

PARALLELS BETWEEN QUANTUM THEORY AND 'PREDICTIONS' IN THE ANCIENT INDIAN OLA (PALM - NAADI) LEAF HOROSCOPES¹

Background

An outstanding problem in academia that has intensified over the last three centuries is the widening gulf between the Humanities and modern science (Arseculeratne 2009). This article is the third in a series that deals with epistemology in the ancient Indian tradition, in comparison with that in modern science.

The phenomenon of the ancient Indian horoscopy of the palm ('ola') leaf variety has been discussed in two previous articles (Arseculeratne 1998/1999; Arseculeratne & Sambandan 2001-2002) in terms of its authenticity and validity and in relation to some problems in philosophy – the Asian theories of 'karma' and reincarnation, and modern western philosophical ideas of Free-will and Determinism.

This article first reports the results of a new test on the validity of these horoscopes and then discusses, as a major focus, possible parallels with Quantum Theory, which is one of the bed-rock theories of modern physics, in an attempt to bridge the divide between the humanities and modern science.

Further Evidence for Validating the Palm Leaf Horoscopes

This test was based on a suggestion of Dr Mario Varvoglis (*Institut Metapsychique International*, Paris, France) at the *International Conference on Yoga and Parapsychology* at Vishakapatnam, India in 2006, where the palm leaf horoscope phenomenon was discussed.

The two previous articles on this phenomenon were based on palm leaf readings of horoscopes of persons who were known to the investigator. The possibility of telepathy as the means by which the leaf reader made accurate statements about the subjects, which were known by the investigator, cannot be discounted. Dr Varvoglis's suggestion was to have the leaf reader interpret a leaf horoscope of a person unknown to the investigator so

¹ The authors thank Dr Mario Varvoglis for his helpful suggestion of an extended test, and R. P. U. Karunasiri, Ratnayake Bandara and Arjuna de Zoysa for discussions on Quantum Theory and ola horoscopes.

that the problem of telepathic acquisition of knowledge from the investigator is circumvented. Such a leaf, as a photograph, was obtained by the co-author-2 from a subject known to the co-author-2 but unknown to co-author-1, the investigator; the subject had obtained this photograph from the leaf that an Indian reader had 'read' for him.

Methods

A photograph of the palm leaf was shown to an experienced Indian reader practicing in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The script on this photograph (Figure 1), was unclear towards its right end. The reader made his comments that were noted by the investigator who took back the photograph. Another photograph of the same leaf was prepared but it still had the unclear sentences towards the right end. This 'new' photograph was shown to the reader one year later; he said –

Results

Reader: "I have read this before, why did you bring this again?"

Investigator: "This may be a better copy of the same picture" (although the same words/sentences were unclear).

The reader then proceeded to read the leaf pictured on the photograph, giving the same facts in the same sequence, as on the first occasion one year previously. From seven facts retrieved from co-author-2 concerning the subject whose palm leaf horoscope was read, four facts were correct; one fact that was wrong was on the occupation of the subject which according to the reader was "he will have his own business". The subject worked for a university, although his wife had her own business.

Conclusions

1. The short-fall of three facts that were in error could have been due to the unclear sentences/words at the right end of the leaf's photograph; Figure 1 shows the words between the arrows, which are blurred and are difficult to decipher.
2. The four correct facts out of seven, that were unknown to the investigator suggests that the readings were not attributable to telepathy.
3. The correspondence of the facts given on two separate occasions, one year apart, suggests that the readings were off a script written on the palm leaf.

Possible Parallels with Quantum Theory

A striking feature of these horoscopes is that data on the past, *up to the time of their reading*, is invariably and remarkably accurate, including names, events, and attitudes of the subject. The accuracy of predictions for the future varies from accurate (for up to 32 years in one of the cases referred to earlier – Arseculeratne 1998/1999), to predictions that were partially accurate or inaccurate; reasons for this difference as were suggested in that article were non-fulfilment of propitiatory measures, or accumulation and operation of new karmic accounts in the present birth. But these do not totally explain why the past was so accurate while the predictions for the future vary in their accuracy. The contrast with conventional astrology is marked; readings by the latter methods seldom or never, in the experience of the author, have this dichotomy.

It was suggested by some physicists at an international conference on parapsychology, where this phenomenon and its study were presented, that the ola horoscope 'dichotomy' problem with an accurate past but a variable future has a parallel in Quantum Theory, in the physics of fundamental particles. A discussion of this problem with two academics, a physicist and an engineer, is summarized below, while the authors of this article make no claim to be experts on Quantum Theory.

