her husband didn’t figure in her plans. She would go by herself if it came to that. She had certain planets strongly placed in her chart, which led me to fear that she might skip off to America with anyone who would take her.

“Has your husband been to America?” I asked her.

“No,” she said, “but he has traveled to other foreign countries before.”

“Sita,” I said, “your husband has stronger karma for going to foreign countries. Yours is to stay and take care of the family as well as you can. When the right time comes, you’ll be able to go with him. It could be as soon as the year’s end or it might take a bit longer. And besides that, Sita, it takes a long time to prepare for foreign travel. You must have a passport, visa and all your documents in order. It’s not like taking a bus to the next village.”

Later that evening, I got my first look at this neighbor I’d heard so much about. He was an exceedingly ugly boy who was uncultured and obnoxious, and I got the definite impression that he was a cheat and a liar.

He shuffled up to me and my acquaintance and began talking with us; I said to him in English, “So, you have been to America?”

He didn’t understand, so I repeated it in Hindi. He replied boastfully, “Yes, many times!”

My friend Priya smiled slyly and said, “How long does it take to get to the United States from the Jaipur airport?”

He shrugged and replied, “About three hours, maybe. Those airplanes are so quick, you know? I’d sure like to go to America with you sometime, Priya.” He winked at her. Actually there is no direct flight from Jaipur, the airport closest to the village, to America; and in any case a non-



stop flight from India to America takes at least fourteen hours. It was obvious that this boy didn't know what he was talking about.

Later that night, we told Sita and her family that the boy was trouble. He was a liar and cheat, so they should stay away from him.

Long after we had left the village, I found out that Sita had run away from her family with the motorbike-riding neighbor boy who had promised to take her to America.

Recently, I got a phone call. The voice on the other end was Sita, the village girl with Hollywood dreams, who told me what happened after she had run away.

“I should have listened to you!” she said, “I made a big mistake by trusting that boy with the motorbike. He promised to show me America and he took me away to some place. He told me it was America and I believed him for some time. In a big water park there, I asked someone if this was America and they just laughed at me. Now I am back with my husband and, just as you said, I'm so fortunate. He's such a nice man! He forgave me and wanted to help me. I'll never go away again. I just called to thank you and ask you a question.”

“What is it, Sita?” I asked.

“When exactly did you say that I will be going to America?”

That was not the kind of question I was hoping for. I nearly fell off my chair in surprise. What a shame, I thought.

Here was a girl who was allowing her mind to bewilder and confuse her. She had neglected her family to trust an idiot. Now she was luckily back home, her husband had lots of land, was cultured and loved peaceful living – what a great fortune for her – but she was still thinking of America. She must have worked hard in previous lives to earn her good karma, but simple Sita didn't get that at all. She didn't understand that Jupiter was in a good place in her chart. She had her choice to pursue her good Jupiter, and be happy and satisfied; or she could mess around with her Venus, which was already in a disturbed state.

Old age is terrible for people with this mentality. As they age, they keep watering their desires for sense gratification. They want more modern facilities, they want to go to America; they think that western looks, money and style are everything. They become old and bitter, thinking, “Oh, I didn't go to America!” Poor people; if they mess up their karma and wish so much to go to America they might be born there next life, but they risk becoming something they might not like, perhaps one more among the 45,000 homeless people of New York?

### **Count Your Blessings**

My advice: Accept life as it comes and don't complicate it. Don't unnecessarily strive to improve your mundane circumstances. Accept your allotted portion of material facilities as a platform to advance; even if you don't reach full perfection, you can have a better horoscope in your next life. I see many people's astrological charts; most of

them are absolutely fine, from the practical point of view. They show lives that are just as they should be – decent health, decent wealth, decent family relations, and so on. Too often, however, the holders of these charts do not see it like that. They're worried, depressed, disturbed, and continually hankering for something more than what they've been handed. They truly believe that they're unfortunate and suffering. And there is one thing that I've seen again and again: All of their plans for more pleasure and happiness always end in more pain and distress.

Because I am blessed with knowledge by my merciful preceptors, I can clearly perceive ways in which people can become happier and more peaceful. They could invest time and energy into obtaining lasting results, which would in turn truly improve their present lives.

Circumstances may be pleasant or unpleasant, but there will always be some mixing in this world. We all must find our own internal balance that is independent from the forces that surround us. The *Bhagavad-gita*, the gem of esoteric Indian knowledge, explains (2.14): “Happiness and distress appear and disappear; coming and going like the winter and summer seasons. They simply arise by the connection between the senses with matter, and one must learn to tolerate them without being disturbed.”

Vedic astrology reveals that some aspects of our lives are set from the moment of our birth to the moment of our death. For someone only interested in “enjoying” in this world this could be a catastrophic realization. Such people are not ready to accept that whatever circumstances they

are in are meant for their growth. Although the machinery of material energy works completely beyond our control and we don't have the capacity to alter its workings and dynamics, we do have a choice in how our mind and senses operate.

The pinnacle of Indian transcendental literature, the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (3.26.8), explains that the micro and macro universal arrangements, from the tiniest part of our personal bodies to the influential celestial bodies, are all within the control of material energy, but the self is fully responsible for the individual experience of happiness and distress. We don't have any possibility of controlling the dynamics of the big machinery surrounding us, but we are fully accountable for the way we direct our thoughts and desires. We need to gain awareness that the workings of the atoms and the molecules in our bodies as well as the celestial arrangements are controlled by agencies higher and incalculably more powerful than us.

Our present circumstances, imposed as a result of our past deeds, are a platform to advance and our obligation as human beings is to direct our psychic movements toward growth and purification. To fully align with the divine plans for our individual lives might be a long way off, but there is no other way to permanent happiness and freedom. We need to learn to tolerate both pleasure and pain. One may ask: "Why should we tolerate pleasure? Shouldn't we strive to squeeze as much delight as possible from pleasurable circumstances?" Actually the effort required to seek pleasure already causes us pain, a nagging hankering for good feelings. When we focus

on searching for pleasure, we are already pained by the burning sense of deficiency. When we try to grab hold of pleasure we become increasingly exposed to its opposite, suffering. We cannot just enjoy when our favorite football team wins; we must also suffer when they are defeated. If we cheer when “our team” scores a goal, we must suffer when the opposite team scores. In fact, in absolute terms, the experience of pleasure might be worse for us than the experience of pain, because the pleasurable experience binds us to the world (and to its concomitant tragedies of birth, death, old age and disease). Pain, if properly handled psychologically, can serve as an alarm bell, useful to wake us up to the understanding of our own incompatibility with the mundane environment.

And, by the way, who said that there shouldn't be any pain in life? Frankly, who do we think we are that we should only have joy and pleasure in our lives? When we understand our position in this universe – basically as outsiders who fell into it – the idea of tolerating pleasure and pain will start making sense. When we are waiting in an airport to catch a flight, we don't become too absorbed in the headlines on the newsstands. Those headlines might be good or bad news, but we don't become distracted by them to the point of missing our flight. Similarly, we are cosmic travelers whose destination is beyond the dualities of this world; we shouldn't get distracted and miss our flight.

When one is in jail, one must think of how to get out of it (hopefully in a legal way); one doesn't put all his energy into repainting the walls of the cell or adding some

curtains and plants. Likewise, we should understand that living inside material bodies is an artificial imposition due to our past wrong choices and we need to focus on how to become liberated.

### **Real Wealth**

Many people I meet in my consultations are always meditating on how to make more money (although many of them have more than enough), and all their waking hours are consumed by this sense of shortcoming. Their minds crave riches, but Jesus Christ says in the Gospel, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” Actually there is nothing specifically wrong in the riches themselves; everything in existence can be productively used for a higher purpose. What needs to be given up is the desire to enjoy those riches, which is what motivates those obsessed with becoming rich. Riches are not to be demonized, but we need to be extremely careful to use them in positive ways. The entire effort of human life should be directed towards the final solution, the uprooting of the root-cause of all distress. We are not meant to waste our few, valuable years in the human form running after a fatter bank account.

Of course, even those who have the karma to be wealthy might face some karmic reaction that spoils the whole show. I once saw the chart of a rich mullah from the Middle East. He was extremely rich but suffered from

poor health. Because of his poor health, he could not enjoy his life. Somehow, although he had never drunk alcohol, his body had the symptoms of someone who had been a drunkard for many years. Doctors used to tell him, “You drink too much. You cannot drink anymore or you will die.” They couldn’t believe that he was naturally like that.

We might falsely think of this evolution of consciousness as a linear process, involving the concomitant increase of facilities, in other words that as we progress we receive more and more wealth and pleasurable circumstances. Since each life serves the purpose of completing karmic lessons as yet unlearned, it is quite possible that an individual could be extremely wealthy in one life and in the next life be poor. It all depends on what lesson he needs to learn. Someone could have been wealthy but may not have appreciated it enough, or perhaps he did not use his wealth in the proper way. Perhaps it was a fleeting reward for some pious deed, and the karmic credit ran out in one lifetime. Obviously the lessons will be different for each person; someone may need to learn to be kind and generous; someone else to be courageous and positive. For a third person it would be learning to control his senses and for another to become completely detached from enjoying the results of his activities. In this human life, regardless of the external circumstances, everyone can decide to proceed towards liberation. In fact Lord Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-gita* (9.32) that any human being, even of lower birth, can reach the supreme destination if he or she takes full shelter of Him.

## Rich People Begging

People need to be trained about what to ask astrologers – and what not to ask. One should not ask, “When is the astrologically auspicious time to kill the person I hate?” Here is a list of what people most often ask me:

“Is my chart good?”

“Do I have a good life?”

“Will I be happy?”

“Will I be rich?”

“Will I find a beautiful wife?”

Very few ask me:

“What is the mission of my life?”

“What do I have to learn in this life?”

“What is the next step in my personal progress?”

Actually there are no good or bad charts; there are duties that we need to perform. There is a dharma (a set of activities aligned with our nature and the laws of the universe) that we need to fulfill. So it’s not important what happened to you (where you were born and what influences shaped your body and mind); it’s much more important how you now react to what happened. It’s more important to understand what your dharma is and how to perform it, because that creates your karma for





your future. The astrology chart is a map of your life and the astrologer's job is to empower people by helping them navigate the map and make discriminating choices along the way. Vedic astrology provides additional navigation systems to help us avoid the roadblocks and learn how to use time to our best advantage – both materially and spiritually. However, our astrology chart is a relatively flexible map because our karma is relatively flexible; in other words some aspects of it are fixed and some are not. It takes a deep, honest and keen insight to discriminate which one is which.

I like a famous Christian prayer, composed by theologian Reinhold Niebuhr and known as the “Serenity Prayer.” Its most well-known form is:

*God, grant me the serenity  
To accept the things I cannot change,  
Courage to change the things I can,  
And wisdom to know the difference.*

Of course, besides these parameters, we should also discriminate which projects are actually worth pursuing – among the things that we can change. And to be successful we need to control the mind; we need to use the intelligence to discriminate, to choose which desires to pursue and which ones to simply tolerate. As Renaissance Italian artist Michelangelo said, “The greatest danger for most of us is not that our goal is too high and we miss it but that it is too low and we reach it.”

This is so true when it comes to the use of astrology.

Sometimes our mind can only conjure up trivial and insignificant desires – or even dangerous and counterproductive ideas.

Imagine you see a beggar, ragged and unshaved, sitting on the sidewalk outside a bank. You know that his father is the billionaire who owns the bank. This beggar has forgotten who he is and he's sitting there waiting for a few coins to be given to him, hoping to get enough to buy some food. He spends all day there, in the cold and the rain, hoping for a little kindness from the passersby. If instead he sought and realized his true identity, he would have everything he needed. You might ask, "Why is he struggling like this? Why doesn't he understand that he can get so much more by finding his father? Why are his aims now so petty?" If you told this man the truth, would he believe you? Or is he too attached to the experience of getting those few coins that he will not sacrifice his time to look for his father?

Often, with the people I consult I feel the same way you would feel looking at that rich man begging. They ask the same questions over and over again – When will I get married? Who will marry me? Will I be happy? Will I be rich? And I wonder: Why don't they know that they can learn about their true identities and true paths of life and be free from bondage? They could learn the lessons they're here to learn in life so that they quit making the same mistakes over and over again. Why do they want to complicate their karma more and more? Why do they want to mess their lives up? Will the begging rich man choose to find his real identity if told? Similarly,



will people interested in astrology start looking for the real purpose of life if they are told? I wrote this book hoping the readers can save themselves from their own minds; which brings up an important dimension of inner development and a powerful method for counteracting inauspicious psychological tendencies: The chanting of sacred mantras.

### **The Mantra for Happiness**

Please understand that you can invoke the purifying presence of transcendental sound and generate transcendental vibratory energy through the chanting of mantras. The mantra – a sound-formula for liberating the mind – radiates energy that erases or minimizes the karmic script. A major accident can be reduced to a small one; a huge financial loss can be limited to a small one. Useless desires can be burned before showing up on the consciousness. The subtle structure of the psyche is modified by such vibrations. The Sanskrit word mantra, after all, comes from the combination of *manas*, mind, and *trayate*, to deliver; it is the sound-instrument to deliver the mind from illusion. The science of mantra, kept alive from time immemorial by chains of disciplic successions, would deserve at least a book in itself. For now it will suffice to say that the ancient Indian sages have codified a treasure trove of mantras to achieve every end that a person can think of. The most powerful and beneficial, however, are those mantras directly constituted by the esoteric names of God; among these, the one that offers

the highest benefit – the reawakening of our dormant divine love and the achievement of salvation from the cycle of birth and death – is considered to be the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra* (*maha* means great):

**Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna,**

**Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare,**

**Hare Rama, Hare Rama,**

**Rama Rama, Hare Hare**

Although the mystical texts indicate the above prayer as the highest, they simultaneously indicate it as the most accessible and relevant to the contemporary circumstances of the world. This mantra can destroy your unhappiness and give you profound personal happiness if you sincerely chant it with respect and devotion.







