Is Everything Determined?
Drawing on the case study of Nāḍī Astrology as a Discourse between Fate and Freewill

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It was a rainy day in Brighton. I was returning from my first visit to the United Kingdom. When I reached Heathrow, I found my flight delayed for several hours. The airline company had arranged for local accommodation, but I decided to return. I had stayed near to a university campus which I had visited many times during my stay except its big library. I returned to Brighton and decided to visit the library. It was 8 O'clock in the evening when I entered the library on a guest pass. While roaming around inside the library I suddenly saw a shelf of astronomy and astrology book. The first book I drew from the shelf was titled "Mundane Astrology" by Nicholas Campion and two other writers. Though I was a curious practitioner of astrology, I had never heard those names. Anyway, I returned to India by the next morning flight, got busy in my work, but that evening and that book was itched in my memory. Few days later I searched those writers online and found Nicholas Campion teaching the subject of astrology at Wales. Few months later I wrote him a mail enquiring about admission in MA in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology and finally got admission in October 2016.

From that fateful evening to this day when I am submitted my last paper of the MA course, Dr Nicholas Campion has stayed in my life, both as a teacher and academician and as a great mentor. This journey and particularly this dissertation work, affected by too many fated breaks like Covid, could not have been possible without his inspirational guidance and freewill support.

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ABSTRACT

This research paper explores and analyse the mysterious predictive system of Nāḍī Astrology under the framework of fate and freewill. Practised mostly in South India, Nāḍī Astrology appears as a hard determinism in which human destiny is claimed to be written on palm-leaves to the extent of minute personal details like name and date of birth. This paper sought to answer basic questions that 'whether' is really works and if yes, then 'why' is works. Does it mean that everything is predetermined? This question of determinism has been dealt in this research as a discourse between fate and freewill in astrology. Unfortunately, there is negligible academic scholarship on Indian astrology and none on Nāḍī Astrology except one research conducted by Martin Gansten under the title *Patterns of Destiny*. Though Gansten's research presents a good theoretical framework for Indian astrology in form of *karman* theory, it couldn't produce a comprehensive and definite research on Nāḍī palm-leaf readings. In the context of Gansten's work, this paper not only revives the research work on Nāḍī Astrology but also examines the merits and demerits of *karman* theory while incorporating the counterviews of Caterina Guenzi who believes that *karman* and astrology are two contradictory theories and there is no concrete theoretical and practical evidence of their systematic integration. While doing so, this paper argues that there is a need to explore a *neo-karman* theory which must include the ritualistic practice of worship (*pūjā*) and *śānti* (appeasement) which not only precedes both the theories of destiny – *karman* and horoscopic astrology – in India, but which has been systematically integrated with *nakshatra* based astrology since the times of *Atharvaveda*, traces of which have been found by Marko Geslani. This paper has shown with examples that it is Nāḍī Astrology which combines the theory of karman and the practice of śānti in Indian astrology in a structured manner to strike a balance between fate and freewill. In this process, this research also introduces Eliadean ideas of sacred spaces and hierophanies to eidetically intuit the sacred cosmology of Nāḍī Astrology and related phenomena of religious rituals. After completing the research while applying the phenomenological methodology, this paper concludes that the readings of Nāḍī Astrology works because it only reflects the fate of actions performed in the past lives. However, as Nāḍī Astrology also indicates, the future course of fate can be changed by freewill actions, including the ritualistic practices, because, as this paper argues in the end that, the karmic residues of fate are nothing but the freewill actions of past births.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Aim and Treatment

The aim of this research is to investigate the mysterious world of Nāḍī Astrology as a dichotomy of fate and freewill. Mostly practised in South India, Nāḍī Astrology [Tamil - Nāṭi Jōtiṭam (நாடி ஜோதிடம்)], is a foretelling system in which the life details of a person are read out from a palm leaf, generally written in an old Tamil script. These details include not only general predictions about the past, present and future of a person with significant accuracy, but also unique personalised details such as names of the person, spouse and parents, and the date of birth. Under this system, it is believed that the destiny of a person has been written much before his or her arrival on Earth, and therefore Nāḍī Astrology appears to be a 'rigid' and 'hard' deterministic model of fate which hardly provides any scope for human freewill.[1] This research, therefore, not only aims to examine the claims of pre-written fate, but also to extend the much-debated discourse of fate and freewill in astrology. While doing so, this research will explore the philosophical theory of *karman* (literal meaning 'action'), as both Horoscopic Astrology and Nāḍī Astrology in India keep referring the past life actions as the building blocks of current and future life fate.[2] Like *karman* theory, the performance of rituals has also been intertwined with the practice of astrology in India.[3] Hence, this research will specifically aim to examine the ritualistic elements of Nāḍī Astrology to highlight the possible scope for freewill to alter the path of fate.

These aims of the research to be achieved while giving Nāḍī Astrology a critical but subtle and sacred treatment as it deals with the augmented faith of people with its 'apparent accuracy' and, also because it evokes a 'sense of wonder' and 'belonging in the cosmos' in an 'unbearably huge' universe where a person gets and thus wants to treasure his or her 'significant place within it'.[4] The application of sacred theory is also important in this research because Nāḍī (literal meaning "to seek") system believes that only those who are destined to seek their Nāḍī will get their reading, which makes it a kind of sacred space for the seeker - 'sacred is not

[1] Nicholas Campion, *Astrology and Cosmology in the World's Religions* (New York: New York University Press 2012), [hereafter Campion, *Astrology and Cosmology in the World's* Religions], p. 119.
[2] Nicholas Campion and Ronnie Gale Dreyer, "Indian Astrology" in David W. Kim (ed.), *Religious Transformation in Modern Asia: A Transnational movement* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 174-175.
[3] David Pingree, "Jyotiḥśāstra: Astral and Mathematical Literature" in Jan Gonda (ed.), *A History of Indian Literature* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2021), [hereafter Pingree, *Jyotiḥśāstra*], p. 66.
[4] Campion, *Astrology and Cosmology in the World's* Religions, pp. 118-119.

chosen, it chooses'.[5] Therefore, a phenomenological treatment for grasping the subtleness of the sacred world of Nāḍī Astrology has also been given in this research.

1.2 Research Source and Scope

While surveying the astrological texts of India, David Pingree termed Nāḍī palm leaves collections as 'most notorious' which has numerous offshoots.[6] These collections are not even properly documented which makes its history ambiguous. Nāḍī palm leaf readings are traditionally believed as thousands of years old, and a sage named Agastya is credited to write the future of all human beings; however, sage Agastya has never been mentioned as an astrologer and not even found place in the list of eighteen sages who are credited for the collection, compilation and promulgation of *Jyotiḥśāstra*.[7] Sixth century astrologer *Varāhamihira* also does not mention sage Agastya in relation to five ancient astrological treatises (*Pañcasiddhāntikā*) he complied.[8] He has not even referred the sage in his famous *Bṛhajjātaka*, which remains the most authoritative astrological textbook in India.[9] But sage Agastya is considered the originator of Nāḍī Astrology, along with seven other sages who represent different Nāḍī traditions under which the mammoth collection of millions of pre-written individual destinies are kept and preserved.[10] There is a similar vast collection of thousands of potential horoscopes, though less organised, which is assembled under the name *Bhṛgusaṃhitā* and generally found in the northern part of India and composed in Sanskrit.[11] The 19th century Indian historian on astrology S. B. Dikshit argued that these collections cannot be older than the times of Varāhamihira as the great astrologer and his commentator *Bhaṭotpala* have not referred to these *Saṁhitās*.[12] This is true that Varāhamihira has not specifically indicated about these Nāḍī system or *Bhṛgusaṃhitā* but he recognised *Saṁhitā* (or collection or compilation by sages) as one of the many branches of astrology.[13] Though, the current

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[5] Belden C. Lane, *Landscapes of The Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality* (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), [hereafter Lane, *Landscapes of The Sacred*], p. 19.
[6] Pingree, *Jyotiḥśāstra*, p 96.
[7] Pingree, *Jyotiḥśāstra*, p 1.
[8] Varāhamihira, *Pañcasiddhāntikā* translated by T. S. Kuppanna Sastry (Madras: PPST Foundation, 1993), p. 4.
पौलिश-रोमक-वासिष्ठ-सौर-पैतामहास्तु पंच सिद्धांता:
pauliśa-romaka-vāsiṣtha-saura-paitāmahastu pañcasiddhāntah
[The five Siddhāntas, of which this work is a compendium, are the Pauliśa, the Romaka, the Vāsiṣtha, the Saura and the Paitāmaha.]
[9] Pingree, *Jyotiḥśāstra*, pp. 84-85.
[10] Pingree, *Jyotiḥśāstra*, p 97.
[11] Pingree, *Jyotiḥśāstra*, p 97.
[12] Sankar Balakrishna Dikshit, *Bharatiya Jyotish Sastra (History of Indian Astronomy)*, trans. by K. V. Vaidya (Delhi: Government of India Press, 1981), pp. 371-372.
[13] Varāhamihira, *Bṛhat Saṁhitā* translated by M. Ramakrishna Bhat (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981), p. 5.

physical compilation of Nāḍī palm leaves are not older than 500 years but the much older oral tradition cannot be ruled out.[14] Whatever be the compilation issues and historical inconsistency, the Nāḍī palm leaves constitute the primary source of this research because of their astrological values and popularity among believers.

Nonetheless, the *Bhṛgusaṃhitā* compilation has been kept out of the scope of this research because of its lesser authentic availability and different prediction techniques. One more astrological tradition that carries the similar name of Nāḍī, but which is also left out from the scope is the Nāḍī-aṃśa based astrological texts. Nāḍī-aṃśa is the 150th part of a zodiacal sign (*Rāśi*) or 1/5th of a degree which makes the 360 degree of zodiac divided into 1800 Nāḍī-aṃśas.[15] The Nāḍī-aṃśa based astrology is completely different from the Nāḍī palm-leaf astrology, as the former contain pure astrological predictive techniques based on astrological calculations while the latter gives personalised unique details without taking the input astrological data.[16] Thus, this research has limited scope to Nāḍī palm-leaf readings which it terms Nāḍī Astrology because, first, the Nāḍī readings produces astrological nomenclature and even horoscopes; and second, the Nāḍī practitioners themselves use the term Nāṭi Jōtiṭam (நாடி ஜோதிடம் – Nāḍī Astrology) and not Nāḍī divination as Martin Gansten applied to it while distinguishing it from the Nāḍī-aṃśa based Nāḍī Astrology.[17]

1.3 Academic Rationale

The only academic scholarship available on Nāḍī palm-leaf Astrology is Martin Gansten's doctoral thesis *Patterns of Destiny*. It is an important contribution on Indian astrology as despite astrology's immense importance in local culture, scholarly works on astrology is scarce in India.[18] It has been argued in a recent academic work on India astrology that the marginal

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ज्योतिःशास्त्रमनेकभेदविषयं स्कन्धत्रयाधिष्ठितं
तत्कात्स्न्योपनयस्य नाम मुनिभिः सङ्कीर्त्यते संहिता ।
jyotiḥśāstramanekabhedaviṣayaṃ skandhatrayādhiṣṭhitaṃ
tatgkārtsnyopanayasya nāma munibhiḥ saṅkīrtyate saṃhitā
[The science of Astrology has many branches within its scope and is mainly divided under three sections termed Skandhas. The treatment of this subject in its entirety has been designated as Saṁhitā, collection or compilation, by the Sages.]

[14] Pingree, *Jyotiḥśāstra*, p 97.
[15] R. Santhanam (translator), *Deva Keralam (Chandra Kala Nadi)* (New Delhi: Sagar Publication, 1992), [hereafter Santhanam, *Deva Keralam*], p. v.
[16] Santhanam, *Deva Keralam,* p. v.
[17] Martin Gansten, "Patterns of Destiny: Hindu Nāḍī Astrology" in Tord Olsson (ed.), *Lund Studies in History of Religions, Vol 17* (Lund: Lund Universitet, 2003), [hereafter Gansten, *Patterns of Destiny*], p. 1.
[18] Campion, *Astrology and Cosmology in the World's* Religions, pp. 110-111.

academic status of astrology can be attributed to its interstitial position as a subject.[19] This research work endeavours to add one more valuable contribution to the scholarship on Indian astrology and aims to help astrology to become an academic subject in India than mere utilitarian practice. Also, this research would be only the second in line as academic research on Nāḍī Astrology after Gansten's work. However, it differs in approach and treatment of the subject. Gansten's research, despite its huge importance, has focussed less on Nāḍī palm-leaf Astrology and more on Nāḍī-aṃśa Astrology. His approach has been quite sceptical about the palm-leaf reading despite his personal details were accurately told.[20] Gansten seems to be convinced with B. V. Raman, a famous Indian astrologer, that the Nāḍī palm-leaf readings are not 'scientific' like Nāḍī-aṃśa Astrology but a result of 'mastery over inferior (*kṣudra*) dangerous deities' and 'produced by means of incantations (*mantra*)'.[21] Gansten still maintained his point-of-view when I interviewed him in July 2021. Like other astrological practices, Nāḍī Astrology is also full of ambiguity and even fraud practices, but summarily dismissing a predictive system without academic evidence merely on some celebrated astrologer's opinion or for not being understood or for not being 'scientific' or for not following the mathematical formulae of horoscopic astrology, is itself an unscientific approach. The dismissive approach, which, ironically, mainstream Astrology itself has faced since ages in the 'scientific' world, closes the doors for further research, and therefore, this research is an effort to open the world of Nāḍī Astrology for academic scholars.

Further, it is also important to examine the dichotomy of fate and freewill in Indian astrology through a new lens, in this case, the Nāḍī Astrology. Gansten has written a lot about how the philosophical model of *karman* has facilitated the Hellenistic horoscopic astrology to be accepted in India. This theory explains that past-life actions (karman) decide the upcoming fate and astrological horoscope including the planets are only the reflection of *karmic* residues of previous lives.[22] This theory has been recently challenged by Caterina Guenzi, an anthropologist, who considers astrology a separate and 'wider' system and thus not ready to accept its 'subordination' to the theory of *karma*.[23] Hence, this research is an opportunity to

[19] Caterina Guenzi, *Words of Destiny: Practicing Astrology in North India* (New York: SUNY Press, 2021), [hereafter Guenzi, *Words of Destiny*], p. 12.
[20] Gansten, *Patterns of Destiny*, p. 44.
[21] Gansten, *Patterns of Destiny*, p. 46.
[22] Martin Gansten, "Astrology and Astronomy (Jyotiṣa)" in Knut A. Jacobsen, Helene Basu, Angelika Malinar and Vasudha Narayanan (eds), *Brill's Encyclopaedia of Hinduism* (Brill Online 2013), pp. 1-20.
[23] Guenzi, *Words of Destiny*, p. 151.

reflect upon the relationship between *karman* and astrology with a special emphasis on Nāḍī Astrology.

1.4 Research Method

For fulfilling the above-mentioned aims of the research, a mixed research method has been adopted – a more literary research method for the discourse of fate and freewill, and a field study to explore the whole gamut of Nāḍī Astrology. However, the two methods have been interchangeable and overlapping for coherent and holistic research as Nāḍī Astrology also needed literary analysis of primary and secondary documents and the exploration of fate and freewill also required phenomenological experience during field work. While conducting this qualitative research, many academicians, researchers, Nāḍī readers, Nāḍī clients, temple priests, devotees and other individuals were interviewed in structured and semi-structured manner, either in a closed space or in the open space of field visits. During the field visits, the study has been conducted with both outsider's and insider's approaches - 'outsider' as a keen researcher and 'insider' as a Nāḍī seeker and rational believer – to understand the sacred worldview of Nāḍī cosmology. As part of this research, I also kept a phenomenological journal, in which I captured my thoughts, often trying to strike a balance between the sacred and the profane. To keep the memory alive and to maintain a visual log of the field exercise, I took photographs of the relevant primary documents, important places and ultimately the sacredscapes related to Nāḍī Astrology and *Navagraha* temples where rituals related to Nāḍī readings take place. In this whole process, there was a deliberate effort to avoid the risk of 'going native', a phenomenon in which the researcher might lose sight of their independent position.[24]

1.5 Research Questions

While keeping the above-described aims in mind and identifying the source and scope through a mixed research method, this dissertation research seeks to answer the following research questions in an academic manner:

a. Is fate written on Nāḍī palm-leaves?
b. How Nāḍī readings deal with the discourse of fate and freewill and does Nāḍī Astrology allow modification in fate?

[24] Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 439

c. What is the role of planets in determining fate and their worship in modifying fate under Nāḍī cosmology?

d. Is everything determined? Does Nāḍī Astrology answer the question in favour of fate or there is a scope for freewill?

Before finding answers for the research questions, it would be pertinent to examine and review the existing literature on them.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Determinism, fate and freewill in philosophy, science and astrology

Is everything determined? This question of determinism has not only concerned the philosophical thinkers, religious seers and astrologers from early times but continues to puzzle even the modern theoretical physicists.[25] In the western philosophical and scientific tradition, the discourse of determinism generally revolves around the Stoic concept of 'universal causal determinism' which ultimately resulted in Laplacian understanding that 'if all the laws of the universe are known and all the knowledge of the universe is known then all future events can also be known'.[26] Laplace went further to assume that there were 'similar laws governing everything else' including 'human behaviour.'[27] Modern physicists Albert Einstein and Stephen Hawking both broadly agreed on this idea and thus advocated for the 'unified theory' of Physics to determine everything and both accepted theoretically that all future events can be predicted.[28] Einstein went to the extent of saying that 'God does not play dice' and thus indicated a pre-determined universe.[29] However, Hawking pointed out that the small details are difficult to predict like the human fate.[30] In fact, the problem of universal causal determinism gets started once the idea of determinism enters into human life and becomes fate.[31] Bernadette Brady, who has explored the roots of determinism in astrology, pointed out this 'philosophical impasse' and gave many examples of philosophers from Marcus Cicero (106–43 BC) to Theodor Adorno (1903–1969) who confused astrological determinism with 'genethlialogy' and fate with 'fatalism' for dismissing the idea of determinism in astrology.[32]

However, astrology itself has never full believed in the idea of fatalism and often looking out for the ways of escaping fate. Renowned western astrologer Claudius Ptolemy (100-168 AD) had suggested that 'if future events are recognised ahead of time and remedies are provided,

[25] Stephen Hawking, "Is Everything Determined" in *Black Holes and Baby Universes and other Essays* (London: Transworld, 1993), [hereafter Hawking, *Is Everything Determined*], pp. 127-139.
[26] Bernadette Brady, 'Some Philosophical Roots of Determinism in Astrology' (Paper presented at Bath Spa University, Graduate School Seminar, 18 February 2008) [hereafter Brady, *Some Philosophical Roots*], p.1.
[27] Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (London: Bantam, 1988), [hereafter Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*], p. 57.
[28] Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, pp. 163-179.
[29] Stephen Hawking, "Einstein's Dream" in *Black Holes and Baby Universes and other Essays* (London: Transworld, 1993), p. 70.
[30] Hawking, *Is Everything Determined*, p. 138.
[31] Brady, *Some Philosophical Roots of Determinism in Astrology*, p. 2.
[32] Brady, *Some Philosophical Roots of Determinism in Astrology*, pp. 3-4.

they either do not occur at all or are rendered less severe'.[33] He is also attributed to the famous aphorism that 'stars incline, but they do not compel' which the modern astrologers like Alan Leo have used extensively in support of their 'freewill hypothesis'.[34] The advocates of so-called 'new age' astrology Alan Leo and Dan Rudhyar were the flagbearers of human freewill, therefore, they asserted the supremacy of soul over body and claimed that only the body 'matter is fated' not the soul, and that planetary birth-chart is only a 'symbolic seed' growth of which into a 'large tree' depends upon a combination of the freewill of the soul and the fate of the material environment.[35] As, Brady and Campion observed, this was not new but Neoplatonic idea body and soul vis-à-vis fate and freewill, which has been the affected the thought process of modern western astrologers about determinism, fate and freewill in astrology.

2.2 Fate and Freewill in Indian Astrology

Though there are philosophical roots of fate and freewill in India, generally found in the discourses of *Upniṣads* that if it is *niyati* (determinism, fate) or *yadrichchha* (probability, freewill).[36] However, in contrast to western astrology, neither astrologers have done any theoretical pondering in India over fate and freewill like Leo and Rudhyar, nor there is any academic scholarship like Campion, Brady and other academicians of. Modern Indian astrologer B. V. Raman (1912-1998), who expressed some views about astrology apart from many instructive books, had nothing new to say except repeating the approach of Alan Leo regarding astrology, fate and freewill. Raman quoted the same aphorism as Leo that 'fools obey planets while wise men control them'.[37] Similarly, following the path of Dan Rudhyar, Indo-American astrologer David Frawley finds astrology a tool to acquire 'self-knowledge' and which can be used 'as a key to inner unfoldment'.[38] Another Indian astrologer, Komilla Sutton combines both the material and spiritual threads while giving example of astrological name selection of a child in India 'to develop the fullest potential and correct purpose in life'.[39] It is thus clear that the modern Indian astrologers have nothing new or academic to add in the existing discourse of determinism. However, there are few important works which traces the

[33] Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, trans. by F. E. Robbins (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), pp. 27-29.
[34] Nicholas Campion, *Astrology and Popular Religion in the Modern West: Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2016), [hereafter Campion, *Astrology and Popular Religion in the Modern West*], p. 58
[35] Brady, *Some Philosophical Roots of Determinism in Astrology*, pp. 4-7.
[36] *Svetasvapatropanisad*, trans. by Swami Tyagisananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1949), p. 11.
[37] B. V. Raman, *Hindu Predictive Astrology* [New Delhi: UBSPD, 2007 (1938)], p. 3.
[38] David Frawley, *Astrology of the Seers* [Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2008 (1990)], p. 7.
[39] Komilla Sutton, *The Essentials of Vedic Astrology* (Bournemouth: The Wessex Astrologer, 1999), p. 1.

elements of fate and freewill in the ancient texts. Nicholas Sutton finds the co-existence of fate and freewill as a 'principal division' of causation – *daiva* (fate) and *puruṣkāra* (human effort) in the epic *Mahābhārata* (900 BC).[40] The epic has compared the fate to 'seed' and human effort to 'field' and it is the union of two which ensure the 'crops' of life to flourish.[41] However, the *Mahābhārata* clearly connected the fate to previous actions as even the 'creator bestows the result of one's own action previously done'.[42] Based on Sutton's findings and getting evidences from other scriptures, Martin Gansten asserts that the 'actions performed in previous lifetimes determine the individual's present circumstances within which new action is performed'.[43] Gansten has quoted an important observation from a *dharma* text *Yäjïavalkyasmåti* – "The accomplishment of an act depends on both fate and human effort. Of these, fate is the manifestation of effort [performed] with a previous body [...] For as a cart does not move on a single wheel, so without human effort, fate is not accomplished".[44] Gansten has argued that the same 'conclusion' has been 'echoed' in other Sanskrit literature including the astrological texts

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[40] Nicholas Sutton, *Religious Doctrines in the Mahābhārata* (Delhi: Motilal Banrsidass, 2000)

[41] Sutton, *Religious Doctrines in the Mahābhārata*, p. 382. *Mahābhārata*, 3.33, 14-17.

अकस्मादपि यः कश्चिदर्थं प्राप्नोति पूरुषः
तं हठेनेति मन्यन्ते स हि यत्नो न कस्यचित्
यच्चापि किञ्चित्पुरुषो दिष्टं नाम लभत्युत
दैवेन विधिना पार्थ तद्दैवमिति निश्चितम्
यत्स्वयं कर्मणा किञ्चित्फलमाप्नोति पूरुषः
प्रत्यक्षं चक्षुषा दृष्टं तत्पौरुषमिति स्मृतम्
स्वभावतः प्रवृत्तोऽन्यः प्राप्नोत्यर्थानकारणात्
तत्स्वभावात्मकं विद्धि फलं पुरुषसत्तम

akasmādapi yaḥ kaścidarthaṃ prāpnoti pūruṣaḥ
taṃ haṭheneti manyante sa hi yatno na kasyacit
yaccāpi kiñcitpuruṣo diṣṭaṃ nāma labhatyuta
daivena vidhinā pārtha taddaivamiti niścitam
yatsvayaṃ karmaṇā kiñcitphalamāpnoti pūruṣaḥ
pratyakṣaṃ cakṣuṣā dṛṣṭaṃ tatpauruṣamiti smṛtam
svabhāvataḥ pravṛtto'nyaḥ prāpnotyarthānakāraṇāt
tatsvabhāvātmakaṃ viddhi phalaṃ puruṣasattama

[Whenever a man attains an object unexpectedly, that [gain] is considered to be by necessity: it is not [due to] anyone's effort. And whatever a man obtains by way of allotment, through divine providence, O Pārtha, that is deemed fate. Whatever result a man attains by his own work, beholding it with his own eyes, that is known as effort. Another, occupied according to his nature, attains objects (seemingly) without a cause: know that result, O best of men, to be natural.]

[42] Gansten, *Patterns of Destiny*, p. 52. *Mahābhārata*, 13.6.8.

क्षेत्रं पुरुषकारस्तु दैवं बीजमुदाहृतम्
क्षेत्रबीजसमायोगात्ततः सस्यं समृध्यते

kṣetraṃ puruṣakārastu daivaṃ bījamudāhṛtam
kṣetrabījasamāyogāttataḥ sasyaṃ samṛdhyate

[43] Gansten, *Patterns of Destiny*, p. 53.

[44] Gansten, *Patterns of Destiny*, p. 53. *Yäjïavalkyasmåti* 1.349

daive puruñakäre ca karmasiddhir vyavasthitä
tatra daivam abhivyaktaà pauruñam paurvadehikam
yathä hy ekena cakreëa rathasya na gatir bhavet
evaà puruñakäreëa vinä daivaà na sidhyati

which states that 'there is no fate without human effort and no human effort without fate'.[45] On the basis of such conclusions, Gansten has reinstated the hypothesis of *karman theory* in astrology.

2.3 *Karman* as the building blocks of determining fate: view and counterview

The theory of *karman* (or *karma*) and rebirth in explaining human life and fate on earth has been in important position in almost all Indian philosophical traditions, but most comprehensively used in the classical *Yoga* and *Advaita Vedānta* systems.[46] Karl Potter has explained the basic formulation of this theory – "an act (*karman*) performed with purposive intent and passion creates a *karmic* residue, either meritorious or unmeritorious, depending on the quality of the act. This karmic residue is accompanied by dispositional tendencies including two kinds of traces (*vāsanā*)– one, if and when activated produces a memory of originating act, and another, if and when activated, produces certain afflictions (*kleśa*). When a person dies, his inactivated karmic residues including his *vāsanās* gather together within that individual's *citta* or *prakṛti* (substance). The *citta* which had 'inhabited' the just-deceased body immediately passes on to a new body – presumably a foetus – and 'fills in' this new body with *citta* appropriate to the kind of body it is (if it is a cat, feline *citta* fills it in; if a human, human *citta*). The karmic residues operate within the new body to determine three things – the kind of body it is (*jāti*, cat or human); the length of its life (*āyus*) under normal circumstances; and the affective tone of experiences (*bhoga*) the individual will have, that is, whether his experiences will be pleasurable or painful".[47] So, according to this system, bad *karmic* residues will produce painful experiences and good *karmic* residues will produce pleasurable experiences.[48] Further, these karmic residues can mature to be experienced either in current life (*dṛṣṭajanman*) or in another life (*adṛṣṭajanman*).[49] However, those karmic residues will not necessarily be activated in the immediate next life, because, as Potter further explains, if one is a cat in lifetime L1 and reborn in other types of bodies in L2 to L100, and then again reborn as a cat in L101, then the *vāsanās* which were laid down in L1, and have remained stored up until now with *karmic* residues, many now be activated, producing feline experiences.[50]

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[45] Gansten, *Patterns of Destiny*, p. 54.
[46] Karl H. Potter, "Karma Theory in Some Indian Philosophical Systems" in Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty (ed.), *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), [hereafter Potter, *Karma Theory in Some Indian Philosophical Systems*], p. 243.
[47] Potter, *Karma Theory in Some Indian Philosophical Systems*, pp. 243-244.
[48] Potter, *Karma Theory in Some Indian Philosophical Systems*, p. 244.
[49] Potter, *Karma Theory in Some Indian Philosophical Systems*, p. 244.
[50] Potter, *Karma Theory in Some Indian Philosophical Systems*, p. 245.

