

STUDIES ON THE PARANORMAL: THE INDIAN OLA-LEAF HOROSCOPES, AND THE IDEAS OF KARMA AND RE-INCARNATION

HISTORY

Horoscopes of contemporary people, Asian and non-Asian, written on ancient palm (ola) leaves have been known for decades in both Sri Lanka and in southern India, especially Tamil Nadu. They have been discussed in many issues of Indian astrological magazines, though mainly in the context of the subject of astrology but not on their history, or on why they were written or even with studies on their authenticity. One South Indian reader of these leaves who had dealt with these for over forty years in Sri Lanka told me they were originally written on goat skins, later transcribed on copper plaques, and then on ola leaves which are now claimed to be hundreds of years old. If this is correct, the possibility of errors in transcription cannot be excluded. On why they were written, it has been surmised that they were tutorial exercises set by the ancient sages (*rishis*) to their pupils who were set the task of composing the horoscopes of persons yet to be born in a series of dates and times, or that the sages made these writings for the guidance of people. There were apparently seven (*saptha-*) *rishis* (*saptharishi*) who authored these horoscopes individually or in conference of all seven (*saptha-rishi vaakyam*, seven-*rishi* stanzas). Since these writings relate to ordinary people, it does not appear that the authors were concerned only with important persons whose life histories could make vivid stories. Some clients are told that there are no leaves pertaining to them.

These leaves are claimed to have been in ancient Hindu temples in South India from where they were either stolen or bought during the British occupation of India. The British, it is said, took away the manuscripts of utilitarian value to them, such as traditional medicinal and alchemical texts. The remainder were the horoscopes. Since they apparently dealt with the lives of contemporary people, the present owners of the manuscripts have made a lucrative practice of reading them for their subjects in Asian countries. An occasional non-Asian has also found his leaf.

The following commentary is based on data from 14 case histories.

IDENTIFICATION

Leaves are identified as belonging to a given subject through his/her thumb prints which probably serve as indispensable 'indexes' or codes; birth date and time are insufficient. Four main groups of thumb print patterns have been identified. The reader generally takes a few days or even a week to locate the respective leaf (leaves) in bundles which the reader has brought over from India. In one case (case No.1) narrated to me, and in which the readings were accurate, the reading was made an hour after the thumb print was supplied. In my case (case No.2), in South India, the reading was begun about 2 hours after the reader took my thumb print. This short interval, in addition to the fact that I was a stranger in South India, would have excluded fraud through the reader seeking out information about me from outside sources. Final identification is done by the matching of birth date, names of the subject and his/her parents as a prelude to the reading. The distribution of 'planets' in the natal horoscope as stated in the leaf, which is described during the definitive reading and not revealed earlier by the subject, is an important verification of the correspondence of the reading with the subject. It is important to state that this correspondence is not used for the *selection* of the leaf. Beginning with the first chapter (corresponding to the 1st 'house' of an astrological chart) which confirms the identity of the leaf, the subject may choose for reading, any of the remaining 11 houses which deal with various aspects of his life, eg. 2nd dealing with his assets, 3rd with his brothers and sisters, 4th his home, vehicles, mother, 10th with profession and status in life and so on. Although the time of birth is not used for identifying the leaf, the exact horoscope (distribution of the planets, birth star, rulership periods) is given on the reading. This indicates that the client's time of birth is *implied* in the leaf-reading, because an accurate horoscope cannot be drafted without the exact time of birth. This suggests that the reader is not using a chart drafted by him on the occasion of the consultation for his reading, excluding this device as one possibility of fraud.....

THE READING

On the appointed day, the leaf is read, while a tape recording is made. In one centre (of the case documented below) there were several readers and translators, one pair dealing with a given leaf. After each sentence or part of it, the reading is translated (if the subject so wishes) into his own language by a translator; the translation is recorded at the same time. The reading covers not only the subject's present life (its past, present and future), but also his/her previous birth and the next birth. The leaf has often been known to state that the subject will have the reading only at the age (and year) at which he seeks the reading. Indeed I personally know of one case (case No. 3) in which the subject was told that at the time of reading, his wife would be abroad; in fact his wife was abroad on a 3 month holiday. It is remarkable that over

an age-span of 60 odd years of this subject, this period of 3 months when his wife was away, was his 'appointed' time for having his leaf read.

