

Do Spiritual Masters Transcend Their Astrological Charts?

The view is sometimes put that the more spiritually evolved we are the less influence astrology has over us. According to this view, spiritual masters transcend their charts. The thinking behind this view seems to be that a birth chart, with its inherent structural patterns and implied schedule of unfolding, is a limitation in some way.

But this thinking is based on a misconception. A birth chart is not a limitation any more than the banks of a river are a limitation to the river. Certainly they define it - a river without banks is not a river. Similarly, a birth chart defines our individuality. It can be considered a limitation only if our individuality is considered a limitation.

To be sure, for enlightenment to occur, the testimony of spiritual masters is that this is in fact the case. For just as a river loses its individuality when it merges with the ocean, so must our individuality dissolve if we are to merge with the ocean of existence and awaken to the Self. The Self is eternal and infinite, and as such was never born and never dies. It necessarily follows then that it has no birth chart. No birth chart, no question of transcending it.

But this ultimate experience of enlightenment, of the individual ego-personality-self dissolving into the Self does not invalidate the relationship between an individual and his chart. How does this work? Ramesh Balsekar, a living Indian spiritual teacher based in Mumbai from the non-dual Advaita Vedanta tradition of whom Ramana Maharshi, Nisargadatta Maharaj and Papaji are perhaps the most well known and influential exponents, puts it like this: *“After enlightenment or awakening, the body/mind organism continues to function, more or less as it did earlier. The body/mind organism will function according to its characteristics.”* Those characteristics are indicated by the birth chart.

Spiritual masters are Self-realized beings who yet continue to function as individual personalities in the time and space bounded world of consensus reality in which we all function. Although their ‘cosmic consciousness’ maybe one and the same, as individual personalities they are certainly very different and reflect their charts like everyone else, though to be sure, often at a higher level of manifestation.

Take for example, the influential Indian Master **Osho**, who is probably better known by his earlier designation of Bhagwan or Rajneesh. In character traits, life patterns and themes, he is almost a text-book Sagittarian.

Consider his insistence on freedom, both in terms of personal action and also as the highest value to be honored in any kind of love relationship, for example. For him, love without freedom is not love at all.

Consider too his quest for enlightenment; his relentless commitment to living in truth and honesty; his sense of humor and parallel attitude that seriousness is the worst sin; his bluntness and directness of expression - for example, not hesitating to call something 'bullshit' if that's what he felt about it, and the sometimes outrageous language of his jokes. Note especially his hilarious discourse on the uses of the word 'f..k'.

Consider also his propensity to engage in argument and his mastery of debate. When, as a student, during the national debating championships his opponent failed to show up, Osho argued both sides himself and the result was declared a draw.

Finally his penchant for telling stories, for exaggeration, for downplaying the importance of facts in favor of a higher truth; his love of higher learning; his insatiable appetite for books; and the fact that he is probably the most published person in history ... these are all examples of Sagittarian traits and themes manifesting at the highest level.

I am struck by the prevalence of the sign Capricorn in the charts of Masters I have studied. Osho had five planets in Capricorn - Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars and Saturn; **Gurdjieff** the Sun and Moon; while **Ramana Maharshi** and **Paramahansa Yogananda** had their Sun in the sign. **Jesus**, too, is a Sun sign Capricorn if he really was born on December 25, though many astrologers, myself included, think it more likely that he was born in the sign of Pisces, under the influence of a Jupiter/Saturn conjunction, that being the 'star' that the three wise men followed to Bethlehem.

Other evolved Sun sign Capricorns include **Kahlil Gibran**, **Martin Luther King**, **Stanislav Grof**, **Carlos Castaneda**, **Timothy Leary**, **Alan Watts** and **John Lilly** [- the latter two share the same birth date.]

The prevalence of Capricorn is not surprising perhaps when it is considered that spiritual life, as much, if not more than worldly life, requires dedication, discipline, commitment, focus, clarity and more often than not, plain hard work, qualities the sign Capricorn bestows in abundance. So **Gurdijeff** is archetypically Capricornian when he calls his spiritual work with his disciples 'The Work'. Two representative aphorisms: *"I love him who loves work"* and *"There is only self-initiation, which is acquired by constant effort. It is impossible to give to a man anything that could become his own without effort on his part."*

Ramana Maharshi worked the whole time in the sense that he made himself constantly available to all comers as he humbly sat in a corner of his ashram silently radiating his spiritual power. Although his spiritual wealth was great, in a mundane sense his life style was extremely spartan, in the same way that some work centered Capricorns in positions of worldly power live quite frugally although they could afford to live in luxury if they so chose. Ramana's spartan routine included rising around 3:00 am every day to help prepare breakfast for his disciples and generally sharing in the communal work of the ashram.