Martin Gansten, in his *Patterns of Destiny* (2003) and other papers, has broadly followed the above *karmic* residual model to integrate *karman* theory in Indian astrology. Though much before him, anthropologist Judy Pugh (1983) and philosopher François Chenet (1985) had diligently tried to interlink the two 'major' and 'highly comparable', theories of human destiny.[51] Pugh considered the 'ideas of karma and fate to be synonymous' while Chenet underscored the 'convergence between astrological theory and the doctrine of karma'.[52] However, it is Gansten, a Sanskrit and astrology scholar, who has taken this interlinking process to a decisive level. He argues that the fruition of past acts is 'inextricably linked' to the performance of present acts, and 'all life events are formed by a combination of the two'.[53] Borrowing the idea of *karman*, which he believes allows the 'interplay of fate and freewill', Gansten thus asserts that the *karman* theory provides an 'excellent theoretical model to support the practice of astrology' in India, and also that the 'art' of astrology is indeed 'interwoven' with the concept of *karman* since ages.[54] Once he accepts the authority of *karman* in explaining the interplay of *daiva* (fate) and *puruṣkāra* (human effort) in a human life, Gansten sees the role of astrology as nothing but as 'a lamp revealing the destiny dictated by *karman*', an aphorism, in his view, repeatedly used by the classical Indian astrological texts.[55] In this illuminating role of astrology, Gansten further rejects the 'causal' potential of planets and contends that they are just representatives of *karmic* residues in a birth-chart and 'mere signs', or at best 'intelligent agents', of 'revealing' future events than causing them.[56]

Caterina Guenzi, in her very recent anthropological work on Indian astrology titled *Words of Destiny* (2021), has challenged the *karman* theory (though without naming Gansten) and differed from the 'convergent' approach of Chenet and Pugh of interlinking the two systems. She has argued that astrology in its 'theoretical assumptions' as well as in 'practical use' presents an 'alternative ideology' which is 'both antagonistic and complementary' to the *karman* theory.[57] Guenzi observes this complementarity and antagonism in the practical use of

[51] Guenzi, *Words of Destiny*, p. 148.
[52] Guenzi, *Words of Destiny*, p. 148.
[53] Gansten, *Patterns of Destiny*, p. 53.
[54] Martin Gansten, 'Reshaping Karma: An Indic Metaphysical Paradigm in Traditional and Modern Astrology', in Nicholas Campion (ed.), *Cosmologies* (Lampeter: Sophia Centre Press, 2010), [hereafter Gansten, *Reshaping Karma*], p. 54.
[55] Gansten, *Patterns of Destiny*, p. 61.
[56] Gansten, *Patterns of Destiny*, pp. 60-63.
[57] Guenzi, *Words of Destiny*, p. 149.

terms *bhāgya* (destiny) and *karm* (action) during astrological consultations.[58] While rejecting the ideas of planets only revealing the past life 'invisible' (*adṛṣṭa*) actions as 'visible' (*dṛṣṭa*) in the current birth-chart, and astrology only acts as a 'lamp' for illuminating the 'good and bad acts accumulated in previous lives', she argues that except for the few introductory passages of the astrological texts, the 'reference to *karma* plays no role in astrological theory'.[59] In fact, both astrology and *karman*, despite dealing with the same human destiny, stand on two contrasting conceptual grounds – astrological 'fruit' is emanating from the stars whereas *karmic* 'fruit' is the product of good and bad deeds done in past and present lives.[60] Also, the 'cosmodicy' of astrology, which envisages human destiny as a network between planets, five elements, colours, animals, human body parts, social roles, castes etc., is substantially different from the 'blaming human responsibility' approach of the *karman* theory.[61] Hence, Guenzi refutes the analogy of astrology as 'lamp' to only illuminate '*karmic* residues' and instead claims that the 'lamp trick' is nothing but an effort of 'legitimizing' astrology in the philosophically 'comprehensive world-view' of *karman*, and which also 'aims at reconciling two theories' which are otherwise in contradiction.[62] This is the similar claim which was made by Wilhelm Halfbass (1980) who opined that theories like astrology and *karman* were existing 'side-by-side' and as 'possible rivals' which were later accommodated with each other.[63] Though this reconciliation attempt serves the purpose of neutralising potential rivalries between the two systems of human destiny, it comes with the cost of 'epistemological subordination of astrology' to the karman theory.[64] It happens despite the fact that astrology covers a 'far wider field of phenomena' than the coverage of *karman* theory.[65] Guenzi points out that while *karman* theory only explains the living things, astrology deals with the destiny of all sorts of things which are a part of the cosmos – not only human beings, animals and plants but also land, houses, nations, and so forth – as well as with the whole system of auspicious rituals.[66]

[58] Guenzi, *Words of Destiny*, p. 149.
[59] Guenzi, *Words of Destiny*, p. 149.
[60] Guenzi, *Words of Destiny*, p. 150.
[61] Guenzi, *Words of Destiny*, p. 150.
[62] Guenzi, *Words of Destiny*, p. 150.
[63] Wilhelm Halbfass, "Karma, Apūrva, and "Natural Causes: Observations on the Growth and Limits of the Theory of *Saṃsāra*" in Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty (ed.), *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), p. 271.
[64] Guenzi, *Words of Destiny*, p. 151.
[65] Guenzi, *Words of Destiny*, p. 151.
[66] Guenzi, *Words of Destiny*, p. 151.

Gansten has recently responded to this criticism in his review of Guenzi's work.[67] He still believes in the compatibility of the two theories and rejects the 'incompatibility' observation of Guenzi.[68]

2.4 Rituals of worship (*pūjā*) and appeasement (*śānti*): Cleaning *karmic* fate

Unlike the philosophical *karman* theory, the ritualistic performance of worship and appeasement of stars and planets has not been dealt in detail, even though almost all the classical astrological texts provide a separate chapter on the subject. Modern researchers like Gansten and Guenzi have touched the subject – former has outlined its presence in the classical texts whereas the latter has surveyed its practice in Banaras (North India) – but they have not explored the theoretical and historical aspect of relationship between astrology and rituals as much as they did for their support and criticism for relationship between astrology and *karman*. As Gansten's *karman* theory does not believe in the 'causal' power of the planets, so this can be understood that it is not interested much in the appeasement of 'mere symbolic' planets, but more concerned about *puruṣkāra* (human effort) and *prāyaścitta* (atonement).[69] However, Gansten has quoted the worship and appeasement method for 'planetary deities' from a very important classical astrological text.[70] On the other hand Guenzi has found in the contemporary astrological practices that ritualistic performances to pacify the planets are 'rarely prescribed', but rather in place of *grahaśāntis*, recommended by the astrological texts, astrologers prescribe the worship of gods.[71]

But there is Marko Geslani (2018) who has recently worked on the historical and theoretical evolution of rituals in India closely related with the astrological prescriptions. Geslani found

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[67] Martin Gansten, "Book Review", review of *Words of Destiny* by Caterina Guenzi, *Nidān*, Vol 6, No 1, July 2021, [herafter Gansten, *Book Review*], pp. 98-105.
[68] Gansten, *Book Review*, p. 101.
[69] Gansten, *Patterns of Destiny*, pp. 57-61.
[70] Gansten, *Patterns of Destiny*, pp. 58-59. *Brihat Prasara Hora Sastra*, translated by G. S. Kapoor (New Delhi: Ranjan Publications, 2005), pp. 1003-1006.

navagrahäkåtés tämrasphaöikäruëacandanaiù
svarëasvarëaräjatäyaùçéçakääsyaiù kramäd budhaù
racayed grahavarëair vä paööavastre 'tha vinyaset
tattadgrahoktäsu dikñu mantrocc.ra.apürvakam
grahamürti. sphuöä vijïair añöottaraçatäìgulaiù
unnatä sakiréöäpi käryä väsobhir ävåtä
varëänusäraà kheöänää väsääsi kusumäni ca
dhüpad.pasugandh.didravy..i ca dadéta vai
tattadgrahoditaà dravyam annapänädikaà tathä
balià ca vidhivad bhaktipürvaka. vinivedayet

[71] Guenzi, *Words of Destiny*, p. 258.

the Vedic roots of separate *śānti* (appeasement) chapter in the Atharvan tradition text *Atharvaveda Sāntikalpa*, which describes an 'explicitly titled *śānti* ritual called *mahaśānti* or the Great Appeasement'.[72] *Sāntikalpa*, as Geslani observes, classifies portents on the tripartite astrological scheme of earth, atmosphere and heavens, and *mahaśānti* rituals have been prescribed for the their remedy with the help of *purohita* (priest) astrologers who would be 'expert in fate and ritual' (*daivakarmavidau*).[73] Assessing the impact of this ritualistic tradition on astrology, Geslani deduced, while examining *Varāhamihira*'s 'astrological ritualism' in detail from his *yātrā* (journey) texts (*Yogayātrā* and *Bṛhadyātrā*) and the famous *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, that *Varāhamihira* makes 'sufficient reference' to the specific rituals and *mantras* (chanting) of the Atharvan *mahaśānti*.[74] In fact, in *Bṛhadyātrā*, *Varāhamihira* makes a detailed discussion about *daivapuruṣkāra* (fate and freewill) in which rituals are interwoven with the astrological information – ascertaining fate with *jātaka* (birth-chart) and inquiry (*praśna*) and then performing *śānti* of planets with rituals.[75] This was the same reference which was used by Gansten to support his karman theory for the interplay of fate and freewill, but he surprisingly ignores the great astrologer's prescription of rituals because it will destroy his planetary non-causality model. On the other hand, Geslani's study presents clear evidence of planetary appeasement (*śānti*) and worship (*pūjā*) in *Varāhamihira*'s texts for escaping the bad fruits of fate through rituals sometimes before the work and event (*Yogayātrā*) and sometimes after success (*Bṛhadyātrā*).[76]

2.5 Nāḍī palm-leaf Astrology: From believers' accounts to personal 'research'

Finally, after briefly examining the historical, philosophical, astrological and ritualistic aspects and theories of fate and freewill, it is appropriate to present a brief survey of literature on Nāḍī palm-leaf Astrology. If there is a shortage of scholarly works on Indian astrology, finding academic work on Nāḍī palm-leaf Astrology is almost impossible. Gansten produced a descriptive work of his experiences with Nāḍī readings titled *Thumbing across South India*.[77] While Gansten's description can be classified as a 'non-believer's account', there are few detailed 'believer's account' available which I found after much effort during the research process. Though these believer's accounts cannot be said academic and generally written, in

[72] Marko Geslani, *Rites of the God-King: Sānti & Ritual Change in Early Hinduism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), [hereafter Geslani, *Rites of the God-King: Sānti & Ritual Change in Early Hinduism*], pp. 54-55.
[73] Geslani, *Rites of the God-King: Sānti & Ritual Change in Early Hinduism*, p. 133.
[74] Geslani, *Rites of the God-King: Sānti & Ritual Change in Early Hinduism*, p. 141.
[75] Geslani, *Rites of the God-King: Sānti & Ritual Change in Early Hinduism*, p. 135. *Bṛhadyātrā…..*
[76] Geslani, *Rites of the God-King: Sānti & Ritual Change in Early Hinduism*, pp. 142-143. *Bṛhadyātrā…..*
[77] Gansten, *Patterns of Destiny*, pp. 14-48.

Campion's words, with a 'sense of wonder' and 'belonging to the cosmos', they produce substantial information, actual readings, exhaustive description, personal experiences and their own 'research' related to Nāḍī Astrology, which can be quite helpful for any academic research. Most of such works have been presented by non-Indians such as *Naadi Palmleaf Astrology* by Kim Paisol (2006), *The Hidden Oracle of India* by Andrew Donovan and Angela Donovan (2008), *Messages from the Universe* by Craig Hamilton-Parker (2015) and *The Spiritual Wisdom of India* by Lisbeth Ejlertsen (2003, 2017). There are also some 'research work' done by Indian writers of which two are notable – *Naadi Predictions: A Mind Boggling Miracle* by Shashikant Oak (2017) and *The Secrets of Naadi Predictions* by Aravind Swaminathan (2009, 2019). As book-titles itself suggests, Oak's work is his personal research with many personal expereines whereas Swaminathan, who himself is a Tamil scholar, presents a neutral and more informative approach.

Paisol, who is a spiritual teacher, believes that Nāḍī reading is a combination of both 'astronomical calculations' and the 'intuitive eyes'.[78] Donovans caution against the suspicious mind as they quote a saying that who come to Nāḍī with a 'sincere frame of mind' will get better readings than those who do not.[79] Hamilton-Parker gives an indication about the possibility of 'multiple destinies' written on the multiple leaves for a single individual.[80] Hamilton-Parker concludes that it seems there is freewill of choosing a path of fate in life under the Nāḍī system.[81] This feeling of having a freewill has been celebrated by Ejlertsen in her writing as once she found that 'one piece of information' written on leaf did not coincide with reality, 'then there might be others' too, and that gives her a sigh of relief that her 'life was not predetermined'.[82] In contrast to these 'outsider' approaches, the two Indian writers are more concerned with examining the validity of Nāḍī palm-leaf readings with an 'insider' approach. Oak has done a good amount of compilation work through his 'researching' since past three decades 'to give a helping hand to the researchers of Nāḍī palm-leaves'.[83] On the other hand,

[78] Kim Paisol, *Naadi Palmleaf Astrology* (Denmark: Sathya Dharma Publications, 2006), p. 45.
[79] Andrew Donovan and Angela Donovan, *The Hidden Oracle of India: The Mystery of India's Naadi Palm Readers* (Winchester: O Books, 2008), p. 71.
[80] Craig Hamilton-Parker, *Messages from the Universe*: *Seeking the Secrets of Destiny* (USA: Psychics, 2015), [hereafter Hamilton-Parker, *Messages from the Universe*], p. 282.
[81] Hamilton-Parker, *Messages from the Universe*, p. 282.
[82] Lisbeth Ejlertsen, *The Spiritual Wisdom of India*: About my Search for Happiness and the Truth in Life with Indian Gurus and Palm Leaf Astrologers (Denmark: Flowlab, 2017, 2003), [hereafter Ejlertsen, *The Spiritual Wisdom of India*], p. 211.
[83] Shashikant Oak, *Naadi Predictions: A Mind-Boggling Miracle* (New Delhi: Fusion Books, 2021, 2017), [hereafter Oak, *Naadi Predictions*], p. 275.

Swaminathan has not only provided valuable information but also analysed the scripts and methods applied in the Nāḍī palm-leaves. He has also incorporated a separate chapter on 'miraculous' *Jīvā Nāḍī* for which no thumbprints are required and in which the palm-leaves are not pre-written but script predicting past, present and future of a person appears only during reading on otherwise a blank leaf.[84]

2.6 Conclusion of Literature Review

It is very clear from the above review of literature that the challenge of applying the concept of determinism, fate and freewill in Nāḍī Astrology is two-fold. First, the discourse of fate and freewill in Indian astrology itself is not a settled one, and not only the *karman* theory needs to be revisited but also the relationship between the rituals and astrology requires further exploration. Second, as there is hardly any academic research on palm-leaf readings, the case study of Nāḍī Astrology needs to be examined in the field so that a theoretical discussion about *karman* and *śānti* vis-à-vis astrology can be produced considering the evidence collected during the process. For this, a robust research methodology must be identified and explained.

[84] Aravind Swaminathan, *The Secrets of Naadi Predictions* (New Delhi: Lathkar LLP, 2019, 2009), [hereafter Swaminathan, *The Secrets of Naadi Predictions*], p. 131.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introducing phenomenology to astrology

Two important qualitative research works on Indian astrology have followed textual and ethnographic approaches. The strength of Gansten's textual approach lies in the identification of various interactive processes while also allowing the researcher to concentrate on a specific case.[85] On the other hand, Guenzi's ethnographic approach mainly presents 'what' practising astrologers do. Ethnography tends to put an 'authoritative account' of the field and to convince readers of the 'reality' of the events.[86] Ethnographic research is very common among anthropologists.[87] While incorporating both aspects of 'how' and 'what' for narrating and defining the contours of the subject, this research is more concerned about 'whether' and 'why' characteristics of the determinism discourse (whether fate or freewill?) and Nāḍī Astrology (why predictions come true?). Hence, this research requires the basic features of textual and ethnographic research as well as a new phenomenological approach.

Phenomenology has been defined as 'a radical, anti-traditional way of philosophising, which emphasises the attempt to get to the truth of matters, to describe *phenomena*, in the broadest sense as whatever appears, in the manner in which it appears, that is as it manifests itself to consciousness, to the experiencer'.[88] In this way, as Dermot points out, phenomenology seeks to avoid all 'misconstructions and impositions' placed on experience in advance – whether these are drawn from 'religious or cultural traditions', from everyday 'common sense', or from 'science'.[89] This research approach suits the study of astrology particularly its branches like Nāḍī astrology which is often seen and sometimes misconstrued as fatalistic by religious authorities, unbelievable by common minds and hoax by the science fraternity. As phenomenological approach, in Tilley's words, opposed to the empiricist or positivist (scientific) 'natural attitude', it is more capable of coping with the subjective attributes of

[85] Judith Bell, *Doing Your Research Project* (Berkshire: Open University Press, 1987), [hereafter Bell, *Doing Your Research Project*], p. 11.
[86] Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), [hereafter Bryman, *Social Research Methods*], p. 363.
[87] Bell, *Doing Your Research Project*, pp. 12-13.
[88] Moran Dermot, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London: Routledge, 1999), [hereafter Dermot, *Introduction to Phenomenology*], p. 4.
[89] Dermot, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, p. 4.

astrology.[90] Especially the diagnostic and prescriptive mechanism of Indian astrology which is layered with complex theories and practices like *karman* and *śānti*, sometimes it can become an academic necessity to understand the phenomena from inside. Hence, this research proposes a phenomenological insider approach with a critical researcher's mind. However, while doing so, the idea should be to not impose explanations from outside before the phenomena is understood from within.[91]

3.2 Exploring Indian astrology with religious phenomenology

As Campion notes, Indian cosmology is chaotic, where if 'the eternal and the individual are inextricably linked', then so does the religion and the astrology.[92] The content, character and mechanism of both the streams are so interlinked that it is difficult to imagine one without the other. Hence, sometimes, astrology itself acts like a religion 'revering planetary deities', 'managing human destiny' and 'connecting past lives to the future existence'.[93] Religion has been theologically defined in various ways such as a 'belief in God and spiritual things', as the 'life of God in the soul of man', and as a 'mystery, at once awesome and attractive'.[94] These theological definitions of religion are also aptly applicable to the theory and practice of astrology in India which provides a basis for studying it in a manner as done under phenomenology of religion. Cox has given a working definition of religious phenomenology which serves the agenda of this research to study the religious tradition of astrology and Nāḍī astrology in India using phenomenological tools: "*the phenomenology of religion is a method adapting the procedures of epoché and eidetic intuition to the study of identifiable communities which base their acts of believing and resulting communal experiences of postulated non-falsifiable alternate realities on a tradition that they legitimate by appealing to its authoritative transmission from generation to generation*".[95]

As the astrological communities including both astrologers (or Nāḍī readers) and believers (or Nāḍī seekers) follow the diagnosis and prognosis and related rituals quite religiously, this research has broadly adopted the steps of religious phenomenology to understand the

[90] Christopher Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 1.
[91] Dermot, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, p. 4.
[92] Campion, *Astrology and Cosmology in the World's* Religions, pp. 122-123.
[93] Campion, *Astrology and Cosmology in the World's* Religions, pp. 123.
[94] James L. Cox, *An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion* (London: Continuum, 2010), [hereafter Cox, *An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion*], p. 3.
[95] Cox, *An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 48.

mechanism of Nāḍī astrology and the discourse of fate and freewill. Following Cox's prescription, the method and process are summarised as below:

Table – 1

Steps	Phenomenological Method	Process adopted
1	Performing epoché This means bracketing out researcher's previous ideas by suspending personal beliefs and withholding judgments on academic theories.[96] Though epoché cannot be perfectly practised, the idea is to be self-reflexive that a scholar starts with prior bias, and which needs to be minimised.[97]	Epoché performed by removing personal belief. Gansten's academic work had minimum influence.
2	Fostering empathetic interpolation For attaining the understanding of phenomena, the researcher must 'enter into' the experiences of the believers with an empathetic attitude, simultaneously accompanied by the techniques of interpolation.[98]	Nāḍī readers were approached as a 'seeker' than the investigator with an open mind of understanding things. Worshippers were interviewed with empathetic behaviour.
3	Maintaining epoché After entering the belief system, which may hold 'alternate realities' and which might be difficult to comprehend, the phenomenologist needs to maintain the process of suspension of bias and judgments	Visits made at Nāḍī centres and related temples with neutral mindset, neither believing the fraudsters nor doubting unnecessarily everyone.

[96] Cox, *An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion*, pp. 49-51.
[97] Cox, *An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 52.
[98] Cox, *An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 53.

	with a kind of 'methodological agnosticism' that is 'we neither affirm nor deny'.[99]	
4	Describing the phenomena This is the first practical task to describe the phenomena as accurately as possible, and the description must be faithful to the believer's own testimony as the final authority of the accuracy of any interpretation is not the observer but the believer.[100] This sentiment must be respected that 'there is no religious reality than the faith of believers'.[101]	Trusted what Nāḍī readers and priests are interpreting than applying own meanings of astrology and religion. Worshippers' belief and sentiments were respected.
5	Naming the phenomena After description, a name or classification to the phenomena must be assigned according to the specific cultural tradition and unique history, which should be capable of accommodating similar type of phenomena.[102]	As the involved communities call it Nāṭi Jōtiṭam (நாடி ஜோதிடம்), Nāḍī Astrology is the correct name of this phenomena.
6	Describing relations and processes A 'historical phenomenology' is also needed to describe the relationship between different classifications of the phenomena, and to understand processes of any change, development, crises, growth or stagnation.[103]	Research conducted for getting the history and development of Nāḍī readings and associated rituals.

[99] Cox, *An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 55.
[100] Cox, *An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 57.
[101] Brede W. Kristensen, *The Meaning of Religion: Lectures in the Phenomenology of Religion* (translated by John Carman) (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), [hereafter Kristensen, *The Meaning of Religion*], p. 13.
[102] Cox, *An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion*, pp. 58-60.
[103] Cox, *An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 60.

7	Making informed comparisons If the beliefs, traditions and rituals are comparable with any other system, then it must be compared to understand the core meaning of the tradition.[104]	The techniques and mechanism of Nāḍī Astrology has been compared with the horoscopic astrology. The concepts of *karman* and *śānti* have also been compared.
8	The eidetic intuition Phenomenological research that does not have a certain idea of religion from the outset can never reach its true object.[105] Therefore, to understand the belief system and to understand its sacredness, 'eidetic intuition' is needed for decoding 'hierophanies', as described by phenomenologist like Eliade.[106]	The whole research conducted keeping in mind the theories of sacredness including the Eliadean idea of hierophany.
9	Testing the intuition Final stage of the phenomenological method is to return to the phenomena, test the intuition in the light of the phenomena and make revision where necessary.[107]	The eidetic intuition was tested time and again at various places of sacredness.

3.3 Application of Eliade's phenomenological methodology to Nāḍī Cosmology

Mircea Eliade has given a unique criterion for interpreting the meaning of sacred and religious phenomenon. Eliade argued that 'man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane'.[108] This Eliadean theorem broadly applies to the theory propagated by the Nāḍī readers that all persons who visit to see

[104] Cox, *An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 62.
[105] Olaf Patterson and Hans Akerberg, *Interpreting Religious Phenomena: Studies with Reference to the Phenomenology of Religion* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1981), p. 61.
[106] Cox, *An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion*, pp. 63-67.
[107] Cox, *An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 68.
[108] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: Then Nature of Religion* (translated by Willard R. Trask) (New York: Harcourt, 1959), [hereafter Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane*], p. 11.

their readings do not get their leaves as only the blessed and chosen ones are destined to get their readings. Considering the common sacred paradigm, this research proposes to apply Eliade's methodology on Nāḍī phenomena which otherwise is also considered as a sacred knowledge system originated from the ancient sage traditions. Eliade's phenomenological methodology is based upon three elements - 'irreducibility of the sacred', 'dialectic of the sacred' and 'interpretation of the sacred'.[109] All these elements are explored with eidetic intuition to find the true meaning of a sacred phenomenon represented by hierophany.[110] Hierophanies, which otherwise can be perceived as ordinary, interrupts the homogenous profane space of a religious person (*homo religiosus*) becomes a manifestation of something else, something sacred.[111] In fact, profane space and time as constantly invaded by hierophanies in such a way that the religious people overcome the 'terror of homogeneity' and find 'meaning in their lives' through their eidetic intuition (Diagram-1).[112]

Nāḍī Astrology through its sacred orientation and dealing with destiny of people while involving the concepts of *karman* and practice of rituals including *Navagraha* appeasement, creates a kind of separate but sacred cosmology for its practitioners and believers. Once a practitioner finds a correct leaf and a seeker get his or her destiny written there, then not only that leaf but the whole tradition, system and ultimately the cosmology becomes sacred for a religious person. Hence, it becomes a delicate religious subject which deals with the faith of people in divine existence and thus cannot only be studied applying the empirical and ethnographic approach. Eliade's phenomenological approach, which has the potential of giving this subject a sacred treatment, can uncover the subtle nuances of the whole experience, so that 'something sacred shows itself to us.'[113]

[109] Douglas Allen, "Mircea Eliade's Phenomenological Analysis of Religious Experience", *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (Apr. 1972), [hereafter Allen, *Mircea Eliade's Phenomenological Analysis of Religious Experience*], pp. 170-171.
[110] Cox, *An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 65.
[111] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane*, p. 12.
[112] Cox, *An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 66.
[113] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane*, p. 11.