There is no discussion between reader and subject except initially when the subject is asked to verify that the leaf is indeed his, from his date of birth, and names of the subject and of his parents, and on occasion from key facts of his life, eg. number of siblings. The absence of such a discussion excludes the possibility of the reader 'fishing out' information from the client...

The reading states all significant facts from the time he was born - including where he was born (eg. public hospital, major city), the date, day of the week, the natal horoscope, parents' names, subject's name, number of siblings (male, female), number of children (male, female), profession, events in the subject's life and a full description of the natal chart.. It is again to be emphasised that, although the subject does not initially state his time of birth, the horoscope that is described necessarily entails a 'knowledge' of the time of birth because the natal horoscope depends on it for its accuracy .

The events are related to astrologically determined 'periods', under the rulership and sub-rulership of specific 'planets'. In my fathers' reading (case No.4) which he obtained in the 1930s, the periods were listed from the year of his birth (1889) till only 1960, as if to mean- 'that, 1989-1960, is his life span'; indeed he died in 1960, a correct prediction for a 30 year period.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE OLA LEAF WRITINGS

Tamil subjects who have had their readings and who have seen the writing on the leaves are of the opinion that the language was not modern Tamil. Indeed one subject (case No.5) had to have his leaf translated into contemporary modern Tamil by a Professor of Tamil who was an expert in Tamil linguistics, and could understand ancient Tamil. Translations might involve a distortion or obscurity of original meanings. In this case (No.5) related to me, the subject was told that his father was in an occupation that dealt with transport and that he had to work with "iron and fire". It is not unexpected that the writing which was probably made centuries before the invention of railways, failed to identify "iron and fire" as having referred to a steam locomotive in which his father was an engine driver. In my father's case (No.4), his leaf stated that he, in his profession, would be concerned with "wheeled conveyance"; he was employed in the railways. In another case (case No.6), the subject heard the word "*upadeshana*" mentioned in relation to her profession. At her first reading the translator gave it as 'teacher' which was correct, but after retirement she was indeed a counsellor in a different line of work. The word 'counsellor' was a better translation of the Sanskrit word "*upadeshana*". In this reading, the subject was told she had 'high blood pressure and cholesterol', which are terms in modern medicine and certainly could not have featured in an ancient script. In the latter instance, the interpretation by the reader or translator might explain the use of modern terms.

THE FUTURE

It is invariably so that the past, up to the time of reading, has been entirely and uncannily accurate, down to the details of personal names. In my instance (No.2) with an Indian reader in Madras, I wrote my father's name as 'Patrick' for the use of the translator in identifying the leaf as mine. The reader however read the selected leaf and said my father's name was 'Don Patrick', which was correct. My father had seldom used the name Don, and I did not mention or write that name during this session. Having been a South Indian reader whom I had not met before, and having had my reading made 2 hours after giving my thumb print, it was not possible for him to have fraudulently ascertained the name Don.

What does seem to go wrong in some cases is the future. Why this is so is controversial and hypotheses abound. One suggests that, as much as the events described in the writings are based on the idea of *karma* (cumulative consequences of one's past deeds), a person's future depends not only on his past *karma* especially from deeds committed in his previous lives, but also on his deeds (and consequent *karma*) in his present life, which can modify his *karmic* account, modifying in turn the events of the future. It is relevant that a current view on the perennial debate on free-will *versus* determinism is that the answer probably lies in the idea of 'compatibilism' (Searle 1984) which accommodates both determinism and free-will, just as much as Radhakrishnan, the Indian philosopher-statesman compared the situation to a game of cards in which the predetermined (*determinism*) pack of cards is dealt out as a hand to each player, who can then use the cards as it pleases him (*free-will*).

The meticulous performance of propitiatory rites or *poojas* (as correctives for 'bad' karmic effects) as prescribed in the readings as a determinant of the fruition of the predictions could also be another basis of the explanation of why the future, as described on the leaf, is not always correct. In these instances, perhaps the *poojas* were not done as prescribed.