On the other hand, Capricorn is also a sign noted for concern with status, standards and quality. Well, nothing but the best for **Osho**, from the Rolls Royces to the impeccably tailored robes, from the acres of marble in his ashram buildings to the beautiful gardens, and more generally in the up market presentation of 'Club Meditation'. As he said of himself: *"I'm a simple man. I simply like the best of everything."* Despite all that, he nevertheless lived quite simply in sparsely furnished personal quarters, albeit of pristine quality and cleanliness.

Gurdijeff, like Osho, is also a distinctive astrological blend of Capricorn and Sagittarius, for as well as Sun and Moon in Capricorn, he had Venus conjunct Jupiter in Sagittarius. This is the astrological significator of Gurdijeff's generous hospitality and well known love of a drop of vodka. The dinner table was his temple of choice to transmit his higher teachings.

Sagittarius bestows a gift for telling stories. In my mind's eye I can see Gurdijeff now, vodka in hand, talking of 'Meetings With Remarkable Men', telling 'Tales of Beelzebub' ... [The titles of his most well known books]

Paramahansa Yogananda, author of *Autobiography of a Yogi*, the spiritual classic that has inspired many a western seeker's quest for enlightenment, based himself in Los Angeles in the 1930's and attracted many wealthy disciples of high social status who helped to spread his teaching and make him famous. In true Capricorn fashion he set up an organization to further his spiritual work, the Self Realization Fellowship, which is still going strong more than 50 years after his death.

Yogananda also has a lot of fire energy in his chart - Mars and Jupiter in Aries, Mercury conjunct Venus in Sagittarius, and Moon conjunct his Leo Ascendant – which accounts for the fact that his autobiography is no mere worthy account but reads like a fascinating adventure story. The Aries influence is reflected in the pioneering quality of his teaching mission, the Mercury conjunct Venus influence in the beauty and charm of his prose, and the Leo in the sheer romance and grandeur of his epic narrative. On a more mundane level, his striking leonine mane of hair is a good example of how the Ascendant sign is often more determining of physical appearance than the Sun sign.

In a happy instance of synchronicity, I came across this testimonial on the back cover of the 1993 twelfth paperbound edition of his autobiography whilst writing the above paragraph, which is positively redolent with Leonine imagery: *“As I looked into his face, my eyes were almost dazzled by a radiance – a light of spirituality that literally shone from him. His infinite gentleness, his gracious kindness [the influence of the feminine Moon colouring his Ascendant, rather than the sign Leo itself] enveloped me like warm sunshine”*

The element of fire mythologizes life. Nothing is just a mere fact, event or chance encounter, all and everything has symbolic import, meaning and significance, potentially charged with awe, wonder and potential. Keeping that in mind, here is Yogananda's account of his first meeting with his guru Sri Yukteswar:

“A christlike man in the ochre robes of a swami stood motionless at the end of the lane. Instantly and anciently familiar he seemed .. A few steps and I was at his feet. “Gurudeva!” The divine face was the one I had seen in a thousand visions .. “Oh mine own, you have come to me!” My guru uttered the words again and again .. his voice tremulous with joy. “How many years I have waited for you!” We entered a oneness of silence; words seemed the

rankest superfluities. Eloquence flowed in soundless chant from the heart of master to disciple .. *“I give you my unconditional love.”* .. *“Will you give me the same unconditional love?”* He looked at me with childlike trust. *“I will love you eternally, Gurudeva!”* “Ordinary love is selfish, darky rooted in desires and satisfactions. Divine love is without condition, without boundary, without change. The flux of the human heart is gone forever at the transfixing touch of pure love.” [pp 106-8]

Another influential Indian spiritual master is **Meher Baba**, a Pisces Sun sign who is totally reflective of that sign with his emphasis on love as the surest path to Self or God realization, retreat into silence, and the touching of his feet as the devotional practice of his devotees. Although this is a traditional practice in India, with him it was the central ritual of his transmission. [Interestingly too, Pisces rules the feet in the body.]

