

The 'Self' in *Vedic Astrology*:

As you may already know, the manifestations in the spiritual spheres of *dharma* and *moksha* take on a number of varied forms. Spiritual inspirations and inclinations, devotional adoration of the Divine (*Bhakti yoga*), perfection in the understanding of the Divine, either directly or through the scriptures (*Jnana yoga*), astral journeys to other worlds, inclinations towards *Hatha yoga*, spiritual activism (*Karma yoga*), psychic gifts, creative insights or creative mathematics or creative poetry sourced in communion with the Divine, expressions of spiritual austerity, *sudden* illumination and realization of the Divine without any *sadhana* (spiritual practice and spiritual seeking), meditational discovery of the Divine (*Dhyana yoga*), renunciation of the world, celibacy, unspiritual traits co-existing with true spiritual greatness, profound seeking and profound curiosity about the Divine, enigmatic spiritual patterns, religious ecstasies, mystical experiences and journeys, Kundalini awakening and experiences, materialization of sacred substances, near-death experiences, activation of past-life memories, communion with the Divine, psychic intuitions, miraculous healings, aspirations to serve the helpless because of compassion (*Karma yoga*), visions, insights, realizations and teachings, etc.

Reading this long list, we may wonder what *Vedic* astrology may have to do with the self? In truth, the whole of *Jyotisha* (*Vedic astrology*) is concerned in essence with the drama of the *self*, as we shall presently see, though this is certainly not the way *Jyotishis* are used to approaching their discipline of learning. There are twelve houses (Hs) in *Jyotisha*, each describing a certain department or aspect of life, and that taken together, these twelve Hs, constitute the totality of life. We are now going to see how the knowing self is disguised in each department of life. We shall express this fact by saying that *the knowing self is made to wear a certain characteristic cloak in each department of life, the cloak then giving the illusion to the knowing self that this covering, this cloak is itself, its true identity*. We are using the verb, to cloak in the sense: to conceal, to disguise. The encasing cloak essentially has the function of self-veiling, of making the knowing self unconscious of its true *Atmic* nature. *In the case of Sri Ramana Maharshi, the Atmic nature of the knowing self was discovered by the reflexive turning of the knowing self upon itself, but this did not happen through a volitional act of the knowing self, it was a Divine happening, on which the boy Ramana had no control whatever.*

In each of the twelve Hs, there are activities of the knowing self going on;

activities of self-seeking, founded on a particular ‘cloak’ being in situ and *this cloak will itself be the sure deterrent for the knowing self to make that momentous and reflexive turning upon itself. The cloak is a God-given conviction, a false perception that one is something or somebody, an infatuation, an attachment-as a surge in thought and feeling.* In the first H, the knowing self is made to adorn the cloak of attachment to the body and personality: ‘I am the body’, ‘I am such and such a personality with such and such likes and dislikes’, etc. *It is very important to realize that this cloak which has fallen upon the knowing self is not certainly any deliberate doing of the self, it has automatically happened to the knowing self, in the course of the human life drama(maya).* Hindus call such a cloak of illusion, a covering on the true self, the *Atma*, so the cloak is referred to as *anatma*, meaning, ‘this is not the true Self, the *Atma*’. Thus in every H, the self unavoidably and of necessity (thanks to Divine *maya*), comes to disguise itself and goes round wearing a cloak, an *anatma*, appropriate to that H or department of life. *It is the Divine that clothes the knowing self in these cloaks (anatmas), and this must be thoroughly understood, at least in the spiritual spheres of dharma and moksha.*

The truth of *maya* must be accepted provisionally as an axiom, till such time as we actually come upon it as our own spiritual discovery. At least in the last sphere of *moksha*, *mumukshus* (seekers after *moksha*) are expected to make this discovery for themselves, and the scriptures are there to attest such a discovery. The Bhagavad Gita (Ch VII, *sutras* 14 and 27) [18] deepens and clarifies our understanding, regarding *maya*.

दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया ।

मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते ॥

॥ ७ ॥१४ ॥

daivī hyeṣā guṇamayī mama māyā duratyayā ।

māmeva ye prapadyante māyāmetāṃ taranti te ॥

॥ 7.14॥

The meaning of the *sutra* 7.14 is this: “My Divine *maya*, constituted of the three *gunas* is difficult to overcome. Whoever takes refuge in Me alone, in utter devotion, overcomes it.”

इच्छाद्वेषसमुत्थेन द्वन्द्वमोहेन भारत ।

सर्वभूतानि संमोहं सर्गे यान्ति परंतप ॥

॥ ७ ॥२७ ॥

icchādveṣasamutthena dvandvamohena bhārata ।

sarvabhūtāni sammohaṁ sarge yānti parantapa ॥

॥ 7.27॥

In this *sutra*, Bhagavan Krishna, is telling Arjuna: “All beings, since birth are subject to the delusion of duality (‘self’ and ‘other’, ‘me and not-me’, i.e.; *maya*). From this *maya* arises, all expressions of duality, attraction and repulsion, pleasure and displeasure, etc.” This validates what we had said earlier, namely that the self does not wear a cloak, volitionally, it is made to wear a veiling cloak by the Divine and the cloak which disguises the knowing self, varies from one H of astrology to another H.

In the second H, the knowing self, takes on the cloak of attachment: ‘I belong to this family’, ‘I am so and so in society, I have this status in the profession’, ‘I like to eat sweet things or sour things’, etc.

In the third H, the knowing self, wears the more martial cloak, ‘I have this and this younger sister and younger brother, they will listen to me’, ‘I like to communicate, and love sports’, ‘I like to do team work and have people under my care’, or, ‘I like to write’. In the fourth H, the knowing self wears again another cloak of attachment: ‘this is my house, I like it’, ‘this is my mother, I love her’, ‘this is my car’, ‘I am happy’. In the fifth H, the knowing self, wears the cloak of enjoyment: ‘I am intelligent’, ‘I love to enjoy myself’, ‘I love to speculate and dream’, ‘I love my children’, or ‘these are my children, I love them’, or ‘*Ganesha* is my *Ishtha Devata*, very dear to me’. In the sixth H, the knowing self, wears a cloak, that has the fragrance of aggression or service: ‘I will win this court case’, ‘I’ll defeat him’, ‘my house was burgled and I suffered a loss’, ‘I love to serve’, etc. In the sphere of the seventh H, the self wears the cloak of marital desire, of sexual desire: ‘this is my wife’, ‘I like her’, ‘I love to go abroad’. In the eighth H, the self wears the eighth H cloak: ‘I love research’, ‘I love easy gains, I must get it’, ‘I am a *mumukshu*’, ‘I suffered dishonor and disgrace’, etc. In the sphere of the ninth H, the self wears the *dharma* cloak, ‘I am religious’, or ‘I love my father’, or, ‘I enjoyed living in distant lands’. In the tenth H, the knowing self, wears the professional cloak, ‘I have lot of Grace professionally, I love my profession, I love the skill, the work, etc’. In the eleventh H, the knowing self, wears the cloak of

ambition, so, it becomes the self-seeking and ambitious self: 'I must earn ten crore rupees this year', or, 'I love my friends', or 'next year and in 2016, I must earn three times what I am earning now'. In the twelfth H, the knowing self wears the clock of either pleasure seeking or renunciation: 'I love to sleep, nobody must disturb me', or, 'I love to meditate', or 'I like to enjoy and relax' or 'I thoroughly enjoy sex', or, 'I love to go shopping and spend', or, 'I do not like this world, wish to go away to an *ashram*.'

When one or more Hs are strong, by their lords being strong, then the knowing self, wears the cloaks corresponding to those strong Hs, more 'tightly'. In other words, the knowing self, gets attached more to the activities in those Hs, and also secures *ananda* or bliss by getting engrossed in the activities of Hs which are strong (*sutra*). Why *ananda*? Because, whenever there is more Divine Grace in any sphere of life, in any H, there will be more success in the activities and affairs of that H, *and this makes the thinking and feeling self, quiet and contented*. This helps the knowing self to abide within itself, experiencing *ananda* or *bliss*. Other details of the *moksha* Hs or *dharma* Hs will be gone into at a later stage.