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Vedic astrology is not lost despite discard by astronomers with astronomical discoveries

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Abstract

Astronomers contend that major astronomical discoveries and advances in our knowledge and philosophy during the last 500 years have dealt a deadly blow on the intense astrological activities of over 5000 years and astrology moved from a pivotal role to an outcast from mainstream thinking. The think tank dismisses astrology as bereft of any science. Several astronomical discoveries are cited as the main contributing factors in breaking the astrological model and to its decline. The conventional astrology being practiced in the east including India with the erroneous sidereal chart and ipso facto the accuracy of predictions has compounded the cause of decline. In this paper, the causative factors for its decline are examined in the light of the uncanny ability and wisdom of ancient seers on the scientific basis in the genesis of basic principles of astrology explaining why it's no longer acceptable to say astrology is rubbish on a scientific basis and attempted to bring in the renaissance of astrology in the very land of its glory.

Keyword: Vedic astrology, not lost despite discard, astronomers, astronomical discoveries

1. Introduction

Sceptical Research into Astrology (www.astrologer.com) in an article entitled "Astrology the vital piece of the big jig-saw has been discarded but not lost" contended that the discoveries in astronomy in the last 500 years' astrology has moved from a pivotal role in the academic system to an outcast from mainstream thinking^[1].

Astronomy is the scientific study of celestial objects (such as stars, planets, comets, and galaxies) and phenomena that originate outside the Earth's atmosphere (such as the cosmic background radiation) while astrology is not only the derivative of astronomy but also the life side of it. It is one of the six limbs of Vedānga. The word 'Jyotisha' has Siddhanta Bhaga (Astronomical Theories), Ganita Bhaga (Calculative part) and Phalitha Bhaga (Predictive part) in its ambit.

The following four major astronomical discoveries during the last 500 years astronomical discoveries are cited as the main contributing factors in breaking the astrological model and to its decline are discussed with reference to Vedic astrology of Yajurveda Vedānga Jyotisha around 3000 BC:

1. Precession of Equinoxes
2. Heliocentric System
3. Discovery of the Outer Planets
4. The vast distances in space

It may be straightaway mentioned here, that the said major astronomical discoveries during the last 500 years have had absolutely no impact on the Vedic astrological model as these so-called discoveries not only find a mention in the ageless Vedas but are seen in the genesis of science of astrology. Further, the observation that the said discoveries have caused the decline of astrology also do not hold any water. Indeed, there is a decline in belief in astrology in society, but why and how did it happen. The think-tank felt that astrology needs to gain academic credentials in order to be taken seriously as it shows no interest in being linked to fields of science (not to biology, not to psychology, not to statistics, not even to astronomy), or the humanities or the social sciences. At this juncture, it needs to be mentioned here that the author of this paper is the author of the book entitled "Vedic Astrology Reintegrated into Astronomy, Astrophysics and Astrobiology" the book is an exposition of the scientific basis

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(more particularly properties of electromagnetism) as the rationale in the genesis of the principles laid down in Vedic Astrology [2].

Interestingly enough, Percy Seymour, a renowned astronomer and a respectable authority on astrophysics, has broken with scientific orthodoxy to claim that astrology could have some basis in fact [3].

The author of this paper, could not but exclaim 'eureka' that principles of astronomy, astrophysics and astrobiology are the rationale in the genesis of all principles of vedic astrology; and, the rationale works in the human life encompassing all the cycles, namely, birth, death, life beyond death, evolution and liberation [4].

Let us now discuss each one of the four astronomical discoveries with reference to Vedic literature.

2. Precession of Equinoxes

Conventional astrology in India is based on Sidereal zodiac and Indian astrologers, in particular, have a difficult time digesting or accepting precession of equinoxes and tropical zodiac because it throws their rich astrological expertise into jeopardy; they would rather choose to counter argue they had been "following the ancients" by using a sidereal zodiac.