The Parallels

Since palm leaf horoscopy (PLH) can be considered to be in the realms of parapsychology, the main focus of this article is to explore links between PLH, parapsychology and modern science, notably physics.

The corpus of 'Newtonian mechanics' is capable of dealing with macro-bodies; for example, billiard balls or planets. Prediction of *all* the mechanical properties associated with such an object is, in principle, possible provided (a) the forces acting on the object (including the location of the forces for a finite-sized object) and (b) say for example, initial information (velocity and position) is known. "... in the old 'classical' physics, particles had definite properties. They had precise velocity and precise position... However, from the viewpoint of quantum mechanics (which, with Relativity theory, is the basis of modern physics) this is not so. Before a measurement is made – an observation of the system – the properties of a particle are indefinite. It is the case that the particle covers, or fluctuates over, a range of positions (or velocities) simultaneously" (Eysenck & Sargent 1982). Werner "Heisenberg showed that, at the subatomic level at least, you can't ever know all the initial conditions of a situation – at best, you are dealing with probabilities and statistics" (Macrone 1994); commentators on the variability in accuracy of predictions in the ola horoscopes also regarded these 'predictions', in contrast to the accurate readings of past events, in terms of probabilities rather than specific predictions.

With subatomic particles, Newtonian Formalism (or its variations such as those of D'Alembert, Lagranges, and Hamilton) fails to deal with the dynamics of them, whose ultimate nature is controversial; for example, is the electron a particle or a wave? Quantum Theory was developed to deal with these entities. It was not possible to make accurate predictions, for example of the position or velocity of an electron; only a spectrum of several 'probabilities' could be derived from Schrödinger's equations, expressing the probability of occurrence of the possible values in terms of a 'wave function', or more elegantly from the Dirac's formalism which shows the equivalent of Heisenberg or Schrödinger formalisms of Quantum Mechanics. When one of these 'values' or alternatives is realized (measured) by an actual experiment, the other probabilities 'collapse'. Which value will be realized in the experiment? Quantum Theory can only predict the probability of occurrence of each possible value and nothing more. As the sum of the probabilities must be unity, at least one of the values should always be realized.

A quote from "Was Einstein a Buddhist?" appears to be relevant to this problem: (<http://home.btclick.com/scimah/einstein.htm>):

... Both quantum theory and Buddhist teachings on sunyatā suggest that as soon as an observer's mind makes contact with a superposed system, all the numerous possibilities collapse into one actuality. At some instant one of these possible alternative universes produced an observable life-form. The first act of

observation by this mind caused the entire superposed multiverse to collapse immediately into one of its numerous alternatives.”

Could there be an analogy of future events in ola horoscope predictions with subatomic particles in that probability theory could deal with both of them? If so, then an ola horoscopic prediction might fail as much as only one of several alternative ‘probabilities’ concerning the behaviour of subatomic particles might prevail while the others fail. The key word in both instances is the ‘*future*’, dealings with which necessitate a theory of probabilities for the future. To repeat the quote from Eysenck & Sargent (1982); “... in the old ‘classical’ physics, particles had definite properties. They had precise velocity and precise position... However, from the viewpoint of quantum mechanics (which, with Relativity theory, is the basis of modern physics) this is not so. Before a measurement is made – an observation of the system – the properties of a particle are indefinite. It is the case that the particle covers, or fluctuates over, a range of positions (or velocities) simultaneously”. Does this qualification “... before a measurement is made...” equate with the ‘future’ in the ola reading, and in which the events are equally *indefinite*? Eysenck & Sargent added: “... the particle we measure only acquires a precise velocity when we measure it”; does this equate with the accurate past in the ola horoscope *at the time of the reading*, and the uncertainty of future events?

As a commentator on the ola horoscopes wrote: “The question remains that at the time the ola were written, everything was in the future. How then did the writer predict so accurately the (past) events that would be given at the time of the reading? I do not think the fundamental puzzle has been fully resolved” (R Bandara, 2009, Personal Communication). The problem deepens when it is seen that up to the time of reading, which is sometimes remarkably foretold in the leaf, (‘you will get this reading in your mid-fiftieth year’) the facts are accurate; it is only in the future, *from the date of reading*, that the variations in accuracy occur.