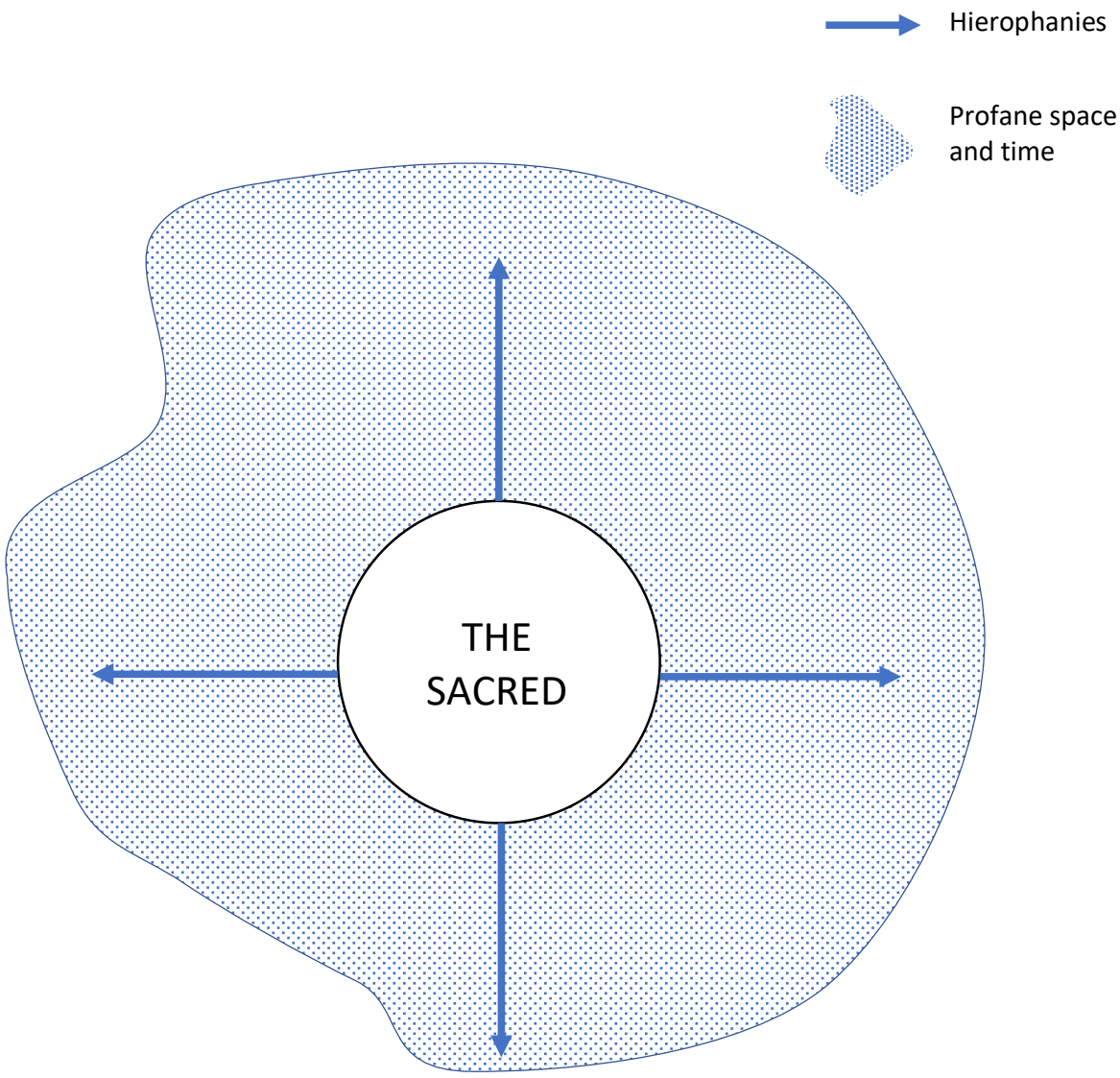


Diagram-1: Eliade's eidetic intuition

3.4 Strength and weakness of applying phenomenological methodology

Phenomenological approach proposes to present the phenomenon of Nāḍī Astrology in all its complexity, and 'not only in so far as it is irrational'.[114] Therefore, in Eliade's words, it will not then only remain concerned about the rationality of the system but with its 'sacredness in

[114] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane*, p. 10.

its entirety'.[115] However, both phenomenological and Eliadean approaches have the risk of producing highly subjective processes and uncritical generalisations.[116] Hence, this research will require the researcher to remain in the academic world and not becoming the 'native' in the worldview created by Nāḍī Astrology and its believers.[117]

[115] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane*, p. 10.
[116] Allen, *Mircea Eliade's Phenomenological Analysis of Religious Experience*, p. 185.
[117] Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, p. 350.

4. RESEARCH AND FIELD STUDY

[Profane Fates 'interrupted' by Hierophanies of Sacred Freewill)

4.1 Entering Nāḍī Astrology: Upholding epoché and empathetic interpolation

Understanding the requirement of phenomenological approach, herewith I enter Nāḍī cosmology while embracing and maintaining 'epoché' throughout the process and fostering 'empathetic interpolation'. As Nāḍī reading is considered 'sacred', it is to be seen how it 'shows itself'. My personal experiences with the Nāḍī reading span for more than a decade between July 2010 to December 2021. In this period, I interacted with several Nāḍī reading traditions which can be categorised in three groups based on their importance and systematic approach and for each one of them I have minimum two personal readings avaialble of different years for comparison – *Agastya Nāḍī* (2010, 2014), *Śiva Nāḍī* (2015, 2019) and *Vasiṣṭha Nāḍī* (2019, 2021).

4.1.1 Agastya Nāḍī Readings

I got two *Agastya Nāḍī* readings in separate years from the same New Delhi centre of Tambaram (Chennai, Tamilnadu, India) based *Sri Agathiyar Durai Swamy Subburathinam Naadi Jothida Nilayam* in which Durai Subburathinam is the 'Chief Naadi Astrologer' and which claims to be in practice of 'collecting palm leaves' and 'giving predictions' over the last three generations. During the first reading I was not present as I sent my thumb impression through a friend while during the second reading, I witnessed the whole process. In both the cases, the centre took few days to bring the correct leaf-bundle from its Chennai headquarter. Detailed transcripts the reading attached in Appendix.

Both the readings gave basic details of past correctly and future on the similar lines with few astonishing predictions which later proved correct. However, the type of thumb impressions differed. Also, second reading talked about marriage and children, which never happened and proved to be wrong. Fate altered?

4.1.2 Śiva Nāḍī Readings

I have two *Śiva Nāḍī* readings of different years from Vaitheeswaran Koil (Nagai, Tamilnadu, India) based *Sri Mahasiva Sukshuma Naadi Jyothishyalaya* (erstwhile *Sri Kousika Agasthiya*

Mahasiva Naadi Jothida Nilayam) in which A. Sivasamy is the main 'Mahasiva Naadi Reader' claiming to be the fourth generation of 'original naadi family' in 'divine service'. I was present in both the readings and gave thumb impression at the site. It took few hours to get the correct palm leaf. Detailed transcripts the reading attached in Appendix.

Both the readings gave basic details of past correctly, but future predictions had many variations. Again, the type of thumb impressions differed. First reading talked about marriage and children, which never happened and proved to be wrong. Second reading didn't talk about marriage. Fate altered?

4.1.3 Vasiṣṭha Nāḍī Readings

Finally, I also encountered two *Vasiṣṭha Nāḍī* readings but from two different centres both based in Vaitheeswaran Koil (Nagai, Tamilnadu, India). First was in 2019 at *Vasishtar C. Poosamuthu Nadi Astrological Centre* and second was in 2021, during writing this research, at *Sri Agastiya Mahasiva Sabthrishi Nadi Astrological Centre*. At both the centres, it took few minutes to get the correct palm leaf based on thumb impression given at site. Detailed transcripts the reading attached in Appendix.

Both the readings gave basic details of past correctly, and future predictions were also on the same line. Once again, the type of thumb impressions differed. This system found to be more consistent than others. First reading warned about leaving the job and assured that it will continue till late 50s, which proved to be incorrect. Second reading didn't talk about job but only politics and spirituality. Fate altered?

4.1.4 Past-birth Stories

Every Nāḍī reading incorporated a past-birth story under the śānti chapter based on which sins, bad deeds and good deeds are identified and remedial measures are suggested. However, in my case, in all the three readings I got a different past-life story born at different places with different courses of lives. Does this mean that each Nāḍī leaf, reflecting one line of fate in each space-time, is tied to one past-life? Does this confirm the existence of multiple fates in a life all of which would be in latent stage except the one which is governing the life?

These questions will be discussed in the later chapter.

4.2 Observing Nāḍī Cosmology: Describing the phenomena, processes, history

My experiences of witnessing the Nāḍī phenomena started much before this academic research. It started in 2010 when I was a curious practitioner of horoscopic astrology and continued even after 2016 when I became an academic student of astrology. This description of Nāḍī phenomena is, therefore based on my own personal encounters with Nāḍī readings and details collected as a researcher from various written sources, libraries, Nāḍī centres, Nāḍī readers, Nāḍī seekers, priests and worshippers.

Tamil meaning of Nāḍī is 'to seek', 'to access', 'to desire' and 'to search' which makes the interpretation of 'Nāḍī Astrology' as 'to come to seek the Nāḍī predictions.'[118] The Nāḍī predictions are generally read from Nāḍī palm-leaves which are searched on the basis of the input data of thumb impression, generally physically taken on blank paper at Nāḍī centres but nowadays facility of sending photos of impression through Post, Email and What's App is also avaialble – right-hand thumb impression for male and left-hand for female, based on the traditional astrological and palmistry system of hand selection for the two sexes. Thumb impression is only a tool to identify the correct bundle of palm leaves indexed based on the classification of thumb impression. Nāḍī readers like Elamaran told me that this classification has been done on the basis of various signs, lines and points found in human thumbs. I found that most of the Nāḍī readers and centres want to keep the classification system a trade-secret and do not divulge much information. Therefore, nowadays, most of them just refuse to allow taking photos of their respective libraries. Even there is also confusion created regarding the exact number of the types of thumb impression. Many told me that thumbs are classified in 108 types (a sacred number in Indian astrological tradition), however, there are many further micro-classifications which pushes the number to 1008 or sometimes 10008. Nonetheless, once the thumb impression is taken, the Nāḍī readers come with a single or sometimes multiple bundles of palm-leaves. They bring these bundles either from their own library or borrow them from some other library based on the category of thumb impression. One bundle consists of approximately 50 to 100 leaves, mostly written both sides, with a size of 10 to 11 inches long and 1 to 1.5 inches wide.[119] These palm-leaf bundles are considered 'sacred' and even kept in the local Nāḍī libraries a sacred manner which is not allowed to be visited by a common person. Last time when I sought Vasiṣṭha Nāḍī reading and asked the concerned readers and managers

[118] Swaminathan, *The Secrets of Naadi Predictions.*
[119] Swaminathan, *The Secrets of Naadi Predictions*, p. 512.

to show me the local library, they denied by saying that only a practitioner or *sanyasi* (ascetic) is allowed to enter the place. Once the bundle is brought on the table, the Nāḍī reader starts the elimination process for selecting the correct leaf by reading out leaves one by one in chronological order. This process is done by giving information from the leaf for which the seeker has to answer in 'yes' or 'no'. If the seeker confirms one information such as '*your name starts with a sound 'k*' with a 'yes', then the reader reads the second information from the same leaf such as '*your mother is not alive*', otherwise even a single 'no' makes the particular leaf rejectable and the reader proceeds towards the next leaf. This process of eliminating leaves continues till the correct leaf is found, either in the same bundle or in the continuing bundles, mentioning the basic details such as name, parent's name, spouse's name, birth date and year and son on. The whole process of finding the right leaf can take few minutes to several hours or it might not be found at all. Once the leaf is found, as it is considered 'sacred', sometimes the reader places it before the presiding deity in the centre and asks the seeker to first take blessings of the deity before proceeding ahead. I have found several cases in which sometimes Nāḍī reader also instructs the seeker to first perform a certain kind of ritual (e.g., lighting a clay-lamp in a temple) on certain day - generally on a Full Moon, a New Moon or in the waxing period of Moon – before commencing the reading. After completing all such processes, sometimes mandatory sometimes optional, reading begins. In theory, Nāḍī reading is divided into mostly 14 chapters called *kāṅḍam* (cantos) based on their nature, though many other chapters are added based on requirement but in practice they are found in rarity. The first 12 chapters follow the basic house patterns of horoscopic Indian astrology in which 1st house becomes the General Chapter, 10th house becomes Profession Chapter and so on. However, I have rarely observed detailed description of specific houses except the General Chapter. The 13th chapter reveals the story of the past birth and prescribe *śānti* (worship and appeasement) or *parihār* (remedial measures) for planetary afflictions (*doṣa*) or/and bad deeds (*karma*) done in the past birth. The 14th chapter belongs to *mantra* chanting and rituals to be conducted by the Nāḍī centre priest mostly as a fire *yajna* from which a talisman is generated and given to the seeker after few months of *pūjā*. In practice, by reading out the General Chapter and the 13th and 14th Chapters (that too are optional) from one or multiple leaves, the Nāḍī reader completes the process of Nāḍī Astrology reading.

As far as the origin of Nāḍī practice is concerned, not much history is known about the evolution of Nāḍī Astrology except the rhetoric narration at its commercial centres and their websites that it is thousands of year-old tradition devised by the ancient sages. Few enthusiasts

have done the carbon-dating of leaves and found them not more than 500 years old. However, the leaves are of good quality belong to *Koondhappanai* category of palm-leaves which are considered robust, untearable and appropriate for writing.[120] Swaminathan informs that these palm-leaves require high quality maintenance and generally cleaned with 'blue-stone wash' and 'peacock feather oil'.[121] I found his information correct when I visited Śiva Nāḍī centre in December 2021 and they told me that my probable leaf-bundle has been sent for washing in Thanjavur. Swaminathan also makes an unverified claim that the ancient Tamil astrologer communities (known as *Nimitthikar* and *Valluvar*) were the authors of Nāḍī leaves and later their successors and disciples inherited the palm-leaf manuscripts, much of which are lost. The only real history of these palm-leaves we know starts from the time of one academically enthusiast Maratha king of Thanjavur named Chhatrapati Serfoji Raje Bhonsle (1777-1832) who collected palm-leaf manuscripts of various subjects including Nāḍī Astrology from all over India and preserved them in 'Saraswati Mahal Library' built by him.[122] When I visited the library in March 2019 and interviewed the librarian and staff members, they stated that the library is now no more in possession of manuscripts related to Nāḍī Astrology but only to history, literature, medicine and other subjects. Even the official guidebook of the library does not refer any such manuscripts.[123] It was told that during British-Raj in the 19th century, as it was found that such unacademic manuscripts are of no use, all Nāḍī manuscripts were auctioned and such sold to families who were interested, and most of those families got settled in Vaitheeswaran Koil, a small town near Thanjavur. Like its mysterious history, nobody exactly knows the total number of palm-leaves or written destinies available, though there are individual claims of thousands to millions of possessions.[124] In my understanding, as the general hypothesis about availability of the personal readings is that only those chosen ones will get the readings who would come to 'seek', therefore any speculation or hypothetical question about the number of avaialble palm leaves becomes redundant as no one would know how many are the chosen ones. Nonetheless, the main storage centre of Nāḍī palm-leaves has been identified as Vaitheeswaran Koil, a small temple town in Tamilnadu, where many families are practising Nāḍī readings since a long time. Nāḍī, in Sanskrit, also means 'pulse' which is often used in terms of medical examination under the ancient tradition *Ayurveda* to know the

[120] Swaminathan, *The Secrets of Naadi Predictions*, p. 520.
[121] Swaminathan, *The Secrets of Naadi Predictions*, p. 531.
[122] A. Panchanathan, *Guide Book to Saraswati Mahal* (Thanjavur: Saraswati Mahal Library and Research Centre, 2014), [hereafter Panchanathan, *Guide Book to Saraswati Mahal*], pp. 1-2.
[123] Panchanathan, *Guide Book to Saraswati Mahal*
[124] Oak, *Naadi Predictions*, pp. 31-32.

nature and status of human mind and body. Sabrinathan (28), a young holy priest of Vaitheeswaran Koil temple, told me during interview that as Lord Śiva is worshipped here as a *vaidya* (healer), and people used to visit this place in ancient times for getting examined their *nāḍī* from local healers, therefore this place also became centre for Nāḍī Astrology. There are many traditions of Nāḍī palm-leaf readings based on the names of the sages as mentioned earlier, but the number is not certain. Also, as far as current Nāḍī centres are concerned, their numbers have increased manyfold in recent times. Earlier it was limited to Vaitheeswaran Koil and Tamilnadu but now they are mushrooming all over the country and even outside India. Oak has listed 347 Nāḍī centres in India, authenticity of many of them certainly needs to be verified.

4.3 Explaining Nāḍī Determinism: Making informed comparisons

While I was observing both the experiences simultaneously – one as seeker to know the destiny and another as researcher to explore the phenomena and its process and history, it was inevitable for me to make informed comparisons. This comparison process can be divided into four parts: first, comparison between my personal readings in different time and space; second, comparison with mainstream horoscopic astrology; third comparable cases of other seekers' experiences; and third, evaluation of the traces of *karman* and related concepts in Nāḍī readings with the ideas of theorists, practitioners and common people, whom I interviewed during the research process.

4.3.1 Comparison of Nāḍī systems and Nāḍī readings

As evident, all the three abovementioned Nāḍī systems followed the same format of readings. First, they narrated the basic details such as names, date of birth, few astrological details and claimed that this was the destined time to seek the reading. Then second, they informed that currently there are some problems or there exist planetary afflictions (*doṣa*) in the horoscope because of past-life sins, curses and misdeeds, but which can be removed or minimised by remedial measures (*śānti*). And finally, they gave predictions for future years in certain age-intervals. They also provided details of past birth in those readings in which I specifically asked and paid for them. It is evident that almost no difference exists between the contents of first and second parts of all six Nāḍī leaves across all three systems. Also, I must confirm that all the basic information about me and my family provided in the first part were fully true at the time of reading. However, there are variations in the predictive last part in all the six readings

and none of them are same even in the two leaves of the same system. Also, there was a difference in readings of two leaves of two different systems (*Śiva Nāḍī* and *Vasiṣṭha Nāḍī*) read out on the same day (8 March 2019) within few hours of difference. Here, I acknowledge that the macro features of life predicted in all the predictions came out to be true such as engagement in administrative, political and spiritual or astrological lines of activity, however one miserably failed regarding marriage and children as predicted in few leaves. Nonetheless, it is the predictions of micro life events where we find variations and discrepancies vis-à-vis events occurred in real during the time-interval (Table – 2), though few micro details also came out to be unexpectedly and astonishingly true. At the end of these inter-systems and intra-leaves comparisons, however, one observation seems unexplainable that how a single person can have different fates written on different leaves especially when there is a claim that there is only one leaf for a person? And more importantly, how can a person have two different stories and details of past birth?

4.3.2 Comparison with Horoscopic Astrology

Though Nāḍī cosmology has its own unique characters, it also significantly uses the nomenclature and techniques of horoscopic astrology in both diagnosis and prognosis. It gets started from the very elementary stage of leaf-bundle elimination process in which the reader sometimes quotes certain Moon *Nakshatra* and *Rāśi* (sign) as a question to find the correct leaf, such as 'you were born in *Bharni Nakshatra* and *Meṣa* (Aries) *Rāśi*?' Later, once the correct leaf is found, many Nāḍī-leaves produce a horoscope with planetary positions, though not all, which always follows the Sidereal system, a zodiac system which is most used in Indian astrology. But I didn't find birth ascendant often, even in those cases where the planetary positions were told. I observed that generally Nāḍī readers ask for the birth-time which helps them to prepare horoscopes. Also, Nāḍī readers frequently enquire about the date of birth in cases where it is not written in the leaf so that they can prepare horoscope which would help them to predict on their own or would validate their system or both. I did not provide birth date or time in any of my cases except the thumb impression and this was my own criteria of distinguishing a genuine and a fake Nāḍī-centre. Because, sometimes, the astrological knowledge and prejudice of Nāḍī reader also affects the reading as I observed in the *Śiva Nāḍī* reading in 2015. In this case, the Nāḍī reader frequently referred to the horoscope and made predictions based on planetary positions in mix with the Nāḍī readings.

Nonetheless, in such scenario where horoscopes are revealed from Nāḍī system following the *Rāśi* (sign) system, it creates a historical paradox. Though *Nakshatra* based astrology was in practice, sign-based horoscopic astrology is believed to be introduced in India through Hellenistic astrological traditions around 150 AD.[125] In that case, the Nāḍī system of prediction cannot dates back to the age of horoscopic astrology and definitely not thousands of years old as generally claimed. However, this paradox does not restrict the Nāḍī system to predict future on the cyclic and periodical basis which seems to follow the transits of bigger planets Jupiter and Saturn in relation to birth Moon *Nakshatra*, which is a traditional method of planetary *daśa* (period) system in Indian astrology. Also, in the *śānti* chapter, rituals for planetary appeasement and suggestions of gemstones etc. are fully in sync with the rituals and remedial measures followed under the horoscopic astrology in India. Hence, the 'non-astrological' labelling on Nāḍī system by astrologers like B. V. Raman and referred by Gansten does not found to be true during my field research.[126]

4.3.3 Comparable cases of other Nāḍī seekers

During the field research I also started reading other's experiences about Nāḍī readings. As mentioned earlier, there are several readings quoted by both foreign and Indian writers in their books and personal 'research'. Those readings are not much different from mine, and they have also received multiple readings with multiple Nāḍī systems. So, one thing is for certain that one person does not have only one leaf in this world as generally claimed by the Nāḍī readers. Though the personal accounts of these seekers are full of 'wonder' and 'awe' feeling, a close inspection of their writings show that their life, like me, also reflect inconsistency with the future Nāḍī predictions, however, mostly in micro detailing only. For example, Ejlertsen points out that she got married and became mother, even when she was completely hopeless about it, at the age of 38 as correctly predicted by the Nāḍī reading, but it was not 'son', as predicted, but was 'daughter' she intuited.[127] She felt relieved that her life is 'predetermined' and she could enjoy 'freedom' in rest of her life.[128] Nāḍī Astrology is filled with these types of examples where the future predictions were modified, altered or sometimes miserably failed both in macro and micro details, which reflects that even this apparently deterministic predictive system is free from the purview of the discourse of fate and freewill.

[125] Pingree, *Jyotiḥśāstra*, p. 81.
[126] Gansten, *Patterns of Destiny*, p. 46.
[127] Ejlertsen, *The Spiritual Wisdom of India*, p. 210.
[128] Ejlertsen, *The Spiritual Wisdom of India*, p. 211.

4.3.4 *Karman* and *śānti* in Nāḍī Astrology: Interviews of theorists and Nāḍī readers

During field visits I could observe even from the very basic structure of the Nāḍī readings that like horoscopic astrology, Nāḍī Astrology also affirms the *karman* theory. It generally starts with a rhetoric narration that because of past-life sins and misdeeds there are planetary afflictions and thus problems in the current life. Later, in the *śānti* chapter, when the past birth is described in detail, it also comes sometimes with a consolation that thanks to certain good deeds at the end of past life, the current birth has corresponding good luck also. Though Gansten still does not trust the phenomena of Nāḍī Astrology, he reiterated his faith in *karman* theory during the interview:

"*The world-view presented by Nāḍī readers is based on complete fatalism or hard determinism, which is not different from any other astrological practice in India which is generally based on karman theory*." (Martin Gansten, 7 July 2021)

However, Guenzi told me in the interview that during her research among astrologers in Banaras, she did not observe *karman* theory having any significant impact on astrological practice except the passing remarks, but she also acknowledged that she is working on a treatise which surely connects both the theories of destiny:

"*During astrological counselling karma was almost absent. It would come in very particular cases, otherwise it was not ideological framework to explain happenings…. This does not mean that there is a contraction between the two… but it was just during the astrological counselling that karma was subordinate to astrology… it comes in cases when something really bad happens and that you cannot explain in any moral way or fix any responsibility for this…then you think of karma in those situations. But I have to say that now I am working on an early modern treatise which is called Karmavipākasaṃhitā, and it is about the articulation of karma and astrology, and where astrology is definitely subordinated to karma and where karma is the main and fundamental way of explaining things. So, in this way I can't generalise it, but I have to say that there aren't many texts or situations where two of them (karman and astrology) are systematically combined and articulated…. but in Karmavipākasaṃhitā they are really tied together, and it is very interesting. There you can see the past life told based on nakshatra…*" (Caterina Guenzi, 13 December 2021)

I found Guenzi's observation correct even among the Nāḍī Astrology practitioners, except the fact that Nāḍī Astrology incorporates a full-fledged method in its *śānti* chapter rituals to counter the bad *karma* performed in the last birth, which has a negative bearing on the current birth. However, I did not find a single reading, and not even in the readings mentioned in the referred books of other seekers, where the Nāḍī leaf would have instructed about undertaking good *karma* or moral behaviour in this birth for good luck and better results. Obviously, there is no separate *kāṅḍam* (canto) in practice on maintaining morality in Nāḍī Astrology. Before I could conclude that *karman* theory does not pass the test of astrological practice in India, I encountered a *Jīvā* Nāḍī reader J. Ganeshan who changed this perspective when I interviewed him.

Jīvā Nāḍī

Jīvā in philosophical literature means 'soul', hence *Jīvā* Nāḍī literally means Nāḍī of the soul. Like other traditional Nāḍī system, which is called *kāṅḍam* Nāḍī by *Jīvā* Nāḍī readers like Ganeshan, because of having cantos, the *Jīvā* Nāḍī system is also classified as per the names of ancient sages like *Agastya*, *Kaka Bhusundi* and *Vasiṣṭha*. But the major difference lies in format as *Jīvā* Nāḍī system does not have pre-written leaves and numerous bundles. Generally, it would be just a bundle as I saw at Ganeshan's house. The moment a seeker reaches to a *Jīvā* Nāḍī reader, the blank leaves start getting scripts. Ganeshan told me that it appears in golden letters and can be compared to a moving news scroll on a television. There is a similar system in Odisha, India, in which there are copper plates instead of palm-leaves, Ganeshan states that sometimes the letter and words can be seen appearing even on a wall and sometimes even without a background solid medium and thus even on water or air. Mostly *Jīvā* Nāḍī leaves answer queries of the seeker, however, in certain cases, in Ganeshan's words, 'whole mind of the seeker gets captured' by the leaf. Once the reading gets completed, the words get vanished and the leaf again becomes blank.

Whatever be the rationality or logic behind this phenomenon, my research is more interested in the treatment it gives to the seekers. Unlike *kāṅḍam* Nāḍī Astrology which focuses more on planetary rituals (*śānti*), the teaching of *Agastya* in *Jīvā* Nāḍī readings stresses more on, as Ganeshan says, conducting *dharma* (moral values) and doing charity for removing past life bad *karma* and sins for leading happy life and getting good results. Comparing rituals with *dharma*, Ganeshan claims, on the 'instruction' of sage *Agastya*, that -

"*Until the mind is free and focussed, one cannot be free from karma, not even by rituals…. One should remove ego and arrogance and serve humanity to get freedom from afflictions. Rituals and mantras are like 'three-vehicle toy-cart' used by children to learn walking, but the cart is not used once a child becomes adult*." – J. Ganeshan (Interview dated 17 December 2021)

4.4 Journeying Nāḍī Cosmology on a 'toy-cart': Performing eidetic intuition

Prologue

After completing my field research and during writing this research paper, I encountered a hierophanic interruption in the first week of December 2021, when suddenly I realised the need of visiting the *Navagraha* temples situated in and around Kumbakonam, Tamilnadu. Though I had visited few of these and other sacred temples during my earlier visits, mostly on the prescriptions of Nāḍī *śānti* chapter, but this time I had a strong urge to visit the temples on my own in the order of days governed by the planets, for example, the temple dedicated to Sun on Sunday and the Moon temple on Monday and so on. I kept a written and visual journal for the journey for observing the rituals, examining the sacredness of the place, identifying the astrological elements and interviewing the priests and worshippers. While doing so I was in the dual role of *homo religiosus,* and an academic researcher who was conscious of performing eidetic intuition. Though the words cannot exactly define neither the phenomena not the experiences, an effort is being made to describe the manifestation of sacred.