We must never lose sight of the mention of tropical zodiac and precession of equinoxes in original authorities, namely, Śrīmad Bhāgavatam of 3rd century, Sūrya Siddhānta of Aryabhata of 4th century, Brihat Samhita of Varahamihira of 5th century and Tetrabiblos of Kepler of 6th century. All these great texts state, in no uncertain terms, that the twelve signs of the zodiac are entirely based on solstices and equinoxes, not stars. By ignoring this fact of astronomy is a great sin and a great injustice to the subject.

Astrologers working more than twenty centuries ago faced almost no difference at all between the sidereal and tropical positions. It is rude shock to be blind and ignore India's own classical literature on the subject. Śrīmad Bhāgavatam held by most Indians as penultimate Pūraṇa with Its fifth division concerning astronomy represents the uncanny ability and wisdom of the ancients.

Sūrya Siddhānta clearly states that solstices and equinoxes define the 12 signs of the zodiac. It says that Capricorn is defined by the Sun beginning to move north at the winter solstice, and that Cancer is defined by the Sun beginning to move south at the summer solstice.

The Ṛig Veda, in Ṛig Vedic times, four to five thousand years ago, mentions Kṛttikā as the "first" star coinciding with Vernal Equinox.

Skipping Bharani, later Indian works beginning with Varahamihira from 5th century noted Aśvinī as the first star, because at that time Vernal Equinox was in Aśvinī star. Historically speaking, the two zodiacs, sidereal and tropical, coincided in 285 AD stated by Bhaskara II of 11th century in his work Siddhanta Siromani.

Varahamihira exploded the astrological and astronomical world with his observations that Vernal Equinox was in the 1st quarter of Asvini star and even ordained the future astronomers and almanac writers to take cognisance of the changes from time to time in his two-famous works Brihat Samhita [5] and Panchasiddhantika [6].

While this is so of precession of equinoxes and tropical zodiac in Indian classical literature particularly of Rig Veda 5000 years ago, the discovery of precession of the Equinoxes by Hipparchus around 130 BC was, at least, 4000 years later [7].

3. Heliocentric System

The concept of Heliocentrism is found in several Vedic literatures written in ancient India. Yajnavalkya of 9th-8th century BC stated that the Earth is spherical and that the Sun was "the centre of the spheres". In his astronomical text Shatapatha Brahmana (8. 7. 3.10) he states: "The sun strings these worlds-the earth, the planets, the atmosphere - to himself on a thread." Shatapatha Brahmana contains his solar calendar.

The Vedic Sanskrit text Aitareya Brahmana (2.7) (c. 9th-8th century BC) states: "The Sun never sets nor rises that's right. When people think, the sun is setting, it is not so; they are mistaken." Vishnu Purana (2.8) of 1st century which states: "The sun is stationed for all time, in the middle of the day. Of the sun, which is always in one and the same place, there is neither setting nor rising." Yajur Veda 3/60 This Earth with its oceans revolves in the space around the Sun.

The Indian astronomer-mathematician Aryabhata (476-550), in his magnum opus Aryabhatiya, propounded a heliocentric model in which the Earth was taken to be spinning on its axis and the periods of the planets were given with respect to a stationary Sun. He was also the first to discover that the light from the Moon and the planets was reflected from the Sun, and that the planets follow an elliptical orbit around the Sun, and thus propounded an eccentric elliptical model of the planets, on which he accurately calculated many of the astronomical constants.

Aryabhatiya represented the pinnacle of astronomical knowledge. Aryabhata's "Aryabhatiya", developed a computational system for a partially heliocentric planetary model, in which the planets orbit the Sun was written in the 4th century long before Copernicus' ideas. Copernicus had written De revolutionibus orbium coelestium, (published 1543) so it's quite likely that Aryabhata's work had an influence on him. Hence modesty prevents the author to call heliocentric system as "Copernician Heliocentric System". Bhaskara (1114-1185) expanded on Aryabhata's heliocentric model in his astronomical treatise Siddhanta-Shiromani.