THE INVESTIGATION OF THE OLA-LEAF PHENOMENON

It is apparent that the phenomenon of the ola leaves cannot be studied 'objectively' or by quantitative, controlled experiments, as one would do in normal science or even with other putative *psi* phenomena - eg. GESP with Zener cards under controlled, experimental conditions, statistics etc. The approach that seems possible with the ola leaves is that used by Ian Stevenson in his analysis of cases suggestive of re-incarnation, or the legal approach to gathering what could be circumstantial

evidence, with corroboration from independent sources, and certainly the elimination of fraud. In this respect, another parallel is the validation of ideas in astro-physics and theoretical physics: "...it is not easy to measure the mass and spin of something as dark and far away as a neutron star or a black hole. These things have to be deduced from circumstantial evidence (especially hard for black holes) which by their nature reveal little about themselves" (General Relativity. *The Economist*, 1997, Nov 8th). Yet it is possible to make some investigations such as whether the readings are off a written script. In this case re-reading at a later date, of the same leaf, should give an identical reading. If it is not identical, then some telepathic event at the time of reading might account for its accuracy,

POSSIBLE SOURCES OF FRAUD

One possible source of fraud is a tracing of the antecedents of the subject through his/her name, address or other personal details (if given), during the week or more that elapses between the initial meeting at which the thumb print of the subject is supplied, and the reading. That this does not seem to occur is suggested by the fact that the subjects who have had correct readings did not give their correct name, nor address nor other relevant personal details. Such a source of fraud is also discounted on the facts that (1) the gap between the giving of the thumb print and the actual reading after the selection of the leaf has been as short as one or two hours, making it impossible for the reader to do 'research' on the subject's background; (2) confidential details pertaining to the subject, but which have not been known to anyone else, or not documented, have been read or commented on with great accuracy; (3) specific predictions, borne out as correct by subsequent events, have been recorded. In one case (case No.7), the transcript of which I have, the subject (a Sinhalese) was told that he will marry a girl of a different race, with a specified surname. Indeed, years later, he did get married to a Tamil girl, but her surname differed from what was predicted. On checking with her parents *after* marriage, it was revealed that their family name had indeed been changed many years before, and the original name was in fact what was stated on the subject's leaf. Neither the subject nor the girl was aware of the original name. Other examples of accurate predictions made for periods of up to several years in the future, would also exclude fraud of this type, and are recorded below.

Another obvious type of fraud could occur when the reader by skilful questioning, draws out the information from the subject himself, in the guise of needing that information for verification of the ownership of the leaf. In my personal experience and that of others, such 'fishing' did not occur. The only questioning by the reader was solely for verification of the identity of the leaf, from basic facts (date of birth, names of subject and family members) related to the subject, before the actual reading.

Each session covers only 2 or 3 chapters and when the subject returns, days or weeks later on appointment, the same leaf (identified by a shrewd subject by its physical appearances such as tears and marks) is taken up again to continue the reading. Further evidence in refutation of the possibility of fraud (as pertaining to an instant astrological reading instead) is that when a person who once had a reading went back for re-reading of the same leaf, a near-identical reading was made on the second occasion, as described below. The investigator was herself proficient in astrology. She had readings (her son's) (case No.8) made on two different occasions, 8 months apart. The facts and the sequence of the facts given in the four chapters thus tested, were closely similar. If the reading were a concoction or an instant reading from a chart made at the session by the reader from his knowledge of astrology, successive readings on widely separated occasions could scarcely have been identical. In case No.3 the subject who once had a reading, went back for a re-reading of the same leaf, six years later, and was told that after the original reading, his leaf has been sent back to India and that he will have to await the reader's return from India with that leaf. On his re-visit he was told that the original leaf was not available but that another leaf, also pertaining to this subject, will be read; this reading was also correct, but this particular case could not produce a confirmation of actual written documentation of the original reading, as two different leaves and different chapters were read.

It is a less stringent refutation of the possibility of fraud that the reader was a visiting South Indian while the subjects were from many different parts of Sri Lanka or even from other countries, who had not known the reader until their consultation with him.

A CASE STUDY IN INDIAN OLA LEAF HOROSCOPE READINGS (AS NARRATED TO THE AUTHOR BY 'C' AND HER HUSBAND, cases No.9, and 10)

Reader - a south Indian, resident in Sri Lanka for over forty years.