Natarajan, Chennai Airport arrival

"When…Siva's foot crashed there…Death it was that died" -Sambandar

CAPTURING TIME AND SPACE

Time and space cannot be captured, yet they can be captured (pictured)
in the form of photos. These pictures worth a thousand words, provide a snapshot
of events that made this research an unsurpassed academic experience.

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JUPITER
Thursday

Day 1

"One of the first puzzles to a student...is the way in which each shrine seems to be spoken of as it were Siva's exclusive abode." – Sambandar





Yellow…they were all Yellow.



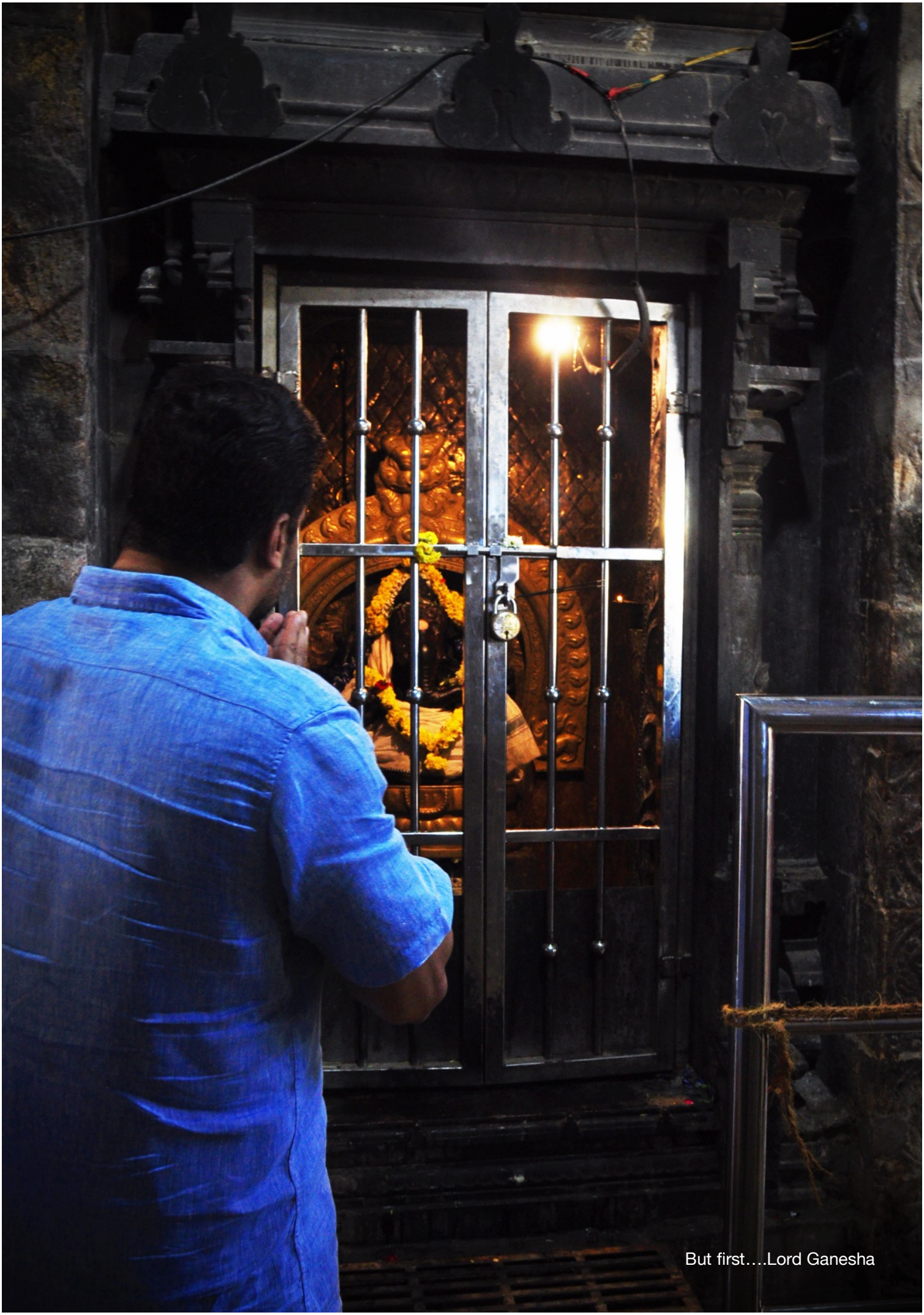
Every piece of offering has an instrumental value- a means to connect, to please, to seek, to thank. The aesthetic has a deep meaning. From the moment you step foot, every sight, the smell, the surrounding has been designed to alert you of the presence of the divine, to nudge you to connect and believe.



"See, there his bright trident appears to me"-
Thirunavukkarasu Swami



"Golden art thou in thy form, girt around with the fierce tiger's skin." -Sundaramurthi Swami



But first….Lord Ganesha



Terms of appeasement in the Daily rituals- “He put Brahaspati (Jupiter) in the position of purohit (priest) to remove danger. Jupiter produced eight objects for the purpose – a priest, a cow, the sacrificial fire, earth, white mustard, clarified butter (ghee), sami (wood), and rice and barley grains.” -*Atharvavedaparisita*



Decoding rituals by embracing both bhaktas (devotees)
and bhakti (devotion).



Relationship of exchange between devotee and divinity.







Golden Pongal, Golden halwa, Golden mathri for and from the golden god.



A sacred space where everyone is welcomed.







“A new beginning without divine blessing is unthinkable”
-Deepa and Swaminathan with their big family that stays together and prays together, tradition becomes a ritual.



“I believe because he listens, and he helps.”
-Chitra



Jupiter







The end of day one is just the beginning.

VENUS
FRIDAY

Day 2

"…no one can know Siva unless He chooses to reveal Himself"
-Sambandar





Predominantly white



The temple gates were closed, and people waited
…without complain.



‘Ritual for remedy’- praying for marriage blessings



Curious- you and I



Punitavadi takes a photo of information on Venus- Agneeshwara. People want to know their god. Want to know how to connect with them, how to please them, and above all people want to know why their god is most omnipotent of all. They say being blessed by the powerful makes them feel cared and secure in a life full of uncertainties and ambition.

Newlyweds queue up to seek blessings here too







“Purpose is staying blessed, frequency of visit is every year.”





The wait is over. Everyone rushes to be in the first in queue.



Captioning me starts by captioning you…



Nine planets wrapped in their color





Only here lamps are lit inside the temple facing the main deity.







Everyone has a different purpose to visit but they have one thing in common- their faith.



Old trees mark sacred space. Says who…



…a place where the believer kneels down with subservience and respect is her sacred space and thus is God’s scared space too.





With the end of second day Venus shines brighter in the sky. Or so it seems.

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SATURN

SATURDAY

DAY 3

On the day of Saturn- the god of all, the temple is open all day.



Every shop in the temple has this flex warning of misfortune that can be fixed by rituals inside the temple.





Sangu Poo (Blue Butterfly Pea) the flower of Saturn and also, god vishnu.

Frankincense and resins (Sambrani) of different colors for different planets/remedies



God Vishnu painted on the wall with different planets as Vishnu’s incarnation.



Nine Planets as Vishnu with the animal or bird that is associated with them.



Insight from the believers of all age.





The only temple with Nandi- Sivas' bull.

RAHU

SATURDAY

DAY 3 CONTINUES





"Below the smoky cloud lies beauty, clarity and power but only for those who can get past that smokiness. The Rahu temple was the most organised, maintained and orderly temple, though from outside the boundaries one could not imagine the orderliness that awaited inside. Even the rituals were conducted in a way that engaged you to give you a darshan of a lifetime. The detail in the method instantly enables you to connect…you leave the temple with a life long connection."





Rituals were detailed. Sweet lemon fruit included in the prasad.





“This that you see is the might of the mighty Rahu”



I believe, that is why I am here.



Lamps lighting ritual

End of third day. The Rahu temple was illuminated from the outside as well as inside.

"To…who has Siva in his heart, of the them [Planets], even the dragons of eclipse [Rahu and Ketu], are auspicious.
All things work together for good to those who love god." -Sambandar



DAY 4

TYAGRAJA

SUNDAY

The temple was closed. But I decided to go inside and find the sundial.





In search of the sundial.





Only temple with Ashwa (Horse)



The Sundial



Cleansing of karmic residues



Red and Yellow





Ten lamps of clarified butter on wheat.















All the planets are worshiped in the temple of Sun. Jupiter is situated inside the main prayer room facing the Sun.



Nine Planets





For (this) Lenin there is a god. Despite his struggle he has never blamed nor questioned Him.







The man who values justice above all.



JEEV NADI

MONDAY

DAY 5



"Only the one who is blessed is chosen for the reading"



MOON

MONDAY

DAY 5

On our way back, we took a wrong turn. Got to the temple late when it was dark the Moon was shining bright in the sky above the deity in the open temple.





White jasmine and white cloth for the deities. In this temple there stood the moon crescent on the Shiv linga.



After Moon Haritha and Bavina pray to the Sun for knowledge- ‘Gyanam’





“Fate is God and so is will.”



Dakshinamurthi with folded
legs only here.

The fifth day ends.



NADI
TUESDAY







Day 6

MARS
TUESDAY





Mars is red- transformational, energetic and dynamic.







Astrological ritual for “auspicious progress”


சிவ சிவ
சிவ சிவ



Two mars deities inside the temple. One at the entrance for main rituals and the other near Shiva.



Goat accompanies Mars





Rituals fixed yet so dynamic





Golden red.

DAY 6

KEDHU
TUESDAY



Mars' goat in the Ketu temple. The only temple with a goat in the premises.



Ketu





Seven lamps for lighting. Aluminum plate and black clay lamp.



Color of cloth green and black.



Remember seven and remember Ganesh.

Day 7

Mercury

Wednesday





Mercury of wisdom



Green color
Story on walls to educate and inform







Ganesh, Nandi, Devi, Shiva and Planet God in this order.



Nandi’s eye on the road- she is waiting to receive Shiva for Parvati. The only temple where Nandi looks to her left.





Five lamps, five of everything in the prasad. Rava Ladoo only in two temples. The other one Sun.






Green – color of
life






What is the color of your faith?




Before I leave



As I was leaving a voice summoned me, someone inside the temple called “here is Rudra’s footprint beneath this old Rudra tree come and see it”. And there also was Ganesh facing the temple of Mercury (See below).



The Rudra footprint and Lord Ganesha facing this, the Mercury temple.



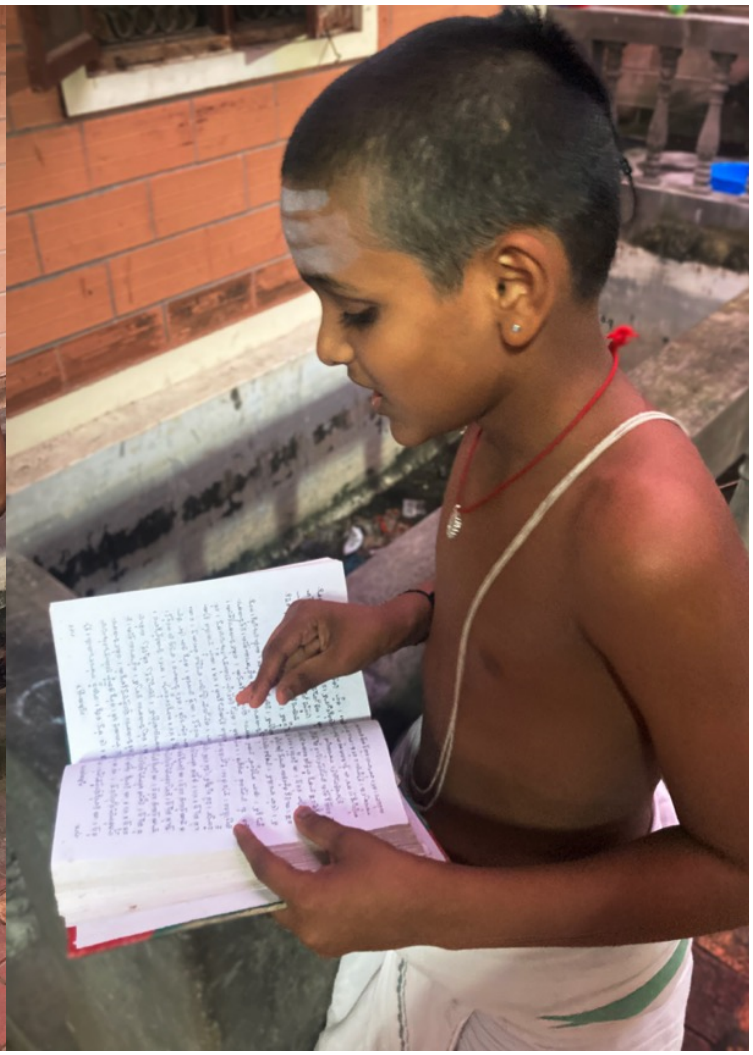
Outside the temple of the God of knowledge Mercury, the learning centre of knowledge.



Mercury ends on the note of wisdom, knowledge and children. A meeting that was not a part of my plan.

The scholars called me again when I was about to leave “Wait please come and see this too, we want to show you inside, where we learn”.





A tradition of teaching rituals
through mantras.

MAHALINGESHWAR

WEDNESDAY

DAY 7







This time I was granted entry.

27 NAKSHATRAS



Starts with Ganesh

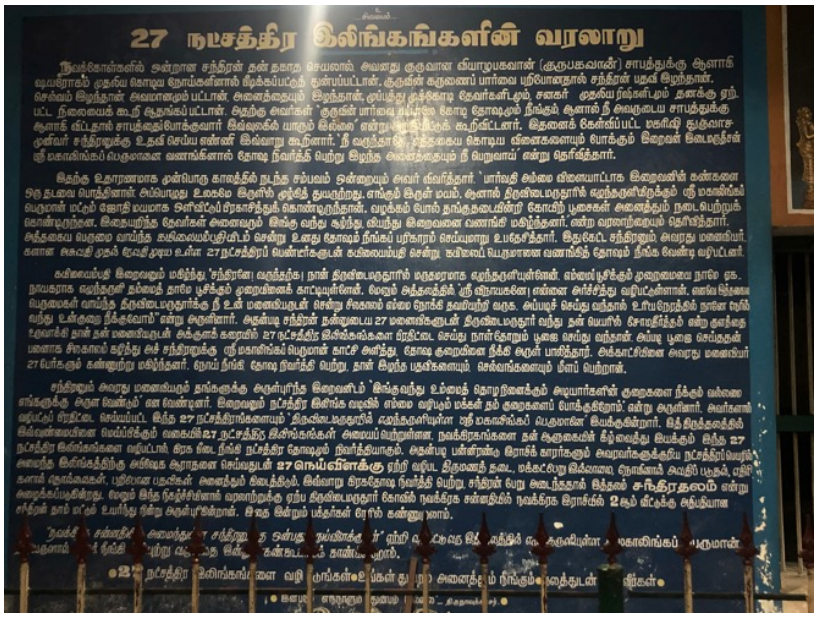








One god for one star.





End of Nine Planets' temple visit is marked here.



This research was just ‘like finding pebbles near a vast ocean’…that remains to be explored.

Epilogue

We started our return road journey at 9 pm from Kumbakonam and reached Chennai at 2 am in the late midnight. So, it was midnight to midnight affair. All temples we visited in the afternoons and evenings, none in the morning. The entire journey was a kind of dedicated to astrology and astrological planets who are worshipped as deities. When we tried to break the norm by planning visit to some other temples, it failed. It seems that the destiny wanted us to only focus on Navagraha, and until we completed visits to all planetary abodes, we were not given entry into the realms of nakshatra at Mahalingeswarar. In all these days, everywhere we encountered sacred spaces and everywhere our profane world was interrupted by hierophanies. We started on Thursday, ruled by Jupiter – the planet of wisdom and ended our journey on Wednesday, ruled by Mercury – the planet of intellect, and in between placed was Sunday, the day belong to the king of planets – Sun representing soul. Both the planets represent two sides of the continuum of knowledge for which this soul journey was created – either by fate or by free will. Who knows?

5. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Nāḍī Astrology works on fate, not on freewill

Whether Nāḍī Astrology works? There is ample evidence in support of yes than no, as it reveals past and present of a person with perfection, and predicts the future with a good success rate, more than any other astrological discipline. The moment the first question is answered in yes, the obvious next question comes like this – then explain how it works? A simple answer to this question would be – no one knows, and no one can perfectly explain unless detailed research is carried out which would require access to all the Nāḍī libraries and ultimately gigantic work of documentation of all the written palm-leaves, which was neither possible because of the personal property rights and which was also not the scope of this small work. This research is more focused on the way it works.

Nāḍī readings largely appears as a deterministic model which can be, in the words of Jim Tester, termed as 'hard astrology' than the 'soft astrology.[129] Especially when Nāḍī tells the very unique personal details such as names, then in the eyes of seekers it more looks like affirming the Einsteinian idea of 'God does not place dice' and denouncing the 'uncertainty principle' idea of God himself 'being an inveterate gambler, who throws the dice on every possible occasion'.[130] However, as the Stoic idea of causality created a kind of philosophical impasse when applied to astrology, similarly any effort to understand Nāḍī readings through the lenses of Horoscopic Astrology or even Modern physics will create an astrological, astronomical and mathematical impasse. Reason being, both traditional astrologers and theoretical physicists will agree with Hawking that their 'theories and laws allow us to predict the future, but in practice, the calculations are often too difficult'.[131] As Nāḍī Astrology does not use the mathematical formulae as tools for calculating and projecting predictions, but only a thumb impression for searching the already written predictions, it can't be understood through the so-called rational view of modern astrologers like B. V. Raman or scholars like Martin Gansten, in a very similar manner in which modern scientists refuse to accept the rationality of horoscope based predictions. In result, Nāḍī Astrology always carry the risk of being branded as fatalistic by the believers and trick by the non-believers.

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[129] S. Jim Tester, *A History of Western Astrology* (New York: The Boydell Press, 1990), p. 1.
[130] Stephen Hawking, *Brief Answers to the Big Questions* (London: John Murray, 2018), [hereafter Hawking, *Brief Answers to the Big Questions*], pp. 94-95
[131] Hawking, *Brief Answers to the Big Questions*, p. 97.

This research would like to argue that Nāḍī Astrology does not promote fatalism, but it simply reveals fate, which sometimes gets modified, escaped or even fooled by freewill actions. Scientists believe that 'there ought to be something simple about the theory of predicting everything' in future.[132] Nāḍī Astrology, while predicting almost everything in unbelievable manner, just adopts the simple theory of fate (*karman*) which occasionally gets over-simplified. Nāḍī readings always mention that the past birth actions are affecting the current birth, which is nothing but the reiteration of *karman* theory. However, what seems to be a contradiction that why there exist different readings in different times (years) and space (Nāḍī systems), as happened in my case. Every time I sought a Nāḍī reading, I got broadly a similar line of fate but something different too and that 'something different' was linked to what I just recently pursued. For example, when I got readings in July 2010, it told me that I was a tax officer but failed to predict that I was switching my job from taxation to administration in the very next month; when I went in January 2014 and July 2015, they told me that I was a senior administrative officer expecting good posting but failed to predict that I was moving for higher studies in foreign land; when I visited in March 2019, two Nāḍī systems told me that I was a senior public officer having future in politics and spiritual research but failed to predict that I was quitting job in few months to join politics; and finally I went in December 2021, it told me that I was doing politics and spiritual research having bright future. These gaps in predictions raises the doubt against an individual having a single fixed fate. It seems that either the fate itself is dynamic or flexible which can be modified or there exist 'multiple fates of human being' on the similar lines as there exist 'multiple histories of universe'.[133]

It seems that, at least in my case, there were certain unorthodox freewill actions involved which interplayed with the destined fate and resulted in a different outcome than what Nāḍī readings predicted or failed to predict. Bhīṣma has asserted in the *Mahābhārata* that 'a combination of fate (cumulative effects of previous acts) and individual effort (contemporaneous resolution and its concomitant action) directs each person's eartly career'.[134] Applying this assertion to my career, I can see few 'resolutions' and 'actions' which affected the course of fate – an unorthodox deputation posting in August 2010 after much effort, a rare opportunity of attaining

[132] Hawking, *Is Everything Determined*, p. 128.
[133] Hawking, *Brief Answers to the Big Questions*, p. 53.
[134] J. Bruce Long, "Human Action and Rebirth in the Mahābhārata" in Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty (ed.), *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), [hereafter Long, *Human Action and Rebirth in the Mahābhārat*a], p. 48.

higher studies in the UK created in 2016 by applying major external forces and finally a decision to quit a very prestigious job in 2019 with a committed resolution without covering major risks. All these actions and resoulitions were taken in exceptional circumstances with very determined but sometimes in 'force quit' mode, especially the last one for which the Nāḍī readings warned against but decision taken within few days to probably test the predictions. The outcome of such freewill actions resulted in all forms – good, bad and ugly, but it certainly changed the course of fate, if not unfolded a completely new course of fate. Nonetheless, this one simple example of career change raises a theoretical question - can fate be modified or altered? Answering this question, one ancient text, in fact, advocates for commanding the fate by a man – "One's own *karma* is called fate, earned from another body, therefore human effort is more important. By effort men obtain the fruit that they seek; men who have no manly energy believe in fate."[135] These religious and philosophical references coupled with personal experiences clearly indicate that 'fate' written on Nāḍī leaves can also be dynamic and subject to modification, and these leaves probably do not contain the freewill actions. But then how the modified fate, combining the effect of freewill actions, gets captured again in the next found leaf in a different time and space? This brings the possibility of 'multiple fates' on the discussion table.

5.2 Neo-Karman Theory: Freewill of choosing fate

Karman theory has already been explained in detail incorporating the contemporary views of both Martin Gansten and Caterina Guenzi. There are clear merits and demerits in their arguments for and against *karman* theory. Gansten's *karman* model convincingly explain the integration of both the theories of destiny – astrology and *karman*, however it fails to conclusively prove that the ancient astrologers were conscious and systematic about the merger. Guenzi is right that no authoritative astrological treatise describes the integration process except few general remarks, or 'lamp trick' in Guenzi's words, where astrology has been assigned the role of illuminating the *karman* hidden in the horoscope in form of planets and which is carried froward in this birth from past births. Whatever be the case, even Guenzi accepts that both the theories are compatible and complementary. Her only argument remains valid is that the discourse of *karman* does not appear during astrological counselling. This difference of opinion and gap in theory and practice gets resolved in Nāḍī Astrology. Nāḍī

[135] Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, "Karma and Rebirth in the Vedas and Purānas" in Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty (ed.), *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), [hereafter O'Flaherty, *Karma and Rebirth in the Vedas and Purānas*], p. 26.

readings provide, in very clear and structured terms - the details of past-birth, a theoretical framework of the impact of past-birth deeds on this birth, and lastly a very systematic method of countering the bad influence of *karman* through *śānti* rituals. Hence, in this way, Nāḍī Astrology recognises and validates the *karman* theory of fate – confirming Gansten's theory and hypothesis and resolving Guenzi's objection regarding its practical use. However, Nāḍī Astrology indicates one more characteristic of fate which has not yet been explored under *karman* theory of astrology. This is about the possibility of having 'multiple fates' of a single human life.

Though this will require a separate framework of research which is surely out of the scope of this paper, it would not be out of context if a brief reference is made to other research fields regarding multiple probabilities of future. There has been a long-accepted discourse in Modern Physics regarding Richard Feynman's hypothesis of 'multiple histories' of particle and universe. It is based on the 'uncertainty principle' that the future position and speed of a particle cannot be precisely predicted simultaneously – "the more accurately the position is predicted, the less accurately you will be able to predict the speed, and vice versa."[136] As precise predictions about the future positions and speeds of particles can not be made, thus can only assign a probability to particular combinations of positions and speeds, and therefore there is a certain probability to a particular future of the universe.[137] When this theorem is applied to past instead of future, there was a probability attached to a particular history of the universe and thus it was concluded that the universe must have multiple histories.[138] Without diving much deeper into the debate of quantum mechanics and uncertainty principle, it would be relevant to point out here that in Indian philosophical tradition, human life has been compared with the universe under the microcosm and macrocosm paradigm - *yatha bahyam tatha dhyatmam iti* ('As without, so within').[139] It doesn't make much difference whether the existence of determinism is due to fate or to an omnipotent God or to the laws of Science.[140] Taking a clue from the this scientific discourse, it must be examined if a human fate could also have multiple histories or, in other words, a human life can also have multiple fates? Though horoscopic astrological treatise or the existing *karman* theory do not throw much light on this, Nāḍī

[136] Hawking, *Brief Answers to the Big Questions*, p. 52.
[137] Hawking, *Brief Answers to the Big Questions*, p. 53.
[138] Hawking, *Brief Answers to the Big Questions*, p. 53.
[139] Alex Wayman, 'The Human Body as Microcosm in India, Greek Cosmology, and Sixteenth-Century Europe' in *History of Religions* Vol. 22, No. 2 (University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 174.
[140] Hawking, *Is Everything Determined*, p. 137.

Astrology seems to deliver four evidence – first, the existence of multiple Nāḍī leaves in different time-space, second, different Nāḍī readings referring to different past-birth stories in the 13th chapter, third, the availability of many rejected Nāḍī leaves during elimination process which mention common details such as names, and fourth, the variation in identification marks of the thumb impression.

- Availability of multiple leaves for a single person is the first and prime evidence of multiple fates written for a life. Though all these leaves and thus fates come up with a similar course of life, but there still exist important variations which might have significant influence on one's life. For example, in my personal readings, according to at least two leaves (2014, 2015), I was fated to have marriage and children which is not the case. These leaves described a lot of micro details about my possible partner and children, their health, education, career etc, which probably could have been true if marriage would have taken place. However, those events of fate could not be unfolded.

- Second evidence of Nāḍī Astrology is even more crucial regarding multiple fates which is related to the story of past birth as described in 13th chapter of the readings. It is seen that every time a seeker finds a leaf, it comes with a different past birth narration. How can a person having a single fate would have multiple past-birth histories? Only way this is possible when there would be multiple fates under operation giving results of corresponding multiple past-births simultaneously.

- Third evidence is the existence of multiple leaves in a palm-leaf bundle which carry very similar and common information about the seeker, but which get rejected because of one or two wrong details. In my own case, and similar observation made by many seekers like Hamilton-Parker, there were leaves in which all the names were same, but they got rejected because of one wrong information like married life or occupation.

- Last, but most critical fourth evidence is the variations in thumb impression signs, every time a seeker goes for Nāḍī readings. As observed during the field study, Nāḍī readers mostly claim that there are 108 types of thumb impressions which is unique for each person and based on which Nāḍī leaf-set is found. Theoretically, the thumb impression signs should not change, or at least not in the same Nāḍī system. However, I can see in my case that except of two readings, every time I got different names of my thumb

impressions which indicate that the signs of thumb impression changed over a period which resulted in variations in predictions corresponding to changed fates.