## 5.

# How Mistakes Can Mess Up Your Life

*Only two things are infinite, the universe and human  
stupidity, and I'm not sure about the former.*

—Albert Einstein

Sam came to see me for a consultation. He looked sad and frustrated, and said, “I feel depressed because this time I lost my tennis match; can you tell me why that happened? I am a pretty good player; do I have any chance of becoming successful?”

I immediately knew that this tennis match wasn't the real issue. The problem was deeper, so I probed him, “So Sam, It seems that this event has triggered so many hidden emotions in you and you feel frustrated.”

“Yes, yes,” he said, “I feel frustrated.” He paused and looked at me as if thinking, “Can I trust her? Should I reveal my problem? Will she help me?”

He cleared his throat and, changing his approach and tone, he said, “The thing is that I am a better person than Steve, my younger brother, but he has always been luckier than me. For instance, I think I am more handsome than

him, but somehow he always gets the attention of girls. I study more but he gets better marks. I play better tennis but he wins more matches. He is always getting better results than me... I have started to feel less confident these days.”

I asked Sam for his date of birth and that of his brother; I then drew up the charts and analyzed them. Things became clear to me, and it also became clear that Sam wasn't yet entirely honest in revealing the whole situation. But I needed for him to come out with the truth himself, or at least to become more open – and so I kept listening mostly, waiting to introduce the idea of karma. As there is no point in throwing a seed on the land that has not been plowed, there is not much value of sharing philosophical information with someone too emotionally agitated. As the conversation went on, Sam became more comfortable and began to share in a deeper way. At one point, with a guilty expression, looking down and apparently struggling to find the right words, he said, “Due to my frustration of being a failure, sometimes I try to get Steve in trouble.”

“What do you mean by that?” I asked.

“Well... like... I once tore apart his study notes and threw them away; Steve became frantic and started looking around the whole house, and I must admit I felt good to see him struggling like that. But even those kinds of things don't work all the time. In another instance I substituted the text books from his bag and because he didn't have the proper books, the teacher kept him out of the classroom, but Steve simply had fun outside,





frolicking with the girls. And this made me even angrier and more determined to cause him trouble.”

It became clearer and clearer to me: “This man is choosing to complicate his karma!”

As all authentic traditions of wisdom teach us: “You reap what you sow.” What goes around comes around. Everything you do has repercussions and you cannot escape the consequences of your actions; there are universal authorities who will make sure you face the music. You are free to make choices but you are not free to avoid the consequences of those choices.

### **The Potential for Change**

Real astrology is therefore not fatalistic: The seeds or reactions are sown by our actions, which are propelled by our thoughts and feelings, which are nourished by the desires we cultivate. In this case Sam was already experiencing the challenging nature of failure, but the way he handled it was only going to make his situation worse. Sam was avoiding taking responsibility for his circumstances and was trying to mitigate them by immature and malicious means. He needed to learn that his tendency to try cause trouble for someone else was the reason for his failure in life. And who knows for how many lifetimes he might have cultivated this tendency? Since our present is based on previous actions, our future can be modified by our present actions. This gives rise to very interesting possibilities; by adopting certain measures

we can lessen the impact of our past negative actions in the past. Vedic astrology works on the karmic premise that the desires we cultivate and the thoughts we nurture eventually manifest in actions, which craft our destiny and our present mentality. We keep contemplating selfish desires, we allow egocentric thoughts, and then perform illegitimate actions – and in this way we stay shackled in the cycle of birth and death. Nowadays going for an astrological consultation is often merely an attempt at wanting to know the outcome of forgotten choices. But simply witnessing outcomes doesn't teach us much. If, at the end of a basketball match, we read "76 – 89" on the score-board, it doesn't teach us how to play better basketball.

In Sam's case he didn't know what he was doing; he was very weak at controlling his mind and confused about what to do and what not to do. Neither was he focused on going to the root of his problems. Like Sam, most people unfortunately forget that they themselves created their destiny. When they consult an astrologer their attitude is as if they were not responsible for their present situation. They simply want to know all about the future and if they don't like what they find they want methods to change it. And often the means they adopt create more and more bad karma – and they don't learn anything. Sam didn't need to mess up his own mind by cultivating jealous and destructive thoughts in an attempt to make Steve miserable. Sam needed to understand his life's situation as a result of his past choices; he needed to learn to improve his attitudes towards others, first and

foremost Steve, who was in his life for some reason, not by chance. Sam's attempt to mask his own shortcomings by putting other people down was the root of his failure-filled present existence.

Although at the beginning it was hard for Sam to connect with the bigger picture of karma, he did accept the idea that we reap what we sow. I advised him to speak with Steve and after some time Sam called me and shared with me that he had told him: "Dear brother Steve, I want to share with you that in the past I have tried to create problems for you, such as when I hid your study notes right before your exams and caused you so much anxiety. The fact is that I was envious of you. I should actually try to learn things from you instead of trying to get you in trouble."

I knew from his chart that Steve was naturally balanced and mature and that he could take this revelation without becoming enraged or vengeful. In fact he told Sam not to worry and that they should spend some time together working things out. Sam realized that Steve was indeed a good-natured person. In this way the realization dawned on Sam that Steve's attitude was the reason why success was smiling at him all the time. At the beginning of the process it wasn't easy for Sam to confess his petty misdeeds and face his demons and so I encouraged him to pray to overcome his inner challenges. Sam told me that he prayed hard and that that gave him courage to face and handle the situation.

## **Resisting Reality? Not a Great Idea**

Life is a series of problems, of instances and events we would rather avoid. But we made a series of choices in the past and as a result we face certain circumstances. Problems, if properly addressed, can give us an impetus to build our wisdom. Problems can be catalysts for mental and spiritual growth. There are at least two ways to handle problems. One way is to attempt to control life, and essentially resist personal growth. This causes us to view life's challenges as negative, as elements that spoil our experience and enjoyment. The second way is to be open to the intrinsic lessons, open to challenges as opportunities to look inside and increase our awareness. One purpose of this book is to encourage you to move from the first to the second perspective, taking responsibility for your life and for creating a better future. I would consider this book a success if it inspires you to learn to trust God as your best Friend, the One who has arranged the opportunities for your enlightenment.

Unfortunately when something good happens – like succeeding at overcoming an addiction – people tend to say, “Oh, it was in my chart...” On the other hand, when they face a failure – in their business plans, for instance – people don't accept it; they don't say, “Well, it was in my astrological chart...” No, they want to fight, they want what they want. Just like Linda. A Peruvian working woman in her late thirties, she approached me asking for advice on her health. She complained about her lung

problem, her trouble with breathing, etc., and she feared for the future of her health in general. When she asked for astrological advice to improve her health, I suggested that she should stop smoking and drinking alcohol – obvious direct causes for her declining health. Linda didn't like that. She protested, "But it's in my chart that I smoke! And I enjoy drinking! Is there any ritual or ceremony in Indian culture that I can perform to counteract the bad effects of smoking and drinking? Perhaps I can wear a stone that can cure me – without stopping my habits? I understand that my Sun is weak and maybe, as a remedy I could chant some mantras and be fine? Why should I give up something I like???" Give me a stone that can give me good health!"

I wondered, "Where do people get such weird ideas?" I was thinking that I should tell her, "Look, what you are saying is that you could jump from the window, here on the eighth floor, and expect that by chanting a mantra you would not smash yourself when you hit the ground." I even thought of suggesting that she indeed wear a stone, one big enough to fit in her mouth and shut it; and that she should keep the stone in her mouth all day, except when eating. But saying that would not have been too professional. So instead I patiently explained that astrology is not for finding ways to maintain our bad habits and avoid the consequences. Astrology is to help us conform and harmonize with the laws of the universe, not to find shortcuts to protect our toxic, self-destructive behavior.

She didn't get it.

She kept asking me what she should do to be healthy, but without having to give up her addictions. Her mind appeared so clouded by her having contaminated her body for years, and her willpower was so weakened by her slavery to her senses, that any good counsel, even plain common sense, did not enter into her brain. I wondered, “Who will she listen to? Who could help her? Perhaps if a yoga teacher again and again tells her to give these bad habits up, she might do it.” I thought that Linda might be able to stop if she would give up the company of those who smoke and drink. I told her, “You should take up yoga classes, eat healthy food and reduce stress; you must spend time with healthy people and this will bring you good luck.” She finally smiled and thanked me for my advice on “how to get lucky.” (Sometimes we need to use the language that people understand, even if doesn’t convey the full philosophical depth of the message.)

Astrology can be a means to help you understand your lessons in life. It is not meant to help you get what you want, even at the cost of your ethics – or your health. Astrology should be used to turn every challenge into an opportunity to grow, to move on to a better consciousness and a better future – in this and in the next life. Astrology should not be used as a tool to encourage us to make the same mistakes again and again.

Imagine a man already married – let’s call him John – who soon after the marriage discovers in his chart that his marriage will be a challenging one. His wife’s health won’t be good, and John will have to spend a large amount of energy and money treating her. This troublesome



situation is as a result of something from John's past life; the chart indicates this as well. John could accept his situation and dutifully care for his wife, or he could try to get a different, healthier wife and complicate his karma, generating more future trouble.

Which path John will choose cannot be predicted only on the basis of his astrological chart. The chart cannot absolutely predict John's decision. Therefore, if you really want to involve yourself with astrology, I encourage you to approach it to create a long-term, better future, instead of only trying to know what the future has in store for you. Remember that the alignment of our consciousness with the Absolute Truth is a work in progress. John might want to find out how to improve his financial situation so as to afford curing his wife, in the mood of fulfilling his burdensome obligations – which might be the lesson he needs to learn. That sort of inquiry can be useful for his progress, but if John asks when he can divorce the present wife or how to find a healthier wife, these would be immoral questions, questions that cater to a crooked mentality that would only serve to further complicate his situation.

### **Are You Ready to Learn?**

Astrology can help you make right decisions in your life, choose your right path of action, identify your psychophysical nature, and work for your mission. The right attitude in approaching an astrologer is to be ready to work

on yourself – without just craving for selfish, immediate pleasures. One can gain more benefit from an astrological reading by having some idea of what astrology can reveal, some idea of what to ask. The bewildered and the deluded approach astrology only as a way to fulfill unhealthy desires. Astrology is a complex science, it might indicate what is likely to happen, but the way one reacts to those happenings depends on one's free will. In other words, astrology indicates possible outcomes and describes your inclinations, but the choices are still yours.

A case of someone resisting and rejecting good advice was Shankar. He was thirty years old when he came to me to ask about the astrological marriage compatibility between him and a young woman. Actually Shankar had already decided to marry that girl; he had already made up his mind and there was no going back, but he wanted more details. The astrological compatibility wasn't that bad, but I didn't see him ready for marriage; not yet. The way he was approaching this marriage was a big mistake.

I shared the astrological report, which included details of the charts plus notes and advice, mainly a warning that he should not marry right away. The girl was too young, so he should wait for another year or two at least. The girl's father – who appeared quite rich according to the astrological chart – was also hesitant and unconvinced about this marriage. The relationship was not just going to be the way Shankar thought it would be. I could see that Shankar would also soon suffer financial losses – another reason to postpone the marriage. I could see that he didn't love the girl and simply wanted the money



of her father. Before sanctioning the marriage, I would also have liked to talk with the girl. I told him, “Do not marry now. If you really want to marry this girl, wait until things settle down. And do not marry her for the money, because you won’t get it.”

I didn’t hear again from Shankar for one year; then I received the following email:

Subject – Urgent.

Dear Madam Sri,

I marry this 17 yr old girl 8 months back. But as you rightly say she is not a nice girl and it didn’t work out for me. She never got any money from her father’s house which caused me financial losses because depending on her father’s money I invested in some big business. It is Indian culture and it is a must that the father in law gives money/dowry to the husband before marriage, but my father-in-law never gave anything. Then I thought that he will give money after the marriage so I married her, because her father is rich man with lot of money. Now the problem is that this girl has gotten pregnant and she doesn’t want to leave me. I want some solution from you how to get her out of the house, and make father pay me for all my investment loss; I am very depressed because of all this. And please also if you can tell me if I have a better marriage in the future?

I was incredulous: This man was an Indian and he should

have known about karma and why things happen the way they do. (Of course, nowadays who teaches about karma? In the schools they just teach how to step on everyone else and “get ahead” in life – never mind sinning or cheating or hurting others.) I wondered if people such as Shankar would ever learn their lessons. I wrote to him:

Sir, You cannot escape in this way. The best thing for your future karma – luck and fortune – is that you must learn to take responsibility for the girl who left everything to live with you. From the beginning you were informed that you would have losses. It’s not the fault of the girl. It is your karma and you can recuperate the losses. I never said that “she is not a nice girl”; she is a good girl and just because she didn’t bring money from her father, it’s not right that you don’t want her anymore. I warned you not to marry her for money. The best thing for you is to stick with this girl who gave her life to you, and to protect her and your child. You should also do positive activities to reduce the bad karma, such as worship, chant mantras and give charity. Forget about another marriage, it might not have been the perfect time to marry, but you can work things out.

After this, Shankar understood that I wasn’t going to support any of his guilty plans. He understood that from me he would only receive suggestions to walk the path of righteousness. What I suspect he did was to go from astrologer to astrologer till he found someone who would tell him, “Yes, of course, dump the girl; there is a better

woman in store for you!”

Let’s be absolutely clear about this point: Even if Shankar finds a “better woman” (in the sense of one who brings him more money and perhaps more sexual satisfaction), the long-term result would be that his unrighteous rejection of his legitimately married wife will create a painful situation for him. Perhaps in the next life he will experience something similar: He might become a woman who is abandoned by her husband. In that way he will have a sense of how it feels, and in a state of helplessness, some humility might sprout in his heart. I keep wishing him all the best, but if he doesn’t listen to sound advice and acts irreligiously, who can protect him from the consequences?