Readings - in Tamil, with English translation, both tape recorded

Personnae - F =, C's father who had a son from his 1st wife W1

AL = his second wife and mother of C

C = daughter of F from his 2nd wife AL

F's ola reading (case No.9) (describing his present and past lives) were given by the reader in 1956, a year before C was born (1957). C was told of her father's reading by her mother AL.

C's reading (No.10) (describing her present and past lives) was also given by the same reader but 24 years later in 1980, after her father had died many years earlier.

The reader was unaware of the relationship between C and F at the time of C's reading, nor did he have cause to remember that he gave her father's (F's) reading 24 years before. Moreover since F had died, there was no possibility of getting his thumb print for retrieval of his leaf for a second time. Later the reader was told of the father's death. The remarkable coincidence of the facts stated on the two leaves, and described below, could thus not have been attributed to a knowledge on the part of the reader that the leaves belonged to two related subjects.

F's present life

F was very keen to study medicine and he sat one examination but he did not continue as his parents wanted him to work towards the examination for the Civil Service. He always regretted that he did not study medicine. In his professional life, F was in employment as a senior government official in the prestigious Ceylon Civil Service, and held an important posting in a state ministry.

F was married to W1 from whom he had a son (S). After S's birth, F's marriage had foundered and they were divorced. The son S was taken by W1. F then married AL and C was born in 1957. W1 died in 1958, and then her son S was brought up by F's 2nd wife AL, who cared for the son as if he were her own son. F's marriage to AL was a successful and happy marriage.

F's former life (as stated on his old horoscope. Italicised parts occurred in the reading, bold initials and words, author's)

You had been a King in Nepal and though having had a Queen, you also had an affair with a minister's daughter (MD), and she conceived. The Queen had the pregnancy aborted, and the mother (MD) too died. Before her death, the minister's daughter (MD) cursed you (the King) that in a future birth you will never be a King but will merely be an advisor to a King, that you will want to become a doctor but you won't succeed, and that you will be married to a reincarnation of herself, the Queen. The unborn child of the minister's daughter (MD) aborted on the order of the Queen will be re-born as your child and the Queen of your former birth, as your 1st wife. This child will bring trouble to you, the parents, and your marriage won't succeed. You will be divorced and later she will die.

You (the former King, now F) will marry the former minister's daughter (MD) with whom you had an affair (now AL) and the aborted child will come back to your second wife (AL) who will look after him, lovingly as her own son.

Your second child chased you away from your throne.

Possible parallels between F's former life and his present life

His former Queen is the 1st wife (W1) in his present life. F is now the former King. The child (of the minister's daughter who conceived after her affair with the former King) that died in the abortion in the previous life, is the son (S) who is now the step-brother of C and who was cared for by F's 2nd wife AL, who was the minister's daughter in the previous life. The affinity between the former King and the minister's daughter in the previous life, now continues in the present life as an affinity (and marriage) between F (the former King) and AL (the former minister's daughter MD). MD's aborted child is now her (AL's) step-son for whom she cares as if he were her own.

C's present life

C's reading (case No.9) was taken 24 years later in 1980 at her age of 23, also from the same reader. C's father F died when she was 15 years of age. C married when she was 27.

The predictive capacity of the ola leaves

Several predictions were borne out as correct by later events:-

Event	predicted period	validity
(predictions made when C was 23 years of age)		
(1) marriage	4 years	correct
(2) daughter's birth	7 years	correct
(3) mother's heart attack and her retirement from her legal firm	7 years	correct
(4) 1983 riots in Sri Lanka. "you won't be in the country" C was in the UK at this time. "Foreign troops will come to Lanka"	7 years	correct
(5) "a low caste person will rule Lanka"		correct
(6) description of her future husband "he will deal with figures" He became an accountant		correct
(7) "He will have his own firm"		correct
(8) "you will live in your mother's house"		correct
(9) puberty of daughter	11 years	correct

C's daughter's leaf was read when she was 1 year old. Predictions in C's daughter's reading-

"your grandmother will have a heart attack and die before your 10 th birthday"		correct
"you will be the only child"		correct
"your father will fall and break his leg"	9 years	correct
"you will change your school"	7 years	correct

The only anomaly or error was that it was stated in C's reading that she will have a son and a daughter, but C's daughter's reading (case No.11) stated that she will have no siblings.