All the above evidence suggests, at least in my case, that despite having a kind of similar path of destiny in all the readings, different histories for the six different fates have revealed before me till date, and as Hawking claimed in other context, 'these histories may be similar on very large scales, but they will differ greatly on normal, everyday scales.'[141] Also, taking a clue from the last evidence of change thumb impression, one can refer to the art of palmistry, where a palm can be compared with the palm-leaf of Nāḍī Astrology. in which main lines remain almost unchanged but other lines and signs get changed over the period of time. Tim Ingold, while considering the lines on a palm as representatives of 'life histories', has quoted the palm-reader Elizabeth Hallam to explain that the palm 'carries a visual map of life, representing time as a series of interlocking paths, routes and journeys.'[142] Moreover, these changing life histories. though sounds contradictory, are well within the conceptual paradigm of *karman* theory. Monist philosopher Śaṅkara has confirmed that the karmic residues (fate) will condition 'the type of birth, length of life, and kind of experience the *Jīva* (soul) will have in the next life.'[143] In fact, under the Indian yogic philosophical system, the karmic residues have been classified into three types – first, those residues which are determined at birth to be experienced during the present life (called *prārabdhkarman*); second, those residues which were produced by actions performed in a previous life, but which remain latent during this present life (called *sañcitakarman*); and third, those residues which are the results of actions performed in the current life and which will mature to be experienced in some subsequent life (called *sañcīyamāna* or *āgamin karman*).[144] So, it is theoretically acceptable that there exist a set of multiple storages of karmic residues corresponding to multiple fates which would remain latent till they are unlocked by some freewill actions or interruptions, made in a given circumstances, in the normal course of fate being experienced. However, it is also possible and probably the only way of liberation from the cycle of births that a process of cleansing of karmic residues is adopted.

[141] Hawking, *Is Everything Determined*, p. 137.
[142] Tim Ingold, *Lines* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 48.
[143] Potter, *Karma Theory in Some Indian Philosophical Systems*, pp. 257-258.
[144] Potter, *Karma Theory in Some Indian Philosophical Systems*, p. 249.

5.3 Cleansing Fate: Rituals are tools, planets are the gods, hierophanies are evidence

Whatever be the strengths or weaknesses of the *karman* theory, it certainly fails to recognise the importance of rituals in its framework. But Nāḍī Astrology combines the two system. Gansten, in his review of Guenzi's work, has argued that rituals of planetary appeasement are not much different phenomena than atonement of *karman* theory.[145] However, this is a problematic comparison, both conceptually as well as historically. Atonement is practised after the sin or misdeed has taken place, whereas rituals are also conducted not only to avert any unforeseen problems which could occur due to past sins, but also to get gains and best results in given circumstances, as Varāhamihira prescribed. Also, the history of rituals precedes both the theories of destiny – *karman* and astrology. Rituals for planetary appeasement started way back since the time of *Atharvaveda*.[146] The philosophy of *karman* originated in *Upniṣads* and developed by later philosophers like Patanjali and Śankara.[147] Earlier, it was nothing but the freewill of conducting rituals - in form of worship (yajna, pūjā) and appeasement (śānti) - which gave ancient people hope and expectation to get both material gains as well as spiritual upliftment to counter fate.[148] Needless to say, this is still the most acceptable method of cleansing karmic residues for common people.

Bhakti Yoga (devotional service) has always been considered convenient and therefore popular than the other two paths of pursuing benefits and salvation – Jnana Yoga (meditative austerity) and Karma Yoga (moral actions). Not surprisingly, ancient and medieval astrologers, despite recognising the importance of *karman* as a theoretical framework, focused more on worship and appeasement than suggesting their clients about performing atonement, good deeds and moral behaviour. Varāhamihira wrote a whole book on śānti and Parashara gave details of mantras and rituals to be conducted under planetary periods, but none of those great astrologers prescribed spiritual way of living by doing meritorious deeds. In fact, worship of the gods and planets has been embedded in the Indian astrological tradition based on *nakshatra* from the beginning, much before the import of Hellenistic Astrology.[149] Varāhamihira gave planetary appeasement (śānti) – image, mantra, perfume, foods and flowers for planets - more validation by terming it worship (pūjā) in *Bṛhat Saṁhita*.[150] This pūjā system is still followed in Nāḍī

[145] Gansten, *Book Review*, p. 101.
[146] Geslani, *Rites of the God-King: Sānti & Ritual Change in Early Hinduism*, p. 97.
[147] S. Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upniṣads (London: Harper Collins, 2017, 1953), p. 115.
[148] Geslani, *Rites of the God-King: Sānti & Ritual Change in Early Hinduism*, pp. 146-147.
[149] Pingree, *Jyotiḥśāstra*, p 101.
[150] Geslani, *Rites of the God-King: Sānti & Ritual Change in Early Hinduism*, p. 143.

cosmology. The problem with the existing *karman* theory is that it does not recognises the causal potential of planets and therefore not interested in their appeasement.[151] This seems to be unhistorical and an imaginary stretch of *karman* theory by scholars like Gansten and beats the very purpose of astrological practice. As Varāhamihira has clearly outlined that 'fate and human effort should be known' first by the astrologer, and then *purohita* (priest) should perform the 'removal of inauspicious fate (*daivasyāśubhasya*) by means of śānti and pūjā approved by the astrologer'.'[152] This is the practice which is still being followed under Nāḍī cosmology in which first the Nāḍī reader outlines the fate and śānti needed to be done and then priests perform the recommendation in the Navagraha temple. This is nothing but the tradition of pre-horoscopic astrology and related rituals as continued since the times of 'Vedic-Jyotiḥśāstric rituals.'[153] Even the historical roots of mantra (chants) prescribed under chapter-14 (Deeksha kandam) of Nāḍī readings can be found in Varāhamihira's prescription borrowed from the traditions of Atharvaveda in which the priest (purohita) invokes a ritual like this – "May all the gods seeking worship (pūjā) come here, take offerings and after receiving pūjā, please depart after conferring śānti".[154] Here, the 'gods' include the 'nakshatras' and 'planets' who must be worshipped (pujayet) and pleased with flowers, fragrances and foods.[155] This comparison and recommendation, by the greatest ancient authority of astrology in India, thus rejects the artificial claim of the current *karman* theory propagators that planets are mere symbolic and don't have causal potential to create or encounter one's fate. In fact, Varāhamihira gave special instructions of the worship (pūjā) of planets as he believed in a 'relationship of exchange between devotee and divinity.'[156] However, as can be noticed in Guenzi's observations of horoscopic astrologers' prescriptions of performing rituals and worship for the gods than 'subordinate' planets, it can be deduced that the horoscopic astrology has demoted the status of planets contrary to the instructions of the father of horoscopic astrology in India.[157] However, Guenzi does not fail in showing theoretical mirror of *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* to the practitioners that 'one desirous of prosperity, long life, bodily health and for removing all the evils, should perform a sacrifice (*yajña*) to the nine planetary deities.'[158]

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[151] Gansten, *Reshaping Karma*, pp. 56-57.
[152] Geslani, *Rites of the God-King: Sānti & Ritual Change in Early Hinduism*, p. 147.
[153] Geslani, *Rites of the God-King: Sānti & Ritual Change in Early Hinduism*, p. 146.
[154] Geslani, *Rites of the God-King: Sānti & Ritual Change in Early Hinduism*, p. 151.
[155] Geslani, *Rites of the God-King: Sānti & Ritual Change in Early Hinduism*, p. 152.
[156] Geslani, *Rites of the God-King: Sānti & Ritual Change in Early Hinduism*, p. 152.
[157] Guenzi, *Words of Destiny*, pp. 257-258.
[158] Guenzi, *Words of Destiny*, p. 258.

Nonetheless, it can be easily observed that even in its current form, almost 1500 years after Varāhamihira, Nāḍī Astrology creates a very similar 'ritual-astrological cosmologies' of the great astrologer who has been termed as a 'ritualist of considerable invention.'[159] In fact, Nāḍī Astrology is an excellent framework which combines *karman* and śānti and pūjā (planetary appeasement and worship) in a seamless manner, and thus saves the *karman* theory from its critics for not being in existence in the real counselling world of astrologers. In this way, Nāḍī Astrology gives a proper response to scholars like Guenzi who believes that karman and astrology are two contradictory models.[160] Besides, the practical Nāḍī Astrology sessions clearly indicate that neither karman is a superimposition on astrological elements nor it makes astrology its subordinate as Guenzi argues.[161] By prescribing, śānti and deeksha rituals, both rooted in Atharvan tradition, Nāḍī Astrology provides a ritualistic tool for not only a successful and pleasurable life but also to clean the karmic residues to get salvation through Bhakti Yoga. And there is also a Jeeva Nāḍī, which is the only tradition which prescribes *moksha* by conducting moral behaviour and serving the humanity with empathetic attitude, rarely found in any horoscopic astrological tradition in India. In nutshell, if it is rituals which brings a cleansing mechanism to counter fate, then it is the Nāḍī Astrology which perfectly combines the interplay of both residual fate and ritualistic freewill to make *karman* theory a complete model of decoding destiny.

Yet, an epistemological question can be raised here. How a seeker would know, while following the path of pūjā and śānti, that the process of cleansing of karmic residues has begun or at least it is following the right track? This can only be understood though a phenomenological experience for which I propose the Eliadean model of sacred and hierophanies, manifestation of which can only be observed by a *homo religiosus* person. First, the example of Nāḍī cosmological set-up, where manifestation begins from the very start of finding the correct leaf by a seeker. She or he suddenly becomes *homo religiosus* and tends to believe, in the words of Lane, that sacred has chosen her or him to reveal itself.[162] The seeker then creates her or his own world of sacred (*imago mundi*) and 'sought to live as near as possible to the so-created centre of the world.'[163] It is in this sacred space where a *homo*

[159] Geslani, *Rites of the God-King: Sānti & Ritual Change in Early Hinduism*, pp. 154-155.
[160] Guenzi, *Words of Destiny*, pp. 148-149.
[161] Guenzi, *Words of Destiny*, p. 151.
[162] Lane, *Landscapes of The Sacred*, p. 19.
[163] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane*, p. 143.

religiosus seeks to encounter the *karmic* residue of fate, as duly suggested by the Nāḍī readings under *śānti* mechanism. For the seeker, such suggestions are nothing but only an 'efficacious measure' of reproducing the 'work of the gods.'[164] Thus, when the seeker starts the pilgrimage of *Navagraha* or other temples prescribed in the Nāḍī readings, then those 'sacred places' which were till now like any other 'ordinary place' of worship, are made 'ritually extraordinary' by the seeker in her *imago mundi*.[165] However, this sacred experience can be created by any *homo religiosus* person irrespective of whether any astrological or Nāḍī readings have been sought or not. Like a devotee named Vasubhi (female, 57) whom I met at Rahu temple, who doesn't consult astrologers but only believes in God. Like me, she was also attending the milk *abhishekam* (milk pouring and bathing) ceremony of the deity of planet Rahu, during which we both divinely felt that 'our afflictions washed away'. From this point the struggle of sighting and feeling the hierophany begins.

Apart from the transcendental feeling, which could be too difficult and abstract to gather and record, there must be something tangible and something striking which should get stitched in the eidetic intuition of a *homo religiosus* person. Under the Eliadean framework, hierophanies are those phenomena, which this research proposes to apply as test to find whether a *homo religiosus* person has started to encounter the karmic residues of fate or still she or he is forced to follow the profane and homogenous world of fate. Considering the existence of multiple latent fates (sancitakarman) in the background and the seeker trying to explore sacred on the path of fate under operation (prarabdhakarman), theoretically the seeker must face the constant interruptions of hierophanies in her or his world (*imago mundi*) for getting a real signal of belief that one or more latent fates are in the process of activation. Those signals of hierophanies will be pushed by the most intense *karmic* residue kept in latent stage, as Śankara explained as a general rule, but with a rider – "the more intense and proximate residues, whether sinful or meritorious, tend to mature first, but that is the general rule subject to many exceptions because there are incompatibilities among several residues which have equal claim but only one of which can mature at a given time."[166] However, the monist Shanakara, the greatest authority of Jnana Yoga, surprisingly brings here the authority of God in choosing the correct fate for the seeker, instead of giving 'virtuous deeds' (moral behaviour) the right of

[164] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane*, p. 29.
[165] Lane, *Landscapes of The Sacred*, p. 19.
[166] Potter, *Karma Theory in Some Indian Philosophical Systems*], p. 258.

selection between two clashing fates, 'God is the ordainer of results.'[167] This brings back the role of God in showing hierophanic path to its devotees and this would include the sacred worship (pūjā) and śānti (appeasement) of planets for cleansing the karmic residue as God himself proclaimed that "whichever divine form a devotee wants to worship with faith, I ordain for him unwavering faith in that very form."[168]

5.4 The lines of fates are determined but not the points of freewill

Though God seems to be omnipotent in deciding and selecting the path of fate for an individual, best expressed under the deterministic model of Nāḍī Astrology, both God and Nāḍī readings leave a much scope for human freewill. In fact, as practically and theoretically shown above, there might be certain freewill actions – right from 'force quit' decision makings to meritorious deeds to appeasing rituals of planets – which would have the potential of changing the course of fate or even bring back some latent karmic residues or fates into action. However, in any case, the line of fate under operation seems to be always determined unless it is again interrupted by a forceful freewill action. Therefore, every time a seeker goes for Nāḍī readings, she or he finds the history of fate accurate and in perfect mode till the date of seeking. It never happened in my six readings during the span of 10 years that a single information of the past was wrong. The problem of inaccuracy lies with the future predictions which get unfolded with many variations or sometimes in a miserable failure. Why it happens? Now, at the end of this discussion, this research would like to explore this common but very important question.

Fate and freewill are mostly seen as two different modes of living a life. Therefore, it creates a binary illusion. Those who want to believe in fate often confuse it with fatalism once it starts to unfold itself. This transition sometimes comes with a convenient logic to even the greatest of wise peoples like Yudhisthira of Mahabharataa who rationalised his 'compulsion' to pursue his greed of winning the gamble of dice-game, by stating that he was playing 'because of the irresistible influence of fate.'[169] Similarly, those who want to enjoy the freedom of choices often confuse freewill with randomness, and keep wondering 'if we don't have freewill, how can we be responsible for our actions?'[170] There are few wants to strike a balance between the

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[167] *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya* of Śaṅkarācārya, translated by Swami Gambhirananda (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 1965), [hereafter *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya*], pp. 641-642…… ….
[168] *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya*, p. 643. *Bhagavad-Gita As It Is*, trans. by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (London: The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 2016), pp. 334-336. …. ….
[169] Long, *Human Action and Rebirth in the Mahābhārat*a, p. 45.
[170] Hawking, *Is Everything Determined*, p. 127.

two modes of living. While I was interviewing Martin Gansten and asked him about fate and freewill, he took a middle path while giving an example that the room in which he was sitting can be considered as fate in which he had all the freewill of doing few activities. So, he believed in co-existence of fate and freewill, which this paper has already shown under the theoretical model of *karman* and with the practical examples of Nāḍī Astrology. In fact, Nāḍī Astrology presents a more comprehensive paradigm of their co-existence.

Taking a clue from Nāḍī Astrology, this paper would like to present fate and freewill on a single line than to see in two different planes. They are not even two extremes of a single continuum. But it seems more appropriate to consider fate as a 'line' and freewill as 'points' on this line. In fact, it can be argued under the *karman* philosophy that a line of fate is ultimately made of infinite points of freewill actions which were taken in different births. Those points travel from one life to another in form of multiple lines of fates as karmic residues. However, in the current life, at a given point of time, only one line of fate is travelled by the individual and the other lines of fates remain latent. As all these lines of fates have been formed by a single soul, therefore it would be apt to assume that all these lines are interconnected in branch forms to each other. If for any reasons, mostly by a freewill action, if a latent line of fate gets activated, then there would be a new operational line of fate for the individual intrinsically connected with the older line of fate. As all fates are pre-determined because of actions already committed in the past lives, any line of fate – old one or the new one – will be a pre-determined line on which all events will look line pre-determined until a new latent line of fate again gets activated for coming in operation. In the context of Nāḍī Astrology, different palm-leaves in different space and time only represents the different lines of fate. When a seeker approaches the readings and a correct leaf is found, then it correctly reveals the past events including highlighting certain points of freewill actions as a part of the line of fate that leaf represents. However, regarding future, as there might be many freewill action points landing on the same line of fate which can trigger activation of another line of latent fate, predictions cannot be made with full accuracy. It can also be deduced from this analogy and using the concept of *karman* philosophy that the lesser karmic residues and in turn lesser number of latent fates left in the current life will result in lesser variation in future predictions. It will also mean that more the soul is nearer to its liberation with minimum karmic residues left, there will be greater chances of predictions turned out to be correct. Alternatively, it can also be argued that if through rituals of worship and śānti, an individual gets success in cleansing the latent karmic residues, then again there will be much predictable life, unless some fresh freewill actions take

place creating more karmic residues. This can be the only plausible reason that the future predictions of Nāḍī Astrology do not come out to be true in some cases. However, explanation for that problem lies in the paradigm of Nāḍī Astrology itself which is clearly based on the interplay of fate and freewill, displayed in the forms of karman and śānti, which would be always open to the phenomena of activating a new line of fate.

6. CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to investigate Nāḍī Astrology under the paradigm of fate and freewill. Originated and generally practised in the Southern Indian State of Tamilnadu, Nāḍī Astrology (Nāḍī, a Tamil word, meaning – 'to seek') presents a deterministic model, in which predictions are made while deciphering the past, present and future of an individual seeker from a pre-written palm-leaf. Therefore, the aim was to examine, while reviewing the available sources and collecting new evidence from the field visit, that 'whether' this predictive system really works? And if yes, then 'why' it works? Is human destiny pre-determined? The last question essentially brought the discourse of fate and freewill under discussion, which was aimed to be made the theoretical basis of the exploration of the phenomena of Nāḍī Astrology. As this prediction system is also considered to be a sacred tradition of ancient sages which gives a very personalised kind of experience, therefore it was made clear from the beginning that the concepts of sacred spaces and research tools of phenomenology will be applied.

At the outset, the scope of research was clarified. A similar practice of Northern India and another astrological system having the same name of Nāḍī Astrology were removed from the scope as the first is chaotic while the second applies a completely different system of predictive techniques.

The first real challenge of this research was to search relevant literature on the subject. Much philosophical, scientific and astrological literature is available on the topics of determinism, fate and freewill in the western academic world. However, the same is not true for Indian knowledge system where academic scholarship on astrology is negligible. There is no research connecting the subject of astrology with the philosophy of fate and freewill, except a doctoral thesis of Martin Gansten on Nāḍī Astrology itself. Gansten has also produced sufficient literature on the theory of *karman*, which he believes provides a theoretical model for astrology as it allows interplay of fate and freewill and strikes a middle path between the two. The basic premise of *karman* theory is that an individual's fate is in the current life is largely determined by the actions performed in the past-lives. Therefore, in astrology, the horoscope is nothing but a reflection of past life karman and the planets are mere symbols of karmic residues without having any potential of causal power. However, the theory of *karman* is not uncontested. Caterina Guenzi, an anthropologist, is her very recent work on astrological practice in India, has pointed out that *karman* and astrology are antagonistic to each other and based on

contradictory theories, and in fact, there is no historical evidence of their systematic and philosophical integration. These two researchers have produced the most comprehensive academic works on Indian astrology in recent times, and therefore this research has referred their works considerably. However, it was observed during the survey of literature that there has not been much academic attempt on the relationship of astrology and rituals, even though rituals of worship (pūjā) and planetary appeasement (śānti) play a crucial role in the practice of astrology in India, and in magnitude no less than the much-debated theory of *karman*. However, Marko Geslani has thoroughly examined the practice of rituals in Varāhamihira's times and found the roots of astrological rituals in Atharvaveda. Lastly, there is no academic research on Nāḍī Astrology, except Gansten's work, therefore few books based on personal experiences and informative research have also been surveyed.

As Gansten's work is mainly text-research based under the theoretical framework of *karman*, Guenzi's approach is more ethnographic and anthropological to mainly observe the practical elements of astrological counselling, and Geslani has conducted chronological analysis of ritualistic tradition, this research has adopted the phenomenological methodology to intuitively study the theory and practices of fate and freewill vis-à-vis religious rituals in the context of Nāḍī Astrology. While doing the field work based on this methodology, the 9 steps of phenomenological method prescribed by James Cox and the theory of Mircea Eliade regarding sacred spaces and hierophanies have been applied.

During the field work, the first and foremost agenda was to describe the phenomena of Nāḍī readings through both personal experience and observation. Regarding this, few personal readings have been presented and then a brief description of process, method and history of the phenomena. A comparative model is also produced in the field report to explain the Nāḍī determinism in which Nāḍī Astrology has been compared within its own sage-traditions and then with the horoscopic astrology. It was observed that while the Nāḍī Astrology has different system of taking input data – thumb impression instead of birth details, and more opaque techniques of predictions, its overall appearance is astrological and therefore a kind of dismissive approach towards Nāḍī Astrology by astrologers like B. V. Raman and scholar like Gansten was not justified. During the research process, many people were interviewed for different purposes, but especially Gansten and Guenzi to get their updated opinion on *karman* theory. Unfortunately, they had nothing much to add on Nāḍī Astrology.

In fact, one of the academic agenda of conducting this research was to reopen the mysterious predictive system of Nāḍī Astrology for the future research scholars. As mentioned, only academic scholarship available on the title of Nāḍī Astrology is by Martin Gansten. His work is quite impressive in the sense of his relentless effort for establishing *karman* as a theoretical framework for Indian astrology, which is though contested but even Guenzi admits that both the theories of destiny are complementary. However, Gansten's research regarding Nāḍī Astrology does not serve the academic purpose. He has only presented an ethnographic account of his visits to few Nāḍī centres and concluded with an observation that this form of Nāḍī Astrology cannot be trusted and, probably based on certain kind of divination using 'inferior deities'. Gansten's research then moves to few Nāḍī-aṃśa based texts, which broadly follows the mechanism of horoscopic astrology and as pointed out in this paper, a completely different phenomenon than Nāḍī palm-leaf Astrology. As far as the allegations of using trick, some form of psychic divination or the help of inferior deities are concerned, my research did not find any basis for such dismissal of Nāḍī Astrology during the field work. In fact, various personal readings confirmed that Nāḍī Astrology works with unbelievable accuracy, especially in telling the past details, including the names of a person and his or family members. Gansten's own details revealed in Stockholm by a Nāḍī reader, after conclusion of his research, must be admitted as evidence in this regard, who still does not ready to believe in the phenomena. This paper argues in this context that just because a predictive system does not meet certain criteria of making predictions and does not appear rational and scientific like horoscopic astrology, it does not make the whole system hoax and unbelievable, as otherwise it will be the same treatment to Nāḍī Astrology which astrology in general has been receiving from Modern Science since ages. There is surely huge scope for researching the 'how' part of Nāḍī Astrology, but that will require access to all the written palm-leaves so that they can be properly documented and analysed, which does not seem possible right now considering the issues of personal rights involved and the unacademic nature of astrology in India. Nonetheless, as this research couldn't find any cogent reason to doubt the practice of Nāḍī Astrology or its predictions, this paper became more concerned about its implication on fate and freewill and on the question of determinism.

This paper has proven with many examples that Nāḍī Astrology validates the theory of *karman*. It is interesting to note that the predictive system which was rejected by the main propagator of the *karman* theory, finally approves the theory with much ease. The main argument of Guenzi against the *karman* theory was its absence in real astrological practice. But Nāḍī

Astrology not only strengthens the theoretical framework of *karman* by unequivocally and structurally accepting the impact of past-birth actions on the current birth, but it also refers *karman* for all practical purposes during Nāḍī readings to get relief from the past misdeeds. However, Nāḍī Astrology provides a more comprehensive – both rational and practical, view of *karman* by including the freewill of worship (pūjā) and śānti (planetary appeasement) in its prescription. By doing so, Nāḍī Astrology recognises the importance of planets in its causal role, and hence modifies the current *karman* theory for a more holistic and accommodative theory explaining astrology, which this research referred as Neo-karman theory. This paper has argued that Neo-karman theory is needed for not only as a theoretical framework of astrology, but also to provide more decisive power to freewill against fate. While doing so, this paper has explained that how Nāḍī readings only predict the fate part of determinism and leaves a huge scope for freewill actions, especially taken in 'force quit' mode, which Nāḍī Astrology often fails to predict or allow the individual to play with fate. I have argued here that Nāḍī cosmology presents a strong case for the possibility of 'multiple fates' as there are multiple leaves containing multiple courses of fates available for a single individual. In this way, under Neo-karman theory the power of choosing one of the fates lies with the individual's freewill, though result of which might not be always good.

The research has tried to give an equal status to rituals vis-à-vis *karman* in the academic discourses of astrology. It is true, as argued by Gansten, that *karman* provided a philosophical tool for Hellenistic astrology to be accommodated in the Hindu religious way of life in India. However, one fact he did not recognise that the practice of rituals was also very well integrated with the *nakshatra* based astrology and precedes the development of both *karman* and horoscopic astrology in India, even from the times of Atharvaveda, as Geslani has shown in his work. Therefore, ancient astrological treatises including the works of Varāhamihira and Parashar refer more to ritualistic relief in encountering fate than the theory of *karman*. This paper then showed that it is again the Nāḍī Astrology which gives equal importance to rituals, and in fact allow the tools of worship (pūjā) and śānti (planetary appeasement) for cleansing the karmic residues of the latent fates.

Lastly, this paper has also presented an alternative model for understanding fate and freewill in answering the question of determinism. Nāḍī Astrology hints towards a hypothetical clue that fate and freewill should not treated as two modes of being, but fate, which is nothing, but karmic residue created by freewill actions in the last births, can be seen as a line on which there

exist many freewill action points. In this way, they are not two separate courses of life, but a single thing separated by the experiences of current and past lives.

To sum up, this research answers the question of determinism in both yes and no – ‘yes’, because fate determines the course of life, and ‘no’, because there always exists a chance for freewill to activate another fate, determining another course of life.

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Yäjïavalkyasmåti

8. APPENDICES

8.1 Journeying Nāḍī Cosmology with a 'toy-cart': Performing eidetic intuition

Prologue

After completing my field research and during writing this research paper, I encountered a hierophanic interruption in the first week of December 2021, when suddenly I realised the need of visiting the *Navagraha* temples situated in and around Kumbakonam, Tamilnadu. Though I had visited few of these and other sacred temples during my earlier visits, mostly on the prescriptions of Nāḍī *śānti* chapter, but this time I had a strong urge to visit the temples on my own in the order of days governed by the planets, for example, the temple dedicated to Sun on Sunday and the Moon temple on Monday and so on. I kept a written and visual journal for the journey for observing the rituals, examining the sacredness of the place, identifying the astrological elements and interviewing the priests and worshippers. While doing so I was in the dual role of *homo religiosus,* and an academic researcher who was conscious of performing eidetic intuition. Though the words cannot exactly define neither the phenomena not the experiences, an effort is being made to describe the manifestation of sacred.