In the case of conventional astrology that deals with the transits, location of the ‘planets’ in the native chart, asterisms in which planets at birth are deposited, and planetary rulership periods and sub-periods, given that the motions of the planetary macrobodies are amenable to Newtonian mechanical calculations, the problem of the dichotomy between past and future does not arise; if analyses are wrong with this method (for both the past and the future), the reason is probably a faulty horoscope or an incompetent astrologer.

Some statements from *Explaining the Unexplained* by Eysenck & Sargent (1982) seem apposite to this problem and, generally, to the interface between *psi* [= paranormal, (parapsychological) phenomena, that include the ola horoscope phenomenon] and Quantum Theory:

- “Nevertheless, John Hasted has argued that the many-universes interpretation of quantum physics may help us to explain psi...”

- these authors consider ‘hidden variables’ in the quantum system, that cause collapse of the wave function; they state that “there are certain reasons for thinking that there might be a link with parapsychology here”.

- they refer to the Einstein-Podolski-Rosen (EPR) paradox – “an observer can affect an event taking place at almost any distance away from him. The collapse of the wave function can be spatially invariant. In certain treatments of this paradox the collapse can have features of temporal invariance”... “These look very like psi events”. “Olivier

Costa de Beauregard goes yet further; he states categorically that psi events must occur as a result of the spatial and temporal independence aspects of the EPR paradox”.

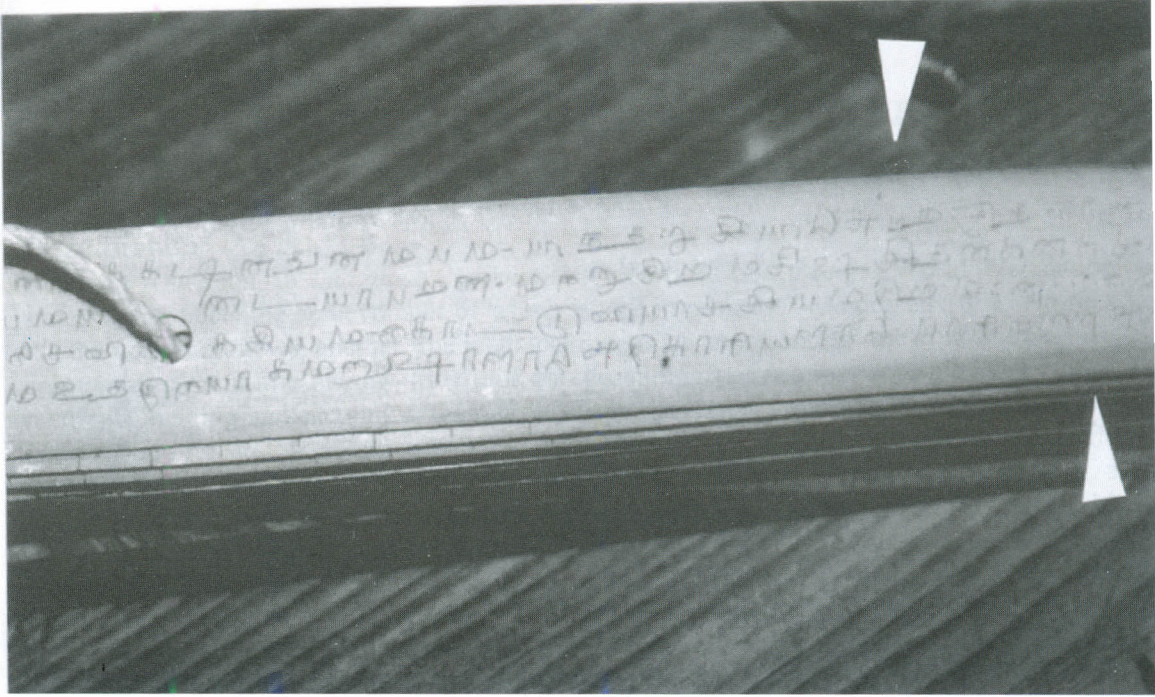
Professor H. R. Nagendra (India) commented on these views (personal communication 2006): “This is exactly what I explained to you. The past events have happened and therefore belong to the Reality realm of our world. Therefore they are deterministic and can be dealt with by Newtonian mechanics.

The future events are probabilistic. There is an element of freedom given to everyone of us. If we exercise it we will be able to change the course of events.”

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The palm leaf that was 'read' by the reader on the second occasion, showing the blurred words/sentences between the white arrows.