

Appendix Two

Premises of Astrology

Sri Aurobindo wrote these notes around 1910. They were not intended for publication.

Chapter I

Elements

Astrology depends on three things, the position of the planets in the heavens and with regard to each other, the condition of the planets at the natal hour or at the moment of enquiry, and the general character or tout ensemble of the horoscope. Any error or deficiency with regard to any of these three elements separately or with regard to their mutual relations will affect the work of the astrologer and vitiate its correctness or its completeness. To cast a horoscope completely is one of the most difficult operations known to Science. The astrologer is born, not made. It is as impossible to manufacture a perfect astrologer by education as to manufacture a poet. Hence the disrepute into which the profession of astrology too lightly and numerously followed has fallen in the Kaliyuga. In addition nine tenths of the true science are lost and the little that remains, is replete with errors. Astrologers make lucky hits or stumble on the truth, but it is only a rare genius here & there who can predict correctly and even he is never safe against error. For even when his intuition divines correctly, his authorities mislead him.

The position of the planets in the heavens is determined by the sign of the zodiac through which they are passing, their relation to the ascendant sign, their precise position in the sign reckoned by degrees and minutes; their relative position to each other by the distance of their signs from each other.

The condition of the planets is determined by the sign they are in according to which they are either elevated, fallen, ascending or descending, or possibly at home; by the direction of their motion at the time, forward or backward; by the quality of their motion, swift, slow or normal; by their mutual relations of friendship, enmity or neutrality, — conjunction, aspect, opposition or distance; by their nearness to the sun, setting or rising, divergent or convergent; by their location in a sign — friendly,

neutral or hostile, fixed or moving, male or female, fiery, watery, aery, earthy or ethereal; by their relations with gentle, fierce or inconstant planets.

The character of the horoscope is determined by the number of elevated, fallen, ascending, descending or entrenched, progressive or retrograde, rapid, sluggish or moderate, well housed or ill housed, setting, rising, convergent or divergent planets; by the number & nature of the planetary relations, conjunctions, aspects, oppositions, by the character of the ascendant, its lord and its tenants, combinations, distributions. All these circumstances have to be considered in order to determine whether the horoscope is great, mediocre or petty, favourable or malign, strong or weak. The results have to be judged according to the character. The same details in a great horoscope will mean something very different from what they would mean in one that is petty or malign or even merely strong. Moreover even if all the positions are the same, yet the infinitesimal shifting of a planet or a change in its character will often mean the difference between life and death, success or failure. This is the reason why twins sometimes have different destinies, one dying, another living, or pursue an identical course up to a certain point, then diverge. One hears astrologers say when the minute of birth is approximately stated, That is good enough. It is the speech of incompetence or ignorance. The first necessity is to determine the exact minute or second of birth. All the general results may be potentially true, yet owing to some accident depending on a few seconds' difference, none of them may have the occasion to come to pass. But if the exact details are obtainable, there is no chance of that comparatively rare, but nevertheless well-instanced fortuity.

Chapter II

The Signs

The signs of the Zodiac are twelve in number, beginning from the Ram, in which the Sun reaches its elevation, and arching back to it. They are, in order, the Ram, the Bull, the Twins, the Crab, the Lion, the Girl, the Balance, the Scorpion, the Archer or Bow, the Crocodile, the Jar and the Fish. The sixth sign is usually called the Virgin in Europe, but the word gives an idea of purity which is not the character of the sign and is therefore inappropriate. Each sign has a *devata*, a god or spiritual being in charge of it. He is not its master, but its protector and the protector of all who are born in the sign. Indra (Zeus, Odin) protects the Ram, Agni (Moloch, Thor) the Bull, the Aswins (Castor & Pollux) the Twins, Upendra (Baal) the Crab, Varuna (Poseidon) the Lion, Aditi, called also Savitri or Sita (Astarte, Aphrodite) the Girl, Yama (Hades) the Balance, Aryama (Ares) the Scorpion, Mitra or Bhava (Apollo Phoebus) the Archer, Saraswati called also Ganga (Nais) the Crocodile, Parjanya (Apis) the Jar, Nara (Nereus) the Fish. All these gods have their own character and tend to imprint it on their protégé. Or it would be truer to say, that men of particular characters tend to take birth under the protection of a congenial deity. Other gods stand behind the planets and the twelve houses & they also influence the temperament of the subject.

There are only two female signs, the Girl and the Crocodile; but the Twins, the Crab, the Balance, the Archer & the Fish are male with feminine tendencies. The rest are male.

