

Understanding the Place of Vedic Astrology in Our Modern World.

An Awareness of Our Prejudice:

It is one of the important principles in life [a teaching given to me by my Guru Sri Bhagavan, many many years ago], *that one has to become aware of any prejudice lurking within oneself, as one stands at the threshold of any new line of enquiry into an ostensibly unknown realm. Such an inward perception, at the very commencement of a new enquiry will enable us to steer clear of any crippling prejudice that we may be harbouring, and of which, we may not be sufficiently aware, without that self-critical internal probing.*

Two Distinct Movements in All Civilizations:

If we throw a sweeping glance at the rise and fall of the many civilizations world-wide, *broadly speaking, we will find, two kinds of collective human endeavours, recurring time and again, in every civilization. Both these collective-endeavours engage our energies and attention in different directions, and put into our hands fruits which are also entirely different in nature.* At different times, in different civilizations, one of these endeavours gained precedence over the other, but what is however significant to note, is the fact that at all times, both have co-existed, side by side, even though one was more dominant, and the other correspondingly recessive. *In fact, always, both were necessary to meet our two widely different human aspirations and appetites.*

‘Endeavours’ is not even the right term in this context, for we are dealing here with *massive collective-aspirations* which are in the nature of *‘intellectual, social or spiritual movements’*. Such movements may come into existence, triggered by some crisis, and then may go on to have a life of their own for some centuries or even perhaps for some thousands of years.

For the study of Vedic Astrology, *and for unearthing that possible hidden prejudice against astrology itself*[which though lying buried within ourselves, *nevertheless, decisively restrains us from taking a head-long passionate plunge into its mysteries & farther reaches*]; *it has become necessary to understand both these movements in human history, and see them in their proper perspectives.*

The ‘World – Obsessed’ Outwardly-Turned Movement:

One movement attracts man *to the outer sensory-world, stimulates his senses and intellect, and after firstly, giving him that essential impetus to enquire into and discover the laws of nature, that hold this Cosmos together, also secondly, drives him to go on the quest of subduing the powerful natural forces, and harnessing them in the bargain, for human happiness and welfare.*

It is a movement, which is outward-turned, ‘sensory-world--obsessed’, and grants us ultimately fruits[apart from a knowledge of the natural laws], in the form of greater physical comforts, luxuries, greater sensory pleasures, better health and greater longevity, access to abundant food supplies, and even more power; in a word, it creates man’s endless quest, and makes him seek the fulfilment of his insatiable material desires, and appetites.

Weaknesses of the ‘World-Obsessed’ Outward Movement:

It does not however, address the more profound issues of life such as: the meaning of human life?

whether destiny is binding, or we are fundamentally free beings?

whether there is God’s presence in man’s life and in the world, and whether we can come upon this blessedness?

whether human aspiration for spiritual peace and inner contentment, will meet with fulfilment?

whether bliss in the spiritual life is achievable at all?

Whether the profound feeling of devotion to God and the oneness of all life, sensitivity to nature, and importantly, the transcending of duality- which seems to be the only enduring solution to all the ills in human life, individually and collectively-are goals which should be legitimately pursued, for the final beatitude called Moksha?.

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We live so much in our bodies and in our sensory experiences that the deeper spiritual nature of our identity is hardly even cognized, in spite of our outer life, suffering every now and then, some painful setbacks. So extroverted are we that awareness of our thoughts and feelings is often, well-nigh impossible. Thus when our consciousness itself is unfamiliar terrain for us, how do we even have the aspiration to seek that bed-rock of our inner life - Awareness - that is ever with the consciousness, but also ever unmanifest and hence also ever elusive, and intangible?

In this extroverted condition, in which there seems to be nothing but the pleasure of sensory gratification and its inevitable pain, any pointer to a altogether different kind of human movement, that is Atmic, inward -centred, and focussed on our inner consciousness, rather than, on the outer-world of the senses, will probably not attract our attention to the extent, that the extroverted movement has so fully consumed our lives.

The 'Atmic-Centered[Vedic]' Inward Movement:

This inner movement, because of its very subtlety, maybe expected from first principles, not to gain adherents in such vast numbers, and so remain more an esoteric movement, confined to the spiritual sphere, at best. Here, the objects that we perceive are not objects of the senses, rather; they are going on in our consciousness, not only the grosser things, like hate, envy, anger, greed, violence, lust, jealousy; but also subtler things at a more sublime level, like

equanimity, peace, love, silence, charity, goodness, generosity, forgiveness, an awareness of God and devotion to Him, and bliss.

In every civilization, this second movement has surely had its presence felt in the field of Religion and the cultivation of the spiritual life, *but because of its very subtlety, it has invariably remained an esoteric and smaller movement, in comparison with the massive extroverted one.* We may not become unduly impressed with the large following seen in many organized Religions, for though, in the cases of all such adherents, the soul may be temporarily and superficially touched, a deeper and truer spiritual aspiration hardly has the scope to flower within the confines of the all too mechanically organized Religions, with their ugly rewards and punishments.

Every civilization has had both components, but in most, the extroverted movement was the more dominant one, whereas, in the long line of the ancient Vedic civilizations of India, the subtle movement centred on consciousness, Awareness, and on the transcendental reality of God, or Brahman, took precedence over the extroverted movement.

Here it must be understood that a civilization which is Atmic-centred [centred on Self-realization and self knowledge], does not necessarily become weak, and crippled on the physical plane, which is the natural field of the extroverted movement.