These readings could not have been attributed to telepathy by the leaf reader because some of the stated facts of their family life (foetal deaths before C was born) were unknown to C at the time of the reading. The accuracy of the predictions (with no possibility of anticipation by C) would probably exclude fraud or telepathy.

C's previous life (as stated in her ola horoscope)

You were the daughter of a king of Nepal in a previous birth and you chased away your father from his throne. Your father, the King, cursed you that you will in a future birth, never know the value of a father. Because you ill-treated youth in your previous life, you will marry late in this life but with corrective poojas, you will marry at the age of 27. (poojas = ceremonial propitiatory rites, votive offerings and religious performances).

Possible parallels between C's previous life and her present life.

C who usurped the throne from her father the King in her previous life, lost her father in her present life when she was 15. C did marry at the age of 27 as predicted in her leaf; 27 is usually considered a late age for marriage for a girl in traditional Sinhalese society.

Possible parallels between AL's previous life and her present life.

AL did not have a leaf read. These parallels are inferred from the readings of C, her daughter and of F, her husband.

The aborted child from the extra-marital liaison in F's previous life as the King, which was thus the vortex of the turbulence in the lives of the King and the minister's daughter, is now, in the present life, the vehicle of the curse that disrupted F's 1st marriage, to W1.

AL (the minister's daughter in a previous life), never felt that her step-son (her aborted child in her previous life) was not her own. She brought him up as if he were her own son. Her marriage to F was a continuing liaison, as between the King (now F) and the minister's daughter (now AL) in their previous birth.

DISCUSSION

It is presumed that the leaf reader, at the time of his reading C's leaf, could not have remembered the reading he gave her father 24 years previously. Moreover since F was dead at this time, he could not have obtained F's thumb print for retrieval of F's leaf for comparison.. It is therefore assumed that the reader could not have used F's reading to comment on C's (his daughter's) former and present lives.

Could the congruence of the past and present lives of F, AL and C support (1) the validity of the Indian ola leaf horoscopes, and (2) the ideas of re-incarnation and *Karma*? It would be interesting to scan the history of Nepal to determine whether such a scandal did occur in any of Nepal's royal households, a technique used by Ian Stevenson in his validation of cases suggestive of re-incarnation. The difficulty with the present case is that the history of Nepal records a multiplicity of kingdoms, fiefdoms and states which had their own kings, rulers, and chieftans, and the skeletons in their private cupboards need not necessarily have found their way into the books on the macro-history of Nepal.

The basis of these ola leaf writings, their stunningly accurate descriptions of the past and sometimes of the future, is obscure. Certainly the writings deal with Indian astrology. In conventional, contemporary astrological readings however, such minutiae as the subject's name, the names of his family members, and other details of his life, are never revealed.

Beyond a possible authenticity of the leaves, could several *psi*-phenomena, other than astrology, be involved? *Telepathy* (reading what is in the mind of the subject). Identification of facts which were unknown to the subjects might exclude this.

Clairvoyance (identification of objects or current events without a sensory process). Some of the identified facts were without documentation elsewhere. Of such data, there seems to be a parallel in the ability to recall the past, describe the present and predict the future as the ola leaf reader did, with the Bulgarian psychic Vanga Dimitrova (Ostrander & Schroeder 1970): "*Vanga began by telling him his first and second name. She told him where he lived at that time. Then she told him his mother's name and identified the disease she suffered with. She told Sasha the date of his father's death and named the illness that had killed him. She gave Sasha all this information as if she was reading from a book. Then she said. 'You've been married seven years, but you have no children. You will have a child one year from now'. This did happen exactly as she had predicted*". Did the ola-leaf readers resort to the sort of GESP that Vanga demonstrated?

An attempt was made to verify whether the leaf reader was indeed reading what was written on the leaves, and not making an 'instant' reading of a horoscope that he had made:-

(1) Subject A had a reading (case No.3) in 1991, A requested that the same chapter be read again, (by the same reader) 7 years later. The reader said he could not locate the leaf which had probably been taken back to India, but identified from A's thumb print another leaf pertaining to A (case No.3b). He read another chapter (chapter 2) but gave the same facts about A including his horoscope, his name, his wife's name and parents' names, and other family details, as accurately as before. A more successful attempt at re-reading of the *same* leaf was made in the second case described below.