There are three watery signs, the Crocodile, the Jar and the Fish; three fiery, the Bull, the Lion and the Scorpion; three earthy, the Twins, the Crab and the Girl; three aerial, the Ram, the Balance and the Archer. The only ethereal sign is the Ram, and it is ethereal only when either the Sun or Jupiter occupy it.

Each alternate sign beginning from the Ram is moving; each

alternate sign beginning from the Bull is fixed.

The names of the signs have nothing to do with their character in any of these kinds, but are determined by the spiritual “totem”, that is, the nervous type of the souls born in the signs. Those who are born in the Ram are brave, but mild and humane; in the Bull irascible, bold but not ferocious; in the Twins gentle, polite & worldly; in the Crab, timid or anxious to please, but formidable when angry, awkward but persevering and successful; in the Lion, royal, bold and splendid; in the Girl, amorous, charming and aesthetic; in the Balance just, mercantile, able; in the Scorpion, fierce, quarrelsome and impetuous; in the Archer, swift, brilliant and effective; in the Crocodile saturnine, brooding and dangerous; in the Jar thrifty, cautious and secretive; in the Fish restless, light and inconstant. It is not always the sign of birth, however, that is most powerful in fixing the temperament, it is sometimes the sign in which the sun or the moon or else the lord of the horoscope is situated; and none of these signs can be neglected. If they are all taken into consideration according to their respective force in the horoscope, a correct idea of the character may be formed; but even then the position and mutual relations of their lords must be taken into the account. This is the reason why men born under the same sign vary so much in character.

I must, however, guard against the idea that the signs and planets determine a man’s character or fate. They do not, they only indicate it, because the celestial & astral influences are the sensational or nervous force in Nature which become the instruments of our karma. That is why the European mystics gave the name of astral plane to the plane of sensational or nervous existence and astral fluid to the magnetic power or current of nervous, vital force in a man. It is this same vital force which pours upon us from all parts of the solar system and of this physical universe. But man is mightier than his sensations or vitality, or the sensational & vital forces of the universe. Our fate & our temperament have been built by our own wills and our own wills can alter them.

Chapter III

The Planets

The word planets as applied to the celestial instruments of our Fate in the modern astrology, is something of a misnomer. It is more accurate of the planets of the mental world than of the material solar system; for in the spherical system of the *sukshma jagat*, even the sun and the moon are planets, each circling in its own sphere round the central, fixed, but revolving earth. But a better term is the Indian word *graha*, those that have a hold on the earth. There are seven old planets, the Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, and two others in process of creation, *Rahou* & *Ketou*. In addition there are two dead planets corresponding to Uranus & Herschel and two others not yet discovered. These are called *aprakashita graha*, unrevealed or unmanifest planets. The last four have no appreciable results except in certain physical and mental details. They may slightly affect the minute circumstances of an event, not its broad outlines. They may give certain kinks, in thought, character & physique, but do not seriously modify them. They are known but ignored by Indian astrology.

Different names are given to the planets by the Indian astronomers and for astrological purposes they are much more appropriate. Mars is *Mangal*, the auspicious, euphemistically so termed because of his great malignancy; Mercury is *Budha*, the clever, intellectual god, son of the Moon and *Tara* wife of *Brihaspati*; Jupiter is *Brihaspati*, Prime Minister of *Indra*, spiritual and political adviser of the Gods; Venus is *Sukra*, who occupies the same position to the Titans; Saturn is the malevolent *Shani*, child of the Sun. *Rahou* & *Ketou* are Titans of our mythology.

Each of these gods has his own character. *Surya* the Sun, is strong, splendid, bold, regal, warlike, victorious and energetic; *Chandra*, the Moon, is inconstant, amorous, charming, imaginative, poetical, artistic; *Mangal* is a politician, a soldier, crafty and

rusé, unscrupulous, unmerciful, tyrannical; Budha is speculative, scientific, skilful, mercantile, eloquent, clever at all intellectual pursuits; Brihaspati is religious, learned, a philosopher, a Yogi, master of occult sciences, wise, statesmanlike, fortunate, successful, invincible, noble in mind and disposition; Shukra is self-willed, lustful, a master of statecraft, a poet, thinker, philosopher; Shani is cruel, vindictive, gloomy, immoral, criminal, unruly, destructive. Rahou is violent, headstrong, frank, furious and rapacious. Ketou is secret, meditative, unsocial, a silent doer of strong and selfish actions. Each planet has a powerful influence on the man if it shares in the governance of the horoscope.

