



Sanatana Mitra

JULY 2008



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Upcoming Events

July 20 - Shakti Healing Workshop
Union City, CA

July 26, 27 - Kriya Yoga First Level
Santa Cruz, CA

Aug 14 - Free Satsang
Union City, CA

Sept 6, 7 - Kriya Yoga First Level
Corte Madera, CA

Sept 19-28 - Kriya Yoga Third Level
Estonia

Q & A

Astrology & Fortune Telling

To what extent should a spiritual aspirant rely on Astrology & fortune telling?

A spiritual aspirant should only rely on his or her own efforts to practice the discipline given by the spiritual guide on the path. There is no substitute for one's own regular practice.

Astrology, especially the Indian form called *Jyotish*, is the artful science which attempts to glean the secrets of the planetary mapping of each person's life potential and probable life trajectory. This is similar to the current science that is making progress in mapping one's genetic code – this can give indications of susceptibility to certain diseases before they can occur, as well as certain emotional and mental tendencies due to hormonal and chemical imbalances. The genetic code is in the microscopic level while the planetary code is in macroscopic level.

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Remembrance (*Smriti*)

In our hearts we all know that if we can remember our mistakes, we will eventually learn not to repeat them.

At every phase of our lives, we are often subjected to learning experiences from which we are expected to form our own conclusions and make the best of every situation. However, it is a very ad-hoc and haphazard process without definite rules and highly dependent on inherited like/dislikes, family and cultural programming.

During our childhood, we learn about the world around us and about the capabilities of our bodies. We find that putting our hands into the flames of a fire will hurt and that it is true even if we repeat the experience – eventually, we learn to avoid flames.

We learn to deal with relationships during our teenage years – what works

and what doesn't work. Friendship or loneliness results from our choices and actions. There are no rules – what works for one person may not work for another.

We learn about responsibilities during our adult phase – supporting ourselves and forming new family units. During old age, we begin to learn the futility of all our hopes and desires and adjust ourselves for the coming death experience.

There is a great virtue known as *smriti* which is the **remembrance of our experiences** so that we **take actions that produce positive results** and **avoid actions that produce negative results**.

Unfortunately for us, we forget our life lessons and even when we do sort of remember, we choose to ignore

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Celebrate Guru Purnima

Once a year, a day is set aside to commemorate one's teachers, especially one's spiritual mentors. This is the day called Guru Purnima and this year, it falls on Thursday, July 17th / Friday, July 18th.

Just as we honor our parents on Mother's Day and Father's Day, we honor those who have been responsible for our spiritual re-birth on this full-moon day of the seventh month.

The light of the Divine is within each and every one of us. However, it is

hidden by the clouds of our ignorance and desires. A Spiritual Teacher or Master is one who can awaken the hidden light of divine knowledge within the seeker student.

Over time, more and more elaborate ceremonies have been created to celebrate the person and work of the spiritual mentor during this special day. It is not necessary to be conversant with these devotional rites in order to pay our respects. Of course, it is a great blessing if one has the opportunity to

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Remembrance (*Smriti*)

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them.

We sometimes would overindulge in food or drink even though we know that we will suffer the consequences. The drunk who suffers the hangover will start drinking again after a few days. The drunken driver knows that there are serious consequences both to oneself and to others but continue a dangerous course of action. Obesity is the result of people ignoring the experience of over-eating. Why are smokers unable to quit their life-threatening habit?

Remembrance is not only the development of memory but also the development of will-power. It is often the case that we subconsciously try to forget our experiences so that we do not have to make the difficult decisions.

The first step in recovery is to examine one's life and record the areas where one seems to be constantly having problems whether in one's health, one's professional life, one's relationships or one's lack of happiness. There is usually no difficulty in identifying the problem areas. For instance, if one consistently enters into troubled relationships with certain types of people, it is evident that there is some life lesson which needs to be resolved.

The second step is to acknowledge the specific area which needs remembrance. Acknowledgement is a mental acceptance of the issue at hand. If one refuses to accept a problem than it negates the possibility of taking personal responsibility and action.