(2) This case (case No.8) was narrated to me by a person who was a competent astrologer herself (DW). Her son had his leaf read, after verification of his name as SW. Eight months later, his mother DW had his leaf read again, at the same centre, through his (the son's) thumb print, and after verification of his name but as SM and not SW as on the first occasion. Really the son's name was SMW. The son was not present on the 2nd occasion eliminating the possibility of personal identification of the subject by the reader. Moreover, both reader and translator were different on the 2nd occasion. DW was herself proficient in Sanskrit, words in which featured on the readings, and she made notes of what was read. The 4 chapters read on the 2nd occasion were compared as to (a) the facts stated, (b) the sequence of these facts. In DW's estimate the correspondence between the **facts** stated on the 2 occasions was 100%. The correspondence between the **sequence of the facts** was 75-80%, suggesting that the two readings were made from an actual documentation on the leaf. DW's views were (a) that differences in *sequence* in a few instances could have occurred on the part of the translator, such as if the reading stated 'cart and horse', the translator could have stated it as 'horse and cart'. (b) the possibility that there could have been two different leaves pertaining to this subject, written by two different *rishis*, which dealt with the same facts (100% correspondence) but with a different sequence (75-80% correspondence). Indeed in my own instance at the same centre and the same reader, there were apparently two different leaves pertaining to me, which corresponded on the principal facts. It was however not possible, as was stated in this case (1) above, to compare the sequences since the consecutive readings were of different chapters in two different leaves.

(3) A medical professor who was proficient in Tamil claimed that he read his name inscribed on his leaf (case No.12). So did a surgeon (a Sri Lankan Tamil) proficient in astrology, see the name of his English wife, on his leaf (case No.13).

Items (2) and (3) would indicate that the readings were indeed from what was actually written on the leaves.

It might seem improbable that the reader made an instant astrological reading through telepathy in cases where the subject did not know the time of his/her birth, which is essential for casting of a horoscope in the first place.

A curious fact about these readings emerged from 2 instances, one of which I was personally aware of, and the second related to me at first-hand by DW, the educationist-astrologer-

(1) the subject A (case No.3) was in the throes of a personal problem on which he was in a particular state of mind- intentions, hopes, attitudes-related to his problem. No one who knew of this problem, was in the country at the time. A's reading described the problem, its origins, and descriptions of persons involved, with stunning accuracy, and made unambiguous comments on A's state of mind. Seven years later, the circumstances regarding A's problem had changed and now he was of a different frame of mind. He consulted the same reader again who gave him a reading of a different leaf because the original leaf could not be traced, as perhaps it had been taken back to India. The new reading also described the same problem but now stated that he had changed his mind on it, tallying exactly with A's new frame of mind on the problem.

(2) DW, the educationist-amateur astrologer also experienced different interpretations on her readings (case No.6) on successive occasions, and she asked the question: "*Is it a variation upon the karmic force which changes according to karma accrued as we go on?*".

This point was also raised earlier as a possible explanation of the short-falls in predictive accuracy as compared with the total accuracy of the description of past events. This recalls Sir Oliver Lodge's and Sir Arthur Eddington's comments:-

"The events may be in some sense in existence always, both past and future, and it may be we who are arriving at them, not they which are happening"

(Lodge)

"This division into past and future is closely associated with our ideas of causation and free-will. In a perfectly determinate scheme, the past and future may be regarded as lying mapped out - as much available to present exploration as the distant parts of space. Events do not happen, they are just there, and we come across them". (Eddington)

If indeed ola leaf writings are genuine commentaries on the lives of people, one might also have recourse to some modern ideas in theoretical physics and metaphysics to unravel the mystery and mechanism of these ola horoscopes:-

(1) *“People like us, who believe in physics, know that the distinction between past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion”*
(Albert Einstein, 1955, Letters)

(2) *“Tachyons. There is speculation among theoretical physicists that exist particles which move faster than light. These hypothetical particles, called tachyons, would have to move ‘backwards’ in time to be consistent with relativity theory. This suggests to some proponents of the paranormal that tachyons could provide a basis for precognition, since the tachyons that exist at the present time have come to us from the future. Martin Gardner (1974) points out that quite apart from the fact that such particles remain hypothetical at the moment, such particles cannot provide a means of communication although some physicists looking for tachyons have overlooked this point”.* (Alcock 1981).