Wednesday, 8 December 2021

Flight journey started in the afternoon (3 pm) from Patna. I was accompanied by one friend. Reached Chennai at 6 pm in the evening and then Kumbakonam at midnight 1 am. Our taxi driver Sangili received us who was also going to be our guide in this trip. All through the journey I thought mostly about my dissertation research and its structure. There was also a strong astrological thread of analysis and intuition related to Jupiter's transit through the 4th house of my Sidereal horoscope. Big changes happened in my life in 1986, 1998, 2010, so what is stored there in 2022? It was very late in midnight when we reached at the place of our stay – a beautiful resort situated in green woods near sacred Kaveri River. I planned for the next day visit to the temple of Jupiter and one Thyagaraja Shiva Temple. Thyagaraja in the morning and Jupiter in evening. There is a traditional timing system in Southern Indian temples which are open to *darshan* (sighting of deity and related rituals) only in the morning generally from Sunrise (5-6 am) to 11-12 pm and then again in the afternoon from 4 pm to 9 pm. The idea was to visit as many as temples during our seven days stay.

Thursday, 9 December 2021

We couldn't start in the morning due to the extreme tiredness. So, Thyagaraja plan got dropped. We started at 3 pm. It was a beautiful sunny day. My journey of experiencing the sacred and observing the interplay of fate and freewill begun. Kumbakonam and its surrounding is very green and exotic. Rural people seem nice. Google map failed, so Sangili had to ask villagers to reach Alangudi where the *Guru* (Jupiter) temple is situated. While they were helping us in reaching our destination, I thought with a smile that in ethnographic study we will reach nowhere unless we trust people more than technology, and as Kristensen argues in phenomenology that 'believers are always right'.[171]

We reached Apatsahayesvarar Temple at Alangudi at 4 pm, which is also known as *Guru Sthalam* (the place of Jupiter) or *Tiru Irum Poolai*. Here Lord Shiva is worshipped as *Apathsahyesvarar* and his consort Goddess Parvati as *Elavarkuzhali*. The planet Guru (Jupiter) is worshipped as a deity of *Dakshinamurthy*. There was moderate crowd despite it being Thursday. I bought worship offerings which were mostly signifying the planet Jupiter – yellow flowers, yellow piece of cloth, *ghee* (refined butter), yellow gram seeds, three (the number of Jupiter) *dipam*, Guru's photo and Guru *yantra* (talisman). Went inside the temple, offered prayers to God, Goddess and Guru. The deity of Guru as *Dakshinamurthy* was in its typical crossed leg sitting posture in which left leg is kept on the right leg. He was gracefully decorated by yellow flowers and yellow cloths and there was also a yellow lemon garland. The holy priest took offering materials from me, asked name and birth *nakshatra*, and performed pūjā while breaking coconut before the deity. While coming out of *sanctum sanctorum* I also worshipped the *Navagraha* deities, all wrapped in colour they rule. Later I lightened the three clay-lamps and bought prasadam which also contained special yellow sweets. Then I talked to a newlywed couple Deepa and Swaminathan visiting the temple with family to take blessings of *Guru Bhagwan* (God). One manager of the temple Sateesh informed me that people come here generally for marriage, children, prosperity and overall happiness. Then I approached one old couple in the temple premises and interviewed them. Jaya (58), a housewife, told me that she came here to pray for removal of her recently developed health problem related to kidney. She was convinced that her problem will vanish as happened many times before during her 24 years of visiting experience in this temple. Her husband Mohanraj (58), an engineer, is a non-believer but respects Jaya's belief. They both agreed that whenever they or their family visited the

[171] Kristensen, *The Meaning of Religion*, p. 13.

temple, they got benefits including a prosperous career for their son-in-law. Jaya visits the temple very often, always on Thursday, and comes with the offering of home-made sweet dish (*pongal*) for *Guru Bhagwan*. But she doesn't come on any astrological advice but only following a traditional belief. After an enjoyable interview, finally, when I was leaving the temple premises, a very young girl came and insisted on buying the local astrological ephemeris having the front cover of Lord *Dakshinamurthy*. I simply bought it without understanding a single word written in it. Thus, the visit ended, and we returned to our resort. It was a very late evening, and I could sight planets Jupiter and Venus on the southern sky. For the next day, I again planned for Thyagaraja temple in the morning and Venus temple in the evening.

Friday, 10 December 2021

Again, I woke up late and missed the chance of visiting Thyagaraja temple. We could leave our resort only at 3.15 pm for the *Shukra* (Venus) temple situated at Kanjanur. It was again a bright sunny afternoon. We reached the temple in just few minutes. This temple is named Agniswarar Temple as Lord Shiva is worshipped here *Agniswarar*. His consort Parvathi here is *Karpagambigai*. Surprisingly, the temple had very simple architecture and low-key infrastructure, nowhere near to the attractiveness expected from a Venusian set-up. Nevertheless, I bought offerings which were all signifying Venusian elements – white and pink flowers, white piece of cloth, white seeds, and obviously coconut. Temple was scheduled to be opened at 4 pm and devotees were waiting outside the closed door. I started interaction with the devotees about what prompted them to visit Venus temple. While Dahantauythapani (38) came for praying for his own marriage and Manjula (39) for her family member's marriage, both following the advice of their astrologers, three friends Tirumalaraju, Mohan and Sridhar, all in their fifties, planned the visit on their own knowledge that praying Shukran (Venus) will give money and prosperity.

After entering in the temple, though the decoration was matching the beauty, aesthetics and grandeur usually attributed to the planet Venus, one could feel a strong aura and energetic vibration. The holy priest took my offerings and from other devotees, completed the pūjā and returned the broken coconut along with other materials. The deity of Venus, accompanied by his wife, was quite small but attractive. I lit the clay-lamps in front of them. Then I also offered prayers to God and Goddess and came out in the courtyard of the temple where devotees were randomly sitting. I approached one young couple Durgadevi and Karthik, in their late twenties,

for interview. Both came here for the first time on the advice of their astrologer as their Venus dasha (planetary cycle) was running and they wanted a baby. They had also visited the Mercuty and Rahu-Ketu temples for removal of afflictions. I also interviewed a young urban couple from Chennai – Ravishankar, who was a doctor and his wife Gayatri. They come to Kumbakonam frequently since last five years and visit temples of Venus, Jupiter and Saturn based on their own knowledge and experience. They felt a lot of benefit from the visits. Finally, before completing the temple visit, one senior holy priest Veluswamy, in his late fifties, told me the history and significance of the temple. He showed me the deity of Guru as *Dakshinamurthy* at the back side of the temple and talked about its rare posture. He also told me about the rare presence of three deities of Saturn in this Venus temple, which is not even the case in Saturn temple. Veluswamy claimed that this is the most powerful temple among all Navagraha temples as far as power, prosperity and fulfilment of wishes are concerned. Regarding the Jupiterian and Saturnian presence in the temple, I did not find it astrologically contradictory as Venus feels happy and gets exalted in Jupiter ruled Pisces and Saturn feels comfort and gets exalted in Venus ruled Libra. Venus is also the 'guru' of demons in Indian tradition as Jupiter is the 'guru' of gods. With this observation, I returned while thinking that in the first two days of my visit, I prayed to the two most benefic planets, both 'guru' and both currently being observed in the southern sky close together. Later I also realised that Jupiter is the ascendant lord and Venus is the *nakshatra* lord in my horoscope, and currently I am having Jupiter period under Vimshottari dasha and Venus period under Moola dasha.

Saturday, 11 December 2021

Saturday was going to be a hectic day. As there are only seven days in a week, I had to take a call regarding Rahu (North Node) and Ketu (South Node), two shadowy but very important planets in Indian astrology. After much deliberation, I followed the classic Parashar model of Indian astrology where the dictum is 'Rahu acts like Saturn and Ketu as Mars' and Parashar has also assigned the two nodes lordship of Saturnian (Aquarius) and Martian (Scorpio) signs respectively. So, I decided to visit Rahu temple too on Saturday. Fortunately, Saturn temple, which is in Tirunallar (Karaikal), Puducherry State and thus the only temple situated 'outside' the *Navagraha* grid of temples in Tamilnadu State, opens for full day on Saturday, clearly indicating the demand-supply chain as Saturn, which is considered as the most dreaded alongside Rahu in Indian astrology, gets most appeasement in any part of India on its ruling day.

With the intention of covering two temples in a day, the journey begun at 12:30 pm. It was a hot sunny day. From the beginning itself I started to feel the Saturnian and Rahuvian impact. The road route was under construction at several places with full of stone chips and black concrete making the journey bumpy. Two-three times we lost our ways. First time in the trip we stopped at a railway crossing for making way for a blue goods train. Also, first time I had to talk to a known person on phone during temple visits, who was admitted in a hospital for old age-related problems and who has Saturn exalted in 8th house and Rahu in 10th house midheaven place in his horoscope. Now I am realising that I also have Saturn and Rahu in 8th and 10th houses respectively in my horoscope. As we were approaching the Saturn temple, our driver Sangili got a little bit concerned that he had not taken permit for entering in a different state and the vehicle can be stopped for breaking the law. I told him not to worry and as it happened there were no checking at the border posts. We entered the temple premises with a side gate where I bought the offering materials such as blue flowers, black cloth, black gram seeds, etc, from an old lady, all indicating Saturnian elements. While entering temple there was a striking feeling of sluggishness and negativity. Also, first time in this trip, we were not allowed to take our camera inside. Even inside the temple, there were a lot of restriction and barricades all over the place. Despite being Saturday, there was moderate crowd probably because of COVID effect. I first prayed to Lord Shiva (*Dharbaranyeswarar*), then Saturn and then the goddess (*Praneswari)*. The holy priest did the usual ritual and returned the offering with a blue garland. After completing pūjā, I first talked to a very young newlywed couple – a boy and a girl in their early twenties - and enquired why they have come to a Saturn temple after marriage. The girl replied that this because their parents asked them to do so, not any astrologer. Obviously, rituals, traditions and faith sometimes overpower the astrological advice as Saturn temple would not be generally prescribed by any astrologer in India for the success of marriage. I then met with a group of Ayappan devotees who were all wearing black cloths and were visiting the temple as a routine annual affair. I interviewed their leader Murugeshan (37) who had been visiting the temple since last 13 years. He told me that he was doing it because of his religious belief and not on the advice of any astrologer. He was also accompanied by his son Ishwaran (10) because he had problems in having a child and then he promised to God that he will visit temples along with his future child for three continuous years if he gets one. Murugeshan, in the capacity of a religious leader, also told me that he believes both in fate decided by God and human freewill. Before leaving the temple premises, this time exiting though the main gate, I interviewed a young couple running a flower shop. The shop owners Babitha (31) and Pashupathi (31), married for six years. informed that people visit this

temple in a large number on Saturdays and they mostly come here on the advice of astrologers and also after getting information nowadays on Television about grahashanti. Pashupathi is a devotee and performs pūjā everyday in the temple whereas Babitha is a non-believer. It was surprising for me that a young girl who everyday observes thousands of people trying to appease God, didn't believe in God or in fate. She told me if there would have been any God, why people would suffer from poverty and misery? The young girl also claimed that if she has big money in future, she will distribute it among poor. After listening the Saturnian ideas of a non-believer girl, we returned from Saturn temple at 4 pm.

While returning on the way to Tamilnadu for Rahu's temple, the moment I was thinking about Babitha's Saturnian challenge to God's omnipotence, our vehicle stopped just few meters before the border by Puducherry police and Sangili cursed his fortune by saying that 'every time I don't take permit, I get caught'. Finally, he got punished and he had to bribe the two policemen before proceeding ahead. I thought that the planet of discipline and law Saturn got Sangili punished, and the law-breaking planet Rahu saved him with a bribe. I also wondered that as the policemen have broken the law and took bribe resulting in their financial gain, what will be the punishment for them?

At the end of the day, we reached to Rahu temple at Tirunageswaram. Here Lord Shiva is worshipped as *Naganathar* (lord of snakes) and his consort Parvathi as *Piraisoodi Gujambigai*. The temple was the biggest and most organised of the temples we visited till date. It had a grand outlook. While entering the temple, we encountered some transgender persons asking for money. I bought the offering for Rahu – blue flowers, blue cloth and black beans along with coconut. When we reached, the auspicious bath of the deity of Rahu was scheduled to start at 5:30 pm. We witnessed the sacred abhishekam (bathing). A huge blue curtain was first removed from the front of deities and bathing ritual got started by the holy priests. First there was pouring of water of the deities of Rahu and his two wives (Nagavalli in right and Nagakanni in left), then came milk, then again water, then mixed of panchamrita (mixed dry fruits, refined butter and other fragnances), then again water, then turmeric mixed milk, then again water, and lastly the deity was again bathed by milk. While pouring of milk was normal on the other two female deities, but it turned out be blue when pouring down from the main deity of Rahu. After the bathing process, the blue curtain was again brought back. Few minutes later when the curtain was finally removed for the *darshan* (sighting) of well decorated deities – with yellow creams and bright blue uniform. This sighting of the whole ritualistic process

was a divine experience. I thought at Rahu is in the 10th midheaven house of my horoscope, I got this heavenly experience. I prayed to Rahu with all my spiritual dedication and prayed for affliction removal if there is any. We also prayed before the God and Goddess and left the *sanctum sanctorum*. After coming out of the pūjā, I again regained my researcher role and interviewed a priest named Senthil (47). He told me that Rahu is the king of snakes and people come here for the removal of sarpa dosham (snake affliction) caused by bad position of Rahu in the horoscope either on the advice of astrologers or on their own. Senthil didn't follow the Parashar's model of Saturn-Rahu and Mars-Ketu equivalence and informed me that Rahu acts on its own and not a single day but every day is assigned to Rahu, therefore there is tradition of observing *Rahu Kalam* (time of Rahu – a time-period of 1-2 hours every day). After Senthil, I also talked to an old devotee couple – Vasubhi (57) and Venkatachalam (65). Vasubhi said that they often visited the temple and felt the benefits especially after milk abhishekam. She also told me with a smile that they are not interested in astrology but only in God. This conversation completed my Rahu temple visit except when I came out of the temple I lit 21 clay-lamps in the honour of Rahu.

Sunday, 12 December 2021

At last, I got a chance to visit Tyagaraja temple on a Sunday. Google timings showed that the temple was open full day. I was determined to visit this temple at any cost as this temple is believed to be the place where the *Navagraha* worshipped Lord Thyagaraja (Shiva) after getting relief from the curse of the Creator God Brahma who punished them for giving boons to humans and sent them to wander on Earth. Lord Shiva restored their power, offered them divinity and allowed their power to give boons to people who appease them. So, with a happy mind I started for Thyagaraja temple, Thiruvarur at 1:40 pm from our place. However, to my surprise when we reached there at 2:40 pm, the temple was closed like other temples, and we were not allowed to enter inside. We could only roam around the temple premises, saw two horses in a stable – very unusual for a temple, and went up to the pillar of a huge Sun Dial. As I had to visit Sun temple also, so we returned without waiting for the opening of the temple. Only ritual I could do at the place was cleaning my hands in the sacred water tank while considering the placement of planets in my palms. I just prayed that if there is any curse following my planets, let it be removed by Lord Shiva. While returning, I was wondering whether I was just destined to visit this temple to see a Sun Dial on a Sunday, or this is destined that in this trip I will be able to only visit *Navagraha* temples? And the two horses? My friend

has *Ashwini nakshatra* literally meaning 'a pair of horses' and we both have Sagittarius ascendant rising in our horoscopes.

Pondering over these hierophanies, we reached the Sun temple at Suryanar Kovil at 4:30 pm. Even the king of planets didn't get a grand temple and the whole temple premises looked very ordinary. I bought offering objects such as white flowers, while cloth with red and yellow borders (signifying Sunrise and Sunset), wheat grain and coconut. Also, one lady shopkeeper gave us two lotus flower – one whitish yellow of Jupiter and another red for Sun. Before we could enter the temple, one young person came to us and offered his services as guide. We accepted his offer after slight hesitation. His name was Lenin. We entered the temple premises, first lit 10 clay-lamps and put them on wheat grain at a designated stand, and then proceeded for worship. This temple did not have the shrines of Lord Shiva and Parvathi, but only of the planets and the shrine of Sun is the main *sanctum sanctorum* where the deity of Sun is placed in centre accompanied by his two wives Usha (light, morning) and Chhaya (reflection, evening). I appropriately remembered the very first verse of Varāhamihira's Brihat Jataka in which he worshipped Sun as the main god and informed that Sun is one of the eight forms of Lord Rudra (Shiva). The other peculiar thing about the temple is that there is no separate shrine for Jupiter like other planets, but Jupiter as Dakshinamurthy was placed in praying form in front of the deity of Sun, for whom the flower lady had given the yellowish white lotus. Only explanation possible for this phenomenon can be seen as the positioning of two most important planets of astrology in which the central position of Sun is highlighted by making him worshipped by the biggest planet of the solar system. This temple is the oldest of all Navagraha temples, which is also clearly the first physical evidence of planetary worship. Moreover, the main deity of Sun is not facing east direction but west, the direction of Sunset. After completing the rituals at all the planetary shrines, I interviewed Lenin and one holy priest. Lenin, who is serving in the temple since last eight years, informed me that the poor maintenance of the temple is because of lack of funding, and recently the renovation work has started. He confirmed that people come here mostly on the recommendations of Nāḍī readers, but many also come on their own knowing the popularity of the temple. Shivaguru (33), a young priest, also reconfirmed the recommendations of Nāḍī readings as the main reason of people coming at this place. When I asked which planet he worships more, his answer was astonishing – Saturn, because it's a planet of justice. It was an interesting answer in a temple of Father Sun in which his arch-rival son Saturn was worshipped more by a holy priest. Also, meeting a young boy named Lenin could only be possible in the Sun temple, because it was the famous

Lenin of Russia who had his Sun in deep exaltation in his Sidereal horoscope. Finally, we returned to our place, however, did not forget to collect white laddoos (sweets) made of rice from the temple, as blessings of Sun god.

Monday, 13 December 2021

After returning from Suryanar Kovil, I again planned two temple visits for Monday – one obviously the Moon temple and another named Mahalingeswarar temple, suggested by one of my Tamil friends. In fact, I was planning for Mahalingeswarar too from very first day as I read somewhere that there exist 27 Shiva lingam for 27 nakshatras. However, when I was planning to start for Mahalingeswarar, my friend called and told that 'if you are visiting the Moon temple today, situated in Thingalur, then you can go to Thanjavur to meet Mr. J. Ganeshan', the *Jīvā* Nāḍī reader whom I planned to meet in this trip. So, I suddenly dropped the plan and went straight to Thanjavur in search of Ganeshan while deciding that I would cover Mahalingeswarar late in the evening as the temple closure timing is 11 pm . After much effort, we could locate the house of Ganeshan. But the moment we reached there and expressed our intention of meeting Ganeshan, one person came out and told that Ganeshan is not available for doing the reading or any interview as he has stopped meeting people because of COVID pandemic. I felt completely gutted and started thinking about returning. But suddenly the person changed his heart and invited us inside the house. We started talking and I requested him to give interview in place of Ganeshan. Mr. Rajaram agreed and gave valuable information about the *Jīvā* Nāḍī readings. As our discussion progressed, he became more generous and even asked us to see the *Jīvā* Nāḍī leaf bundle kept at a sacred place. He also asked us to take the blessings of Sage Agastya. Rajaram later told us while we were returning that he did not know why he did all such helpful things and probably he was only obeying the directions of Sage Agastya. He later gave the correct phone number of Ganeshan on which I could take his interview later. The whole experience of visiting the place, sitting in front of *Jīvā* Nāḍī bundle and praying to Sage Agastya was just divine, which cannot be expressed in words.

We left for the Moon (Chandiranaar) temple in the late afternoon and scheduled to reach there before the sunset. However, something else was destined. We lost our way by a big margin and became late for more than an hour. When we reached the temple, crossing through wet and watery farmlands, it was complete darkness, while the Moon was just climbing above our head in the sky. We bought offerings outside the temple – white flower, white cloth and coconut. This temple was also appeared to be very old and in a delipidated condition. I thought if Sun

is God and Moon is Goddess, then this place definitely did not suit the beauty and grandeur of Goddess, and therefore needed renovation. Still there was a lively vibration in the temple. Lord Shiva is worshipped here as *Kailasanathar* and his consort Parvathi as *Periyanayaki*. Interestingly, this temple also comprises a shrine of Sun near to Moon shrine, probably acknowledging the fact that Sun is the source of Moon's light. No other *Navagraha* temple has Sun as a separate shrine. Nonetheless, I offered pūjā and visited the whole temple premises. I also observed that this was the only temple where the deity of Dakshinamurthy (Guru) had both legs folded in yoga position unlike other places where he has only one leg folded. Why? Because Jupiter (Guru) gets exalted in the sign of Cancer ruled by Moon? I interviewed few devotees. A lady Shivshankasi (38) said that she came here following the advice of an astrologer for śānti regarding her *nakshatra*. Her daughter Jalashri (12) told that she was praying for good studies. Arun Kumar (37) was a frequent visitor who comes for mental piece and positive mindset as Moon is the lord of mind. The holy priest of temple Karthikeya (37) confirmed that people generally come here on the advice of astrologers and Nāḍī readings according to their birth *nakshatra*, which is identified based on Moon's *nakshatra* position at birth. However, local villagers also come often for praying and the temple is famous for first rice feeding to infant children. We left the temple after meeting two very young and beautiful girls who were praying for jnanam (knowledge) named Bavina and Harshita studying in the 3rd and 5th grades respectively. However, this time too, I could not go to Mahalingeswarar temple and postponed it for another day.

Tuesday, 14 December 2021

Tuesday was again going to be a hectic day, as three items needed to be covered – two temples of Mars and Ketu, and the Nāḍī readings at Vaitheeswaran Koil where the Mars temple is situated. Therefore, the plan was to start early in the morning at 8 am to first visit the Mars temple, then Nāḍī readings from 10 am and then Ketu temple in the late afternoon at 4 pm. However, something really strange happened in the morning. When I got up at 7 am to be ready for the visit, I was told by the resort management that water connection was suddenly broken, and it will take the whole day for repairing and at least 2-3 hours for alternative arrangement. Though it was a frustrating time, I understood that the destiny has some other plans. By now in this trip, it had become very clear to me that we were destined to visit all the temples in the afternoon session only. So, I made peace with myself, waited for the alternative arrangement and started from the resort at 10:15 am for Vaitheeswaran Koil. We decided to first visit the Nāḍī readings centres - Śiva Nāḍī and Vasiṣṭha Nāḍī.

We arrived at Śiva Nāḍī centre at 11:15 am and gave our thumb impressions at 11:35 am. However, after few elimination rounds, Elamaran, a Nāḍī reader known to me from earlier visits, told me that our leaves could not be discovered as hundreds of bundles were sent to Thanjavur for oil cleaning and washing. I got really frustrated because it was the first occasion in my 10 years experiences with Nāḍī readings that my leaf was not there. However, after revoking the research mode, I interviewed Elamaran again and he repeated the same information that their centre had more than 100 thousand leaf bundles, there are 18 types of Nāḍī systems, there are 108 types of thumb prints and almost 70-80% people get their leaves. With heavy heart we left the place and directly went to the other centre of Vasiṣṭha Nāḍī. This centre is also a famous one and I got my readings from here in 2019. However, when we reached there, the manager of the centre asked for the name and date of birth. I was surprised. I told him that last time those details were not asked, and we are not ready to supply the details. He refused to procced further without the details and it left no choice to us but to leave the centre. We got really frustrated. But Sangili, our cab driver, asked me to explore other centres. As most of the centres there are unauthentic, so I was not much interested but he said that we should explore one or two. We stopped at a centre. The place was not looking very promising, though I was also prepared for another disappointment. But again, strange thing happened. The Nāḍī reader immediately revealed my name and my parent's name. Still, somehow, I was not much impressed. But then again, my friend also got the name and other details correct. So, we decided to proceed further and asked for the General Chapter reading, though the reader was requesting for the full reading. The reader asked us to wait and went to library to get the full reading leaves and came back in few minutes with Vasiṣṭha Nāḍī leaves. My overall reading was mostly on the same line as the previous readings. Same political, spiritual and other stuffs. We felt satisfied and later also paid for special pūjā for my friend. One strange thing again happened. While reading my friend's Nāḍī leaf, the reader said that Sage Vasiṣṭha was asking for visiting the Mahalingeswarar temple for worshiping Lord Shiva. It was an astonishing prescription and we believed that it was nothing destiny that we have to definitely visit that temple, which we were planning for so many days.

After completing the task of Nāḍī readings, we moved towards the Mars temple which was just few meters away from the Nāḍī centre. I purchased offerings from a mid-aged lady – reddish pinkish flowers, red cloth, horse gram – all the Martian elements, and obviously coconuts. I also took one special red roses garland for the goddess. The temple has a huge infrastructure,

and it was looking very beautiful also because *kumbabhishekam* (a process of renovation of temple) was done recently. Before we could enter inside the sanctum sanctorum, we saw a big number of women cladding with red *sarees* coming out of the temple. Clearly, Tuesday is considered as special day for the goddess. After entering the temple, we first visited the Mars shrine. Mars shrine was guarded by the clay idols of two big red goats indicating Maritan rulership of Aries. Interestingly, there was no symbol of Scorpio in the temple, so I questioned to myself – who governs Scorpio then? Ketu? Anyway, pūjā went well, the holy priest asked our names and nakshatras, completed the ritual, gave us garlands and broken coconuts, and then we proceeded for prayers before Lord Shiva (*Vaitheeswaran*) and his consort Parvathi (*Thayyal Nayagi*). There exists another Mars shrine at the left side of Lord Shiva's place where the deity of Mars is made of brass metal in contrast to the black stone of other shrine. Priests call the metal Mars as *Uttama Mangal* (Best/Exalted Mars) and the stone Mars as *Moola Mangal* (Original/Root Mars). We also worshipped at the shrine of Lord Murugan, the elder son of Lord Shiva and Parvathi, who is also considered to rule the Mars. As Lord Shiva here worshiped as a healer (*Vaidya*), the temple is famous for healing process especially from skin diseases for which people immerse jaggery in the temple tank. Before coming out of temple, I interviewed one young holy priest Sabrinathan (28), who informed me that *nāḍī* examination under Ayurveda started at this temple, therefore this place was earlier famous for *nāḍī* readings for healing purposes, which later got astrological character once Nāḍī leaves were brought to this place by some families. He also confirmed that many devotees come here after counselling the Nāḍī astrologers or general astrologers for mainly removing the *Mangal Dosham* (Mars afflictions) in their horoscopes. His statement got reconfirmed when I briefly interviewed a family of Bengaluru visiting the temple – Manjula (58), Maruti (33), Harshita (24) and Chandni (20). Maruti explained that he was suffering from mental anxiety or some mysterious disease which medical doctors could not diagnosed, so his astrologer told him to visit the Mars and Ketu temples after reading his horoscope and further advised to spend a night at Vaitheeswaran Koil.

