

Part I: Origins of Vedic Astrology & Fundamental Principles

I.1 Brief History of Vedic Astrology [VA]-Ancient Vedic Roots.

I.1.2 Rishis [Seers or Sages]:

We had earlier considered, under the Sec: I.1.1 Rishis [Seers or Sages], *the important role of the Rishis as the progenitors of all branches of Vedic learning, in particular, even, Vedanga Jyotisha.* In those ages, Vedic Astrology was not set apart from Vedic Astronomy- both were inseparable, and went by the unified name of *Jyotisha*, whose important meaning we shall presently go into.

At this point, it may not be out of place to remember that in applying ourselves to a deeper study of any discipline, we will have to be able to swing in our perceptions between two extremes; the macroscopic vision[Cosmic(Brahmanda) or Atmic, in its outlook] and the microscopic one[body-centered(Pindanda), & local, in its outlook]. These two extreme perceptions are kind of polar opposites, but we will have to keep both perceptions before us, and have the capacity to shift from one to the other, as and when, the situation calls for such a swing.

In the microscopic vision of things, we must become sensitive to all sorts of small detailed ingredients: mathematical, symbolic, even words, never allowing them to mesmerize us, as they indeed are sometimes known to do, especially, when we are given to wallowing in the past memories or wandering into the unreal and dream-like pastures of the future.

Note that we are not saying here that *dreaming and imagination are movements in consciousness, which are unspiritual per se.* No, we are not saying this, because even dreaming and imagination have their natural place in our life, for they have been put there by God. What we are however saying, is that rather than we using words & imaginative pictures consciously and deliberately, they could also

possess us and hold us in their spells-and this is where we will have to become alert and vigilant. We know only too well that when this happens, we lose control over our lives. Later on in Astrology we will also learn, under what conditions, such a painful unconscious subordination to words and pictures, comes to pass.

Words are in reality, like tools or magnifying glasses of various focal powers. In the hands of intelligent people, they can, become tools which facilitate 'seeing', which will then give us a clearer vision into the things they are intended to point to. However, we will gain this deeper vision and power, only when we learn to become very aware of their creative potencies, their etymological meanings, and use them carefully and sensitively, learn to keep them at a certain distance, from the silence of the inner chamber of the Self[Atman], and not thoughtlessly come under their ever-inviting hypnotic spell.

An ancient Sanskrit saying [probably from the illustrious poet Kalidasa], gives us the further necessary insight into the dual aspects of the word: *"The sound of the word & the meaning of the word, are like the Supreme, which has two polar aspects: the manifest aspect of Parvati[Shakti] and the unmanifest aspect of Parameswara[Shiva]"*.

The etymology of each word takes us back to its Shiva aspect, its heart or source, whereas the written or articulated form is only the manifested or externalized aspect of Shiva, namely Shakti. It will be very much to our advantage if we care to always go into the etymology of words, for then, in all likelihood, we will also learn to use them wisely - as Shiva is verily, the source of wisdom.

The Master J Krishnamurti had asked us to be aware of the process of *naming*, for it is through this almost automatic process of naming, that the self sustains itself, through words, and memories of it's various experiences. Of course, this teaching is only for the serious ones, who have already realized that this life, this gift from God, too precious, to

be squandered away in the mere pleasurable trifles of our mundane existence.

Vedanga means an organ [*anga*] of the *Vedas*, the complete corpus of *fundamental spiritual knowledge, of Man, God, Cosmos, Nature, etc.* A bifurcation between Astronomy and Astrology had not yet come to pass, only because, such a bifurcation, usually comes to pass only with the greater development and unfoldment of knowledge, which produces, *something like cell-differentiation*, with which we meet in Biology. For, example, in the 19th Century, and even in the early part of the 20th century, Physics and Chemistry did not have separate and independent existences, rather, they formed an integral discipline of learning, which went by the name of ‘Natural Philosophy’. This implies that in ancient times competent Astrologers were also competent Astronomers.

Jyotisham [noun], means Astronomy, as well as Astrology [Jyotishaha means Astronomer or Astrologer, and Jyotisha is an adjective.] Jyotim [neuter], means Light of the Supreme Brahman, and not just Light. Jyotihi [feminine] means also Light. *It must be noted that, Jyotishaha also means faculty of seeing. In fact, one of the important functions of Astrology is to open this faculty, to cultivate this faculty, so as to enable us to see [= understand, or realize], the nature of the Supreme Light, not as an abstraction, far away in another world, but as It Blesses and also inevitably Hurts us [for this is duality]- in its act of weaving and setting in motion the destiny of our lives.* There is a well-known pithy statement, which summarizes the essence of Vedic Astrology:

||Jyotisham ayanam Chakshuhu||

Meaning: The function of Astrology is like that of the eyes: to see clearly what is, that is reality, as it is, but not according to our hopes and despairs, likes and dislikes. Also to see [seeing means understanding or realizing] man's role in life, in the Cosmos, as a

product of creation, subject to the laws of fate and causation; and yet also as the unborn and undying Atma, to know one's innermost Immortality. Because, the function of Vedic Astrology is to bring fulfilment in all the four spheres of life, **Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha**, one creative Hindu Astrologer, Venkatesa, had some centuries ago, written a classic, calling it: **Sarvartha Chintamani**, meaning, this Vedic Astrology, is that 'Wish Yielding Gem' [Chintamani], which gives fulfilment in all the Arthas [Sarva-Arthas], namely the four Purusharthas mentioned above.

