We Are All Wayfarers On the Waves of Time
Category : November 1998
Published by Anonymous on Nov. 02, 1998

EDITORIAL

# We Are All Wayfarers On the Waves of Time

And one of the few truly useful navigational tools is an ancient one--Vedic astrology

the Editor

Believing nothing, the skeptic is blind; believing everything, the naif is lame. Somewhere between the two lies the lucid land of viveka, discrimination, which neither doubts every inexplicable phenomenon nor swallows every unexamined statement. In this issue we explore the uncanny Vedic technology of jyotisha, that hoary knowledge derived from secondary Vedic texts, born, they say, of Lord Brahma who taught it to Surya, the Sun, who gifted it to Brighu, the first human to know the science of astronomy and astrology. It's about time. And it's about the unseen forces that swirl about our blue Earth-island, creating tides, not of matter but of mind, not of water but of flowing fates and karmas.

Ronald Reagan, when President of the United States, confounded the White House staff and embarrassed aides by having his itinerary and major meetings scheduled in careful consultation with his wife's astrologer in California. Scoffing staffers counted it pure silliness, others thought it merely

impolitic of him.

Mr. Reagan is not a lone heretic. Queen Elizabeth I consulted the stars. Galileo, the Italian mathematician and astronomer, cast charts on the side, as did the German celestial scientist Johannes Kepler. Britain's Princess Diane followed the stars, and many Hollywood stars do the same. Ditto with Carl Jung and American millionnaire J.P. Morgan. That said, astrology still is not anywhere near as important in the Western world as in Asia. A 1990 poll of Americans found that while nearly 30% of Christians in America believe in astrology and read their horoscope weekly, only 5% had personally consulted an astrologer. Like so many other things, astrology in the Occident is about personal things--about me and mine, my spiritual progress, my love life and business success. In the Orient these concerns are not absent, but larger concerns dominate. Astrology in India is about auspiciousness, about connections, about sacred timing and being in a flow with the ebb and tide of divine forces. This universalizing approach to astrology gives the science a maturity that it tends to lack in the West, where it is seen as a frivolous, campy diversion for lonely souls trying to get a grip on their out-of-control life.

At the Hinduism Today headquarters in Hawaii, monks move in a matrix of Vedic understanding. We don't observe the days of the week in our life on Kauai, rather following the sacred lunar calendar for which our Monday is called Sun 1 and our Friday is Sun 5 (or maybe 6 or 7 or 4), since the week we live is, like the day, flexible in its length depending on the celestial movements. "Weekends," which we call retreats and dedicate to nonworldly matters, are usually two, but sometimes three, days long. All this brings us closer to the sacred cosmos,

though it can confound our connections with the rest of the world. We're always hearing one among us utter, "What? Today is Saturday?" We also avoid important meetings or events during ashtami, the eighth day of the lunar cycle. Ironically, some Vedic astrologers don't themselves follow the traditional Indian calendar, which is understandable in this 7-days-make-a-week world. Less understandable is why they don't always follow the knowledge they teach others. Consider how when an astrology conference was being planned last year, we proposed it happen on an auspicious day. "That won't work," came the answer. "It's not a weekend!" Behold the new auspiciousness!

The astrologer is something of a tribal shaman. Ideally, he or she is the one with special insight, a wider vision that lifts awareness beyond our little world, connecting us to the canopy above, expanding perception beyond the narrow sliver of time in which we live by bringing past lives and actions into the now. I have said before that astrologers tell time with a bigger watch.

The genuine astrologer is a time navigator. He teaches that time is not all colorless and neutral, the same in all directions. Time has its eddies, its waxing and waning, its preferential ways--and in that sense is much like the oceans, full of change. No ship's captain worth his hardtack would consider the sea uniform, everywhere equal and indifferent to his passage. No, the sea is alive with idle doldrums and treacherous tempests, and, yes, dangers worthy of anticipation.

To the astrologer, time is like that sea, with changing moods

and forces, some propelling us swiftly forward, others opposing our well-plotted progress. Today time impels, tomorrow it impedes. How foolhardy is the seaman who keeps his canvas unfurled in a storm or stows his sails when good winds blow. Time is a kind of psychic wind, blowing now this way, now that. As a ship's captain heeds the chart reckoned by his navigator as to course, winds and tides, so our life's journey benefits from another chart, our astrologer's appraisal of protean time's orderly and sometimes ornery flow. It benefits, too, from a deep submission to the fact that this life is all our own self-created sea, and the navigator's chart cannot change the waters we are in, it can simply help us exploit the currents and avoid the perilous shallow reefs.

The subtle art of astrology turns on what to give importance to. Ask ten astrologers, and you may get ten distinct responses. The key is finding one that suits you, your needs and understandings. If ever it seems too confusing or you fall into doubt about your days, remember the words of Sri Lanka's greatest sage, Satguru Yogaswami: "All times are auspicious for the true devotee of Siva." He wanted to combat the superstition and Sani-phobia that often surrounds an astrologer's forwarnings. He meant that we need not cringe in fear that this time is bad for me, that time is good. All times are beneficent to those who cling closely to God.