Life is a longer journey than we may think. Through the actions of many lifetimes we accumulate karma that becomes evident in this life. But things are not fully preordained. If they were unchangeable, there would actually be no point in the injunctions of the scriptures and the instructions of the spiritual teachers. Some aspects of karma have already fructified and some are still latent. For instance we cannot change in which family or country we were born, but within the framework created by our past we do have the autonomy to work on our future. We can make amends for our mistake and move on to a brighter future.

This capacity of autonomously choosing our path within an unchanging framework is something like flying as a passenger in an airplane. Once the flight takes off I can’t

change the destination. I bought a ticket from city A to city B, I boarded the plane, the plane took off, and – in normal circumstances – the plane will arrive in city B. But while flying, during those, say, three hours, I can choose what to do with my time. I could read a good book and gain wisdom and insights; I could sleep and get refreshed; I could watch a movie; I could work on my computer; I could idly flip through the in-flight magazine; I could speak with other passengers and even start a lasting friendship. But I could also create some disturbance – perhaps I could try to steal money from another passenger or get into a fight with a flight attendant. In that case as soon as the plane lands I would be arrested. In this way, I might not be able to change the external aspects of my flight (the speed of the plane, the mechanics of the engine, the time of departure and arrival and so on) but what I do while flying will certainly affect my future.

### **Guiding Lights**

The great teachers of humanity all teach us to purify ourselves from our lower instincts and to cultivate our higher ambitions. Depending on their historical circumstances and the quality of their followers, these teachers revealed more or less knowledge. To audiences that are ready to accept it, they teach that the highest goal of life is to achieve pure love of God and transfer ourselves to His kingdom.

Among such traditions of transcendental knowledge, the



Vedic tradition contains the most detailed information about the Supreme Lord and the science of disengaging from our karmic anchors. The *Bhagavad-gita*, for instance, teaches us that the certain method for reforming our karma is the process of *bhakti-yoga*, the path of divine service. Directions towards this path and information about its performance are found in all authentic traditions. Our karma can be purified when we engage the result of the karma – our present body and mind – in the service of the Lord. This is technically called *karma-yoga*, the science of dovetailing what is in our possession for the pleasure of the Divine.

Of course, stubborn, unreasonable people might reject all the benevolent education from the sages and remain locked in the realms of misery. Holy scriptures in various traditions reveal the secret of the soul's identity and goal to everyone, but for those who are not yet ready to focus on direct reformation, astrology can shed light on the lessons to be gradually learned – if the astrologer is qualified and trained in scriptural knowledge. The planetary position of the Moon, for instance, often shows what lessons are needed to be learned, while the rest of the chart indicates how the individual can learn them. There are several indicators hinting at the residue from past lives that must be refined, corrected and built-on for the individual to reach success.

Our astrological chart – known as birth-chart, natal chart or horoscope – is a map of our karma, revealing the trajectories we can expect in this life. In the ancient *Mahabharata* the analogy is given: Just as a calf can always

find its mother, even in the middle of a large herd, our past karma will always seek and find us out. The fact that as humans we do have the option to progress and evolve doesn't mean that we will all take advantage of the opportunity. As the saying goes, "Change is inevitable, but growth is optional." Some people in fact – through repeated, serious mistakes – degrade to lower consciousness and end up in lower forms of life, such as animals and plants.









## 6.

### Meet the Protagonists

*The signs of the zodiac are karmic patterns; the planets are the looms; the will is the weaver.*

—author unknown

Vedic astrology considers nine main “influencers,” known in Sanskrit as *grahas* (from the idea of *holding* and *seizing*). These *grahas* or markers of influence indicate nine important factors in life and point out the karmic influences on the behavior of living entities. You are not influenced by just one planet, but rather by all the planets to different degrees. I want to provide you a panoramic view of the nature and influence of these higher beings, instrumental in enforcing the karma of human beings. They reward you with good karma or reaction if you have performed well in their particular sphere of influence and teach you more lessons in areas where you have failed. A partial study of their psychology and how it connects to our tendencies can help us navigate our inner landscape of desires and attitudes, helping us to understand what to be wary of and to see what needs development.

## The Big Picture

As our days begin with sunrise, which makes things visible or discernible, the Sun emphasizes awareness, our sense of acquired identity or ego. On the basis of that sense of self, the Moon enriches that identity with emotions, desires and opinions – the contents and expressions of the mind. The mind then interacts and communicates – functions that Mercury controls; Venus then gives rise to the desire to make things enjoyable and brings beauty into our existence. When Mars enters, it spurs the hankering to get what we want, which might create competition and strife. Jupiter then comes into the picture and sets the standards of morality, ethics and spirituality – and the resultant sense of well-being. As that sense of satisfaction turns into complacency and neglect of our relationship with God, Saturn helps us by reducing or ending the temporary game so that we can focus on the real purpose of our journey. Rahu and Ketu enter as forces of change and evolution, causing transformation and speeding up the process towards the end and transcendence of each phase of human experience.

The real, all-auspicious direction in life is the path to reawaken our love for God, the source and basis of everything, the center of all existence and the vortex of original attraction and pleasure. He, known in the esoteric Vedic scriptures as Krishna (the all-attractive), is the origin and substratum of all manifestations. Everyone has power only because He allows it; whoever has



influence, reflects and channels His splendor. He remains the Absolute Truth and Supreme Lord beyond the fluctuations of matter. When we distance ourselves from His realm of loving exchanges, trying our luck at enjoying separately, He kindly places us in the lower energy – as parents sometimes entrust a naughty child to a stern educator. Here we travel for eons within the spheres of conditioned existence, characterized by the temporary, material universes. The nine planets, or *nava-grahas*, have the thankless task of manifesting our conditioning and nudging us along the track of reformation, reminding us of the temporary nature of this world. When we are under a positive influence, manifesting favorable material conditions, we need to utilize the situation in the service of God; and when there are unpleasant circumstances we need to double our efforts to remain fixed in our ultimate objective, moving on without becoming depressed or discouraged and taking the adversity as an opportunity for growth.

### **Sun (*Surya*)**

Every one of us has had experience of the Sun to a greater or lesser degree. In countries where there is less sunshine people tend to suffer more from depression. Even if the people in these places have more money, they often experience sadness and darkness from within. The Sun's presence creates an aura of awareness, identity and wellbeing. If an astrologer says that you have a weak Sun, there is no need to despair. The Sun is an expert agent of

God who helps you to manifest your identity at all levels of personal development.

If you lack self-confidence and the courage to do things, the underlying reason is a lack of clear self-identity. Therefore you need to find that identity and become aware of your real self. The Sun takes care of this area and places you in circumstances which help you cultivate the necessary awareness of yourself and others around you.

This self-awareness is the core of our present identity, our historical self (the person described in your passport, who has a beginning and an end) and our “ego.” The Sun is the source of light and therefore sheds “light” on things, granting us awareness of ourselves



and our world. Being the source of warmth the Sun gives health. Physical health is primarily centered in the heart; strong bones are also important. The Sun’s massive gravity keeps him in the center and keeps everything else “in line,” revolving around him. Thus the Sun is the ultimate authority figure and defines all governments, bosses, leaders, fathers and father-figures.

The Sun influences a person’s career, because career depends very much on one’s level of awareness or ego. You might hear from an astrologer, “You can become



great because you have a strong Sun”; but remember that you can also have too much “I-ness,” self-absorption and egomania. So be wise and work on being balanced and on avoiding becoming selfish. You may have your Sun very well placed on your natal chart, and therefore hold the potential to achieve great results, but these may cause you to become proud and when your Sun-related good karma is finished, you may become morose, because you were used to success and fame. Once your credits are over you may suffer more than others who have not known such glory. Please remember that you cannot actually have all planets strongly and well situated, and certainly not forever. For instance if you have your Sun well placed, then naturally Saturn, an enemy of the Sun, makes your life difficult and vice versa.

The Sun represents success without much effort, and Saturn is endurance, persistence and hard work, so if you have a strong Sun you may be averse to perseverance in difficult situations. Born on this earth, each one of us has some or other difficulty through which a lesson needs to be learned. You could become proud due to a strong Sun or become dejected by depending on the Sun-factor alone.

### **Moon (*Chandra*)**

The Moon is responsible for ruling over the most important factor of our existence, the mind. If you are a person who is easily affected by problems, issues, and disturbances in life, quickly becoming depressed, happy,

sad or angry, then the Moon will manifest situations that can help you become sober, and cautious of your thoughts, desires and emotions. It's not what happens to you, but how you react to what happens, that really matters.

The Sun offers awareness of your circumstances, once this has been achieved, the moon enters the picture. He rules the mind. The Moon governs the next layer of the sense of self, creating your desire and ability to reflect your core awareness into the world of things. The Sun within you makes you conscious and aware. The Moon within you lets you reflect your awareness into the relative world of dualities. Opinions are fundamental aspects of the mind's function. Those opinions create desires, which in turn create emotions. The mind is therefore the repository of opinions, desires and emotions. The Moon rules mental health, mothers and rhythm.

The Moon determines the nature of your opinions: how strong are they? How clear are they? How much do they fluctuate? How healthy are they for you? The Moon holds all your desires, so the Moon in a horoscope reveals a lot about the role of desire: is it a destructive or constructive role? Are your desires strong or are you uninterested in life? The Moon is a central factor in determining how well you will be able to fulfill your desires and thus feel positive emotions. Positive mental health happens when we experience our emotions in a positive way. Mental health is the only real happiness. Without a healthy relationship with your own emotions, you can have a limitless supply of anything you want in the world and

you will still feel like dying most of the time. But if you form a healthy relationship with your emotions, you will feel happy inside regardless of what you do or don't have. The Moon in a horoscope is an enormously important factor revealing the mental status – is the person feeling fundamentally happy or miserable inside? Mental balance and cleanliness can be cultivated by the process of chanting mantras, praying and regularly meditating on scriptural passages. The ultimate controller of the Moon is Krishna, God, therefore chanting His names is very effective in controlling the wanderings of the mind.



Emotions are extremely difficult to handle and channel, because they thrive below the realm of rationality. The mind is like an ocean of emotions – and the waves on that ocean are often extremely stormy. The mental dimension creates challenges for everyone; everyone struggles with some form of mental health issues, trying to make inner happiness outweigh unhappiness. The one who guides us through childhood and has a big influence in creating good mental health is our mother. The Moon also rules over karma associated with the mother. The aspects of life that are ruled by the Moon are not profoundly stable things in the world. They are things which always fluctuate and change. We can see that the Moon appears

to change each night, sometimes the Moon will be a huge round circle, other times a half a circle, sometimes just a sliver, and sometimes you won't even see him at all. He always changes and fluctuates, just like the emotions that he generates; but the fluctuation of the Moon is not haphazard, it is rhythmic, cyclic. It has perfect timings, which enable us to have calendars.

A strong Moon is a gift! But just make sure you don't become a fanatic of your own thoughts and desires, overly enamored with your opinions. With a strong placement of the Moon, you would probably not care much about planetary placements, as giving power to something external is just not the nature of a strong Moon. Conversely, a weak Moon might cause undue concern about one's planetary placements. And a weak Moon might make you worry about the same. Focusing on clear thinking and practicing God consciousness, naturally strengthens your Moon. My advice is, be cool and welcome the Moon's blessing in your life.

### **Mercury (*Budha*)**

Everyone has all the planets in their chart, they may be weaker or stronger, but they are all there. If you so desire, you can cultivate your relationship with them and make their influence stronger. With some planets it's easier and with others it's more difficult. The psychology of Mercury is interesting, as Mercury bridges the island of your consciousness to the mainland of "things," allowing exchange and interaction between the two. The Sun's



awareness, and the Moon’s fascination with objects and subjects, naturally leads to the next thing, interactions and exchange between them. Before you can share something you must clearly understand it. This requires intelligence – Mercury’s primary role. Intelligence gives you the ability to make sense of things, to cognitively assess what is what. Once you understand something you are ready to share it. But that requires communication – Mercury’s secondary role.



Diplomacy is defined as “the art of dealing with people in a sensitive and effective way,” and Mercury is the master of this art, which is the key to success in both communication and commerce. Mercury is the bridge between the world of light and the world of darkness. He creates a roadway which traverses the gap between you and other people and things. If your Mercury is well placed or exalted, there is a risk that you may feel tempted to think that you can trick everyone, “I can cheat or steal and never get caught because I am smart; I can outsmart anyone.” But if you analyze people with this attitude, they end up criticizing and manipulating everyone without any real success in their own lives. So, if you don’t have great Mercury it’s for your own good, to keep you peaceful.

## Venus (*Shukra*)

It is not enough to warn you about the influence that could come from those planets unfavorable to you, but it's also very important to warn you about the "good ones" in your chart, because they could be "bad" for your ultimate goal. For instance, several astrologers told Derrick, a young English man from Birmingham, that he had his Venus exalted with no bad aspects and all his desires to enjoy life could be completely satisfied. He had everything in life; all that he had to do was enjoy it. Firstly, however, he was not warned that this good karma of having Venus well positioned was temporary. Secondly he was not informed of what desires would be best for him to cultivate. Thirdly, he didn't even know what exactly the power of Venus was. So, unfortunately all Derrick did during the years of his Venus period was hunt for girls and gamble away his money. Towards the end of this time he came to me for a reading, expressing how he had a feeling that this was all coming to an end. I helped him get a clearer picture of how things work, how planets create favorable situations for a certain time only. Fortunately he eventually became a serious seeker, later in life. So, yes, Venus gives beauty, pleasure and satisfying relations – but nothing lasts forever.



When we desire to experience this world, Venus's influence emerges. Our body and senses are given to us for the purpose of experiencing the world at various levels. Sensuality is the gross manifestation of this. Venus influences not only the senses but it also gives human beings the ability to cooperate, form relationships, make marriages, be peaceful, and experience the joy of love – the goal of relationships. Venus gives us senses and the energy that vitalizes them, and he also grants us the ability to improve the sense objects we can experience. For example he gives you the enthusiasm to listen to things – and then he also gives you the ability to create beautiful music. Venus controls all the arts: Painting and the visual arts, music, cooking, making perfumes, and the erotic and sensual arts of touch. Venus creates things with inherent desirability, and also creates in human beings the art or talent of making things even more desirable than they naturally are.

