

PITFALLS IN PREDICTING FUTURE EVENTS

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Pitfalls in Predicting Future Events

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راز بقا سمجھ نہ سکا جب بقید زیست
فردا کی اک امید پے انسان فنا ہوا
ضیاء فتح آبادی

English transliteration:

“Raaz e baqaa samajh na sakaa jab baqaaid e ziiist
Farda ki ik ummid pe insaan fanaa huaa”

“When man, enslaved by life, could not understand the secrets
of his survival, he perished in expectation of his resurgence.”

-Zia Fatehabadi

Dedicated to

*To my wife,
Shakuntla,
My companion
Of over four decades.*

ग्रहाधीना योगाः सदसदभिधाना जनिमतां

ततो योगाधिनं फलमिति पुराणैः समुदितम् ।

जातकलङ्कारे योगाध्यायः तृतीयः ।

English transliteration:

“grahaadhiinaa yogaah sadsadabhidhaanaa janmitaam
tato yogaadhinam phalamiti puranaih samuditama”

“Our ancient teachers have said that the good and bad yogas are formed by planets, and the good and the bad results of planets are experienced on account of those yogas.”

- Jatalankara
(Ch.III on Yogas)

PITFALLS IN PREDICTING FUTURE EVENTS

To predict means to foretell or forecast the future. The future is always uncertain and the uncertainty about it makes it ever so exciting and attractive. There is no one who does not want to know about the future, and there is no one who does not seek to know what the future holds in store. Towards this purposeful end those who practice the science of Astrology are most often approached, and from them astrological predictions about future events are eagerly gained. The experienced practitioner of Astrology knows and understands the language of the stars and the roaming planets, and he also understands what those who consult him desire to know. He takes on the role of a trusted friend and faithful guide, and in some extreme cases assumes the role of a psychiatrist to take the pressure off the minds of those who approach him. He acts as a witness, speaks soothingly and exercising needful patience lends his ears and support. But, predicting future events for even the most experienced astrologer is not an easy task.

Accurate astrological predictions cannot be made without mastering the art of prediction. To master the art of prediction it takes many years of dedicated in-depth study of the various available texts under the watchful eyes and supervision of an able guru, and thereafter, by putting that learning into actual practice all the while gaining more and more experience and honing of the acquired skills. All predictions are generally based on statistical inference, by sifting the data in hand and subjecting it to quantitative and qualitative analysis using relevant scientific methods that have as their basis logical consequences of scientific theories and established principles. For a devoted astrologer each act of prediction is a

learning experience, he always credits successful predictions to the ancient seers and his guru, and whenever he fails he takes it upon himself the task of finding out where he has erred and what more he has to learn in that particular context.

An astrologer predicts future events with the help of the moving planets, and the fixed stars serving as their back-ground. Astrology enables him to discover their varying effects and influences on human and mundane affairs. A sincere astrologer does not allow his judgement to be influenced by outward appearances; he weighs and re-weighs the evidence afforded by planetary configurations; he carefully maintains the delicate balance in his critical assessment of that evidence, and he does not ignore or set aside any abnormality. The moving planets and the fixed stars do not by themselves cause the events that are associated with them to occur. All events that unfold expectedly or suddenly for us to experience are actually beyond causation and destined to occur. Verily the planets and the stars dotting the sky indicate the destinies of all human beings which destinies without any exception are guided by the reason of an individual's present actions and reactions in the context of one or more previous experiences. These actions and reactions, which are not independent but dependent on the physical self, bind a person to this world and shape individual and collective destinies. Destiny is connected with the outer physical body that the results of the previous karmas bind, and which results cannot affect the inner self. Astrology unfolds the results of the previous karmas of man whom it fore-warns to be fore-armed. Existence is a matter of science and direct perception, and as Adi Sankara had once remarked knowledge is obtained by investigation and not by the mere acceptance of assertions by others. As a science of tendencies astrology indicates what is likely to happen, it reveals the future but it is not meant to promote fatalistic attitude of resignation to a pre-determined destiny, it is meant to free the confined spaces of the mind stifled by ignorance, delusion and greed. Fear is a kind of delusion, and astrology is meant to make one fearless and be prepared for the worst.

Predictions as per Hindu Astrology, which is indigenous in its origin, are based on various principles that had long ago dawned upon our ancient seers as a result of supernatural divinations. Astrology or Jyotisa is a divine science; it has a set format and

follows a well-defined methodology but it is not an empirical science because it deals with the part-less formless non-material entities such as Time and Space in the context of Cause and Effect; its prescribed rules cannot be violated. For effecting accurate predictions the ancient seers deemed as essential the knowledge of the exact determination of the ascendant or lagna at the time of birth or query, the knowledge of the exact positioning of the nine planets, their relative strength and inter-relationship, the nature of query and the judicial application of various rules and principles of mathematics, astronomy and prognostication. Astrological predictions go wrong when these fundamentals are either ignored or are casually applied. In India, it is not rare to see the Pundits, the professional practitioners of Astrology, making predictions on the basis of the Rasi-chart (Horoscope) with reference only to the current planetary dasa and planetary transits; they do not appear to conduct even the required minimum analysis of that rasi-chart. Predictions made in this fashion are mostly unreliable and invariably go wrong. Incorrect predictions are made not due to any absence of scientific basis, but only to the lack of proper command of the facts. All astrologers have their own percentage of failures. Many astrologers are even seen to apply along with the reading of the birth-charts or query-charts entirely different vidyas such as the study of the thumb based on Ravana Samhita, this kind of approach should be avoided. An astrologer should have a very thorough knowledge of interpretation of horoscopes. Hereditary astrologers acquire skill due to generations of cumulative experience. There are no short-cuts available for an accurate divinisation of future events. Astrology is not considered deterministic for it is the human mind that finally decides even though all forms of desire that the mind projects give rise to pain and pleasure which are at the root of the evolution of the brain. Nevertheless, revelation of what causes specific and significant impacts on all that exists requires a human agency for its own manifestation, and therefore, that human agency must be a trained one.