Vedic Astrology uses both geocentric and heliocentric models in the genesis of its principles. In modern calculations, the terms "geocentric" and "heliocentric" are often used to refer to reference frames. In such systems, of the Earth-Moon system, of the Sun, of the Sun plus the major planets, or of the entire solar system can be selected. Right Ascension and Declination are examples of geocentric coordinates, used in Earth-based observations, while the heliocentric latitude and longitude are used for orbital calculations. However, such selection of "geocentric" or "heliocentric" frames is merely a matter of computation. It is in this context that sun substitutes the Earth in the seven Planets as the earth is a moving observatory. It does not have philosophical implications and does not constitute a distinct physical or scientific model. The geocentric model of the solar system is still of interest to planetarium makers, as, for technical reasons, a Ptolemaic-type motion for the planet light apparatus has some advantages over a Copernican-type motion.

The celestial sphere, still used for teaching purposes and sometimes for navigation, is also based on a geocentric model which in effect ignores parallax. However, this effect is negligible at the scale of accuracy that applies to a planetarium.

4. Discovery of the Outer Planets

While arguing against astrology, it is alleged that the discovery of outer planets, meaning planets situated beyond

the orbit of Saturn, namely Uranus, Neptune and Pluto in our solar system was a rude shock to and a great shake up of astrology of ancient system worked with seven planets for thousands of years. This criticism gained momentum, for at this juncture it coincided with the 'Age of Reason and Revolution.

The argument against astrology, put in a nut shell, is that our ancients are not aware of the existence of these 'Outer Planets'. This misconception must be blown out with all the might of ancient wisdom and their uncanny ability by quoting Sage Veda Vyasa. Veda Vyāsa in his Mahābhārata text in Sanskrit, mentioned three additional planets Uranus, Neptune and Pluto as Shveta, Shyāma and Teevra respectively. He mentioned these three planets with their positions^[8]. Veda Vyāsa is about 5000 years ancient than Herschel, but still he knew all these three planets. Ancient Hindus were aware of the existence of these planets in our solar system and they were not included in Vedic astrology as they were not useful in predicting the future of a person. So, they lost importance. Another argument could also have been initiated against astrology, as to why even 'not ordinarily planets', namely, Sun (a star), Moon (satellite of the earth), the two lunar nodes (intersecting points of the orbits of sun and moon) are included as planets and why the Earth and the 'outer planets' are excluded in its studies. Also, why the International Astronomical Union (IAU) shows sympathy and exhibits antipathy to Pluto alternately about the status of Pluto as a 'Planet' since its discovery in 1930^[9]. The argument of astronomers against astrology stands vindicated rather counterproductive to astronomers if it is said that whole edifice of astrology rests on the sunlight (electromagnetic wave) received by the earth from the Sun directly, and from other member planets by reflection and/ or deflection and by obscuring and/or variation by non-planets. This is the rationale in the inclusion exclusion and substitution of seven planets in its studies^[10].

5. The vast distances in space

In 1975, A sceptical group CSICOP of 186 leading scientists affirmed their objections to astrology based on this reasoning: "In ancient times people had no conception of the vast distances from the earth to the planets and stars. Now that these distances can and have been calculated, we can see how infinitesimally small are the gravitational and other effects produced by the distant planets and the far more distant stars."^[11]

Still on the distance theme, "As you might expect in an Earth-centered system made thousands of years ago, astrological influences do not depend on distance at all. The importance of Mars in your horoscope is identical whether the planet is on the same side of the Sun as the Earth or seven times farther away on the other side."^[12]

In India science and religion are not opposed fundamentally, as they often seem to be in the West, but are seen as parts of the same great search for truth and enlightenment that inspired the sages of Hinduism. Hinduism's understanding of time is as grandiose as time itself. The Hindu concept of time embraces billions and trillions of years. The Puranas describe time units from the infinitesimal truti, lasting 1/1,000,000 of a second to a mahamantavara of 311 trillion years^[13]. Hindu sages describe time as cyclic, an endless procession of creation, preservation and dissolution. Scientists such as Carl Sagan have expressed amazement at the accuracy of space and time descriptions given by the ancient rishis and saints, who fathomed the secrets of the universe through their

mystically awakened senses. The distances of the planets of our solar system in the Puranas measured in Yojanas perfectly tally with values in AU in modern science.