When it comes right down to it, thinking that satisfying the senses alone will provide for a happy and fulfilling life is an infantile attitude. People are much more important than things, and relationships are therefore much more important than sense objects. Venus helps you realize this. Just as Venus concerns himself with making the sense objects as enjoyable as they can be, he also concerns himself with making relationships as satisfying and fulfilling as possible, through cooperation. Without knowing how to cooperate, we simply can't develop and enjoy relationships. Venus grants us the ability to be cooperative, but we can't really be cooperative unless we

are peaceful. Peace is the opposite of war, and war happens when you strive for what you want by force. Peace is what happens when you don't give undue attention to what you want. The less you are concerned with fulfilling your own personal desires, the more peaceful you become. This holds true in politics as well.

Love means valuing the needs and the growth of another person. Venus blesses the world with love, because this is the root from which peace sprouts, and from peace cooperative relationships can form. Venus creates marriages and blesses them to be happy and fulfilling. Good marriages are impossible without a foundation of love, because love allows one to be at peace with one's own personal desires, which allows one to cooperate fully with one's partner.

People often misunderstand what to do with a good Venus in their charts. A horoscope with a very positive and influential Venus would create a person who is very loving, peaceful, cooperative and unselfish. They would have bright senses and appreciate the beauty and sublimity of all the things in this world. They would create even more beauty by their very nature and their artistic talents. If you have challenges in this area then you must work on love, co-operation and accepting life as it comes in order to start manifesting calm and peace from within.

If you don't have a great Venus, you don't need to feel bad – it might be a sign that you won't become a slave of luxury. A client of mine had a strong Venus, and money came spontaneously to him without having any

inclination to work hard – actually he became extremely lazy, let himself become addicted to women and abuse whatever he could get from Venus to enjoy his senses. When that time was over he pitifully regretted his choices as a waste of time (and money). He realized that he had neglected his creativity and had lost many chances to build something of value.

### **Mars (*Kuja or Mangala*)**

Like electricity moving from one end of the wire to another, Mars generates the energy we need to achieve our goals. Mars is fuel, passion and enthusiasm. Passion can be defined as the single minded intention to achieve a desired goal and Mars is the planet of passion.

Energy has to move towards a goal. Passion can't exist without something to desire, something to be passionate about. Passion is movement towards a single goal and Venus is the planet most responsible for establishing the desired goal, while Mars creates the energy to achieve it. Energy is a fundamentally useful thing. It gives us enthusiasm, gusto and a “zest for life.” So Mars is a fundamentally useful planet. But energy is also dangerous, as Mars is prone to be.

Willpower, strength and courage are other aspects of his personality. Our passions always come up against resistance. When this happens we need what Mars can give: willpower and strength, which breeds bravery and courage. Mars gives humans the power to “make their

own choices” and stand out from the crowd, go their own way, chose their own path, and follow their own rules. Mars, the planet of energy, gives human beings the capacity for independence, independent thought, and quick decision-making.

But Mars is dangerous as he also indicates anger and violence. If you touch fire you can expect to get burned, similarly, if you mess with Mars, bad things are bound to happen. The first bad thing is anger. When something stands in the way of you getting what you want – anger arises. That’s it. Pretty simple. Pretty dangerous. Mars is the main planet generating anger.

Some people divert the energy of Mars into rather harmless pursuits through sports. Sports involve lots of energy, competition, strength, willpower, bravery, quick decision-making, and even a pinch of anger – thus they allow Mars to display his full spectrum within



a safer “closed circuit.” If you think about sports for a second, you’ll see that anger can be used as a positive tool to some extent. It can be a tool to get rid of opponents and opposition. Each planet can be used in a good and bad way. Planetary influence can be likened to a knife, you can use it for cutting fruit or cutting your own fingers, the choice is yours. Mars in many ways is the opposite of Venus. Mars and Venus try to deal with the same situation,



but do so in opposite ways. The situation is that we exist in a world where we desire things that other people also desire. Venus' solution is to cooperate with those people and share. Mars' solution is to become strong, compete, win and then claim the object of desire.

Mars is the energy without which you can't get what you want. Energy meets resistance and so Mars develops the strength, willpower, courage and quick independent thinking to overcome that resistance. If that doesn't work, Mars will resort to anger and, finally, violence and warfare. In a consultation with a couple, the astrologer told the wife, "Your Mars is very strong." The husband sighed and said, "That's what brings us here... to see where that's going to lead our relationship." He was feeling the burning sensation of being with an intense spouse.

If you have a weak Mars then you need to work on your willpower and courage. With a weak Mars, you might feel frustrated and sad. But in reality this may also be seen as protection against developing a dangerous obsession with a particular desire, risking to damage relationships in the long run by acting impulsively. I know of an astrologer who told a client, "Oh, if your Mars was just one house away in your chart you would be such a fighter and win battles in life! How unfortunate..." But it doesn't really work that way, because if Mars were in that position that client might have to face obstacles and go through experiences that he might not want to. He might have had more fire and drive, but that might have caused a negative effect in some relationships because of his harshness. In one sense if you have a weak Mars you need to cultivate

courage, as if gradually fanning a fire, but doing this gradually might be easier than taming a blazing inferno. Having a weak Mars requires a conscious effort to be assertive and strong; if you have a strong Mars you need to work on becoming more sensitive and balanced.

### **Jupiter (*Guru*)**

You are here, in this world, because you want to enjoy the experiences it has to offer. When that happens, Venus will try to inspire you to peacefully cooperate and share with others in their desires. But sharing doesn't always work – sometimes we just don't feel like it. Passion is good, but it can get out of control and create trouble for everyone involved. It needs to be controlled. It needs guidance. Jupiter provides that guidance. When the passion of Mars goes unchecked, conflict and war erupt. We therefore need Jupiter – to keep Mars in check with a dose of morality. A weak Jupiter is characteristic of people who may be averse to religious beliefs and systems; they might face challenges in accepting and following religious life. The lesson for them is to come to terms with the moral dimension and understand the laws of God. If you don't have great Jupiter it's an indication that you need to study spiritual matters. Just as in the case of a weak Venus the client needs to learn to connect with the beauty of life, a person with weak Jupiter needs to connect with morality and ethics. Without moral standards, whatever a person does is a waste. "You have a weak Jupiter," said an astrologer to his client, "you cannot follow good advice." "Oh, that's good," said the client, "because I don't like



following anyone’s advice. From whatever you say I will take only what I like and leave the rest – especially the good advice.” Presenting a weakness as a fact, as an irrevocable truth, is not the sign of an expert advisor.

As Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-gita* (18.5): “Acts of sacrifice, charity and penance are not to be given up; they must be performed. Indeed, sacrifice, charity and penance purify even the great souls.” Tempered by Jupiter’s morality, human passions can be channeled in productive pursuits, thus avoiding self-destructive habits.



Jupiter connects with teachers giving sound ideas, which form our morals, and then network into philosophy and ethics, organized into codes of law, ultimately connecting to God and becoming religion. Morality is supposed to be the reason why you refrain from doing anything and everything you want to do on the basis

of your passion alone. Many people control their desires; men tend to look at women but, thankfully, the majority usually contain themselves. Why? On the basis of their morality. Most people like buying things, paying for them, even in some cases when it might be easier to just take them. Why? Again, because some sense of good and bad inside says, “No, that’s wrong.” Whatever the instrument for curtailing your passion – that reason is Jupiter. Jupiter stops passion from flowing in destructive directions, and

encourages it towards paths that are positive and that enable growth. Jupiter on his own or in cooperation with other kind and wise planets simply encourages individuals to understand right and wrong on their own terms, in a moral way for the benefit of all concerned. Having a good Jupiter gives you opportunities to get in touch with saints and spirituality. But whether you make use of the gift or not, is up to you. Jupiter rules over teachers of many varieties: teachers teach in school. Philosophers are teachers for whom all of society is the classroom. Counselors are teachers who deal with one student at a time. Gurus are teachers of esoteric subjects. All sorts of teachers are manifestations of Jupiter. Within his circle of influence are the priests and the legislators as well. What Jupiter likes to do is take morals, ethics and laws and link them to God. God-based law is theoretically a positive force for mankind. But when harsh and selfish planets influence too strongly, religion may become a tool for mass manipulation and control – and the oppression of enemies.

Jupiter wants to help us use our energy in positive ways, encourage our immediate and ultimate growth and evolution. For this reason Jupiter creates the tools which can lead us in a positive direction and direct our energy for good. You can think of Jupiter as the planet with the most fundamentally positive outlook. People and things with positivity and positive attitudes are energized by Jupiter. Whenever you see the dynamics of expansion you are also seeing Jupiter's energy. In a family, Jupiter represents children and reproduction. Children allow the



human race to expand and grow. They are also the ones who begin the process of morality: Teachers educate children and these children thus develop morals and set the Jupiter process in motion.

Jupiter wants to help us benefit, not suffer, from our energy and independence. So he becomes the teacher who creates positive ideas in the minds of children. These ideas – when centered on morality and ethics – become good philosophy, which attain its pinnacle of expansion when it links to the Fountainhead of everything, God, and marries religion.

### **Saturn (*Shani*)**

Saturn is the misery of limitation, whose purpose brings strength and enlightenment. Saturn rules everything that brings you misery. Limitations and restrictions are on the top of the list; they make us miserable because they block us from getting what we want. When you want to get something and cannot, because of some or other limitation, Saturn is the cause. The ultimate misery comes from the ultimate limitation: Time. Time restricts and limits everything, causing the profound miseries of decay, old age and death. Obviously, Saturn is a dark, morose figure who day in and day out has to deal with the most morbid and difficult of subjects. This is why Saturn controls endurance, perseverance and tenacity.

Most people do not understand the purpose of misery – therefore very few people understand Saturn. They rudely cast him out and shun him. Saturn is alone – private, cold,

distant, alienated, lonely and misunderstood, and therefore he appears spiteful. If you treat Saturn like this – hating your own limitations and miseries – you will earn his spite and will become more miserable and restricted. You should try to understand Saturn by understanding the purpose of misery. If you do so, Saturn will grant you enlightenment.

Saturn rules realistic pessimism, the ability to see the shortcomings of an idea. You may think, “Yes, I’m going to get this job!” but Saturn says, “So many people are trying to get it; the odds are against you.” Knowing that you are one of many applicants, you should just try and see what comes of it. That’s realism. But to avoid even trying is the



extreme manifestation of Saturn, when your pessimism kills your opportunities. If you know this psychology of Saturn, then whenever you are faced with overly pessimistic and defeatist thoughts you can control them with your intelligence. The ability to criticize and be critical is Saturn’s talent. If Saturn is good in a horoscope, this ability will get you into important jobs and be useful for you and your friends. If Saturn is bad in your horoscope, your habit of always criticizing others will make you lose opportunities and friends. You should catch yourself when your criticism has bad effects, on you and others – is it destructive or constructive? Does it help to clarify, discern and prevent,

or simply to increase people's dislike of you? Actually Jupiter is very helpful, but Saturn can be even more helpful than Jupiter, regardless of whether he is good or bad in your chart. In many ways Saturn and Jupiter form a pair of opposites, much like Mars and Venus. Saturn limits and restricts things, but Jupiter helps things grow and expand. Saturn is pessimistic, Jupiter is optimistic. Saturn is critical, Jupiter is encouraging. Opposites attract because to be "opposite" you have to have something very important in common. Two sides of the same coin. This means that Jupiter and Saturn must have something fundamental in common. What is it? They both want to keep our passion (Mars) from getting out of hand, and they both want us to come to a higher understanding of who we are so we can attain enlightenment.

Jupiter does so by encouraging us to do right and rewarding us for it. Saturn does so by making it impossible for us to keep doing wrong, and punishing us for what wrongs we insist on holding on to. When we are too lazy to learn our lessons, choosing instead to squander our time, we continue making the same mistakes. Then we grumble about the misfortunes that befall us time after time. We only learn "the hard way" if we do not learn our lessons the first time round. If you don't take the time to learn, time takes away your life. Time spares nothing and nobody. This is Saturn's attitude. As you can see, Saturn's tasks are brutal, awful and thankless. Only the truly strongest of the planets could continue to bear the burden of such responsibilities day after day for the duration of cosmic time. Saturn therefore bestows the

strength to endure. Not the muscular strength of Mars; nor the sensual strength of Venus; but the strength to survive the impossible. Saturn grants the ability to endure - whether he is ill positioned or well positioned in your chart.

Saturn's position in a horoscope indicates how and when alienation and loneliness affects you. If you lack the strength to endure difficulties in life, which is what life is all about, you must invite Saturn to teach you lessons which will make you complete, whole and strong. When a child is beaten up and hated by the others, he turns within himself and lives there, separate from the rest of the world. Saturn is like that child. Cast out and hated, Saturn keeps to himself and becomes very private. This is why, in outer space, Saturn is the furthest astrological object in the solar system. He is dim, distant and cold in every way. Saturn is the slowest planet. Everything he does happens slowly... but surely.

Mars rules anger but it is Saturn who is the master of hatred. If you treat a person as badly as we all treat Saturn – hating old age, death, etc. with the intensity that we do – you just fill that person with hatred and spite for you. Saturn is a bottomless pool of contempt for those who shun him and his effects. Isn't this sort of amazing, though? The more you hate something associated with Saturn the more that very thing hates you. The more we hate old age, for example, the more negatively old age affects us. Everything about Saturn makes him the master of detachment. Saturn appears perverse and abnormal; so appears detachment. We came to this world to enjoy it. It is strange to do the opposite and

become detached from it. Saturn is full of spite and hatred: Detachment is connected to a type of hatred of sense gratification. Saturn controls time, causing disease, old age and death. These three things are the prime stimulants for realized detachment. People turn to astrology to know the future and gain something... Well, Saturn has a very simple reading for you, 100% accurate every single time. What is his reading? You are going to die.