“In some laboratories an active search is going on for hypothetical ‘tachyons’ - particles of cosmic origin which are supposed to fly faster than light and consequently, according to orthodox Relativity Theory, in a reversed time direction. They would thus carry information from the future into our present, as light and X-rays from distant galaxies carry information from the remote past of the universe into our now and here. In the light of these developments, we can no longer exclude on a priori grounds the theoretical possibility of precognitive phenomena, such as, for instance, those produced in the Soal-Shackleton experiments. The logical paradox that predicting a future event may prevent or distort it is circumvented by the indeterminateness of the future in modern physics and the probabilistic nature of all forecasts” (Koestler 1973)

The consideration of a possible parallel in Nostradamus and his predictions is compelling although the veiled language used by Nostradamus contrasts with the clear statements made on the leaves. Nostradamus was accused of heresy by the Church. He used veiled language and garbled archaic French for his quatrains on account of this, and because (in his own words):- *“If I came to refer to that which will be in the future, those of the realm, sect, religion, and faith would find it so poorly in accord with their petty fancies that they would come to condemn that which future ages shall know and understand to be true”* (quoted by Tomas 1974). The situation amongst the South Asians, of whom the *rishis* are alleged to have

written these forecasts, is entirely different because the ideas of re-incarnation and *karma* are firmly embodied in their indigenous faiths.

Having read this script, Professor Ian Stevenson (Division of Personality Studies, Department of Psychiatric Medicine, University of Virginia, USA) recommended that a further test be done on the validity of these leaves. A leaf which is found to be correct in the stated facts needs to be photographed and the script on the leaf be translated by an expert in the old Tamil script. If the facts as written on the script match the facts as stated to the subject and are correct, a conclusion could be made that the reader's correct statements are indeed from a documentation on the ancient leaf. It is hoped that these tests could be done and reported in a subsequent communication.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Indian palm (ola) leaf horoscopes are amazingly accurate in describing past events and sometimes, in accurately predicting the future.
2. The history of their documentation, and why they were written allegedly many centuries ago, are obscure.
3. There is no incontrovertible proof in all instances, that these leaves did actually record all that the readers recited. Experts in Tamil linguistics will be needed to examine these writings, supposedly in ancient Tamil, before their authenticity is established. However two Tamil professional subjects claimed to have read either their own names or that of their spouse on their leaves suggesting that the readings were made off written scripts. That the readings are made from what is actually written on the leaves and not from an instant astrological reading of a chart made by the reader, is also suggested (in one case documented in this paper) by the 100% correspondence of the identity of the facts and 75-80% correspondence of the sequence of the facts, from readings of the same leaf on two different occasions.
4. The possible role of GESP (precognition, telepathy) on the part of the reader, in at least a part of the readings, cannot always be excluded. However in the majority of cases studied, some of which are documented here, precognition and telepathy on the part of the leaf reader, were probably not operative.
5. A possible source of genuine error in the accuracy of the readings might arise from the translator's mis-interpretation or incompetence, or from translational difficulties in relation to contemporary language..

6. Research on these ola leaf horoscopes has to reckon with fraud, through a reader seeking out biodata of the subject, between the first visit for providing the thumb print and the reading, or by the reader skilfully attempting to extract facts from the subject. These sources of fraud were excluded from the cases documented here.

7. Quantitative, experimental investigations under controlled conditions which have been used on other *psi*-phenomena such as Zener card-reading ability, are difficult with the leaf horoscopes. The approach used in this study was the use of circumstantial or 'legally' acceptable evidence.

8. If these ola leaf horoscopes are found to be genuine ancient writings and are accurate in describing and predicting human events, the ideas of re-incarnation and *karma* then would merit serious consideration as valid.

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Captain Robert Knox, 1641 - 1720, of the East India Company (Portrait by P. Trampon, c. 1708) Courtesy: National Maritime Museum, London