The third step is to set aside time – I recommend at least fifteen minutes three times a day – in the morning, during the lunch hour and just before retiring for the night. During these three periods of time, one should recollect the issue, acknowledge it and willfully apply oneself to resolving it by remembering to avoid the causal factors in the present.

There are those who wonder why we cannot remember the lessons that we have learned or failed to learn in previous lives, but do not even make the effort to remember the lessons from the present life.

There is an ancient prayer that says, “O, Divine, please help me to remember!” Let us learn from our experiences now.

Celebrate Guru Purnima

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thank the Master in person. More often, we are separated by time and space from the Guru.

Whether one's Teacher is alive or working in higher planes, whether one is participating in a group or by oneself, it is only necessary to either have an image or a good visualization. Light a candle flame and a stick of incense. A good time to do this is around 6:30 pm to 7:00 pm. The seeker / student / disciple should offer a flower and fruit to the image of the Master with thanks and invite blessings for the coming year. If we have been taught any Guru stotras/mantras including the Hanuman Chalisa, this would be a good time to say them aloud. The most important part of the “ceremony” is to practice the spiritual discipline given by the Master – this is the greatest thanks you can give to any Teacher!

In case one feels doubtful that the grace of the Master has appeared in one's life and is still in the searching mode, this is a good time to ask for the manifestation of the spiritual guide in one's life. Place an image of the Master of the Master of all Masters, Lord Shiva and offer the fruit and flowers to Him, chanting ‘Om Nama Shivaya’ and if you know it, the Karpooara Aarti. It is said that when the student is ready, the Master will appear – one needs to be ever on the lookout and be prepared. Tune in to your soul-heart and seek there for the ever-present inspirational guidance.

This day is also an opportunity for each of us to re-examine our progress on the spiritual path, to re-affirm our commitment to our practice and to re-connect with the spiritual guide within. Traditionally, on this day, our

connection with our inner guide is the strongest and the veil of illusion thinnest, and therefore, we should make our sincere effort to tune into and receive the grace of our True Self.

For those who are Teachers and spiritual guides, it is a day to selflessly transmit the blessings and grace of the Divine to all the seekers that are in your stream of consciousness – to pour forth your soul force to those struggling in the mire of Maya. It is an opportunity to grow further in one's quest to be a better Servant of Humanity, to be more capable to serve all who are drawn to you.

JAI GURU

Listen to the Guru Stotra:

www.rudrashivananda.com/mantras_chants.htm

Q & A - Astrology & Fortune Telling

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The problems with astrology is that it has become mystified over time and burdened with dubious accretions that have no basis in reality. There was a proliferation of dubious practitioners who caused this ancient science to fall into disrepute. Of course, there are very sincere and knowledgeable practitioners even now, but it is difficult to ascertain those who are true *gyotishis* from those who are opportunists.

Those who live a materialistic life are more prone to behave predictably according to their innate tendencies or karma, while those who have decided to swim upstream by pursuing the spiritual goal of self-realization are less subject to their *karmic* tendencies. The consequence is that a Self-Realized *yogi* is no longer subject to *karma* and therefore cannot be predictable under any form of fortune telling.

For spiritual seekers on the path any method that claim to have predictive capabilities may be helpful if it can provide information about health – such as tendencies towards particular sicknesses, so that preventive measures

such as a proper dietary and exercise plan may be implemented.

My personal favorite use for *gyotish* is to help seekers with useful information on the path, such as present life-lessons, past life *karma*, correct life-path, best choice of *mantra*, or identification of *Ishtadeva* (personal form of liberation).

Sometimes, there are advanced people who seem to be using methods such as astrology, palmistry, dice or cards, but may be actually accessing their intuition or higher faculties to make predictions rather than the rules of the method. Such psychic talents should not be over-utilized or relied on due to the strain they may put on the psychic sooner or later. Only realized *yogis* have the unlimited access to these psychic sources but they will seldom need to use them.

