

# FOREWORD

By Brendan Feeley

I regard it to be a great honor to write the foreword to this scholarly work. Robert Koch is an advanced Jyotishi of a high order and those who are familiar with his teaching and work, especially over the past decade, will welcome this book. He is not only a scholar of Jyotish but also of Vedic knowledge and his background is uniquely suited to the topic he has presented here. He has dedicated his life to the pursuit of spiritual knowledge from his early twenties when he received *Diksha* initiation from his beloved Guru, Sri Srimad A.C. Bhaktivedanta Svāmi Prabhupada in March, 1971. His Guru was tireless in His promotion of Krishna Consciousness and in spreading the teachings of the *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad Bhagavatam* throughout the world and Robert was tireless in his dedication to his Guru. During those years, he abandoned all the pursuits of material comfort at an age when the typical individual is in hot pursuit of an education that will lead to professional success and financial stability in the world. Instead, he dedicated himself to the study of the most important scriptures of Vedic India and the Hindu religion, the *Bhagavad-gita* and the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. The *Bhagavad-gita* is said to be the prime *Upanishad* as it delineates the essence of *Atma-vidya* (spiritual knowledge in all its various categories), while the *Srimad Bhagavatam* is the crown jewel of all the scriptures of the Vedas as it embodies all the spiritual philosophies of India. It reveals the eternal *Svaurpa* or personal form of God in His various incarnations, and that selfless dedication to Him within the heart (*bhakti*) ensures liberation from the pains of ignorance and material existence. In addition to the years he spent in India as a *brahmachari* (celibate priest), Robert served as head *pujari* (priest) at several ISKCON temples in America and Canada, and with this background he is well-qualified to present the subject of spiritual Jyotish to both East and West.

His extraordinary background comes through the pages of this volume and it soon becomes obvious that his dedication to his subject is just as intense as the earlier impulse that brought him on his long and rewarding spiritual journey through the vast volumes of Vedic literature. This excellent work sets a new standard for both student and practitioner of this sacred science and the book should soon become a requirement for serious students, especially those who are courageous enough to venture into the vast and unfathomable ocean of Parashari and Jaimini Jyotish.

Not only does he produce a new set of predictive techniques to examine spirituality in the natal chart, but Robert also presents the material in a context that is steeped in the richness of Vedic cosmology and spirituality. The important point here is that his writing honors the depth of the tradition and culture of India. Jyotish in the West is too often presented as a mechanical model devoid of the cultural and spiritual underpinnings of its origins, and in my experience the subject cannot be completely understood without an appreciation for the stories, attitudes, beliefs, values, rites and rituals, dramas, festivals, religion and philosophies of that culture.

Jyotish is a *Vedanga*, a limb of the Vedas, and as such it reflects the light (Jyoti) that leads souls to God-realization ultimately. The task of the Jyotish, therefore, is to see the will of God in the natal chart and to guide the souls on the path of God-realization. Throughout the chapters of this book, we learn that the intention of the soul, the *Atma*, is to be seen by examining the status of the *Atmakaraka* planet and its placement in the chart. In addition, we learn that the *Ishta-devata*, which is determined from the placement of the *Atmakaraka*, is the aspect of the Divine that we should worship to overcome our suffering and misery in this world. Once the *Ishta-devata* is determined, appropriate mantras and spiritual practices can be recommended to the individual to help him overcome the past *karmas* which obstruct the path to spiritual enlightenment. These are vital teachings for any Jyotishi, for our first responsibility is to guide individuals towards the path of *moksha* or ultimate spiritual liberation.

In addition, Robert Koch has presented an entirely original research on Drig Dasha, a predictive tool presented by Maharishi's Parashara and Jaimini for determining periods of spiritual initiation, meeting of one's Guru, as well as years of life where great steps can be made on one's spiritual journey.

The teachings of the Vedas are not the product of the human mind, and thus Jyotish cannot be invented by any human being. As Jyotishis, we have to learn the science that was given to us by the great sages and teachers of this knowledge, and apply our intelligence in the application of that science.

In my opinion, Robert Koch has proven to all of us that he is a rare exponent of this science and his work honors the teachings of his Jyotish Guru and the Parampara (disciplic lineage) to which we belong.

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