Before we understand anything, we must understand universe division. According to Hinduism the universe is divided into three parts Urdhva-loka (Highest abodes), Madhya or Bhuloka (Middle ones), and Adho-loka (the Lower realms).

The highest planet in the Material Realm is the abode of Lord Brahma, the progenitor of this universe. Along with him are present, his consort Saraswati and other spiritual entities who, after eons of spiritual penance have been able to transcend the bonds of Material world and reach this plane by traversing through the Milky Way. At the time of final dissolution of the material planets the residents here transform their subtle bodies into spiritual bodies and enter the eternal Vaikuntha planets, which begin 26,200,000 yojanas above the Satyaloka. According to vedic physics, space inside our universe is multi-dimensional. There are 64 main dimensions and each dimension is further divided into many sub-dimensions. Since the inhabitants of earth can perceive 3 dimensions, their senses have no access to many other realms of universal reality.

It is said that through the ancient process of yoga, one can obtain access to many other dimensions. When a yogi obtains access to other dimensions, he can perform unusual activities and technology is but one of innumerable ways of applying it^[14].

6. Discussion of results

'Precession of Equinoxes' is nothing new to Indian Astronomers. It finds mention multitude of times in timeless Vedas. Varahamihira, Indian Astronomer and Astrologer of 5th century made startling revelations of his observations in his two-well-known works, Brihat Samhita and Panchasiddhantika which exploded the astronomical and astrological world by surprise.

Vedas and scriptures have spelt the heliocentric model in unequivocal terms. Aryabhata, Indian Astronomer and Mathematician of 5th century in his famous work Aryabhatiya of 4th century dealt with "Heliocentric Model", nearly 1000 years before Copernicus.

The existence of outer planets is nothing new to ancient wisdom either. Sage Veda Vyasa detailed the outer planets, planets situated beyond the orbit of Saturn, and nomenclature them.

The measurement of vast distances in space are nothing new to the sages of antiquity whose astonishing concept of the distances of planets of our solar system and distances measurement of vast distances in the universe and the occult time-scales in cosmology whose values tally meticulously with modern astronomy would make any man spellbound. The following excerpts obtained from various sources should bring the matter to rest.

Alan Watts, a professor, graduate school dean and research fellow of Harvard University, drew heavily on the insights of Vedanta. Watts became well known in the 1960s as a pioneer in bringing Eastern philosophy to the West. He wrote: "To the philosophers of India, however, Relativity is no new discovery, just as the concept of light years is no matter for astonishment to people used to thinking of time in millions of kalpas, (A kalpa is about 4,320,000 years). The fact that the wise men of India have not been concerned with technological applications of this knowledge arises from the circumstance that technology is but one of innumerable ways of applying it."

"It is, indeed, a remarkable circumstance that when Western civilization discovers Relativity it applies it to the manufacture of atom-bombs, whereas Oriental civilization applies it to the development of new states of consciousness." (Source: Spiritual Practices of India-By Frederic Spiegelberg Introduction by Alan Watts p. 8-9).

Dick Teres is the author and co-author of several books about science and technology, including *The God Particle*. He is cofounder of *Omni* magazine and has written for *Discover*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and *The Atlantic Monthly*.

He says "Indian cosmologists, the first to estimate the age of the earth at more than 4 billion years. They came closest to modern ideas of atomism, quantum physics, and other current theories. India developed very early, enduring atomist theories of matter. Possibly Greek atomistic thought was influenced by India, via the Persian civilization."

Hinduism's understanding of time is as grandiose as time itself. While most cultures base their cosmologies on familiar units such as few hundreds or thousands of years, the Hindu concept of time embraces billions and trillions of years. The Puranas describe time units from the infinitesimal *truti*, lasting 1/1, 000, 0000 of a second to a *mahamanvantara* of 311 trillion years. Hindu sages describe time as cyclic, an endless procession of creation, preservation and dissolution. Scientists such as Carl Sagan have expressed amazement at the accuracy of space and time descriptions given by the ancient rishis and saints, who fathomed the secrets of the universe through their mystically awakened senses (source: *Hinduism Today* April/May/June 2007 p. 14).