At the end of the day, we finally progressed our journey towards Ketu temple located at Keezhaperumpallam. The whole route was covered through very narrow and circular roads which could be visualised a snake like turns. It was quite dark and while reaching to the temple site I could observed many elements related to Ketu such as a black cat with sparkling eyes, black goats and many dogs in the temple premises. There was also a giant old Peepal tree, a tree which represents jnana and moksha in Indian tradition just like Ketu. It seemed that the

temple architecture and infrastructure was also following the jnana tradition and it was very simple and ordinary looking. I bought pūjā offerings – flowers, black-green cloth, green gram, coconut – and entered the temple. Here Lord Shiva is worshipped as *Naganatha Swamy* and his consort Parvathi as *Sowndara Nayagi*. A cute idol of their son Lord Ganesha, the god representing Ketu, was placed in from of their *sanctum sanctorum*. We worshipped God and Goddess and proceeded to Ketu shrine where the holy priest took our offerings, asked our names and *nakshatras* and completed the ritual. We also lit seven black clay-lamps given to us by the temple management on an aluminium plate. Both the number 7 and aluminium are believed to be ruled by Ketu. After completing the rituals, I took interview of the main holy priest Kartikeyan (46). He informed that people come here on the advice of both general and Nāḍī astrologers mainly for marriage, children and for removing sarpa dosham (the affliction of snake in the horoscope caused by Ketu). Kartikeyan explained that Ketu represents knowledge (*jnana*), memory and past birth, therefore devotees here ask for removal of past birth sins and good studies. He ruled out that Ketu has anything related to Mars and stated that all days belong to Ketu. Before moving out of temple, we also took seven prakraman (revolving around) of Lord Ganesha and the whole *sanctum sanctorum* on the advice of Kartikeyan which he gave us after knowing the fact that my friend's birth nakshatra was Ashwini, ruled by Ketu, and even the day was ruled by Ashwini. Then we started our return journey to the resort despite Sangili's insistence that Mercury temple was nearby, and we could visit the same for time saving. I said no and told him that Mercury means Wednesday.

Wednesday, 14 December 2021

This was our last day of temple visit programme and last day at Kumbakonam. So, we checked out of the resort and started for Mahalingeswarar temple at 2:30 pm. The idea was to visit this long pending temple first and then Mercury temple from where there was a shorter route for returning Chennai. It was a bright, sunny but pleasant afternoon. We were feeling emotional after leaving the place where we stayed. It was a very beautiful location with excellent facilities. Before I could gather my emotions, we reached the Mahalingeswarar temple in just five minutes. I was surprised. The temple which was eluding us for so many days was just few minutes away from us. But we also get shocked to know that the temple was closed despite the Google timing showing the temple opened for full day. We had two options, either to wait till 4 pm or to move forward for Mercury temple which was 60 km away from there. Sangili proposed to finish this work first. However, we decided against it and asked him to take away to Mercury temple. We wanted to follow the path of destiny.

We reached the Budhan (Mercury) temple at 4 pm. I purchased offerings from a young lady named Kaushalya – flowers, green cloth, green seeds, and oil for clay-lamps (not *ghee*). Once we entered temple, I found its premises not only beautiful but a huge one, in fact the largest among all the *Navagraha* temples – filled with large water tanks, big trees and many buildings. I wondered about the paradox – largest infrastructure for the smallest planet of the solar system! Everything in the premises was reflecting the shade of green colour representing the element of Mercury. First, I offered pūjā before Lord Shiva (*Swetharanyeswarar*) and his consort Parvathi (*Brahmavidyambigai*) and then Aghoramurthi, standing idol form of Lord Shiva, only found in this temple. Lastly, we came to the shrine of Budhan (Mercury), a separate temple here. We lit five clay-lamps first and then gave our offerings to the holy priest. Pūjā was wonderful and divine. We also throwed rice flakes into water tank for fishes and also gave some to many puppies roaming around. There were a lot of Lord Ganesha idols in the campus, and we worshipped all of them. Before leaving the temple premises, I interviewed one holy priest Ramanathan (35) and a shopkeeper Śankara (33). Ramanathan told the history of the temple and stated that the temple is compared with the Kashi Vishwanath temple of Banaras. He confirmed that people come here mainly on the advice of Nāḍī readings for children, education, business and studies. I queried about the Nandi (bull) with a diverted face in front of Goddess and he explained that this was because Nandi is waiting on behalf of Goddess Parvathi that if Lord Shiva is coming or not from other side. Ramanathan believed that fate cannot be permanently changed we can protect us from its impact. Śankara explained the logic of three - this is the only Navagraha temple in which there are three water ponds, three sacred trees, three Shiva and three Goddess. He also added that apart from other things, devotees also come here for good health, particularly mental health. Śankara was selling gemstones and gem idols in his shop. We purchased one Jade Shiva lingam and two idols of Lord Ganesha – one green Onyx and another white Opal.

After coming out of temple premises, we stopped for the South Indian filter coffee near Kaushalya's flower shop. I noticed that few young boys in white cloth and appearing as Vedic students were curiously looking towards us from a building premises, most likely a monastery. I finished my coffee and approached them for talking. Visharad (17) started talking enthusiastically and soon many others joined the conversation – Satyanarayan (22), Abhishek (19), Sridhara (12) and Manibhuwan (9). Visharad told me that the monastery belongs to *Kanchi Śankaracharya Peetha*, and they were studying there the Krishna Yajurveda.

Apparently, they were not attending any regular school, and this was the specialised study they had to follow in their life. I asked them about the purpose of the study and Visharad replied that they will become priests and scholars and perform rituals and yajna at temples or households. Visharad insisted that I should the temple located in the monastery. I told him that it was becoming late. But where I was going to sit in the car, he again insisted and took me with him from the side gate of monastery to the inner temple. The temple belongs to Goddess Kamakshi and all Śankaracharyas, including my spiritual guru, Adi Śankaracharya. It was both intellectually and spiritually satisfying experience, and it happened nowhere except at the temple of intellect and studies – the Budhan (Mercury) temple.

At last, we left for Mahalingeswarar temple. Again, it was more than an hour journey, to the same neighbourhood where we lived for seven days but couldn't get opportunity to meet the greatest God – Mahalingeswarar (the greatest lingam). We reached there around 8 pm and bought white and pink flowers from a lady. Interestingly, the temple was open but there was no pūjā going on as it was told that some priest died during the day. So, it was just us, few other people and God. We had to perform pūjā on our own without any middleman. It is believed that this is the temple where Lord Shiva appeared and worshipped himself, therefore this is the greatest of all lingams. Also, this is the place where Lord Shiva himself approved the monism (advaita) philosophy of the great Śankaracharya when he visited the temple and local priests opposed to his idea of Aham Brahmasmi (I am God). We performed pūjā with full dedication and then visited the hall where 27 lingams were placed – one each for 27 *nakshatras*. This was the last darshan (sighting) of our trip and it concluded a divine and blessed journey in the same woods and at the banks of the same sacred river Kaveri from where we started the journey seven days back.

Epilogue

We started our return road journey at 9 pm from Kumbakonam and reached Chennai at 2 am in the late midnight. So, it was midnight to midnight affair. All temples we visited in the afternoons and evenings, none in the morning. The entire journey was a kind of dedicated to astrology and astrological planets who are worshipped as deities. When we tried to break the norm by planning visit to some other temples, it failed. It seems that the destiny wanted us to only focus on Navagraha, and until we completed visits to all planetary abodes, we were not given entry into the realms of nakshatra at Mahalingeswarar. In all these days, everywhere we encountered sacred spaces and everywhere our profane world was interrupted by hierophanies.

We started on Thursday, ruled by Jupiter – the planet of wisdom and ended our journey on Wednesday, ruled by Mercury – the planet of intellect, and in between placed was Sunday, the day belong to the king of planets – Sun representing soul. Both the planets represent two sides of the continuum of knowledge for which this soul journey was created – either by fate or by free will. Who knows?

8.2 PERSONAL NĀḌĪ READINGS

Agastya Nāḍī Readings

First Reading (18 July 2010)

Praying to Lord Shiv, Agastya Maharishi requests that the reading be started. Maharishi is starting with the details of how your life can be enlightening.
Evidence : One round (sutru) circle (vatta) rekha, with 3 dots. This was used to identify your palm leaf
Poem recited for your identity (written in the book)
Tamil year of birth – Pingala, tamil month – Vaikashi, tamil date – 31, English date – 13/6/77. Born on Monday. Bharani star, Mesha raasi, born in a good family. Last child; Degree in Arts stream; 2 brothers, of which one is married; You are not married; Govt job; Parents alive; Name – Anupam Kumar; Father's name – Hemant; Father's occupation – cloth business; Mother's name – Asha. Age – 34;

Has the prospect of coming up as a great person in this life. Well known to the world; People will know your name; But there are some detrimental planetary effects. Some bad effects of previous life leads to failures of decisions / efforts. Married life will not be good. Even if you get married there will be disturbances and separations. Parents will be worried about this. There will be situations in the coming days for quitting job. Your talent will be wasted. Expenditure in family. Accidents due to vehicle. Enmity in workplace. Hurdles in family's prosperity. Parents' life span will decrease.
But need not be afraid of all this. There are remedies for these. In the Shanti chapter, there is description of where you were born in the previous life. In Chapter 14 there is mention of hurdles for becoming a great person and not getting blessing of God. Remedies mentioned may be done speedily. Post this there will lot of clarity.
35-36 : There will be more blessings of God and more involvement in spiritual activities. Your efforts will bear fruit. Spending on auspicious events in family. Association with good people during this time. This association will lead to reduction of conspiracies against you. Monetary difficulties will go away. Health will be good.

37-38 : There is chance for marriage. There will be a turning point in life. Will receive the love of parents. Change of work place. Increase in power. Accumulate wealth. Changes in house. Accident during travel likely. Due to remedies, it may end up as minor scratch in vehicle. Will help orphanages.
39-43 : Blessings of Guru. No monetary issues. Difficult time for father. Increase in comforts. Physical and mental boldness in work. May get property.
44-49 : Name and fame in Political field. Will result in reduction of focus in work. Will get honour and respect. Will have a political post.
50-53: Great name and fame, including political fame and important person in politics; will get involved with "Hand" symbol; will have all the necessary comforts; good relationship with brothers; threat to life from enemies; however you will have a long life; because of your hard work you will become a great person;
56-65 : Role of advisor; Blood related issues and breathing issues; But will get good treatment. Will live more than 72 years. Whatever you do not get in this life, you will get in the next life.

Second Reading (24 January 2014)

Om Sadhguruve namaha
Siva Parvatiye namaha
Agastya Durai Subbaratnam, Delhi
God prayer
This palm leaf is being read to remove the obstacles and give a bright future for the person.
Evidence:
Finger print : Vari vatta pinnal Rekha with 2 lucky dots.
Birth details : Pingala year, vaikasi month, 31st day. 13 June 1977. Monday, Bharani, Mesha, Last son of the first wife. Good character, good talent, good habits. Parents are living but separated. Mother is retired from Govt job. Has relationship only with mother now. 2 brothers, one is married. Arts degree, Govt job, tax department. Not married, but marriage is definite. Name Anupam kumar. Father – Hemant kumar. Mother – Asha Lata.
37 aged. Destined to hear now. There are some expectations. No difficulties in life hearafter. Lots of happiness in future.
There are some sins of previous life, planetary positions are all not good, and there may be confusion and lack of peace.

Need to be very careful of all belongings. Not only money, may be mobile or laptop or any document. There may be cases against you for the wrongs done by others. Because of conspiracies of others he may face difficulties. People who are angry with you may cause accidents for you in secret manner. You may do hard work but may not reap changes as desired. Delay in marriage of self and also of brother. Because of curse and sins of previous life.
To overcome these, the Shanti and Diksha chapters are given. Purpose of Shanti chapter and Diksha chapter mentioned.
37-38 : No problems. Good health, clarity and peace of mind. Left eye related problems may be there. Need to be cautious. Good changes and progress may be seen. Chances of getting married before brother. The girl will be of better talent, better character and more God-loving than you. Will have more than one degree. She will also be working in Govt related job. She will not be the last child. Will get married with her and lead a good life. All expectations will be met in life.
You should continue to work. There will be situations for leaving job, but should not leave. There will be problems due to jealousy and competition, but will pass off.
38 : Unimaginable or unexpected changes in work.
39-40 : Visit to Siva temple. Charity work – not necessarily money, can be clothes or food too. Will get darshan of great Guru. You will get peace of mind. Brothers will have a good life. There may be difference of opinion with others, it would be good to compromise. Because of the remedies there will be clarity in life. There are chances of father coming in search of you. You will have one daughter. Child will have good health. Because of wife there will be a turning point, because of daughter there will be an unexpected turning point.
40-43: Association with eminent persons. Because of your talent and hard work, will reach greater heights in job. Possibility of reaching top position such as next to CM. Others will invite you based on your talent. There will be hurdles and confusions in between, but because of your thoughts, it will resolve. There will be changes. There wont be any lack of money. Whatever work is done, it would be good to consult wife and do. Everyone will know your name. You will be associated with politicians and they will support you in a hidden manner. Family life will also be good.

44-47 : During sleep will get blessings of parents and eminent Gurus. Heat and breathing related health issues. Wont cause much trouble. Exercise essential. Wife will continue to work. She will work in consultancy or teaching line. There will be expenditure for good causes.

Possibility of acquiring property. Will get back all lost wealth. However should not sign as guarantor or witness.

48-50 : Will be in a big position. Will leave the job and join politics. There will be a change in political set up and you will be a part of the new set up. There wont be any dearth of name and fame. Minimum you will be an MLA. Child will study well, arts related interest, will be unique. Name and fame due to the child. Even if your are involved in politics, you will ensure that family is well taken care of. You will meet some eminent and noble person.

50-56 : Your brothers will also live a good life like you. Will have a prestigious post in politics. Example – Head of a political party or advisor to the party head. Wife will be supporting all this.

57-65 : Will support wife and child. You will complete all the tasks that you want to do. Age related issues will come and go. Nature will support your life. You will have the blessings of parents as well as family deity. You will live a life of happiness that others will admire. Will live for more than 70 years.

Śiva Nāḍī Readings

First Reading (24 July 2015)

Sri Mahaganapathi thunai, Om Namo Narayana

Sri Kausika Agastya Maha Siva Naadi jyothida Nilayam

24/7/2015

Starts with Prayer. Explains meaning of Naadi jyothidam. Something which is already written in palm leaf. Naadi means seeking. Written by siddar and 7 rishis. The siddhas had the power of seeing all 3 kaalam

This is Siva vaakiya naadi. This is what was discussed by Lord Shiva and Lord Parvati.

Current persons in the organisation belong to the 4th generation. Palm leaf received from Saraboji Maharaj, by ancestors. This is the copy of the original palm leaf.

Does everyone get their leaf?

Can everyone read the leaf?

If everyone reads it will the things mentioned in the leaf become true?

This can't be said

Whoever has the blessings of Lord Siva and Lord Parvati only they will get their leaf.
Lord Parvati says all beings in this world are our children and we are their parents, and asks Lord Siva to give the details of the life of this beloved son, what are the good things in his life, what will be his achievements, what will be the hurdles and how to overcome them, how will his health be, etc.

Lord Siva starts saying
Evidence :
3 types of evidence –
1. The finger print
2. Date of birth
3. Current situation
First evidence
Finger print – Naadi jyotish is based on this. Right for men and left for women. Finger print is generally unique. But in naadi there is relationship between the naadi of different persons. The relationship is based on the nakshatra or star. There are 27 starts and each star can be divided into 4 parts, making it 108. Hence there will be similarities of finger print between people. Hence it is not possible to find palm leaf purely on the basis of finger print. Hence the palm leaves are searched for finding the correct leaf for the person. For every finger print there will be about 5 to 6 bunches of palm leaf from which the specific person's palm leaf is searched. The leaf that has all details pertaining to the seeker that becomes the correct leaf.
Name of the finger print – "Iru sutru mani makuda Rekha" There are 2 half chakras (circles), between the 2 half circles there is a crown. There are 2 lucky dots in the crown. This is very special. The half circles are equivalent to the Sudarshan chakra of Lord Vishnu. Hence in this birth you have the blessings of Lord Vishnu. All efforts leads to success for this seeker. There will always be happiness in mind. There wont be great difficulties due to enemies. You will achieve something big. It may be God related too. It will not only make you happy but will also lead to publicity. The crown indicates a king-like life. There are 2 types of king-like life. It can be in spiritual or worldly / material life. But your details indicate that it would be more of spiritual and service-oriented king. In the interim time there will be some confusion in the mind, that will be overcome eventually.
The 2 dots are signs of luck – in future there will be 2 times where there will be a positive change or turning point, which you will be able to make out, you will need to make use of it to help you move to great heights.

You have been born in a good and respectful, Kshatriya family.
Second evidence: Date of birth
Details written in the first page – Pingala year, vaikashi month, 31st day of Tamil calendar. Equivalent English date – 13/6/1977. Day – Monday, Star – Bharani, Raasi – Mesha, Dhanur Lagnam. Moon, Mangal & Venus in Aries, Ravi, Bhuda, Guru in Rishabh, Saturn in Kataka, Rahu in Virgo, Ketu in Pisces. You are a respectful person. Kala sarpa dosham, Post 35 it is graha malya yoga. Good progress after that. Dhanur lagna and Mesha raasi, you will want to complete things quickly. At the same time you also want to do it well. Spending for all necessities. Will rise due to your own efforts.
Details of the horoscope discussed.

Third evidence : Details of current situation.
At the time of seeing the palm leaf, both parents are alive. Parents are separated. Father has married twice. Mother is the first wife. Father has studied science, doing own business. Mother has Arts degree. Retired teacher. No sisters. Two brothers. One married, working with Govt. Second one in private job.
You are not married. May want to marry or confused about it at times. You have done Arts degree, Govt job. Service oriented. Administrative post. You may be wanting to leave the job. Have knowledge of sastras, astrology, dhyan, yoga. Wondering whether to serve in political or spiritual line. Good health. Living in rental house.
The name of the person who has all the above details is Anupam Kumar. Father's name Hemant Kumar. Mother's name Asha Lata Kumari. At the time of seeing the naadi, age is 39. Due to the grace of God, you are destined to see your Naadi now.

The future is looking good. Current time is not so good. The cause is previous life's sins, hereditary sins, evil eye of others, causing obstruction, delays and problems. People whom you may believe may also cause problem. Shanti & Diksha chapters can help you remove these ill effects.
Shanti chapter talks about the previous birth, sins, what are the temple remedies etc. Diksha chapter is about the evil eye of others and what mantra can be used to get over it. These 2 chapters help in living life happily.
39 : No big problem. Good things will happen. Continue current job. Panchakshara japam will be good. Follow some Guru. Visit their jeeva samadhi on Thursday or Full moon. Post that fast on Thursdays and eat only curd rice. You will get blessings of Guru and with that God's

blessings. Possibility of marriage with a known person, not a relative. The person would be a graduate. Service oriented job, from a respectable family. Will be good looking, matching height, round face, mole in the hand or foot, fish-like eyes, will have parents, won't be the first daughter. She will have own house. Description of girl's house and name.

40:41 – Chances of child, first son and then daughter. Probably 3 children. You will move to better role in the job. You will connection with social service and will have political connection. You will be in a position of influence. You will have powerful position. Brothers will also do good.

You are likely to write on topics related to Shastras. You may preach on meditation and Yoga as part time work. This will be at the age of 42. All efforts in the age of 42 will be successful. You are likely to meet s great soul at that time. Through him you will learn some truths. That will lead to a big change. Will continue till 43.

43 : Will serve the poor downtrodden, may form a Trust. Opporunity for travel outside. Based on your writings you will have achievements. You may want to leave job during that time and do preaching. This will continue till 45. You will have one son and one daughter. In addition to social work, your political work will also increase. You will get a good post.

46 will also be good. You will buy some property in city or town and construct your own house. There are 2-3 sources of income. Along with your wife you will do a lot of service. You will get back all the lost money.

47-48 is also good. Opportunities for indirect income.You will be involved in God's work and get the grace of the person whom you consider as Guru. In public service as well as God's service you will be at peak. You will get name and fame. Own house, car, income from property, good status in the society.

49-50 : Need to be careful. Health of parents will have some issues and there will be expenses. Possibility of bad name in the social and spiritual service. Difference of opinion with wife leading to a separation kind of situation. Problems from Govt possible. But all this will vanish due to God's grace.

51-55 : Good things will happen. You will get rid of unnecessary habits and activities. You will do only good things. You will achieve status and people will worship you. Money will increase. Family will progress. Relationship with wife will be good. Children will be fine. Your eyesight will be fine and you will speak truth. You will have achievements in the field of sastras. You may form a group and involve in temple renovation work.

56-58 : Will be good. You will be in administrative role and many people will work under you. You will have connect with great people and politicians. You will provide good support to politicians. Hidden profits and hidden posts. You will have achievements in the field of sastras.
59-60 : Need to be careful. Wife will have stomach related ailments. You will have blood and nerves related problems. Children will not study properly. All this will get over step by step. And you will live well till 65. Children will have specialised education. Children will go outside country. You will travel within and outside the country.
You will live beyond 70 years. You have the opportunity to see your grandchildren too. You will enjoy good health. You will be able to see Lord Siva in your sleep.
In this life you will live up to 80 years. In Margazhi month, Full moon day, in your own house, your spirit will leave your body. You will do a lot of charity work in this life, you will do service to Guru, public service, service to sastras. Hence there is chance of Moksha in this birth. You wont have a next birth. IN this life it is good to worship Guru Dakshinamoorthy and Lord Subramanya. Red and Sandal colour are lucky, 3 and 9 are lucky numbers, North east and South are lucky directions, Coral and Topaz, by following these you will find all happiness. All the problems that you face are due to previous karma. To get over this, follow remedies mentioned in Shanti chapter.

Second Reading (8 March 2019)

Thumb details – oru suzhiyum, kalasa rekhai – one circle / round and Kalasa rekhai.
Bright future. Whatever decisions you take are good and lead to success.
Not getting married is good. Spouse may be an obstruction to your efforts. Capable of achieving great heights.
However, the time at which the palm leaf is being seen is not good, this is because of sins of previous birth and planetary defects. If those sins would have not been there, this human life would not have been there. Kala sarpa yogam not dosham. Hence he can achieve great things. In addition to planetary positions there is hereditary sins. Hence there is difference between what you think and what you achieve. There are chances that in many situations you may meet disappointments or failures. Your work will be topmost, but others may not like and avoid you. Hence you may feel disillusioned because of your efforts not yielding results. So you may want to leave your job. Some friendships may give you bad name.
Breathings troubles. Forgetfullness. There may be confusion whether you are doing your research correctly or not. Hence you may not proceed as fast as you want.

7th-8th month from now need to be careful about night driving, fire, food, electrical items etc. Need to be careful about lending and not be guarantor. Should not publicise your secrets. May also get bad name due to some women and may fool you. Brothers may also cause disenchantment. Even in political field there are chances that you may not progress, there will be many enemies. In spiritual field there wont be enemies. So you may be involved in politics, but should not try for a post. You will find the peaceful spaces (blank, vacuum, void) in spiritual field, similar to a Guru. When you achieve those levels, many people will mock you. The research may lead to writing many books. Many masters will support you for this. Will start this from 42 years and continue till 45 years. You will find things that others have not been able to find. Whatever you say will become true. You will also find a Master. Once you find the peaceful spaces of mind, you will be able to understand spiritual truths and also control your chakras. Should be done carefully. This will be achieved at the age of 50.

You will preach and people in difficulty will come to see you and on seeing them you will know their problems. Hence people may accept you as Guru. You will travel outside India and you will have publications. Because of jealous Masters you may face bad name due to women.

51-52 : You will attain the state that you desire. Many people will praise you. You will be able to see the evils in all the places that you are visiting. You will take efforts to eradicate those evils. You will easily do things that many cant do. Pranayama, Yoga, meditation, and all research will be completed.

52-53 : Need to be careful while popularising your work, you may earn bad name. Reduction in eyesight and nervous issues, unable to eat food. Weakness in limbs, danger for mother. Difficulties for brother. Better to continue job and do this. Remedies to be done.

54-55 : Good time. There will be many disciples who will listen to you. This will be your last human birth. Post your death too people will continue to worship you. Will live above 77 -80 years.

43-44 : Chance for political association. There will be lot of disturbances and hence you may think this is not the right path. It may seem like you are reaching political goals, but someone will cause hindrance and you may not achieve.

Vasiṣṭha Nāḍī Readings

First Reading (8 March 2019)

Prayer

Vasistha Naadi Astrology (Pusamuthu)

Gives astrological details of date of birth.

Pingala year, Vaikasi month, last day, MOnday, Bharani, Mesha rasi, Dhanur lagnam.

Had God's blessings at the time of birth. Born with good health. Last child. No anscestral property. Would have suffered with heat related health issues in the age of 4-5. Post that there would have been differences in the relationship between father and mother. Within the age of 10, you would have taken interest in studies. Father would have had some business. Separation of parents when you were 10 years. You have completed your Arts degree. Joined Govt job at the age of 27. Your mother would have worked as a teacher.

You will continue your job permanently. You are currently in a senior position.

You would lose your father after the age of 30. You are currently unmarried. All siblings are married. You are currently in an administrative role. You are an honest officer. You will have secret relationship with women.

Father's name is Hemant. Mother's name Asha. Have 2 brothers. Your name is Anupam. No sister. Father is no more. Father has 2 wives, you are the son of first wife.

There are sins of previous birth.

Till now you have experienced difficulties, activities that you start may not be successful. Unnecessary expenditures. Mother has nerves related issues. If you would have got married, there would have been separation.

You are currently 42. You are destined to get your Naadi read at this age.

Details of previous life you were born in Chola kingdom, in Tanjavur, in a good family as eldest son. Father was Subramanyan, mother was Chellammal. You were named Somasundaram. Father had food related business. You studied well. You were involved in relationship with a girl. You promised her of marriage. She became pregnant. You wanted her to abort the child. During abortion the girl died. Once your parents got to know they made you stop your education and got you married and asked you to join business. After your marriage, your mother died. You took care of food and finance business. You charged 4 times interest. You troubled people who worked under you. Your father dissuaded you from such activities. You tortured your father. Did not take care of your father. You continued to do your business after your father's death. Due to the curse, you suffered of diseases. While suffering, you realised your mistake and prayed to God. You requested for a better life in the next birth. You did good work and charity after that.

Because of the girl's curse you are not married till now. If at all you would have got married, it would not have been happy life. Because of that, in this birth you will earn bad name due to women.

You need to do the remedy immediately and your life will be better.

43: You will have better life than 41-42

Mother will continue to have bad health

44 : If you are interested, you may study further.

45 : You will complete the education successfully

46 : You will get promotion in your work. You will continue the Govt job. You will buy property. You will travel abroad frequently. You will have affairs but will not get married.

Till you complete 47, there will not be much progress. Hence you need to be careful in your activities.

47 : In the beginning, you will meet with some accident.

48 : You will reach the first step of success. You will continue your job. However you will not continue till retirement.

Before 50, your mother will have danger. If she survives that she will face danger when you are 52.

53 : Change of job / profession. You will lose your job and start your own profession. You will get involved in public service. Others will pull you into this. At the time of leaving job, you should take permission of Vashist and Arundhati. You will get involved in Politics.

55 : You will get some responsibilities in Politics. Till you are in Govt service, you will work honestly and sincerely. You will leave when you are at a senior position. Right from top to bottom, everyone in the organisation will give you respect. You will help a lot of people junior to you. Very little chance of marriage

56: You will again meet with an accident and escape.

57-58 : You will be elected by people and win by a huge margin.

59 : You will buy another property. Brothers will have a good life. One brother may slightly oppose you.

60 : You will have all wealth and live like a king.

62: You will be elected again. You will have political post.

63 : You will have Party related responsibility. You will have equal attention to spiritual life. You will have experiences and realisations as you get more involved in spiritual activities.

Due to the blessings of Vashist and Arundhati, you will be involved in Gyan Marg post 65 years of age.

66 : You will construct a temple.

Post 67 you will receive upadesh from Guru. By doing meditation you will be able to cleanse your soul and you will get rid of all attachments.