You are probably also going to get old and sick, but death is certain. That is Saturn's astrological reading for you. What can you gain from it? Detachment! Allow Saturn to put your life back into perspective. Yes, it might be frustrating that someone else got your promotion, but guess what? That person is going to die and so are you. Get over it. There are much more important things to worry about. Like what? Like figuring out the purpose of misery in the first place! We wanted to come to this world but we also want an escape route. We wanted in, but we want a way out eventually. That is why we suffer. Misery is the key to opening the exit door from the illusory way we currently tend to live our tiny lives. It is not the only key, don't get me wrong. Jupiter also gives the key to enlightenment in a positive way, without misery but with encouragement. Jupiter encourages our less selfish actions with positive rewards and thus gradually moves us towards the enlightenment of selfless divine love. But this takes a long time. Saturn offers a huge shortcut, you just have to be willing to enter the doorway of misery. Misery is a negative reward for the more selfish actions we have performed throughout our lives. To hate your misery is a

selfish reaction, which thus attracts even more suffering. But you can utilize misery in a positive way by becoming detached and less self-centered.

Detachment means not holding onto things for yourself. Let the things you want to possess be what they are, and love them for what they are. This attitude will not only end misery, it will bring about its ultimate purpose, enlightenment. Saturn therefore plays the leading role in helping human beings wake up to the fact that they don't really want to be in this world. We get out by becoming detached from it. Saturn plays what appears to be a very grim role – causing misery and grief by creating these insurmountable limitations of time and, ultimately, death. It is always important to remember that all the planets exist under the control of your greatest friend, but they have different ways of helping. Saturn means you well by waking you up from the illusion that you have limitless time and energy to fantasize here in a material dream land. Saturn can bless you with the positive side of everything he is the master of – he can remove limitations, extend your lifespan and health, make you satisfied and happy in all your daily tasks, give you the insightful realism and make you detached from inevitable sufferings. On the other hand, if you have had a hatred of Saturn in previous lives and in this one, Saturn will give you a hell of a rough treatment.

In India sometimes people worship Saturn, assuming that he will remove their miseries; they don't understand that he actually blesses one with penances that make one strong





and never fails in his mission of teaching detachment. Some people become rich with the help of a good Saturn, but bear in mind that they work very hard at it, enduring all sorts of austerities, another blessing from Saturn.

We have discussed all the visible planets and explored the role of each: Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. There are two more “planets” remaining to be understood. They don’t evolve – for they are the very power of evolution itself. They are invisible points in the sky which cause the Sun and Moon to blackout. They cause eclipses. An eclipse is a visible demonstration of their power to completely reverse things, to create the chaos of change, transformation and evolution. Their names are Rahu and Ketu. They are a separated pair – two sides of the same entity.

## **Rahu**

Rahu is the power of transformation – that alone is his singular, fundamental trait. You can learn everything else about Rahu just by always keeping this in mind. The very story of Rahu’s birth centers on his ability to transform himself from one shape into another! If it were not for Rahu, nothing would evolve, nothing would change. Anything you have ever done to change yourself – and any change that has ever happened in humanity or on Earth itself, has all happened with the power invested by Rahu.

Rahu and his other half, Ketu, both create the energy of

transformation – but Rahu’s transformation is the kind that impels you forward and makes you think about making the future better – forward and outward. Rahu is the force that compels you to radically change your lifestyle – trying to improve your future and make your outer-self a better reflection of your inner potential. Astrologers tend to connect him with confusion and uncertainty. Rahu brings transformation, which causes revolutions, the destruction of the old ways to make room for the new. Destruction causes chaos and rubble and dust and smoke and thus makes it difficult to see anything clearly. We become confused.



Rahu on his own, untamed by any other planetary influence, would create a world in constant revolt – pure destruction, pure chaos, pure confusion and pure uncertainty. Thankfully, he is almost never completely untamed. He is also the cause of compulsive behavior, uncontrollable urges, overwhelming emotions which cannot be stopped. He is the wild thing within you. If you don’t take shelter of God, Rahu threatens to finish you, to shred you to pieces. Rahu and his other half, Ketu, are not ordinary planets. They have no mass, they occupy no actual physical space – therefore they are not bound by the normal laws of space and time. As a result they transcend the boundaries between here and



there, past, present and future.

Rahu specifically bridges the present to the future. Those who can see the future do so as a result of Rahu's power. This includes acolytes of divination as well as scientists and inventors, those who foresaw electric bulbs and mobile phones and then brought them to the present. Rahu always sees the future and therefore he tries to revolutionize and change the present. He works on the present to transform it into the future.

## **Ketu**

Ketu and Rahu are two halves of the same entity, the same planet. And so they share many of the same traits for the same reasons. They both create the force of change and transformation. Ketu's transformations though, are more instantaneous and sudden than Rahu's. They occur when something from your inaccessible subconscious past suddenly bursts, fully formed, into your conscious awareness and shocks you into an abrupt change. Under Rahu, for example, you change your lifestyle dramatically because you see a better future for yourself, but Ketu causes you to suddenly understand or "remember" something about yourself which makes you abruptly change your outlook and direction. Rahu and Ketu are both anti-authoritarian but Rahu is more of a social revolutionary while Ketu is more of a private, personal non-conformist. The radically conservative wants similar changes, because he wants to return to a better past. Rahu and Ketu both create chaos in

the wake of their changes and transformations; but Rahu's chaos mainly affects the external conditions of your life, while Ketu's chaos affects your inner being. They are both polar; but Rahu's polarity is visible, while Ketu's polarity takes you through emotional and psychic extremes. Rahu will change you from rich to poor and poor to rich. Ketu will not affect your external situation as much as he will change you from happy to sad and sad to happy. Rahu is the person whose world is falling apart or radically transforming around him. Ketu is the one whose world is fine, but whose insides are in radical turmoil.

Rahu and Ketu are both compulsive and untamable; Ketu however will create more deep seated and private compulsion, while Rahu will make exaggerated public displays. The person who must shout his opinions to the world and force people to hear what he has to say is the one driven by Rahu. On the other hand, the shy person who compels your curiosity and intrigue is Ketu. The person who is compelled to change the world is driven by Rahu. The person who is compelled to change himself is driven by Ketu. To make a real change you need both halves of Rahu and Ketu. You cannot truly change the world without changing yourself, and you cannot truly change your inner self without changing your outer behavior.

Ketu connects the present to the past. Rahu shows the direction you are supposed to evolve towards in your future. Ketu shows what you have already mastered and evolved beyond. Our minds access only a tiny fraction of our past.



Ketu holds on to all the past that our conscious mind cannot directly access. These unknown memories compel you to know certain things, need certain things, hate certain things, etc. You do not know why you know it. You cannot explain why you are so talented in some area. You do not know why you feel so strongly attracted to or

repulsed by something. But Ketu remembers the ancient past, mysteriously affecting every aspect of your present. Those who have a powerful Ketu in their horoscope can see directly into the past. They have greater access to the things previously mastered in their past lives. For example, a child who sits at a piano and composes a symphony while only five years old is gifted by Ketu to access the mastery accomplished over previous lifetimes. Ketu is the force creating prodigies.

Ketu creates mind-readers and oracles that can see the past with clarity. But Ketu also creates the researchers who dig into the earth and uncover the record of her geological and cultural past. Archeologists and geologists spring from Ketu. Some often have a *déjà-vu* experience, “I have been here before, I went through these miseries already; let me get out of this bondage.” This is also the effect and blessing of Ketu. All persons obsessed with the underworld and with secrets have strong Ketu in their horoscope. Ketu is

the master of such things, and thus is the planet who can grant knowledge of secrets, ordinary and divine. Ketu takes human beings on a journey through inner space, to find their own cores, their own souls. Rahu makes people love the idea of journeying in spaceships to other planets – but Ketu makes you passionate about the idea of traveling through trance into the inner space of your own being. Ketu acts as the master of those who attain spiritual liberation as a result of meditation and renunciation. Ketu pulls your thoughts away from the surface world and down deep inside yourself. A blessed Ketu will take you all the way to the spiritual emancipation of knowing you are not this body but an eternal self, a traveler through lifetimes.

Those who fearlessly tread Ketu's path discover unlimited bliss and are not depressed about losing the shallow and superficial pleasures of the world. From Ketu they acquire a blessing more profound than any other planet could bestow. But those who hesitate and resist Ketu's pull are torn apart and become lost in a confusing haze of depression – ever aching to return to the comforts of the superficial world.

### **Benefic and Malefic Planets?**

Before delving into this topic we need to stop for a minute to consider things philosophically. Failing to do that would mean condemning ourselves to the endless and endlessly bewildering alternation of dualities. There is no good and bad in this world. Seeing something as good and something as bad is the trick of the mind. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu,

the divine incarnation and universal preceptor (*maha* means great and *prabhu* means master) who appeared in Bengal in the fifteenth century, succinctly put it: “In the material world, conceptions of good and bad are all mental speculations. Therefore, saying ‘This is good’ and ‘This is bad’ is all a mistake.”

In a world where everything is destined for decay and death, the ideas of auspicious and inauspicious are simply concoctions. When one is absorbed in the illusory energy of God and cannot understand God, one cannot ascertain what is good for him and what is bad. One may want to enjoy and make plans to obtain the good and avoid the bad, but all these are only imaginations. In one sense everything is bad in this world, because the very mask of matter produces dreamlike experiences, incompatible with our inner nature. In another sense everything is good, because everything rests on the energy of God and can help connect us to its source. The wise transcendentalist will see God everywhere and every situation as an opportunity to remember Him. It is therefore with this premise, within this worldview that we can approach the topic of “good” and “bad” planets without getting too confused.

First of all, the planets are all benefic because all of them are instrumental in helping you fulfill an important aspect of your life. Next, be aware that the way they go about being benefic to you is not always nice. It’s not nice, for example, to have a knife plunged into ones belly; but a very similar action can be performed by a surgeon, who is acting

in your best interests. The act of cutting you open is, of course, unpleasant, but the intention governing the action is ultimately “good.” That’s what the malefic planets do and the way they do it is often not easy for you. To put it another way, all the planets are good. But not all of them are pleasant. Venus, Jupiter, Mercury and the bright Moon tend to be generous and beneficial towards all aspects they influence in a horoscope. A nice planet will give the best of what it possesses to whatever it contacts in the chart. Then there is the dark Moon, Sun, Saturn and Mars – in increasing order of harshness. When you look at a horoscope, know that these planets can be stingy and draining upon whatever they influence.

Let’s start with Venus, the most pleasant planet of all, who basically works to make things beautiful and enjoyable for you. After Venus, the next most pleasant planet is Jupiter, who is always interested in your becoming “more.” But now and then you may find him a little unpleasant, because of his insistence on your following some etiquette, some rules and regulations. After Jupiter you may want to meet his son, Mercury, the next nicest planet. Mercury is basically seeing that you are happy, but he has a tendency to mix a bit indiscriminately and may not always keep the best company. After Mercury, the Moon, who manifests archetypical femininity and has phases ranging from completely dark to completely bright and full. In the fullest of his light the Moon is giving and generous – but not in the way of Venus, Jupiter or even Mercury. There is coolness about him even when he is distributing gifts but even in the dark phase the



Moon remains mild and never extreme, although he knows how to cut irrational behavior.

The unpleasant planets are more energy-sapping, draining you, and requiring you to make them happy. After the dark Moon, we can move to the Sun. He is also not that extreme in his roughness. He is mature and sort of kingly, but may come off as demanding and a bit harsh. Once you have met the Sun you can move to Saturn. Don't be afraid. I promise you Saturn is not as bad as he looks and not as bad as people treat him. He is the one with no one around him, everyone keeping their distance. If, however, you are brave enough to humbly step into that radius and introduce yourself he will be snappy and critical but he will sincerely take a liking to you. You already know he is going to be tough; he is all about the inevitable things in life, such as death, old age and disease. These shouldn't come as a big surprise. Then comes Mars, who is kind of good looking in a manly way, but who can be most unpleasant when he gets furious.

What about the shape-shifters, Rahu and Ketu; are they nice or not? Rahu causes you to become unconventional, whether that is good or bad is up to you; Rahu will make you look at life differently. A benefic Ketu in your chart causes detachment, and if he is malefic, causes depression, but again it's your choice ultimately how you decide to take things. You can see the glass as half empty or half full. Or you can appreciate having a glass in the first place. And consider this: In the Chinese ideographic script, the word for crisis is formed by two characters, danger and opportunity.

Rahu and Ketu are like that, dangerous but also opening up a whole range of new horizons.

### **The Safe Way to Empower Your Planets**

The best and most esoteric astrological advice I found in regard to dealing with negative planetary effects is offering worship to the specific forms of God presiding over specific planets. The original Vedic theology is purely monotheistic; there is one and only one Supreme Lord, one God. But it's a special monotheism, *polymorphic monotheism*. God is one and in His unlimited perfection He expands in many forms of Himself.

A striking advantage of this God-centered remedial method is that either a particular planet is debilitated or exalted in your chart, focusing on the Divine Lord of that planet – by chanting mantras or by offering worship – the results are always positive and there are no side effects. This is the nature of the Supreme Lord, the father of all living entities, who maintains a benevolent attitude towards all his parts and parcels, the souls trapped in this material cosmos. In this way people with karmic obstacles but pious attitudes learn to depend more and more on His blessings and develop faith in Him as the ultimate controller, beneficiary and friend. This information of the specific forms of the Lord connected to the planets can be very useful for those who want less complications in life, while simultaneously advancing on the devotional path.



The influence of your Sun is strengthened by worshipping Sri Ramacandra, who appeared in the North Indian kingdom of Ayodhya as the ideal righteous king. His devoted servant Hanuman is still venerated throughout India – and other parts of the world – as His most loyal and powerful devotee.