Professor Arthur Holmes (1895-1965) geologist, professor at the University of Durham. He writes regarding the age of the earth in his great book, *The Age of Earth* (1913) as follows:

"Long before it became a scientific aspiration to estimate the age of the earth, many elaborate systems of the world chronology had been devised by the sages of antiquity. The most remarkable of these occult time-scales is that of the ancient Hindus, whose astonishing concept of the Earth's duration has been traced back to *Manusmriti*, a sacred book."

When the Hindu calculation of the present age of the earth and the expanding universe could make Professor Holmes so astonished, the precision with which the Hindu calculation regarding the age of the entire Universe was made would make any man spellbound.

(Source: *Hinduism and Scientific Quest* -By T.R.R. Iyengar p. 20-21).

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7. Conclusion

The modern age of reason and criticism has challenged the very fundamentals of the subject of astrology and the dry rules of astrology have accepted the inevitable defeat. It is true astrology is on the decline. The growing discredit to and the rapid decline of the subject astrology may lead to total annihilation of the subject from the surface of the globe in about 450 years when the divergence between the two zodiacs would amount to 30°, the extent of one zodiacal sign. The controversy, however, between the Fixed and the Moving Zodiacs - the *Nirayana* and *Śāyana* Determinations - has been raging in India more or less acutely and, in almost every conference of astronomers and astrologers of more recent times, the question was mooted along with the vexed question of the *Ayanāmśa*, but only to widen the gulf and accentuate the differences between the opposing camps, the orthodox section crying hoarsely against the adoption of the moving Zodiac given for astrological purposes, leaving alone religious purposes and observances. But truth cannot be suppressed indefinitely.

Vedic astrology has survived innumerable insinuations and paradigm shifts. Vedic astrology with a rich heritage on the predictive side has been parting company with vedic astronomy, if not actually sinning against it. The profound works of astounding precision of the gigantic intellects of ancient India which do not appeal to the modern scientific inquirers besides the interpretation and practice of the subject on the astrologically disappointing astronomical data of the Indian Almanac are the causative factors behind the defeats.

Foreign invasions and consequent lack of patronage conspired to make the generations after *Varāhamihira* of 5th century commit the sin of sticking on to the *Sidereal Zodiac* (beginning with the first point of *Aśvini*) for want of direct observation. Long companionship with the first point of *Aśvini* star has made it heresy to part with it, while *Varāhamihira* himself parted with *Krittikā* star for obvious reasons. A further reason for clinging to the *Nirayana* horoscope in India appears to be the circumstance that the progressive horoscopy in India has come to depend exclusively on the so-called *Nakshatra Daśās* or planetary periods, which are believed to be inextricably wedded to the 27 asterisms, while, as a matter of fact, it is not the case, but dependant on the Longitude of the Moon measured from the Vernal equinoctial point ^[15].

Who really has the burden of proof? ^[16] We are deliberately targeting the major television networks, which is to say, the well-known media conglomerates in UK as well in India. No doubt, the burden of proof lies on the astrologers. But majority of the astrologers invited to debate on the subject, no matter which part of the globe they belong to, do not have background of astronomy and even if some possess, they do not know the scientific basis and rationale in the genesis of

the principles of astrology let alone “how astrology works”. It is that the ‘think tank’ is compelled to revise its opinion about astrology. Astrology encompasses all the modern subjects of science and arts at every step in the genesis of its theory, calculation and predictive parts.

The need of the hour is to unearth the scientific content latent in the Vedas and scriptures. The citadels of orthodoxy have to be broken through and ill-informed criticism has to be faced with missionary zeal, in the hope and belief that facts are bound to be more eloquent than mere criticism and finally emerge successful by ushering the renaissance of astrology, elevating it to the unchallengeable position it occupied in times gone by in the very land of its glory.

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