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ASTRO-SKELETONICS: ABOUT PANDIT KULKARNI'S *ASTROLOGICAL ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF FACES*

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ASTRO-SKELETONICS

About Pandit Kulkarni's *Astrological Encyclopaedia of Faces*

by Emmanuel Grimaud

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In India, astrology is called *jyotish* (light). The contexts in which such light is necessary to compensate for our lack of vision are so varied that a full life wouldn't be enough to document its techniques and forms, past or present. From one consultation to another astrologers help their clients to cultivate an astral matrix, invisible yet luminous. Astrologers reveal the movements of this dense, bright matrix, and study its whims, its intimate rhythms in order to understand, optimize and multiply the possibilities of action. Within an astral matrix which has its own periodicity, they help identify the friendly influences as well as the blockages and conflicts due to hostile influences. An 'interactive decision theory' expands radically when the stars are included, recognised here as partners in their own right with whom one must deal. The astral matrix provides a whole set of behavioral entities with which one must co-ordinate for a given time in order to increase the chance of a gain (or from which one must protect oneself).

In India, it is possible to cast the astrological chart of almost any object on earth: human, animal, temple, house, project and even a country, an institution, or the nation. Nothing escapes the temperamental choreography of the stars. Astrologers may be consulted to make decisions based on prior knowledge or to neutralize the influence of deleterious planets, for which there are always remedies (rituals, etc.), according to the astrologer's prescriptions. Much more than this: some are true researchers, exploring new techniques, resurrecting old ones and thus

renewing their discipline through contact with new tools or media. Such is the case of the astrologer Pandit Kulkarni (1930-2019).

The son of an astrologer himself, Pandit Kulkarni worked for many years as a draughtsman on archaeological excavations. He was known for his reconstructions of human skulls and his geological drawings. His landscapes showing the rocks beneath were animated by a unique inner tension, giving the impression of cosmic and telluric forces in action. He also drew portraits of people, sometimes even without having seen them, based on their birth charts. He left behind hundreds of portraits that are the traces of a fluid research process, on the borders of archaeology, physical anthropology, art and divination. His clientele was mainly made up of women, including sex workers and, actresses, but politicians, mafiosi and gangsters also followed his predictions. His secret wish was to compose an astrological encyclopaedia of mankind. The Pandit became probably one of the greatest portraitists that modern India has ever known, but his work has been largely ignored.

The Pandit used terms such as *astro-morphology*, *astro-skeletonics* and *robot-portrait* to talk about his work. He drew parallels between the morphology of rocks, landscapes, human evolution and the ballet of the stars. Above all, he offered people an innovative predictive support: robot-portrait integrated astral influences right into the face. The face, the skull and the horoscope were considered the photographic negatives of each other, as the skeleton was seen as being tied to the movement of the planets. There is a difference between the working portraits kept by the Pandit and the ones made for his clients, drawn during the consultation. The portraits made for the clients follow the same format, with the face on the front and the underlying skull on the back of the page. The working portraits kept by the astrologer display the skull and face on the same page and are usually accompanied by more personal and often poetic comments, sometimes written in the future tense when they are about the person's past or switched to the past tense when giving predictions for the future.

As well as working with clients in person the Pandit also made conjectural horoscopes based on famous figures or faces reconstructed from cranial remains. This could involve studying the faces of historical figures when portraits survived but

whose birth chart was unknown. Yet he also reconstructed faces (associated with possible horoscopes) from archaeological skulls, changing his method depending which factor was unknown (face, skull or horoscope).

"No one can see himself as he is, even in a mirror. He meets only his inverted image," he said. Astrology, on the other hand, can. But what does it reveal? About a woman with a 'good reputation in intellectual circles', he wrote:

“Fortune, Jupiter and Venus are in high position in the northwest quadrant. As a result, she will only achieve well-being after 24 years. After June 2002, Rahu will be in Gemini and will destroy the enemy completely and Saturn in Pisces will finish defeating her enemy... Because of the influence of Jupiter and Venus, she enjoys a rare beauty, a magnificent figure and body. Ketu in Pisces gives her dense hair and large eyes. The god of education and the enemy god are in the position to influence knowledge. The position of the Husband is aligned with that of Knowledge in the horoscope. She is likely to marry someone she meets at her workplace. Her boss will also be her husband's boss. However, before that, she will make a serious mistake and to correct this mistake, she will want to get married. But in the meantime, she will have been cheated because the shadow of Death will already be looming over her body.”

For the Pandit each face was a pluriverse, a battlefield where entities-divinities-planets confront each other, a zone of conflicting and passionate tension crossed by multipolar influences, never the play of a single power. Any concretion, whether a face or a landscape, perseveres in its "fragile cohesion" between fluctuating forces in tension. Thus a man wanted by the police gives rise to the following portrait:

"Man on the run, date 28-10-1993. The god of death, Venus, is opposite the god of Intelligence and he emerges in Virgo placed in low position. The consequence of this configuration is that his mind has been filled with a desire for emancipation but his enemies have taken over his body.”

About a woman, known to stir up the passions of men:

"Date of birth, 19 November 1977 dawn, 6:15 Birth and marriage horoscope: Arrogant beauty. Pretentious woman with eyes capable of arousing violent male passions. Nature could only have given birth to such a creature in a moment of distraction. The Body is influenced by the Sun and Budh, the Intelligence, influences her face, the suppleness of her structure and her fragile cohesion. Hence also her bright milk complexion of magnetic power, her strong bones and the solid structure of her muscles influenced by Budh. As for her beauty, she owes it to Venus and the influence of Libra."

The portrait operates a rise in the presence of astral forces by offering a paralyzed image of the person, freezing the grip of these forces. Bringing the subject face to face with pure forces, the portrait makes visible the inescapable current that makes a man "a gun", the instrument of an interstellar war happening beyond his consciousness. Thus, the face of a gangster is commented on as follows :

"A good portrait is one that makes you feel the danger of a person and the risk you take when you approach him. Look at the face of this merchant. He is frightening and as dangerous as a hydrogen bomb. An explosive man!"

This is very different from nineteenth century phrenology in which the inclinations and passions are buried inside the cranium. The Pandit, by contrast, relocates these inclinations from the 'depths of the human soul' (as Gall would say 1810) to the depths of the cosmos. The deeper one goes into the interiority of a being, the more one opens up to the life of the cosmos.

How does astrology connect resonances to the realm of passions? In Kulkarni's astro-morphology each trait (*laksana*) includes several possible interpretations that increase the possibilities of 'sounding right'. Astrology then becomes a ballistics of passions through the medium of portraiture. A person is always a configuration, the relationship of relationships, a constellation. A body is unique from an astrological point of view, because it is located at the meeting point of forces that sometimes attract, repel or neutralize each other. By 'passion', we must understand a particular form of crystallization: humans continue to circle but at the point of falling out of orbital movements which, when they encounter living matter, create passion.

It is worth noting that the reasons people consulted the Pandit were varied and that

he used the birth chart, a facial examination and a palpation of the skull in combination. Clients could contemplate their deepest tendencies in portraits. The astral portrait, once seen by the subject, was intended to gradually replace their own self-image. Superimposing the skull and face then completed the astromorphosis, putting the person back into the field of the astral forces at work, revealing to them the cosmic drama that was being played out within and through them. If each portrait was destined to appear in an astral encyclopaedia of evolution, alongside rocks, plants and great apes, Kulkarni's drawings published in *L'Etrange Encyclopédie du docteur K.* (2014) are the only remaining testimonies of the stellar history of mankind he had in mind.

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