Your Moon is improved by worshipping Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the fountainhead of all avatars, who is eternally engaged in loving exchanges in His original form as a cowherd boy of bluish complexion, playing the flute and tending transcendental cows. Besides fortifying the mind, His worship bestows divine love.

By worshipping Narasimhadeva, the half-man-half-lion incarnation, the influence of Mars is reinforced and purified. In this special form, the Lord protects His devotees by removing all obstacles, internal and external, and by awarding fearlessness.

Venus is fortified, and its potential dangers neutralized, by the worship of Parasurama, who appeared at a particular historical time to relieve the Earth's burden by repeatedly exterminating the corrupt monarchical dynasties.

Your Jupiter can be empowered by your worship of Vamanadeva, the special form of the Lord as a young midget, descended to recapture the possessions of the celestial beings that had been snatched by the dark forces. He tricked the king of the demons to donate in charity all the lands he had conquered.



Buddha has the power to mitigate the negative influences of Mercury. Buddha is an atypical avatara of Krishna who preached against the Vedic rituals when people started misusing them. He promoted non-violence and other preliminary religious principles. That was the mercy of Lord Buddha, making the faithless faithful to him. (Please understand that I am not at all promoting Buddhism, an atheistic philosophy in which the real nature of Buddha as an avatara of God is ignored. One should perfectly know that Buddha is a manifestation of Krishna and therefore direct worship of Krishna is more beneficial.) Also in connection with Mercury is the transcendental horse, Hayagriva, a special form of the Lord who empowers our intelligence, increases our wisdom and allows us access to esoteric knowledge.

Planet Saturn in your chart can be made stronger and more auspicious by the worship of Kurma, the tortoise incarnation of God, who appeared to benefit the inhabitants of the universe by churning the ocean of milk in the higher region of the cosmos, thus producing marvelous manifestations. The worship of Narasimhadeva (see above) is also recommended to ingratiate Saturn, who is a devotee of the half-man-half-lion incarnation.

Worship of Varaha, the boar avatara, can make your Rahu more beneficial. Varaha appeared to save planet Earth by lifting her up from the depth of the cosmos.

Your Ketu can be purified and strengthened by worship of the Matsya avatara, the Lord in the form of a gigantic

golden fish, who saved the Vedas from oblivion.

All the above avataras are diverse divine manifestations of the one Supreme Lord, Krishna; they are not separate gods. Like a king ultimately owns and controls the whole kingdom while administering it through various ministers and officers, God delegates cosmic functions to various administrators such as the planets. Astrologically speaking, the zodiacal signs influence every part of our bodies and the planets rule over the zodiacal signs – but they are all manifesting fragmental portions of the Supreme Lord’s power. They are not independent; their qualities originally exist, in a pure and uncontaminated fashion, in God, Krishna. He is the source of all manifestations, the origin of all powers; His eternal, blissful, transcendental form is the cause of all causes.

### **What Would You Choose?**

Five-thousand years ago, on the eve of the great battle of Kurukshetra, in North India, Lord Krishna, playing the role of an earthly prince, had agreed to be on the side of the general He would see first in the morning. Arjuna and Duryodhana, leaders in the opposing armies, went early in the morning as Krishna slept. Duryodhana arrived first, went straight to the head of the bed and sat down. Arjuna remained at Krishna’s feet, gazing at Krishna’s face with tears of loving affection in his eyes. After a while Krishna awoke and saw Arjuna first. Then Krishna sat up, saw Duryodhana

by His head and welcomed both visitors. Duryodhana said, “I arrived first and thus you should become my ally.” Krishna smiled and said, “Yes, you arrived first, but I saw Arjuna first. Therefore, I think I will help both of you. I have an army of one million soldiers; let one of you take them and let the other take Me alone. But I will not fight. O Arjuna, what do you choose?” Without hesitation Arjuna chose Krishna. Duryodhana could hardly conceal his joy. Arjuna had forsaken Krishna’s invincible army in favor of Krishna Himself, who would not even fight. What a mistake! Duryodhana thanked Krishna and left.

As history unfolded the virtuous Arjuna won the battle, while Duryodhana lost his kingdom and his life. Taking shelter of the energy of the Lord is never as advantageous as taking shelter of the Lord Himself; trying to adjust our condition in this world by material arrangements and the accumulation of assets is never as propitious as directly surrendering to the will of God.

**A**nus. leo. sagittarius. sunt  
calida et sicca colicrica  
masculina. Orientalia.

**T**aurus. virgo. capricornus.  
sunt frigida et sicca melanco  
lica femmina. Occidentalia.



**A**nus. aquarius.  
libra. sunt calida et  
humida masculina  
sanguinea. Orientalia.

**A**nus. scor  
pius. pisces.  
sunt frigida et humi  
da stemmatica femini  
na. Septentrionalia.





## 7.

### **How to Mess Up Your Life with the Zodiac**

*Responsibility: A detachable burden easily shifted to the shoulders of God, Fate, Fortune, Luck or one's neighbor. In the days of astrology it was customary to unload it upon a star.*

—Ambrose Bierce

You can find tons of websites and books describing the signs of the zodiac. I am not going to get into those details here, but I am going to tell you about the pitfalls of identifying yourself with any sign. We need to go beyond any identity acquired in contact with matter – either by planetary influence, zodiacal signs or whatever – and connect with our real transcendental qualities as eternal spiritual servants of God. Astrology is a warning science, pointing out certain qualities that all human beings must develop.

Because most people identify themselves with one sign; they have limited understanding about themselves and they tend to limit to certain activities and attitudes. They brainwash themselves to think that because they are such and such sign they must experience certain shortcomings and manifest

certain weaknesses. Thinking: “I am Leo,” or “I am Pisces,” means cultivating a transient, external designation, one that will be given up in the course of time. Furthermore what is the use of building up a sense of self that is supposedly your natural way of being? If you were really a Leo you would spontaneously manifest the related qualities, such as confidence, without the need of anyone telling you what a Leo should look like. If such characteristics were real, they would exhibit themselves whether you knew about them or not. Besides, you may be identifying with the wrong sign.

### **A Case of Mistaken Identity**

Western astrology takes the Sun’s position at the time of birth as the most important factor. The Sun’s location indicates the I-ness, the sense of self. This is generally highly valued in Western culture: High self-esteem is considered a key element to make it in the world. But obviously that doesn’t give a complete picture; otherwise there would be only twelve types of people, according to the position of the sun in the twelve divisions of the zodiac. But obviously every individual is unique, with a unique blend of flavors due to the multi-faceted aspects of his karma. And no two people have the same karma in every regard, not even twins. I am not saying that identifying one’s sign according to the Sun’s position is wrong or useless, but it’s highly limited and limiting. The Sun is certainly an important planet, but it’s not sufficient to determine the person’s nature and potential. What to speak of predicting the future.

If you hear that the Sun was in Taurus at the time of your birth, you may come to think of yourself as grounded and peaceful. You might feel some contentment in this, but be careful: you may also be forcing upon yourself some artificial boundaries. Your sense of being grounded will compound the concomitant opposite – it will be hard to be dynamic. Thinking, “I am peaceful” you may feel complacent and avoid taking up important challenges and new projects. Is it worth identifying with the quality of your sign and getting stuck in its constraints? Thinking “I am Taurus” can be used as an escape from actively pursuing useful goals. You need to work on counteracting the limitations that come along; the universe is telling you, “OK Taurus-girl, you have a sense of stability and that’s good for you; but now get off your butt and do something productive, lazy bum!”

I know of several Taurus people who are most distracted and restless – which shouldn’t happen if their Sun was so determining. Marlene, a friend of mine from Germany, for the first forty years of her life thought herself to be a Gemini. The Sun was in Gemini at her birth and she grew up seeing herself as one. To me it was obvious that it was not her nature, but somehow she was convinced, firstly because that’s what she was told, and secondly because she was unconsciously twisting some facts about herself and using them as confirmation: “See, I like public speaking; that’s a Gemini right there!” “Hmm...” I was thinking, “Gemini like talking, yes, but Marlene speaks so strongly, challenging her audience; that’s not how a Gemini speaks. A Gemini is a natural socialite, and considers other people’s

feelings. But her speech is straightforward and unforgiving. Her sign must be ruled by Mars.”

When I checked her chart I found that her Moon sign was Aries and her ascendant was Scorpio – both of which Mars controls. At first Marlene was disappointed; she had tried so hard to become a curious and adaptable Gemini, but her competitive spirit kept coming up. She gradually realized that her previous identification had been an illusion; that’s why it was so hard for her to be a Gemini. Your mind can make you believe anything; you can start believing to be any sign, just as the little duck that mistakes a bull to be her mother.

### **Progress Is Mandatory – Failure is Punished**

Actually, to a greater or lesser degree, we all have some characteristics of each sign. Furthermore, regardless from his or her sign, every civilized human being should acquire certain attributes. In the *Mahabharata*, the great authority Bhismadeva recommends nine preliminary qualifications: (1) not to become angry, (2) not to lie, (3) to equally distribute wealth, (4) to forgive, (5) to beget children only by one’s legitimate wife, (6) to be pure in mind and hygienic in body, (7) not to be inimical toward anyone, (8) to be simple, and (9) to support servants and subordinates.

One should not think, “I am such sign and can never become kind and compassionate towards others.” Or “I am this sign and so I don’t like to follow the traffic rules.” Better you



learn to like it; otherwise you may get into some serious accident. You may say, “It’s not my nature to worship God or to read revealed scriptures,” but it would be like saying, “I am anorexic, it’s not really my nature to eat food.” No, anorexia is an acquired condition to be treated. Anorexia is not you. We can go beyond the limitations impelled by our conditioning by taking shelter in an authentic spiritual master. He will teach us to act without being stalled by our karma. He can teach us to move up from the rut of our lower tendencies.

### **Moon, Ascendant and You**

Vedic astrology gives more importance to our Moon sign than to our Sun sign because the status of the mind (ruled by the Moon) indicates our desires, thoughts and actions. Vedic astrology, promoting self-growth and being non-fatalistic, emphasizes the condition of the mind, the center of all the activities of the senses.

The ascendant sign is given similar importance as it shows the temperament, nature and potential of the person; how the person will act and be perceived in the world. Still, we need to always remember that the real self is by nature eternal, full of knowledge and happiness; astrological designations are therefore not the real us. Either Sun sign, Moon sign or ascendant, these signs won’t stay forever; at the time of death we will take another body, with a different astrological chart. Besides these broad considerations, in

everyone's life there are transitory periods known in Sanskrit as *maha-dashas* that heavily influence the experience of the person. These cyclic periods, lasting from a minimum of six years to a maximum of nineteen, keep changing throughout one's life. Within these *maha-dasha* periods there are various other subdivisions, each carrying its own influence. And remember that you might be another sign, even according to Vedic astrology, as sometimes a difference of one minute in your time of birth can change everything.

Seeing and managing your life according to your concoctions about your sign is very dangerous and can create many unnecessary problems. Just this morning one girl told me, "I broke up with my boyfriend because I figured that he is a Scorpio." I asked, "That the only reason you broke up?" I didn't believe that this could be the only cause. So she started saying things like, "Well... he is not actually mature enough..." By the end of the conversation it became obvious that the sign was only an excuse. I later checked their charts and found that they have a good astrological compatibility. The cause of the break-up was her restless mind, not the signs. I know of people, married for years, who illegitimately start contemplating the possibility of finding a new spouse; they then started meddling with astrology to find an escape route, a pretext to destroy their marriage.



## Signs and Marriage

It's not by chance that you are married to someone, of whatever sign. There are no mistakes in your karmic reactions; the agents of God do their work perfectly, giving you a certain situation exactly at the right time. Even if at one point you start thinking that you and your spouse are “incompatible” – according to Western, Vedic or any school of astrology – there is always some karmic basis in your relationship, otherwise you wouldn't have married. And your feelings of uneasiness in the relationship might have nothing to do with the signs. Whatever it is, you have got a lesson to learn, and therefore you are in this marriage. Why is it that a hundred years ago people weren't getting divorced and now they are so often? Was it a different zodiac then, different signs? Or is it that people have become flickering and immoral, stubborn and irresponsible? Why in every traditional civilization was divorce unheard of or at least very rare? Is it because “modern” people are slaves to their unstable minds and agitated senses? Falling out of love is not a reason to break up your marriage; it should be taken as an incentive to work on your relationship and, first of all, understand what love really is.

On the other hand sometimes people are just attached to marry someone. If the astrologer warns them that the match is not favorable, they argue that “love” is higher. For instance Raj, a man from Sri Lanka, fell in love with a Russian girl. He came to see me and said, “We want to get married; we are both Virgo; we are very similar and I always

wanted a similarly minded person. There is no problem in compatibility but you please tell us how many children we will have.”

I checked their charts and their compatibility was very low as their natures were extremely different. Their Sun was in Virgo, but Moon and ascendant signs were ill-assorted: the boy was Leo by both Moon and ascendant, while the girl had Moon in Capricorn and Taurus as ascendant. The match presented other issues; for instance it was unlikely that they could even have children. All considered, nothing indicated a long lasting relationship. I shared the reading but Raj couldn't take it; he was too infatuated and considered this girl as a goddess. He argued, “We are both on the path of God consciousness, so things will work out.” He left with his mind unchanged and got married.

Two years later Raj told a friend of mine, “Oh, I should not have married a Virgo... we didn't last even a year together. Next time I should marry a Pisces.” Raj never got the point that the Sun sign isn't everything; there is much, much more to check. But, more than that, one should have the maturity to make a lifelong commitment, seeing whom one marries in his or her totality, not just trying to fit the person into a zodiacal box.