Pisces as the final sign completes the circle of the zodiac, which is a symbolic representation of the totality of life. I read the glyph for the Sun, N, as the outer circle of the zodiacal signs, symbolizing the multi-faceted human experience, encircling the ‘still point of the turning world’ or the Self at the center. The question then again arises, what is the relationship of time bound individual experience to the eternal non-dual Being of the Self or God, the core sustaining reality at the center of the multi-dimensional human experience? **Meher Baba** provides an inspirational ‘answer’:

“The sojourn of the soul is a thrilling divine romance in which the lover - who in the beginning is conscious of nothing but emptiness, frustration, superficiality, and the gnawing claims of bondage - gradually attains an increasingly fuller and freer expression of love. And ultimately the lover disappears and merges in the divine Beloved to realize the unity of the lover and the Beloved in the supreme and eternal fact of God as infinite Love.”

J.Krishnamurti, Gurdijeff, and Osho all have a dynamic aspect pattern in their charts emphasizing the planet Uranus. Reflecting it’s maverick status in the solar system of being the only planet that spins on its side, Uranus is associated with non-conformism, un-conventionality, radical individualism, independence, rebellion, revolution, brilliance, genius and the clear light of truth. Uranian individuals insist on living in freedom from family and social expectations and indeed from all externally imposed constraints. They take inspiration from Buddha’s famous words, “Be a light unto yourself.”

J.Krishnamurti was born with the Sun in Taurus opposed to Uranus in Scorpio, with both planets squaring his Aquarius Ascendant. His Uranian nature is reflected in the brilliance of his insight and in his rebellious refusal to take on the role of World Teacher, for which he was intensively groomed by the Theosophical Society. His best known quote displays the archetypical Uranian refusal to be part of any institutionalization of wisdom: *“Truth is a pathless land. Man cannot come to it through any organization, through any creed, through any dogma, priest, ritual, not through any philosophical knowledge or psychological technique.”*

Gurdijeff had Mars in Scorpio opposite Pluto in Taurus, both square Uranus in Leo, making Uranus the focal planet of a so called T square aspect pattern. A ‘rascal guru’, many examples could be given of conventionally immoral escapades. However, like all evolved Uranians he answered only to the higher authority of his own inner law. Uranians too, are often outsiders, ‘strangers in a strange land’, so this description of Gurdijeff by his influential student J.G. Bennett struck me as most apt: *“He made upon me the impression of an exile from another world, who must always be a stranger in any company.”*

Osho had Moon conjunct Saturn in Capricorn opposite Pluto in Cancer, both square Uranus in Aries, again making Uranus the focal planet of a T square aspect pattern. Uranus also forms part of a Grand Fire Trine involving his Sagittarian Sun and Jupiter in Leo. This abundance of fire, combined with the dynamic tension channeled through the focal Uranus accounts for his provocative larger than life personality, a personality that made it almost inevitable that he would so often be the centre of controversial attention.

Throughout his life he was the quintessential rebel, continually speaking out against religious beliefs and social practices that he felt were not based on truth or logic, no matter how culturally sensitive or politically unwise. For example, he condemned the revered Mahatma Gandhi for his preoccupation with the poor and anti-technology stance, a stance which Osho maintained hindered their liberation from poverty; accused Mother Theresa of manipulating the orphan problem in order to create more converts to Catholicism; denounced the Reagan Administration’s ‘prostitution of the constitution’ for deporting him; and in general, never let up on his scathing attacks on ‘priests and politicians, the mafia of the soul’, [the title of one of his more provocative books] And of course, his much misunderstood

advocacy of conscious tantric sex as a valid path to enlightenment was like waving a red flag at a bull to established religious views.

In his late book *The Rebel*, which to me represents the highest and most inspiring expression of what the planet Uranus symbolizes in astrology, Osho paints a picture of the authentic rebel as a spiritual phenomenon that is quite distinct from the conventional views of the rebel as a social non-conformist or political revolutionary. And with this, rather than transcending, I would say he actualized the full potential of the powerful Uranian placement in his chart. A representative quote: *“The new rebel is an enlightened being - he is fulfilled and deeply contented. He stands aloof and alone, with a clarity about everything. Truth is his religion, freedom is his path. And to be himself, utterly himself, is his goal”*

The birth chart then, is a universally valid blueprint of individuality. Anyone born in time and space, including spiritual masters, will reflect their birth charts as long as they are functioning in time and space.

Osho confirms this in his autobiographical memoir *Glimpses Of A Golden Childhood* when he says apropos of his birth chart: *“It described my whole past exactly and also my future. I was amazed because everything it said had either happened or was happening. Now things that were in the future then have also become the past. They have happened.”*