The Inward Atmic-Centered Movement is Not ‘World-Negating’:

The sages of the Vedic civilizations of ancient India, so directed and shaped this movement, that the external world of the senses was seen to be, but a manifestation in the Atmic-Light, and for this significant reason, they did not become entirely other-worldly as we may have expected at first sight, but went on to assimilate and integrate the world of the senses, into their Atmic-world, and in this way, wiped out all division between an outer world, and the inner. In this inclusive

sense, the Atmic-centred spiritual movement in human civilizations was not 'world-negating', as the 'world-obsessed' movement was negating with regard to the Atmic-world. Finally then, the Atmic-centred movement, typically represented by the Vedic civilizations, though esoteric in nature, did become inclusive and accommodative of the entire manifest world. Astrology, as a disciple of learning, belongs to this Atmic-centered world-view, in which the spiritual nature & the spiritual-needs of man are met. And this spiritual understanding of the whole gamut of life, individually and collectively, which gave birth to Astrology, also through Astrology, opens the doors to fulfilment in all the four classical goals of life: Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha or Self-realization, -for this is the ultimate fruit of Vedic Astrology.

Dominance of the Western Civilization:

We live at a time when our contemporary Western civilization, on account of its present world-wide dominance, has consumed us so wholly that we may not have the necessary inner space within ourselves, to appreciate the Atmic-centred civilizations, and their spiritual fruits. *This spiritual-blinding by the Western civilization, is so complete that at the present time Astrology, hardly earns the admiration and the appreciation of even spiritual people of our times! This is the prejudice that I alluded to, in the beginning of this introduction.*

'Renaissance' and the Birth of the Sciences:

The physical and the biological sciences which are our proud modern disciplines of knowledge, and which have given us immense power over material nature, and even in the healing of our own bodies; are *relatively young disciplines of knowledge, and have had their genesis in a sustained movement of rational enquiry about our material and social world [Renaissance]. This gathering movement of the intellect and rational-enquiry is roughly no more than five centuries old.* As in

our present understanding, historical precision will not be as important, as an intuitive and spiritual understanding of the nature and scope of this modern movement, exact dates do not matter so much in our present discussion.

Philosophers of modern science always remind us of *the more ancient and hidden roots of this modern movement*- they trace it back to the empirical approach of the Greek philosophers and the Greek civilization and even to some roots which sprouted from the Arab world, but during a later epoch.

Notwithstanding all these ancient roots, it must be emphasized that *this movement of rational enquiry was primarily centred on sensory knowledge , on the physico-material world, and sought to arrive at the truth about the perceived world in the form of inviolable natural laws. The method of progress was through careful, systematic observation, repeated experimentation, rational enquiry in all realms of thought, but with the constraint, that the conjectured natural laws, often mathematically formulated ; must stand the test of experiments, done by different observers, in different places, and at different times. This has been the method of the Sciences.*

The 'World-Obsessed' Outer Movement Lead to Objectivization:

This stringent demand lead to an objectification of their knowledge and in this modern scientific world view, to even postulate and propose an alternative subjective view of the world, would be outright rejected as absurd, primitive and regressive. This is just an arrogant assumption that underlies a world view, arrived at in a systematic logical way, and in view of the immense power, science and technology have put at man's disposal, any alternative world view, is likely to meet with only ridicule and rejection.

We must note however, that very different in spirit and content, from *this younger movement of analytical thought, for understanding*

natural laws and the sensory world, in another ancient river of understanding and learning flowing through the millennia, and constituting the life-blood of most of the ancient spiritual civilizations. It created another world view, with a life its own and this is an appropriate occasion, to understand, how this ancient river of learning, fulfils the spiritual appetites of man, that are deeper, Atmic and spiritual, and clearly, complimentary to his grosser material-needs, of a mere bio-physical organism, which is in search of food, more pleasure, more satisfactions of the body, and psychological security.

The Fruits of the 'Atmic-Centered' Inner Movement: Astrology:

Though in our modern times, this ancient river of spiritual understanding has been seemingly running dry, yet its continued sustenance, by genuine spiritual Masters, Avatars, spiritual seekers, yogis, psychics, and spiritual groups[though not by governments and the establishment]; is a testimony in itself, that this movement too, *has its own life-sap, and fruits, that man needs for the immortality of his soul, for his intellectual clarity, and for his Atmic-oneness with the whole of life. These spiritual needs and appetites of man are not certainly fruits and blessings accruing to him from the extroverted movement, in which man is presently enmeshed.*

Vedic Astrology, along with the systems of Astrology, belonging to all the other ancient civilizations, belongs here, to this Atmic-centered movement, common to all ancient civilizations, but, which is especially, the life-blood of the Vedic civilizations of India. For this reason, those enmeshed in the life of the senses, caught-up in the extroverted movement, and 'world-obsessed', and devoid of any direct experience of the deeper spiritual nature of man, will show a characteristic uneasiness and a tendency to take up cudgels against Astrology, because its goals and insights, will be incomprehensible

things to them. This is the reason for the world-wide prejudice against Astrology, especially in the so-called learned scientific circles.

These Lessons belong to:

A Course in Vedic Astrology

{ With the Systems Approach to Vedic Astrology enshrined in the *sanctum sanctorum* as the presiding Deity of Hora Shastra [Predictive Astrology], and the whole Course embedded in the Hindu spiritual ethos of Dharma and Moksha }

Course taught on the Net by:

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