Again you will get elected at the age of 67. And will have a critical role. Friends will support you.

Before 70, you will be attracted to Ashram and spiritual activities. You will be able to foresee future. You will do research in astrology. You will receive awards and recognition. You will be able to control breath and Ida, Pingala.

At the age of 74 you will hear the sound of dance of the Lord.

Post 75, you will move out of Politics and other profession. You will visit many temples. You will not have prolonged illness or long-term debts. You will benefit many families. Though you may have big post, work or position, you will follow simplicity. You will have some challenges with your eyes. You will not be attached to any property.

Once you do the remedies suggested, you will attain the purpose of this life. You are born to serve people in this life.

79 : You will face some danger. You will overcome that and live till 88 years. You will travel to many countries and places. The spiritual life will attract you.

Lucky : Numbers – 1, 5, 9; Colour – White, yellow, blue; Gemstones – Topaz, Coral and Pearl; Days – Sunday, Wednesday, Friday; Direction – East and North; God – Ganesha.

You will attain Moksha in this life. Natural death.

Shanti Chapter :

1. Visit Thirupanandal – pray to Lord Ganesh, Siva and Devi

2. Visit Thiruvenkadu -

3. Visit Vaidyanatha temple -

4. Visit Vashistha centre and keep in the pooja room –

5. Every Thursday offer pooja to Ganesha and Guru Bhagwan for number of weeks twice your age.

There are chances that you can enter politics at the age of 45, else at the age of 53.

Second Reading (14 December 2021)

Om sri Maha Ganapathi thunai

Om Sri Maha Mariamman thunai

Vashishtha 2021 – 14-12-2021

Sivaya namaha

First evidence "Kalasam"

A) Has God's grace

B) Will have public life, in this life if someone tells your name everyone will know you

C) You will see Guru in this life

There are 3 dots in the Kalasa Rekha

a) First dot is high, hence you are born with good character, in a good family, with good parents, with good intelligence, as the last son.

b) second dot indicates "Sanyasi dosham". Have strong grace of God.

c) third dot indicates some "Karma sins". Due to this you will be confused some times. At times you may wonder if the decision you took was wrong. Sometimes you may not use your "yogam" (special gifts) appropriately. Sometimes there may be confusion / misunderstanding due to some woman.

Need to take action to get rid of the sins

Vashisht muni asks you to

1)take a bath in a place where all three seas get mixed, in Suchindram. Donate clothes, food and fall at the feet of Shiv Sadhus.

2) Do Shiv Yaga and put it in the river. Fall at the feet of parents. Do this on New moon day. All these will lead to eradication of your sins.

44-46 : Entry into political life. Friendship of noble persons. Ability to do some exclusive work (which only you can do) will appear. Time is nearing for attaining new position or post. Opportunity for Religious / God-related activities, Guru & great persons' blessings, learning scriptures.*

Tamil word :Uyarntha manithan – Bade aadmi, great person, elevated person, noble person,

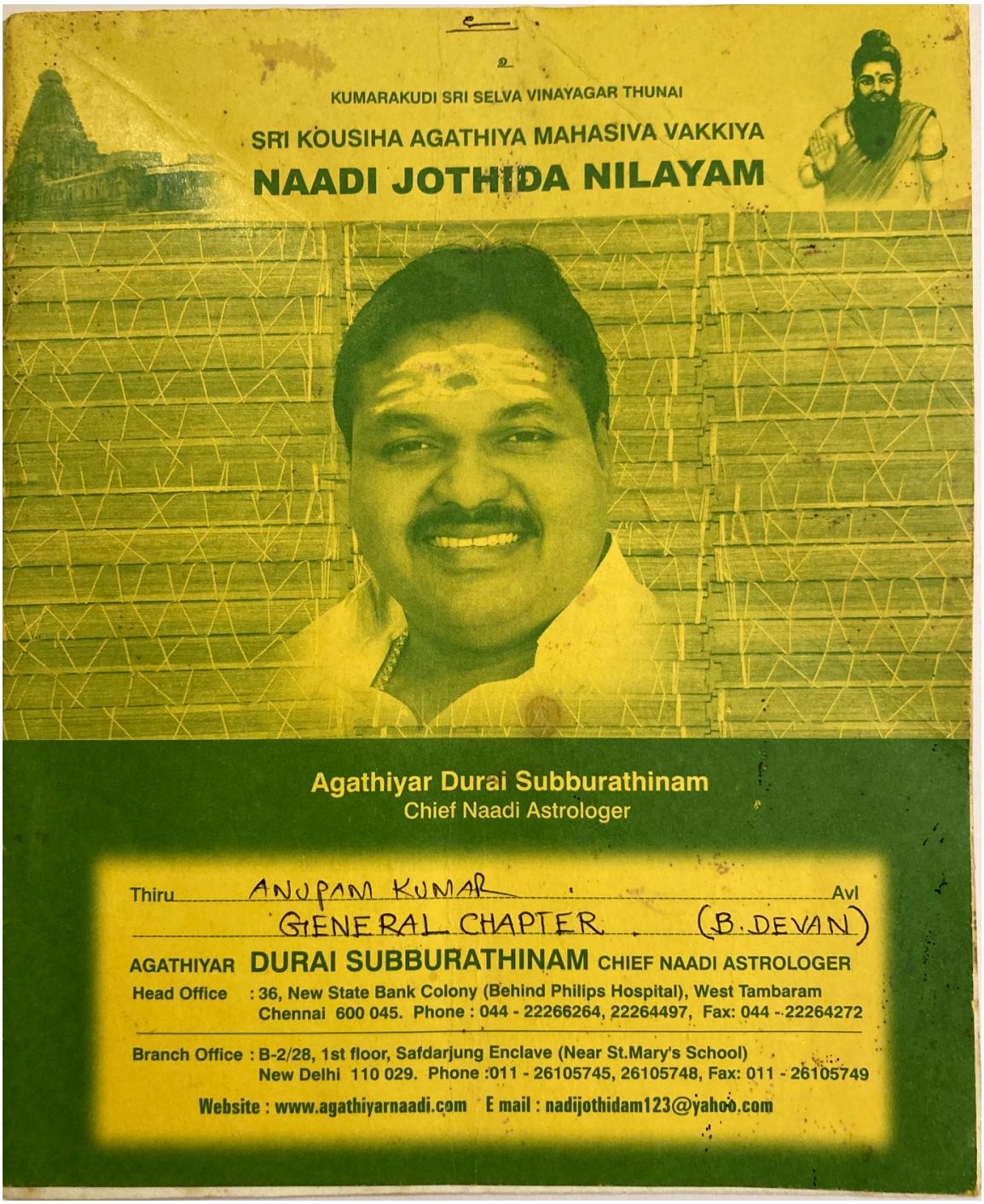
46-50 : Being elected by people, you will be in a leadership position. During this time a woman in public life will like you. If you do not get married during this time, you will lead a life of Sanyasi. If you get married during that time, you need to go and worship Lord shiva on a hill top.

50-53 : During this period you will achieve fame due to a woman. There will be a decrease in mother's status. Relationship with brothers will bring happiness.

There are chances that you will receive some house or land after the age of 54.

You will live like "Raja Kalasam" without any shortcomings.
Everyone in your state will know your name.
Post 61 years, you will be more involved in Sanyasa yoga. There are opportunities to undertake pilgrimage in search of God. Post this you will not live for yourself, you will live for others.
By the age of 63, you will be able to visit and pray to the jeeva samadhi of sage Vashist. Post this you will live up to the age of 86. During the last one year, you will live without consuming food. You will look young till the end. You will serve your mother till the end. Many people will consider you as their Guru and become your followers.
During this life your body will depart happily. You will leave this life only after realizing the purpose of life.
With this Vashisht Maharasishi completes the General chapter.

8.3 NĀḌĪ READINGS – NOTEBOOKS, CASSETTES, CD



Front Page

LIST OF KANDAMS

1. To be found out through thumb impression (Gents-Right, Ladies-Left) or horoscope of the concerned person which will contain name, parent's names, present details of profession, brothers, sisters, children, wife and gist of future predictions for all the 12 houses.
2. Money, Eyes, Family, Education and speech.
3. Number of brothers and sisters, affection, help or ill feeling between self and brothers and sisters, Ears, Courage, House hold utensils.
4. Mother, House, Vehicles, Land and pleasures.
5. Children, - Their Birth, death, reason for not having children, adoption and remedial measures for having children, future lives of the children.
6. Disease, Debts, Enemies & Court cases, Remedial measures for avoidance.
7. Age of marriage, Distance, Lagnam, Planetary position of the bride or bridegroom, future life with husband or wife.
8. Longevity, Accident & Danger to life, Age, Month, Day, Time, Star, Lagnam and Place of death..
9. Predictions in regard to father, Wealth, Visit to Temples, Luck, Preaching through holymen, Charitable deeds.
10. Profession, Future Predictions in regard to job or business, change of place good and evils in profession.
11. Profits in Business and second marriage.
12. Expenditure, Foreign Visit, Next birth and Attainment of Salvation.
13. SANTHI PARIHARAM : Last Birth, Sins committed, Remedial measures for getting rid of the effect of the past birth's sins.
14. DEEKSHAI CHAPTER: Manthra Jepam, Wearing of Rakshai (Talisman) for avoidance of enemies troubles etc.

SEPARATE KANDAMS

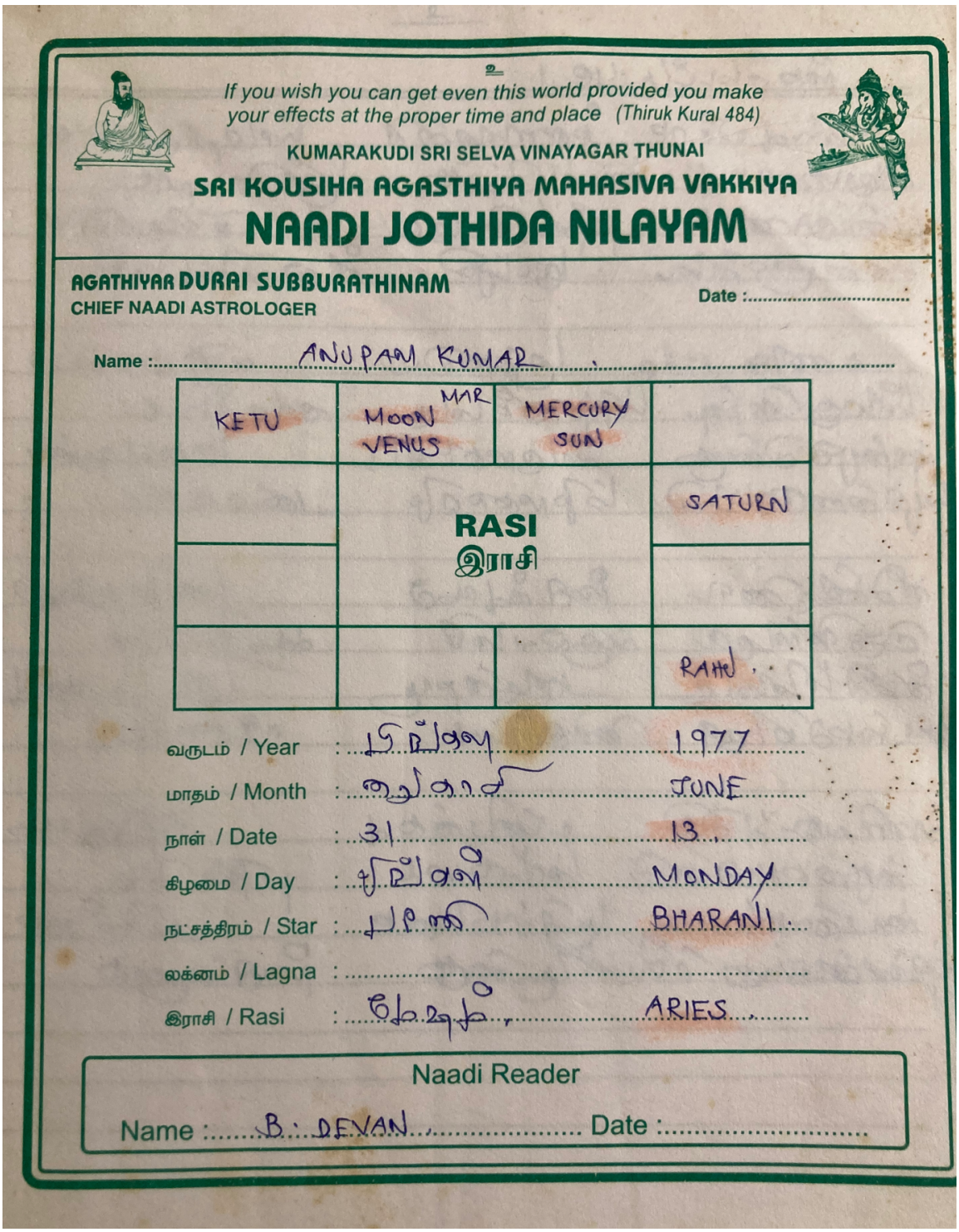
These are separate Chapters and extra amount needs to be paid.

1. AVUDATHA CHAPTER : Medicines for long standing diseases and method of taking them.
2. DISABUKTHI CHAPTER : Prediction for the running Disa Bukthi (Major Sub Period).
3. POLITICAL KANDAM : Deals about the success of your political carrier.
4. PRASANNA KANDAM : You can get the solution for your problems through Questionnaire.
5. DISA BUKTHI SANTHI : Tells you the remedies for the malefic effect of the Disa Bukthi.
6. KOTCHARA SANTHI CHAPTER : Remedial measures (or) pariharas will be predicted based on the unfavourable planetary position.
7. GNANA KANDAM : also available.
8. We are having MAHA SIVA VAKKIYA, MAHA SIVA THUILLIYA AND MAHA SIVA SUKSHMA NAADI with elabarate prediction.

Note :

1. Thumb impressions are to be registered between 8.30 a.m. and 9.00 a.m.
2. As it is very difficult for us to locate your correct palm leaf, we request you to come prepared to wait until atleast 6.30 pm. We solicit your co-operation in this matter.
3. It is possible to give your correct prediction only if you are patient.
4. There is no need to pay any money if your palm leaf is not found out.
5. Don't make advance payments for chapters to be sent by post.
6. It is not possible for us to send the chapters by post. Under unavoidable circumstances you can meet the chief nadi astrologer **Mr. DURAI SUBBURATHINAM** and hand over the money to him.
7. English and Hindi Translation Available.

Back page explaining cantos



If you wish you can get even this world provided you make your effects at the proper time and place (Thiruk Kural 484)

KUMARAKUDI SRI SELVA VINAYAGAR THUNAI

SRI KOUSIHA AGASTHIYA MAHASIVA VAKKIYA

NAADI JOTHIDA NILAYAM

AGATHIYAR DURAI SUBBURATHINAM
CHIEF NAADI ASTROLOGER

Date :.....

Name : ANUPAM KUMAR

KETU	MOON VENUS MAR	MERCURY SUN	
	RASI இராசி		SATURN
			RAHU

வருடம் / Year : 1977

மாதம் / Month : JUNE

நாள் / Date : 13

கிழமை / Day : MONDAY

நட்சத்திரம் / Star : BHARANI

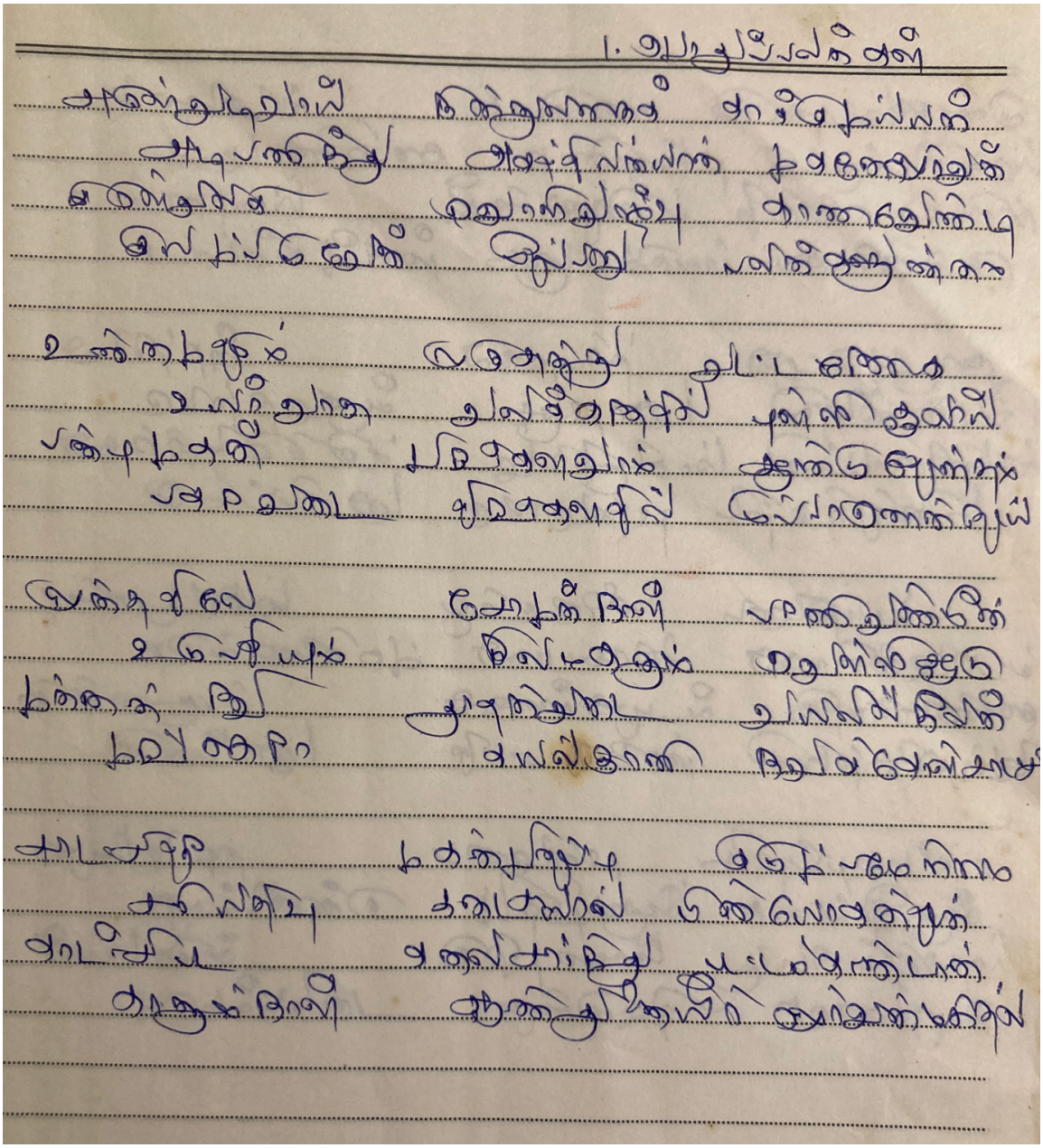
லக்னம் / Lagna :

இராசி / Rasi : ARIES

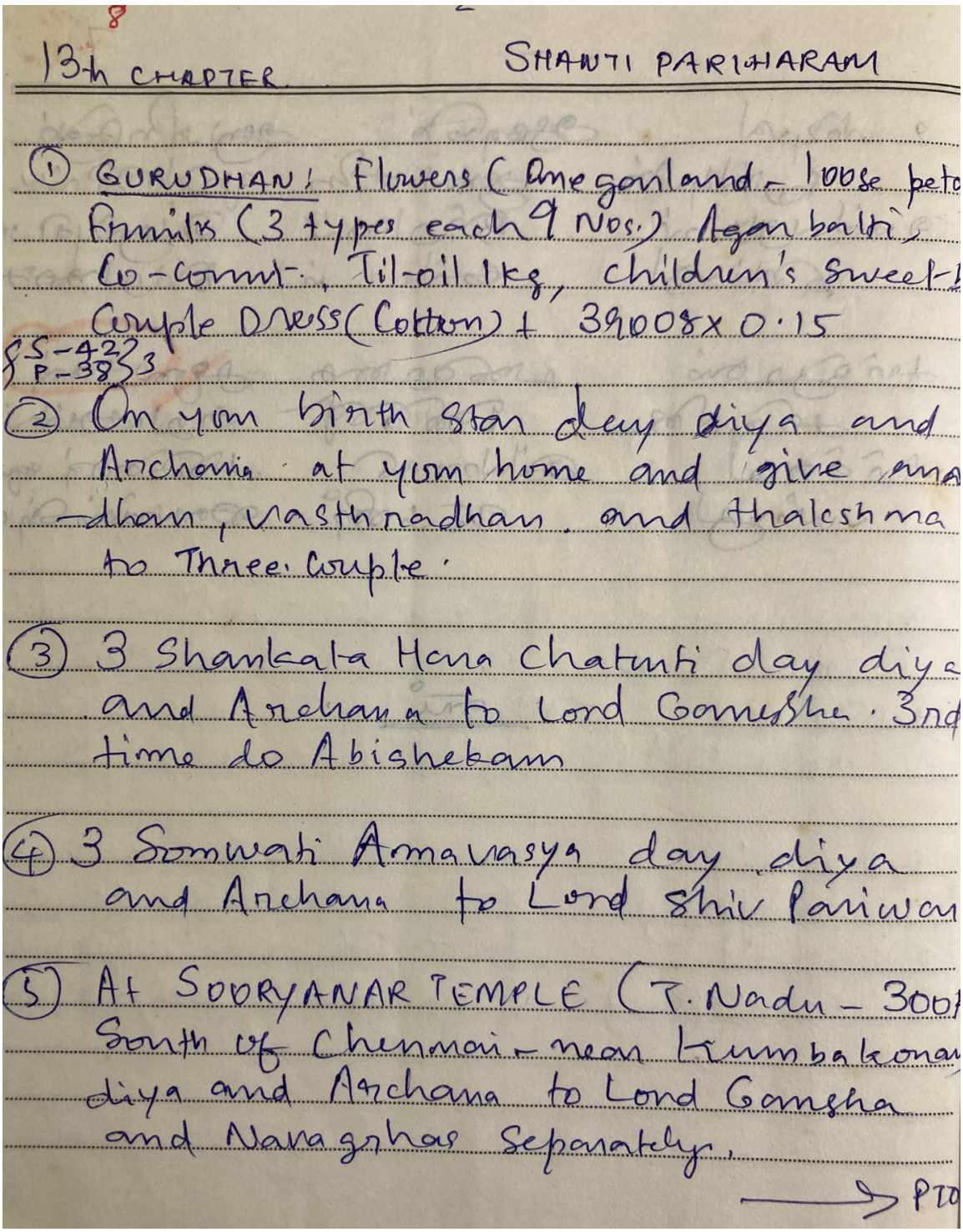
Naadi Reader

Name : B. DEVAN Date :.....

Horoscope produced from leaf (ascendant missing)



Typical reading page



13th CHAPTER SHANTI PARIHARAM

(1) GURUDHAN: Flowers (One garland - loose pet
Fruits (3 types each 9 Nos.) Agarbathi,
Go-ghee, Til-oil 1kg, children's sweet-
Couple Dress (Cotton) + 39008 x 0.15
S-422
P-3853

(2) On your birth star day diya and
Archana at your home and give ana
-dhan, vasthradhan and thalesh ma
to Three Couple.

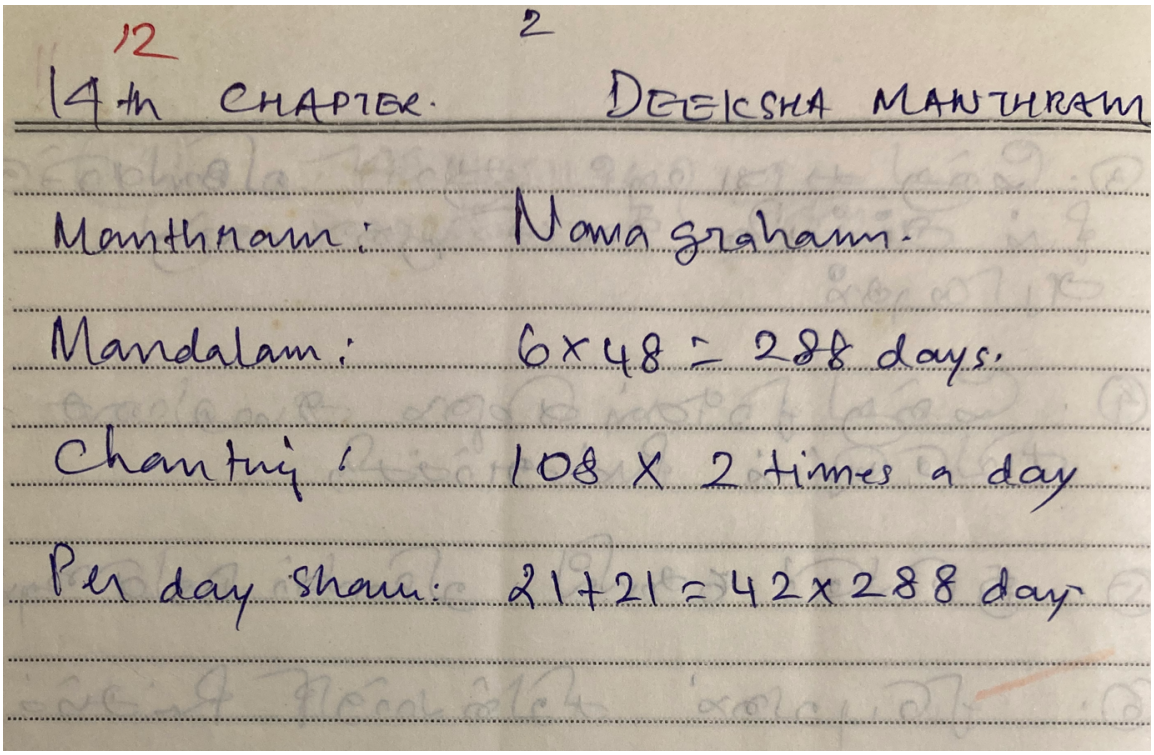
(3) 3 Shankata Hara Chathurthi day diya
and Archana to Lord Ganesha. 3rd
time do Abishekam

(4) 3 Somwathi Amavasya day diya
and Archana to Lord Shiv Parivar

(5) At SOORYANAR TEMPLE (T. Nadu - 300
South of Chennai - near Kumbakona
diya and Archana to Lord Ganesha
and Navagrahas Separately.

→ PTO

13th Chapter prescribing Śānti



14th Chapter of Mantras and Yajna (Deeksha)



Earlier Audio Recording was given in Cassette


SRI AGATHIYAR DUARI SUBBU RATHINAM
KUMARAKUDI SRI SELVA VINAYAGAR THUNAI
NAADI JOTHIDA NILAYAM
AGATHIYAR DURAI SUBBURATHINAM
Chief Naadi Astrologer
Name : Mr. ANUPAM KUMAR
Naadi Reader : Chi. Vijaya Mohan
Chapter : GENERAL
Head Office:36, New State Bank Colony (Behind Philips Hospital), West Tambaram, Chennai 600 045. Phone : 044 - 22266264, 22264497, Fax: 044 - 22264272. Branch Office:B-2/28, 1st floor, Safdarjung Enclave (Near St.Mary's ... New Delhi 110 029. Phone: 011 - 26105745, 26105748, Fax: 011 - 26105749

Then came CD