I discourage any kind of future forecasting with any kind of “fortune-telling” method primarily because they will seldom be accurate. Most “predictions” are either so general that they can fit multiple scenarios or are

self-fulfilling prophecies, made true, by the highly suggestive. Even the best of forecasts are only one of many possible event trajectories that can be altered by one’s choices – of course, the astrologer will choose the most probable trend by observing the current state and deducing the likely course based on the *karmic* pattern.

It is best to cultivate the correct course of actions through the practice of the *yamas* and *niyamas* and surrendering oneself to the Divine. Let our *karma* work itself out rather than try to avoid it. It is sometimes possible to mitigate the *karmic* effects by the proper application of gemstones, *mantras* or other self-efforts such as pilgrimages, but this should be under the advice of a spiritual guide.

Nothing is fixed and unchangeable – the universe is very dynamic and can be influenced by our choices. Only if we are too lazy or set in our ways, will we be following the flow of our *karmic* habits. It is different from the flow that happens when one truly surrenders to the Divine and events are then guided by the Divine Will. Do not confuse the two.

Focus on Mantra - Asatoma

There are *mantras* which should be repeated aloud in order to have the desired effects on the external world, that is, the environment and physical body. There are also mantras which should be repeated mentally only, in order to internalize their effects for wholly spiritual purposes.

There are also some mantras which can be practiced both aloud and mentally. In general, we can repeat these powerful vibrations first, aloud, then in a whisper and finally mentally. These three modes of repetition give

powerfully enhanced effects on the physical, energetic/emotional, and mental/causal complex of human beings.

The following is one *mantra* which has been repeated everyday by spiritual seekers for thousands of years and is one I recommend to chant before your daily practice:

Om
Asatoma Sadgamaya
Tamasoma Jyotirgamaya
Mrityorma Amritamgamaya.

O, Divine

Lead me away from untruth to Truth
Lead me away from darkness to Light
Lead me away from death to
Immortality.

Repeat at three times aloud, three times in a whisper, and three times silently. The best time is before meditation in the morning.

For the pronunciation, listen to the audio file from the following link:

www.rudrashivananda.com/mantras_chants.htm

Mantra Yoga

One of the great paths of liberation is by the practice of mantras or spiritually charged sonic patterns formed from the Sanskrit language.

The word *mantram* combines the root *manas* (mind) with *tram* (protection) so the literal meaning is mind-protection. The mind is subject to innumerable perturbations that constantly disturb and keep it from the stillness that can lead the soul to higher consciousness. The proper practice of a mantra will lead the soul to the realization of the Self.

Since the effectiveness of mantras depend on their vibrations, their correct pronunciation become very important. They can be practiced by chanting aloud or by repeating mentally – some of them are meant to be mentally repeated for the purpose of being internalized, while others give emphasis to external effects. Mantras have been known to promote self-healing, spiritual development, as

well as beneficial effects on the world around us.

Mantras can be used as the only means of spiritual liberation or as part of an integrated yogic system. Most yogic paths utilize some form of mantra or another in their techniques.

The most basic mantra is Om which is known as the “pranava mantra,” the source of all mantras. It is the humming sound of creation because it is the vibration of the universe and the sound uttered by the Divine Creatrix. More complex sound patterns utilize the sound of Om in their beginning. It is used as an address for the Divine.

Om is the principal mantra given by Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras. It can be chanted aloud, whispered or repeated mentally. In higher yogic techniques, instead of repeating the sound, the student should listen and try to hear the sound within and without – forming a powerful connection with the Universal Soul.

Nowadays, the emphasis is on the

mantras which utilize bija or seed sounds because of their easier pronunciation, and prevalent use in tantric systems. Mantras were originally conceived in the ancient scriptures known as the Vedas. When they are crafted into two-line verses, they are called “shlokas.”

The following is from Rigveda X-191-4:

*Samaani va aakutih
samaanaa hrdayaani vah.
Samaanamastu vo mano
yathaa vah susahaasati.*

Let us unite our intentions.
May your hearts also be in unison.
United be the thoughts of all,
That we may all happily agree.

The repetition of this mantra tends to promote a team consciousness and help a group to achieve common goals. It is very helpful to chant in a group.