

human affairs and natural phenomena on earth. A person is believed to be born with the samskaras of past births and vasanas. These are like initial conditions for determining the destiny of the person. Unlike other beings, human beings are endowed with free-will and *purushartha* (see Yoga-Vasishtha). A

person can control vasanas and change the course of the trajectory of the destiny by *purushartha*. The prevalent system of prescribing rituals to change the effect of planets/stars appears to be a crude and vague form of this principle. Rishis – the seers of truth, declare in the Vedas that one's penetration of vision

determines the level of truth one reaches.

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## Astrology – a neo-science without utility

One may support the views of K. N. Ganeshiah (*Curr. Sci.*, 2001, **80**, 719) not because there is unscientific burial of Vedic astrology by a large number of scientists (*Curr. Sci.*, 2001, **80**, 1088) in opposing the UGC's move to introduce Vedic astrology in the curriculum of the universities, but because Vedic astrology is probably a systematic knowledge or science. There is the balanced and knowledgeable opinion of V. V. S. Sarma (*Curr. Sci.*, 2001, **80**, 115) too. Whether Vedic astrology is a science and whether it should form a university-study, are two different questions. Most of us have superficial knowledge of astrology and only a few of us have knowledge of the Vedas. Nostradamus, some four hundred years ago used to predict favourable and unfavourable events about people which were generally found to be true. These predictions put him into trouble and he then started making predictions in guarded language in the form of verses about the persons, country and time. It has not been an easy matter to make correct and precise interpretations of these French verses. One interpretation made by Hiranmaya Kirlekar (?) in *Observer* in October 1986, said that Communism will be wiped out by 1991. I refused to believe it then and all of us considered this to be an impossibility at that time. However, now we know what happened ultimately and to what extent. There are numerous instances from our daily life when we are eager to know the future events with the help of astrology, and thereby ascertain whether the predictions are true or not. The main reason for the predictions not being true is

insufficient knowledge of astrology, imprecise calculations and wrong interpretations. There is nothing wrong in getting a horoscope made at the time of birth of a child in the family. There is optimistic justification in knowing the auspicious moment for starting or doing some important work, which is equivalent to knowing the mood of one's boss to get anything done. If we fail to get the work done by the boss, surely it is our failure to read his/her mood correctly.

In all probability, astrology may be a science, much more difficult to understand and practise than physics and mathematics. It may not be as exact and precise as known sciences but it is a systematic knowledge very similar to science. It may also not have cause and effect relationship as rigorous as in chemistry and physics. The limiting factors in astrology are much more than in conventional sciences. Let it be known as neo-science. If several scientists including a few Nobel Laureates have given a statement in mid-1970 that astrology is not a science (Narlikar, J., *The Times of India*, New Delhi, 14 May 2001), that is not the last word or the end of a story or phenomenon. Their contention is based on western philosophy with no history or ancient background.

Do we not have an open mind as scientists to know more about them and to find out the truth?

Even though one may possess sufficient knowledge of astrology, it requires lot of wisdom, intuition and experience to make predictions accurately and appropriately. One must be able to make

precise calculations about the influence of a planet and of the stars on a person's life. It is something like the practice of homeopathy which is more difficult than allopathy or ayurveda. There may be several homeopathic medicines for a complaint, but only an experienced practitioner knows what particular symptom is most important to be given attention to, for prescribing the medicine.

Astrology may or may not be a science, but the big question is, why should we study it? To be able to know the future? How does knowing the future help us? Not in any way. On the other hand, it creates confusion. The best thing is to do one's duty according to the *karma* theory of *Srimad Bhagavad Geeta* and leave the rest to the Divine.

It is a human weakness to want to know one's future. If astrology is made a part of the curriculum in universities, it lends credibility and respectability to it and to the practice of knowing the future. Thus, the tendency to know future will grow more by what the UGC has already done, and this we have found, is not useful in life. Astrology may be a science or neo-science, but its study would not leave us any wiser and its practice would lead us to more confusion.

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