Those who wish to know the Leela [the play of Isvara] and Maya [the Illusion, Isvara has created], Isvara is weaving in human lives, must study Vedic Astrology. It makes Isvara or God, very real to us. ***In my vision of Vedic Astrology, I have placed emphasis on this particular meaning: Faculty of Seeing What Is, and thus Understanding What Is, as the handy work of Isvara and thus securing peace of contentment within.***

When approached from this truly philosophical and spiritual angle, Vedic Astrology, will be seen to qualify, as another profound **Darsana[System of world-view or Philosophy]**, which the Rishis had developed, a Darsana, which is independent and stands apart, from the other six time-honoured classical Hindu Systems of Philosophy. On account of its mathematical nature, which could have become a deterrent for many scholars, it probably did not gain the ascendancy, that the other Darsanas were fortunate in gaining.

Returning to the theme of the progenitors of Jyotirvidya [Astrology], the Rishis, let us absorb the true meaning as found in Vaman Shivram Apte's Sanskrit-English Dictionary: **"An inspired poet or sage, a singer of sacred hymns, (e.g., Kurasa, Vasishtha, Atri, Agastya, etc). They are the persons to whom the Vedic hymns were revealed. In every sukta [hymn], the Rishi is mentioned, along with the Devata, the Metre, and application or utility of the sukta."**

In a later work [Satapata Brahmana], the **Sapta Rishis [Saptarshyas]** are mentioned:

1. Gautama, 2. Bhardwaja, 3. Vishwamitra, 4. Jamadagni,
5. Vasishtha, 6. Kasyapa, and 7. Atri.

In the **Mahabharata**, another list of the **Sapta Rishis** is cited:

Marichi, Atri, Angirasa, Pulaha, Kratu, Pulastya, and Vasishtha.

Manu has added the names of some other illustrious Rishis:

Bhrigu, Pracetas, Narada.

Vedic Astronomy's **Sapta Rishi Mandala** is what we moderns call the **Great Bear Constellation.**

The original founding fathers of Vedic Astrology are the 18 Rishis, whose names are mentioned in the classic work: **Brihat Parasara Hora Shastra:**

Surya, Pitamaha. Vyasa, Vasishtha, Atreya, Parasara, Kashyapa, Narada, Garga, Marichi, Manu, Angira, Lomasha, Paulisha, Chavayana, Yavana, Bhrigu, Saunaka.

The classical works of VA, are mostly cast in the same form of a **'Samvada'** [meaning, conversations or dialogues] between a teacher and a disciple. *This is so, because, the fruits of learning arise, only from 'that field', where, after both the teacher and the disciple, have tilled the soil together [enquiry], and the teacher has sown the seeds, & both have watered the crop [contemplation on what was discussed].*

It is noteworthy that all the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, even the Puranas, and much of the Itihasas [Ramayana and Mahabharata] are set in the mould of the **Samvada**. The whole of **Brihat Parasara Hora Shastra** is a dialogue between the disciple **Maitareya** and the illustrious **Rishi Parasara**. **Maitareya's** name also figures in the

Mahabharata and the Bhagavata Purana, and Vidura [we are told] the highly intelligent philosopher and Prime Minister in Dritharasthra's court, used to often discuss with Maitareya on fundamental questions of philosophy, etc.

Some classical works were cast in the form of 'Samhita', meaning comprehensive, encyclopaedic, dwelling on many connected disciplines. 'Brihat Samhita' of the 5th century Astronomer-Astrologer Varahamihira is renowned.

In Parasara's Hora Shastra [Hora means 'hour' or time], one reads, the following qualifications of an Astrologer:

"The teachings of this Astrological knowledge is to be given only to disciples who are good and peacefully disposed, who honour the Gurus and elders, who speak only the truth and have devotion to Isvara. It is only in this way, that good will follow. Jyotisha Shastra should not be given to an unwilling student, to an atheist, and to faithless people."

The reason for these spiritual demands and qualifications, is simple, people who do not possess these Blessings in life, are unlikely to learn Astrology and even if they do attempt learning this discipline, *they may not be ethical in its practice, or may not grasp its profundity, so thereby becoming the instruments, for passing on to the next generation, a 'corrupt or polluted' version of this sacred knowledge.*

Note that no such demands are made, when it comes to learning Science and Technology.

You may also note that while Science and Technology are young discipline [only a few centuries old], this knowledge of Astrology, is easily several thousands of years old, it originally belonged to another distant spiritual and Vedic civilization, *and for this reason, its inner meaning may be somewhat elusive for us*, because our attention, may

be outward turned, rather than inward turned. We had already touched on this important aspect of VA, in the earlier section.