Hindu Astrology is based on the Fixed Zodiac and the Nirayana positions of planets. The Nirayana positions of planets are arrived at by firstly ascertaining their Sayana positions and then subtracting the Ayanamsa from such positions. The Bhava Sphutas (Longitude of the Houses), the Rasimanas (Oblique Ascensions) and all other

calculations are computed for Sayana Rasis or signs and then subjected to Nirayana reduction. The Ayanamsa or Vishuva, the word used in Vedanga Jyotisa, is the distance between the Hindu First point of the Zodiac and the Vernal Equinox, measured at an epoch, taking into account the very slight rate of Precession of the Equinoxes. The relevant verse of Vedanga Jyotisa is also interpreted as describing the arithmetical method to determine the Tithi and Parva on the day of the Equinox without the observation of or computing the position of the Sun and the Moon. Since the exact date when the fixed and the movable zodiac coincided at the first point is not exactly known the precessional distance varies from nineteen degrees to twenty-three degrees. The adepts in Hindu astrology by using different dates have introduced un-necessary complication and doubts with regard to the true value of the Ayanamsa. The rate of precession is one degree in about 72 years or one Dwadasamsa in 179 years, and is generally taken as fifty and one-third second per annum. The rate of actual precession is 50.2438 seconds per annum but due to error in the length of a Sidereal Year in the Hindu tabulations it is 58.68 seconds per annum. It is generally presumed that the precession is perpetual but there are some who believe that the precession is not perpetual but oscillates up to 70 degrees either side of the First point of Aries in a cycle of 7200 years, and that the rate of precession is not uniform. Vedanga Jyotisa of Lagadha is believed to have used Dhanishta as the fiducial constellation. Chitra nakshatra is used as the fiducial for the present age. The Ayanamsa added to the Vernal-point equals 30 degrees. Some insist that the sixteen-degree wide Zodiac is alien to Hindu astrology because the ancient texts use the term, Rasikootadhruva or the meeting point of all rasis, as referring to the poles of the ecliptic which are 180 degrees apart which distance at any given moment covers rasis and nakshatras and their parts. The dimensions of signs is not the same at all latitudes, and the change in the values of positional parameters of planets due to a change in the co-ordinates do bring about a change in the vargas of occupancy of planets and a shift in the timing of operation of dasas and antra-dasas. The Yogataras are conjunction stars and not the junction stars.

The Vedic people who were fully conversant with the nakshatras (Rig Veda 8.8.5) were also conversant with the twelve rasis or signs (Rig Veda 1.164.11, 1.164.48) and the five planets or Tara-grahas,

Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn (Rig Veda 1.105.10). The division of the zodiac into twenty-seven nakshatras is an exclusive feature of Hindu astrology. The more ancient Hindu texts refer to the nakshatra-wise position of planets with each nakshatra sub-divided into four or more parts. They do not refer to the signs. Planets tend to give results of the lords of the nakshatras occupied by them. It is essential to find out whether a planet occupies a nakshatra which is benefic and friendly and that the nakshatra-lord is vested with required strength. A planet in the same sign but in different nakshatra behaves differently. Planets conjoining in the same sign and same nakshatra are more effective. The points of the highest exaltation of planets are based on the lordship of the nakshatras covering those very particular points as representing their anti-thesis. The Udu-dasa system is primarily based on the nakshatra occupied by the Moon at the moment of birth or query and the effects of the dasas and antra-dasas of planets also depend on the quality of the nakshatras ruled and occupied by the dasa-lords and not on the signs and the sub-divisions of the signs alone; the nature and the quality of the nakshatras alter according to the nakshatra occupied by the Moon.

Time has been viewed differently by different schools of thought. Patanjali tells us that time is the fluctuation of consciousness. The conscious mind alone is aware of time. Einstein tells us that time is relative to the observer. Time is perceived because there are objects in space and its measurement is not the same at all places in the universe. Astrology deals with the physical time that is expressed as Solar, Sidereal, Standard and Local time, which physical time is provided by the spinning of the earth and has no separate existence because it is a mode of being of concrete objects which cannot be reversed. For all practical purposes the local apparent time of rising and setting of the Sun is taken to be almost correct. The duration of the signs of the zodiac differs from latitude to latitude; the Hindu Panchanga (Ephemeris) uses the Charkhandas (accessional differences) of the particular latitude for ascertaining that duration. The horoscope is cast on the basis of the Local Mean Time. Panchanga for the place of birth is usually not available; the birth time is required to be converted into local time of the place for which the consulted Panchanga has been prepared. Most often the pundits prepare horoscopes without effecting this conversion and

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