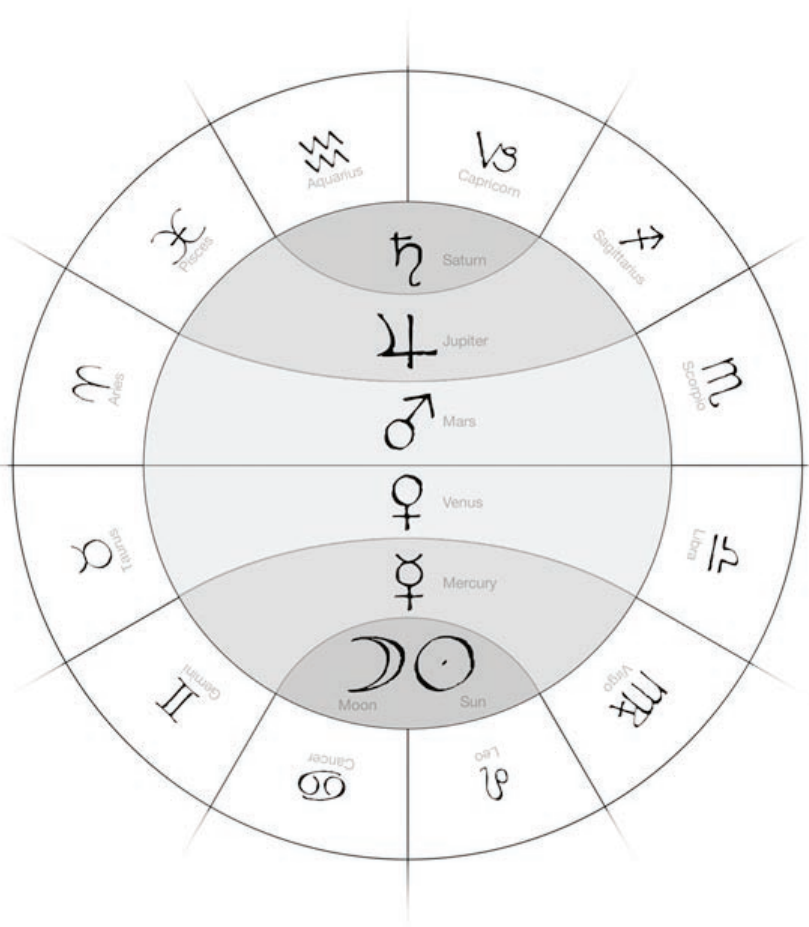


## Celestial Territories and Treaties

The planets, except Rahu and Ketu, rule over specific fixed spaces in the zodiac, known as houses. The Sun owns only one sign, Leo. The Moon also rules over a single sign, Cancer. Mercury owns Gemini and Virgo; Venus governs Taurus and Libra; Mars owns Aries and Scorpio; Jupiter rules over Sagittarius and Pisces, while Saturn presides over Capricorn and Aquarius. The signs possess traits similar to the planet that rules over them.

As different countries have good or bad relationships, among planets there are also friends and enemies. Each has a particular feeling and relation with the other eight. Grasping their interactions can help us establish better relationships among us human beings. For example, with the Sun and Mercury: The Sun is authority while Mercury is intellect and free speech. There is a complex relationship between free speech and authority figures. Mercury can appreciate the Sun's commanding position and the need for a strong ruling power; at the same time Mercury needs free expression, which the Sun, like a king, tends to dislike and mistrust. The government is generally uncomfortable with intellectuals, as they tend to challenge the status quo. In short, Mercury likes the sun, but the Sun doesn't like Mercury. These analyses, unlike the extemporary predictions, are basic principles of life.

If you hold an American passport you can easily enter countries in Europe and South America, but it's much



more difficult, for example, to visit Iran. The relationship between governments affects your traveling, making it simpler or more complicated – from just going without a visa, to being prohibited entry. Similarly, as the planets travel through the different houses of the zodiac, your horoscope will reflect the kind of relationships they have amongst themselves, friendly, neutral or inimical. One must simultaneously engage the positive relationships and work to improve the weak ones. For instance, you might have the resilience of Capricorn – which comes from Saturn – and you are comfortable committing to long-term projects. Without renouncing your nature, you might want to make an effort to appreciate the creativity of Venus – who might have envisioned the project you are working on in the first place.

Similarly, in marital compatibility there are easier and more challenging aspects of interaction. We should focus on the positives and the whole relationship will improve. It is said that Aries is compatible with Sagittarius, Leo, Gemini, Libra and Aquarius – in that order of strength – while incompatible with Taurus, Scorpio, Pisces, Cancer, Virgo and Capricorn. But I know couples married for decades whose Sun signs are “officially” incompatible (for example Aries and Capricorn). They had issues to work out, but they didn’t give up – they valued duty and stuck to the marriage even when it wasn’t particularly pleasant. They accepted the sacredness of marriage and optimized the areas of agreement. On the other hand I know cases of people who divorced after just a few months although their Sun signs

were highly compatible (for instance Aries and Sagittarius). They faced challenges but they didn't accept responsibility and ended up hurt. If you keep focusing on what you don't like in the relationship you will forever feel dissatisfied, even through a dozen marriages. And, after all, do you really expect to find the perfect man or woman?

It's all in the mind. If your intention is to enjoy, you will never be happy – because the whole universe of matter is fundamentally incompatible with you, the eternal self. If you maintain your marriage under any circumstances, against all odds, because it's your dharma, the effort will purify you and it will ensure a better future. If you fail, you might have to face the same test again and again – so think carefully and deeply before giving up. Better you tolerate the hard times and simultaneously work to reawaken your higher qualities, and access the full love that has been inside you from time immemorial, beyond any acquired zodiacal identity.







## 8.

# Religious Teachers and Astrology – The Case of Srila Prabhupada

*What good is having someone who can walk on water  
if you don't follow in his footsteps?*

—author unknown

It is beyond the scope of this book to chronicle in detail the fluctuating views that have distinguished the attitudes of different religious groups towards astrology throughout recorded history. As an example, if we take a look at the perceptions within the Catholic Church in various centuries, we find an almost bewildering swing between the staunch rejection of astrology and the devout acceptance of it. The Catholic Encyclopedia, for instance, informs that “Emperors and popes became votaries of astrology – the Emperors Charles IV and V, and Popes Sixtus IV, Julius II, Leo X, and Paul III. When these rulers lived, astrology was, so to say, the regulator of official life; it is a fact characteristic of the age, that at the papal and imperial courts ambassadors were not received in audience until the court astrologer had been consulted.”

Within contemporary Christianity we observe some diametrically opposed attitudes. While some see astrology as totally incompatible with Christianity – the Jehovah’s Witnesses, for instance, on their official web site go as far as saying that “Satan and the demons are the power behind astrology” (!) – others see no contradiction between their loyalty to Jesus and their practice of astrology. Christian astrologer Carmen Turner-Schott writes:

Many Christian clients of mine even tell me that they feel more connected to God and their Christian faith after having an astrological consultation. . . . I feel that astrology was a tool created by God for us to understand ourselves better and to use as a spiritual tool. I feel that there are many biblical verses that support astrology. . . . The verses in the Bible that condemn astrology can actually be interpreted in many different ways. . . . As a Christian, I truly believe that the knowledge of astrology must be used with care and with great integrity. . . . Human beings were warned by God not to put anything in the outer world above your relationship with him and that includes astrology. . . . There is a tendency for people to neglect God and put their faith in psychics and mediums completely and this is what the Bible warns against in some verses. They were warned that it is a tool to be used in moderation, when needed, but to never ignore God and depend solely on an astrologer for your answers. . . . The energies of the planets affect us



at all times, but we always have free will and choice as to how we respond to life's many challenges. When we understand this, we develop more control over ourselves and are better equipped to meet the challenges we face as well as fulfill God's plan for us here on earth."

I think we should all treasure her warning against putting anything in this world (including planets and stars) above our relationship with God.

As far as Islam goes, following the capture of Alexandria by the Arabs in the 7th century, Islamic scholars enthusiastically took up the study of astrology. Medieval Islamic scientist Al-Biruni wrote: "The comprehension of the structure of the Universe, and of the nature of the form of the Heavens and the Earth and all that is between them, attained by rehearsing the information received is extremely advantageous in the Art of Astrology." Al-Biruni presented astrology as a logical and necessary part of Islamic philosophy and science. Eventually the practical application of astrology became the subject of various theological debates. Islamic scholar Ibn Sina (known in the West by his Latinized name Avicenna), accepted the principle that planets act as agents of divine causation – a sign of God's complete power – and that the movements of the stars influence life on earth, but argued that it is not possible to determine their exact influence and produce fatalistic predictions.

In recent times it appears that the Islamic scholars' position has turned to rejection of astrology. Some equate astrology

with fortune-telling which, for instance, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is banned as a form of sorcery and is punishable with death. Nonetheless Islamic followers of the mystical Sufi tradition seem to remain much more comfortable with astrology as a source of psychological and other esoteric insights.

In short, attempting to summarize a history of many centuries in a few words, it seems that important religious leaders in the Abrahamic traditions at various times became very frustrated with the *overdependence* of their flock on astrology and other forms of divination. These religious leaders, most likely in a protective mood, reacted by bashing and banning astrology (and the commercialization and exploitation by unqualified astrologers certainly played a role in giving astrology a bad name). The condemnation of astrology by religious figures was a reaction to the tendency of their followers to focus on astral matters at the expenses of cultivating their devotion to God. Perhaps these leaders' lack of familiarity with the complexities of scientific astrology also contributed to their rejection of it, but, in retrospect, their decision to discredit astrology (especially as it moved from its Vedic roots and became increasingly misused) might have been the wisest and most God-conscious decision in their circumstances. It might therefore be interesting to study how a twentieth century religious leader from India – a rigorous follower of Vedic devotional principles and a renowned scholar of ancient Sanskrit texts – treated the subject of astrology, both in his books and in direct dealings with his followers.



## Srila Prabhupada and Astrology

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896–1977), usually referred to as “Srila Prabhupada,” is the *Founder-Acarya*, founding spiritual master, of the *International Society for Krishna Consciousness* – better known as the Hare Krishna movement. In 1965, at the age of sixty-nine, he left India for the West. He wrote about sixty volumes of elaborate commentaries on the jewels of the Vedic transcendental literature, such as the *Bhagavad-gita* and the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Even before leaving India Srila Prabhupada clarified his position (and the position of Vedic civilization) on astrology; in the early 1960s’ he wrote in the First Canto of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (1.12.12, purport):

Astronomical calculations of stellar influences upon a living being are not suppositions, but are factual, as confirmed in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Every living being is controlled by the laws of nature at every minute, just as a citizen is controlled by the influence of the state. The state laws are grossly observed, but the laws of material nature, being subtle to our gross understanding, cannot be experienced grossly. As stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.9), every action of life produces another reaction, which is binding upon us, and only those who are acting on behalf of Yajña (Viṣṇu) are not bound by reactions. Our actions are judged by the higher authorities, the agents of the Lord, and thus we are awarded bodies according to

our activities. The law of nature is so subtle that every part of our body is influenced by the respective stars, and a living being obtains his working body to fulfill his terms of imprisonment by the manipulation of such astronomical influence. A man's destiny is therefore ascertained by the birthtime constellation of stars, and a factual horoscope is made by a learned astrologer. It is a great science, and misuse of a science does not make it useless. Mahārāja Parīkṣit or even the Personality of Godhead appear in certain constellations of good stars, and thus the influence is exerted upon the body thus born at an auspicious moment. The most auspicious constellation of stars takes place during the appearance of the Lord in this material world, and it is specifically called *jayantī*, a word not to be abused for any other purposes. Mahārāja Parīkṣit was not only a great *kṣatriya* emperor, but also a great devotee of the Lord. Thus he cannot take his birth at any inauspicious moment. As a proper place and time is selected to receive a respectable personage, so also to receive such a personality as Mahārāja Parīkṣit, who was especially cared for by the Supreme Lord, a suitable moment is chosen when all good stars assembled together to exert their influence upon the King. Thus he took his birth just to be known as the great hero of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. This suitable arrangement of astral influences is never a creation of man's will, but is the arrangement of the superior management of the agency of the Supreme Lord. Of course, the

arrangement is made according to the good or bad deeds of the living being. Herein lies the importance of pious acts performed by the living being. Only by pious acts can one be allowed to get good wealth, good education and beautiful features.

Srila Prabhupada therefore clearly considered Vedic astrology “a great science”; at the same time he indicates that there could be “misuse” of such a science – hinting that most likely Srila Prabhupada had personally witnessed less-than-qualified practitioners. In the same chapter Srila Prabhupada even promotes the idea that qualified astrologers should be maintained by the state so that people in general could freely benefit from their expertise (*Srimad-Bhagavatam*, 1.21.29, purport):

The Vedas are the storehouse of knowledge, both material and spiritual. But such knowledge aims at perfection of self-realization. In other words, the Vedas are the guides for the civilized man in every respect. . . . The specific intelligent class of men who were devoted particularly to the knowledge of the Vedas were called the *vipras*, or the graduates of the Vedic knowledge. There are different branches of knowledge in the Vedas, of which astrology and pathology are two important branches necessary for the common man. . . . the *jātaka* expert *vipras* were good astrologers who could tell all the future history of a born child simply by the astral calculations of the time (*lagna*) . . . There is a need of such *vipras* in

the social structure, and it is the duty of the state to maintain them comfortably, as designed in the Vedic procedure. Such expert *vipras*, being sufficiently paid by the state, could give free service to the people in general, and thus this department of Vedic knowledge could be available for all.

Once in the West, Srila Prabhupada focused his energies in promoting pure *bhakti-yoga*, devotional service to the Lord; at the same time, at least on one occasion, he appeared to encourage the fledging interest of a disciple in astrology. Srila Prabhupada wrote to a student who had recently become a mother (letter to Lilavati, October 23, 1967):

Your child should be named Subhadra, the name that you have already chosen, this is nice. Regarding the horoscope, it is a nice idea and if I meet a good astrologer I shall try to get one for your little child. I'm glad that you have sent me the exact time and date of birth, this will help.

