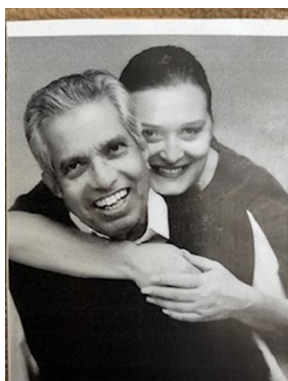


ACVA Newsletter 2026–03 Informational Article



By Dianne Brown

Recollections of Chakrapani Ullal, Astrologer

I have been asked to share some observations about Chakrapani Ullal on the occasion of his birthday, March 29, and it is my pleasure. For those of you who do not know me, I am Dianne Brown, Chakrapani's partner for some 35 years. We met in a reading in 1981 when he was living in Swami Muktananda's ashram in Santa Monica. Our relationship went through several iterations through the years, and starting in the early 90's, beyond what had become a personal relationship further morphed into my wearing several hats in his astrology practice, quietly and behind the scenes. I mention this so you will know who is speaking here and to say that I knew Chakrapani well. We enjoyed an easy, open rapport about most things, so that I feel comfortable offering you these insights about his life as an astrologer. I hope you will not feel I have overstepped, but being familiar as I am, my only desire here is to conjure his memory for your pleasure in remembering him, or for you to become acquainted with Chakrapani, a devoted Jyotishi with great passion for his work. For those of you who knew and loved him, I hope these shared recollections will serve to remind you of him and give you a moment's pause remembering how he may have touched your life.

Chakrapani was a simple man born to a lineage of astrologers from a small village in rural Kerala. Besides his family roots in astrology, which made the study as natural and organic as breathing, were his spiritual interests which resulted in him walking ten miles each week to take darshan with his guru, the great Bhagawan Nityananda. He did this throughout his youth, spending the course of his weekends with his guru. This set him apart from other children who typically spent their leisure time pursuing sports and the like. Chakrapani's penchant for spending time with gurus, saints, and sages was something he was drawn to throughout his life, and he became the trusted companion and confidante to many. It was because of his friendship

with Swami Mukananda that he found himself moving to America, as otherwise such a thing would never have occurred to him.

I mention his youth because, if one's early childhood passions portend one's future, it was certainly the case with Chakrapani. Without fanfare or struggle, he followed a path born of his natural interests. They were two: Jyotish and spiritual knowledge, which later proved to be his companions for life, fused together, really— inseparable. In the end, these abiding interests determined the spiritual depth and dimension of his readings, which most would agree were his signature. That, and the fact that he was rather like a channel, a vessel for the astrological wisdom to flow with uncanny insights and details. Undoubtedly, that was not only because of his familiarity with the subject, given the volume of readings he undertook, but also was the result of living in rural South India from birth, where astrology was reflected in the customs and daily routines and rituals of village life. This included nightly gatherings in his home where his father led discussions in Jyotish, Ayurveda, and related subjects. In such a life, one imbued astrological principles, further enhanced and made conscious under his astrologer father's tutelage and their studies together throughout his early years.

At age seven, Chakrapani's instruction in Prashna began by memorizing poems for each month, enabling him to know the Lagna position for each day and time of the day for the year. By eight or nine years old, he had good command of seeing the horoscope in his mind's eye and knowing the current planetary positions. Looking back, his dharma was indicated right from the beginning, although he had no conscious thought of becoming a practicing Jyotishi; he was educated to pursue a career in law. Nonetheless, one can see it was Jyotish and spiritual interests that were the real focus which absorbed Chakrapani throughout this period and onward.