The Sun, Mangal, Saturn, Rahou & Ketou are fierce planets; Brihaspati & Shukra gentle and kindly; the Moon and Budha are one or the other according to circumstances and company, they are mildly severe and hostile or tepidly kindly. The others are stronger planets. Nevertheless the favour of the Moon or Budha, when they are wholly friendly, is a mighty influence.

The Sun is master of one sign, the Lion; the Moon master of one sign, the Crab; all the others except Rahou and Ketou are masters of two signs each, Mangal of the Ram and the Scorpion, Mercury of the Twins and the Girl, Brihaspati of the Archer & the Fish; Shukra of the Bull and the Balance; Shani of the Crocodile & the Jar. These are their homes and, when they are entrenched in them, they are exceedingly powerful and auspicious. Rahou & Ketou are still wanderers, homeless.

But they are still more powerful and auspicious when elevated. The Sun is elevated in the Ram, dejected in the Balance; the Moon elevated in the [], dejected in the []; Mars elevated in the Jar, dejected in the Crab; Mercury elevated in the Balance, dejected in the Ram; Brihaspati elevated in the Crab, dejected in the Jar; Shukra elevated in the Twins, dejected in the Archer; Shani elevated in the Girl, dejected in the Fish; Rahou elevated in the Bull, dejected in the Scorpion; Ketou elevated in the Scorpion, dejected in the Bull. When dejected the planet is weak to help, but strongly maleficent. Moving from elevation to dejection, a planet is descendent, from dejection to elevation,

ascendant. A descendent planet tends towards weakness, an ascendant to strength, but it is better on the whole to have a planet just descendent than a planet only just ascendant. A good conjunction, helpful influence or favourable situation will go far to neutralise evil tendencies, and vice versa.

When setting in the rays of the sun or in opposition to the Sun, a planet tends to weakness, but not to maleficence. When it is convergent, coming from opposition to set, it grows in heat of force and is only eclipsed for the short period of its set, emerging full of energy. In its divergence it loses the energy. It never, however, forfeits by relation to the sun its other sources of strength.

Forward motion brings the fortune, devious motion delays, backward motion brings opposite results. According as the motion is swift, slow or normal, will be the pace of the good or evil fortune.

Beyond this the planets have certain mutual relations. A planet is in conjunction with another when in the same sign; in opposition when farthest away from it; in aspect when at a certain distance. Brihaspati when looking at a planet in the fifth or ninth house from it, starting from its own position, Mangal when looking at a planet in the fourth or eighth, Shani when looking at a planet in the third or tenth is said to have a full sight or aspect. All have otherwise full aspect when in opposition, three-quarters aspect on the third and tenth houses, half aspect on the fifth and ninth, quarter aspect on the fourth and eighth, no aspect, that is, absence of any relation, on the second, sixth and eleventh.

Each planet has natural friends, enemies or neutrals. The Sun is friends with all planets except Rahou & Ketou, who are enemies and Budha who is neutral. The Moon is friends with all planets except Rahou, Ketou & Brihaspati who are enemies. Mangal has as friends the Sun, Brihaspati, Rahou, Ketou and Shani, as enemies the Moon & Mercury, as a neutral Shukra. Budha has as friends the Sun, Moon, Brihaspati, Rahou, Ketou and Shukra, as enemies Mangal and Shani. Brihaspati has as friends the Sun, Mangal, Budha, Rahou & Ketou, as enemies the

Moon and Shukra, as a neutral Shani. Shukra has as friends the Sun, Moon, Budha, Shani, Rahou & Ketou, as enemy Brihaspati, as a neutral Mangal. Shani has as friends the Sun, Moon and Budha, as enemies Mangal, & Brihaspati, as neutrals Rahou, Ketou & Shukra. Rahou & Ketou have common enemies, the Sun & Moon, friends in each other, Brihaspati, Shukra and Shani, neutrals in Budha & Mangal.

These relations are fixed by the past of the devatas. But they have also occasional relations. A planet in conjunction with another or harbouring it in its house or harboured by it becomes its friend. There is no occasional neutrality; moreover it shares its host's or its partner's friendships and enmities, not its neutralities. It may have at the same time a natural friendship and an occasional enmity to another. In that case it does not become neutral, but is sometimes friendly, sometimes inimical. The natural is the stronger feeling.

There are finally certain gods who stand behind these planets. Behind the Sun & Moon is Vishnu, behind Mangal and Shani Rudra, behind Shukra, Rahou & Ketou is Kali, behind Budha Lakshmi, and behind Brihaspati Durga. Vishnu gives royalty & victory, Rudra force and fortune, Kali subversive genius & destructive energy, Lakshmi wealth & ease, Durga wisdom, protection and glory.