At the same time, although reiterating his acceptance of astrology as a science, Srila Prabhupada vigilantly ensured that his disciples not become too absorbed in it at the cost of their direct God consciousness. In a private dialogue discussing the planning of a drama on Lord Caitanya, the topic of astrology came up:

**Srila Prabhupada:** “[Lord Chaitanya’s] grandfather was a great astrologer, His mother’s father, Nilambara

Cakravarti. He immediately calculated His horoscope, constellation of the stars under which He was born. He calculated that “This boy will be a great reformer.””

**Tamala Krishna:** What is the position of astrology in Krishna consciousness?

**Srila Prabhupada:** Astrology is a science. Krishna consciousness has nothing to do with astrology, but it is the general custom that as soon as a child is born the astrologers come. That is the Indian system, Vedic system. (Conversation, Los Angeles, August 4, 1969)

A few years later again the topic came up, this time during a morning walk; again Srila Prabhupada confirms his views on the validity of astrology – although “because it is a difficult science, people do not understand it properly.” Srila Prabhupada also shares his personal experience with his own horoscope (Los Angeles, December 29, 1973):

**Jayahari:** Prabhupada, this morning you talked about astrology in your lecture. Is this accepted in the Vedic scripture and by the gurus?

**Srila Prabhupada:** Oh yes. Astrology means... That is also Vedic. *Jyotir-veda*. *Jyotir-veda*. That is also part of the Vedas. . . . A *brahmana* [learned priest] is supposed to go to every householder’s place, and he will inform, “Today is such and such *tithi* [lunar day].



The such and such thing should be done.” And if required, if somebody inquires about, “Now I am going to that place. What will happen? Just find out the auspicious moment,” so they will give him. Still it is current. It may be wrongly done or rightly, but the system is still there. Astrologer; the king should be always accompanied by a first-class astrologer. . . . what is the opinion of the scientist?

**Svarupa Damodara:** Oh, scientists would say that there is no background.





**Srila Prabhupada:** So how it so happens?

**Svarupa Damodara:** Because they say something which cannot be proved by experimental science, that does not work, calling science.

**Srila Prabhupada:** So then how do you say that life is from matter? That cannot be proved by experiment.

**Svarupa Damodara:** That is why they are going to prove it. They are trying to prove it.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Then again, “going to prove.” They cannot prove; they’ll not admit it.

**Sujit:** See, astrology, I think, what he said is half true. Astrology is a science but it is not an exact science like mathematics and chemistry.

**Srila Prabhupada:** No, no, it is mathematics. Astrology is simply based on mathematics. Exactly.

**Svarupa Damodara:** To calculate the planetary...

**Srila Prabhupada:** Just see. The comet...

**Sujit:** It is from astronomy.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Astronomy, yes. Astrology is part of astronomy. Yes. . . . our astrology is calculated by the position of the stars. By astronomy you calculate the position of the star, and they know, “If the star is

in such and such position, the result will be like this.” That is astrology. . . . It is calculated by the astral movement. It is a great science. People do not know it now. . . . No. We believe in astrology. But because it is a difficult science, people do not understand it properly. That is another thing. In my practical life I see. In my horoscope, everything is written, what I am doing. Everything is written.

Hardly a year later Srila Prabhupada strongly corrected a London-based disciple, a lady who apparently had become too absorbed in astrology (letter to Devamaya, January 9, 1975):

Regarding astrology, you should not listen to any of these so-called astrologers—strictly avoid. Don’t even see them. What is the use of seeing them? Astrology is meant for the materialist, but a spiritualist does not care for the future. Everything is dependent upon Krishna. So where is the necessity of astrology? The devotees’ principle is, let there happen anything as Krishna desires. Let me remain sincere devotee, that’s all. Pure devotee is never interested in this astrology.

This letter – especially when understood within the broader context of the totality of Srila Prabhupada’s statements – offers a poignant example of the attitude he expected from his followers: Dependence on God (Krishna) for the future. He discouraged mundane worries and taking shelter of astrological consultations to assuage fear; he didn’t

want his disciples to become dependent on astrologers, going to them for direction. Saying that “Astrology is meant for the materialist,” Srila Prabhupada indicated that, although scientific, not everything in Vedic civilization is needed for those fully dedicated to cultivating their love of God. Nonetheless, in his books – his most public and lasting statements – Srila Prabhupada kept recommending astrological practices, especially for specific situations. A couple of years after the above letter, he wrote (*Srimad-Bhagavatam*, 10.8.5, purport):

Those in this material world for material enjoyment should know that because their present position will cease to exist, they must be careful in how they act. . . . Whether one has a short life or a long life, one must suffer the threefold miseries of material life. Therefore any gentleman, *dhīra*, must be interested in *jyotiṣa*, astrology.

Nanda Mahārāja was trying to take advantage of the opportunity afforded by Gargamuni’s presence, for Gargamuni was a great authority in this knowledge of astrology, by which one can see the unseen events of past, present and future. It is the duty of a father to understand the astrological position of his children and do what is needed for their happiness.

I wish to highlight two major points here; the first is that astrology serves to offer warnings and guidelines to people, who “must be careful in how they act.” Astrology is not meant as entertainment or simply as fortune-telling, idly

or worrisomely enquiring about what the future has in store. No, astrology should serve to make people sober, aware that every action has a reaction and teach them to behave according to the laws of God, as to minimize the accumulation of bad karma and move towards the overall solution of the problems of birth and death. The second point is that fathers have the duty to understand the psychology of their children “and do what is needed for their happiness”; that is, to direct them in life according to their nature, not according to the parents’ whims and imaginations. Parents should not force on their children their ambitions for social prestige: “My son must become a doctor; my daughter must excel at playing piano” and so on. No, parents should carefully consider their children’s natal charts and the field of occupation suitable to their tendencies. Failure to do this would cause a miserable existence for the children and bad karma for the parents, who irresponsibly pushed them towards something unnatural.

Marriage is another sphere for which Srila Prabhupada indicated astrological consultations might be useful. Uniting for life a man and a woman – with their own intrinsic psychology and nature – is a matter of great importance, both for the couple and for society at large. Harmonious, religious marriages create stability – mental, emotional and economic – and a better chance to generate law-abiding citizens, while separations and divorce carry a load of unwanted consequences. Srila Prabhupada wrote (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 9.18.23, purport):

According to the Vedic system, the parents would consider the horoscopes of the boy and girl who were to be married. If according to astrological calculations the boy and girl were compatible in every respect, the match was called *yotaka* and the marriage would be accepted. Even fifty years ago, this system was current in Hindu society. Regardless of the affluence of the boy or the personal beauty of the girl, without this astrological compatibility the marriage would not take place. . . . The central idea is that if the boy and girl were on an equal level the marriage would be happy, whereas inequality would lead to unhappiness. Because care is no longer taken in marriage, we now find many divorces. Indeed, divorce has now become a common affair, although formerly one's marriage would continue lifelong . . . when the Vedic system is not rigidly observed, marriage frequently ends in divorce.

A suitable spouse is a great asset on the path of progressive purification and Srila Prabhupada warned against basing a marriage simply on external considerations such as good looks. Husband and wife should faithfully assist each other and not simply attempt to exploit the other to squeeze some temporary pleasure. In all traditional, civilized societies marriage is a sacred covenant established before God and the whole community, and the responsibility of both spouses is to stick to their marriage vows, even against all odds and obstacles. Srila Prabhupada wrote (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 3.21.15, purport):

In astrology, a man is considered fortunate who has great wealth, very good sons or a very good wife. Of these three, one who has a very good wife is considered the most fortunate. Before marrying, one should select a wife of like disposition and not be enamored by so-called beauty or other attractive features for sense gratification.

Although Srila Prabhupada apparently encouraged the use of astrology to determine the suitability of a match, he also stated that devotees of the Lord are beyond such considerations. Their staunch adherence to dharmic principles makes them able to adjust and tolerate even the most trying circumstances. Since they see their loyalty to each other and to their marriage vows as an aspect of their divine service and obedience to God, they don't become too disturbed in face of setbacks and misunderstandings – which are bound to occur in any relationship. Srila Prabhupada wrote (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 6.2.26, purport):

[T]he custom in Vedic society is to examine the horoscopes of a girl and boy being considered for marriage to see whether their combination is suitable. . . Of course, this is *traī-guṇya*, a material calculation according to the Vedas, but if the boy and girl are devotees there need be no such considerations. A devotee is transcendental, and therefore in a marriage between devotees, the boy and girl form a very happy combination.



The devotees of the Lord, to whatever authentic tradition they might belong, build a set of strong religious values that allow them to withstand challenges that materialists find very hard to negotiate, absorbed as they are in the temporary. Sincere devotees experience a higher inner pleasure in their relationship with the Lord. This illuminates and informs all other relationships in their life, giving them the power to withstand with serenity and moral strength whatever unpleasant or challenging situation they might face.







*In conclusion,*

if you really have to consult an astrologer (a qualified one, of course) I advise that you do so in two circumstances in life: When you get married and when you have children. There might be some special, extraordinary circumstances that might warrant a check, but otherwise these two occasions should be sufficient. Consider carefully who you will marry; and when you do get married, stick to that partner for life (as part of your dharma). When you have children, check their charts to understand their nature to provide training suitable to their psychology.

Apart from these two important passages of life you can peacefully forget about astrology, which, after all, can only describe fluctuations of matter. As Srila Prabhupada wrote to his disciple Sanatana dasa in June 1975, “Astrology will not save you at the time of death.” Dear reader, please always remember that you can achieve permanent happiness only through full surrender and loving devotional service to God.

*Hari Om Tat Sat*

## *Completed*

on 14 December 2011, the anniversary of the disappearance of **Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura** (right) from this world, in 1936. He was the spiritual master of Srila Prabhupada, who wrote about him:

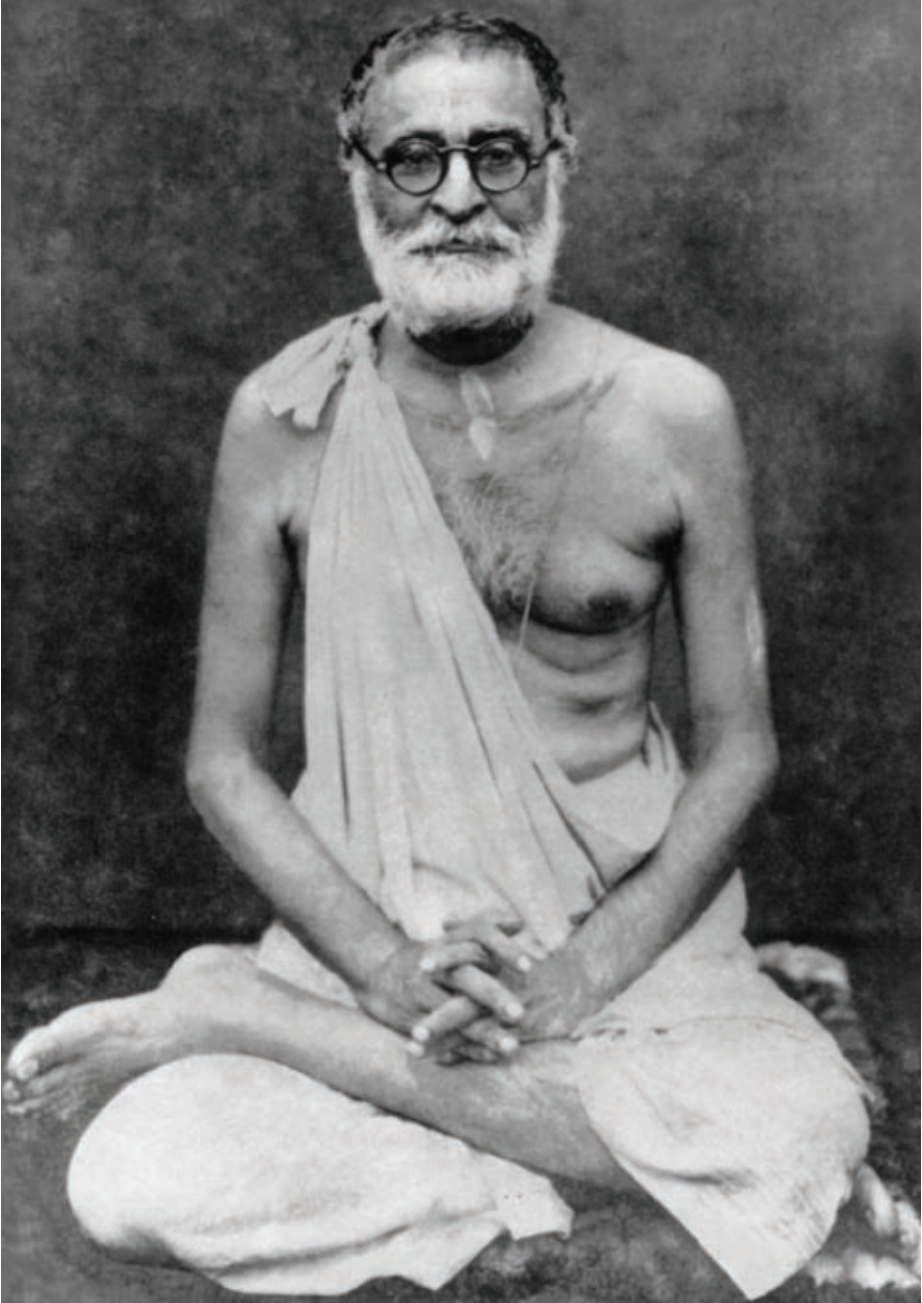
“My Guru Maharaja used to say that for one who is not engaged in devotional service, reading all the books is simply like licking the outside of the honey jar. One who thinks the books is the thing is content in this way. But we should learn the secret to open the jar and taste the honey.” (Letter, February 17, 1968)

“My Guru Maharaja was called ‘Living Encyclopedia’, he could talk with anyone on any subject.” (Letter, July 23, 1973)

“My Guru Maharaja was a great astrologer and astronomer, but he gave it all up.” (Letter, June 10, 1975)

May this brilliant astrologer and realized saint, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, be pleased with this humble attempt at shedding light on the right mood for approaching astrology and the right mood for giving it up.

SRI



# SRI

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