Thereafter, as a young man, Chakrapani essentially stumbled into notoriety due to his Prashna predictions while working as a part-time Jyotishi in Bombay, practicing in his free time outside his law studies. Subsequently, building on his early training with his father, and his early days as an astrologer in India, the next chapter came when Swami Muktananda requested that Chakrapani join him in America. That request was not exactly a request, strictly speaking; rather, given the nature of their relationship, it was an invitation with which he was expected to comply, one way or another. The move, which altered the trajectory of his life (although he didn't know that at the time), was negotiated smoothly and with a natural ease, typical of how his path as an astrologer unfolded. There was never a grand plan, no goals, no vision board (ha-ha) ...just a man with his enduring love of Jyotish, and the rest took care of itself.

Through those early years in America especially, he slowly earned another (private) distinction—that being his gradual assimilation of Western culture which resulted in necessary insights in how to apply Vedic astrology principles to the foreign cultural mores of America. His circumstances resulted in his traveling and doing charts for people from a myriad of backgrounds, from all walks of life, and this brought a comprehensive education of lifestyles and culture in the West. Ultimately, you might say Chakrapani's unique strengths came from the

remarkable number of charts he read, and his training from early childhood steeped in astrological and spiritual pursuits. When Swami Muktananda took samadhi, Chakrapani left the ashram and opened his own practice in Los Angeles, where he maintained his home base until his passing in 2017.

Chakrapani never tired of giving testimony to how fortunate he felt to be a Vedic astrologer. His gratitude never dimmed and was the founding impetus for his work ethic. He always felt he had been given a great privilege, both to be a student of such an endlessly fascinating subject, and to be useful to others in his work. That an astrologer's life was animated by thoughtful pursuits and meaningful inquiry into a myriad of life's most provocative questions and ongoing reflections, this was truly a blessed existence! That he could ponder its depths in solitary meditations, as well as in the company of others of like mind—this was the bounty of the Vedic astrologer; this was what it meant to have the opportunity of being a lifetime student. If you didn't hear Chakrapani pronounce these sentiments directly, you would have seen them in his manner. It animated his humility, his helpfulness, and his willingness to go the extra mile for his clients.

Long after his formative years spent with his father, being a student going forward meant casting thousands upon thousands of horoscopes over many decades resulting in independent study and reflection infused with his other lifelong passion dedicated to spiritual pursuits. Over the years he also continued to seek the company of many revered saints and sages of India, and he was the trusted confidant of many. Also, especially in later years in America as more aspiring Vedic astrologers emerged, he continued his astrological study through discourse with students and colleagues. He greatly enjoyed being in the community of astrologers as a means of sharing a kind of reverie in continued study. He appreciated the communal nature of the quest, of ongoing student and teacher roles blending, everyone lifted and inspired in their search for ever greater, deeper understanding and knowledge.

Additionally, being an astrologer rendered his being able to be of service to others, which gave a greater sense of purpose to his life. In this role he was grounded and solid like a rock, utterly reliable. His manner transcended age or other distinctions. For example, he could relate to anyone, young or old, rich or poor, celebrity or ordinary person, it didn't matter. Chakrapani's practice was built on relationships that continued to mature throughout the years. To many, he was as intimate to them as a family member. Many he counseled and guided from their youth, and then ongoing as they started their own families, and then too with the younger generation as they matured into adulthood.

Chakrapani's office was the site of many tender reunions filled with the warmth and happiness of longtime friends reuniting. His astrology practice, spanning over six decades, was evidence of his unfailing consistency and his affection for his clients was returned in full measure. He had many, many clients who were with him over many decades, as well as their children whom he also guided to maturity and thereafter. On Chakrapani's passing, one could see he was truly a wealthy man for the love he garnered from a lifetime of devotion to his clients.

Chakrapani was well known for the schedule he maintained, and he always claimed the work itself inspired him and actually gave him energy. He typically saw seven to eight clients a day, six days a week, and he did that right up to the end. He rose at the same time each day, took a long brisk early morning walk before performing his puja, morning prayers, and mantras. His surroundings were cleansed by incense and chanting, and there was a period of undisturbed quiet that he maintained in the morning as he reviewed his charts for the day. He was a very disciplined person, always, and equally so regarding his diet. Gradually, in the final year before his passing, his schedule became lighter, although he still prepared and started his day at the same time, and he worked right up until the end.

Chakrapani had certain qualities that stand out in my mind as unique to his style. One was his humor which was always in evidence and expressed the obvious joy he took in his work and his true delight in the infinite varieties and combinations of qualities that made up a human being. He laughed frequently, often with unrestrained full-belly laughs. His good cheer was palpable and guided the day. Much of Chakrapani's humor grew out of a kind of communing with the client, a kind of shared recognition because they both "got it," something maybe very unique, personal or complex, or unexpected (hard to know), but laughing together cemented a mutual, private understanding.

Importantly, Chakrapani had empathy for human suffering, whether expressed through humor or a quiet mutual understanding, and this allowed him to help guide a client through challenging times. He did not assume a superior attitude; rather, because of his deep faith, and because he viewed suffering as a necessary part of the human experience for greater growth, his readings were infused with a deeply spiritual orientation. For Chakrapani, the dilemmas, tragedies, or ongoing challenges were, in reality, the human condition that united us all. Of course, sometimes there were relatively somber moments—it was quiet or the environment was contemplative, but regardless the tone, Chakrapani's empathy and compassion for his clients shined through.

This, I would suggest, went beyond what Chakrapani verbalized, as there was something communicated by his countenance which had a lower timber, as though residing in stillness (the only way I can think to describe it). That quality, something beyond words, quietly soothed, was reassuring and calming and contributed another significant dimension to his readings. It brought depth and helped one be in a more settled place that allowed otherwise unpleasant or unwelcome (or unfamiliar perspectives or information) to come through, to be considered, perhaps to be reflected on, if not at that moment...going forward. He never preached, although sometimes he gently coaxed. On occasion, he would take a firm stand about something that he felt was in your interest to hear boldly and clearly. But all was executed with an eye to your benefit in sharing what he saw in your horoscope.

His manner brought to bear the calming influence that comes from taking a broader view as opposed to the angst we suffer when mired in myopic perceptions that distort and magnify. The way he encouraged this change in perception was not only through the information shared, but,

importantly, was also the effect of Chakrapani himself residing in this broader, expansive orientation. His very manner of being carried a persuasive influence; it could quietly, imperceptibly bring the client along to a more expansive perspective. I'm not referring to his teaching; rather, it was his presence itself that carried a certain weight and had an impact.

You could say much of Chakrapani's style in readings was born of his spiritual perspective, nurtured since early childhood. It was an orientation that came from experience rather than intellect. Thus, the power of it to influence came in a natural, organic manner without undue intellectualizing. He was not seeking to be superior, judge, or place himself on a pedestal by virtue of his insights. Rather, the opposite. He sought to understand, to empathize, and to share. This orientation animated his manner of communicating what he saw, what he chose to feature, how he chose to say it, and what he allowed to be implied or left unspoken. These choices were intuitive, guided by expertise honed from years of experience and driven by his perspective entrenched in spiritual values.

Beyond his spiritual orientation, the other subtle but profound distinction in Chakrapani's style would be due to his early astrological indoctrination which helped cement his direct perceptions of the surrounding world in astrological terms. It was as though astrology itself were another native tongue he absorbed growing up, just as were the languages of English, Hindi, and Malayalam (native to Kerala tongue) that he also learned in his youth. As such, the horoscope was, in effect an originating window through which he viewed the world, as opposed to a second-generation translation from another language/vantage point. Always, for Chakrapani, the reflection of the heavenly map itself represented a fully flushed out three-dimensional reality.

Another thing about Chakrapani, he never put on airs or tried to be anything other than himself. His natural humility was disarming and made him accessible and relatable. In his company, you might have perceived him as a kindly father figure. He did not judge; there was nothing stern or intimidating about him, nor did one sense he was harboring any agenda. He was simply there for you to help you find the best, fullest understanding of any given issue, or the best course of action given the available choices. He would express his opinion where appropriate or where it was sought, and sometimes he was very matter of fact (leaving you to ponder his findings or query him further), but generally there was a discernible kind touch to his delivery. He was exceedingly kind! He had sympathy for the suffering of others, and especially if you were in trouble, you wanted to be with Chakrapani because to be in his company in itself was comforting.

Another unique feature to his style was his equanimity of manner. He was very grounded, and he did not waver; he was very steady at the helm. His abiding faith gave him strength like a deeply rooted tree. The fact that he walked the talk elevated the proceedings in a reading. With clients who came to him in an emotional state about one thing or another, he consistently would help them find their center and enable them to negotiate whatever action was necessary with clarity.

Anyone who knew Chakrapani would be aware of his quiet strength which anchored him and meant he could always be counted on. He was utterly reliable. He didn't indulge in moods, and he was rarely sick. This was very much the case in his personal life as well, and I witnessed him both in times of challenge and in loss, as well as when enjoying good fortune. His demeanor did not fluctuate, regardless. He accepted disappointments with grace. Occasionally he might find himself amidst a hotbed of political intrigue with gossiping, backstabbing, and such, as this was sometimes part and parcel to some spiritual groups and the like. But he always managed to quietly sidestep all that and would allow any dramas to just roll off his back. He wasn't attracted, and if it hit him, it would likely only be a sideswipe such that he didn't break stride.

Chakrapani did have his preferences, and although he was skillful in negotiating with different kinds of people and situations, he would not pander to celebrities. It simply wasn't his style. As I write this, I'm thinking of one household name, a celebrated actress who blanched when Chakrapani responded to her claims of fame and importance saying that all his clients were equally precious in his eyes! Dearie me, she didn't like that and never came back, and unfortunately took the referring renowned fashion designer (whom he favored) out the door with her. Such was his particular style that had disdain for pomposity, and he accepted the consequences of his manner without equivocation. This was the man, such as he was, generally one to avoid confrontation, but in some circumstances, he might be blunt in expressing his preferences.

One aspect to dealing with the public at large was in the interactions with clients from many varied spiritual, religious, political, or lifestyle preferences. Chakrapani was masterful in dealing with a wide variety of orientations, and I think everyone felt his respect and affection equally regardless of their affiliations, some of which were passionate, quirky, and maybe even dogmatic which, in the right circumstances, could incite an argumentative or contentious environment. Chakrapani avoided all that with charm and diplomacy, fundamentally because it was entirely outside his role as an astrologer to bring to bear his opinion about any of it.

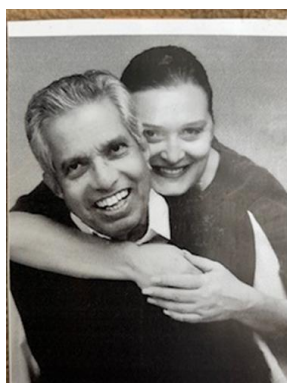
Chakrapani considered it his great good fortune to enjoy the company of many interesting people who made his days lively and provocative right up to the end. He enjoyed meeting new clients, different circumstances to consider, new discoveries that emerged in our ever-evolving world, and new opportunities for problem solving. He found the work an ongoing, engaging, and meaningful undertaking. From my vantage point, it kept him flexible and youthful. He was essentially a traditional person in terms of his values, but his work kept him hip to current trends and ways of thinking, and he was very comfortable with young people who shared freely with him about their problems and concerns which kept him in the loop of contemporary lifestyles.

There was thread of grace weaving through Chakrapani's life that I came to recognize over the years. It didn't exempt him from working hard, or facing challenges, but there was undeniable support in the form of unsolicited assistance or gifts that helped soften or ease his passage forward. In his astrology practice, grace created in him a human receptacle through which the

insights could flow, and grace undeniably helped smooth the way to his becoming an astrologer of note. You could say grace created opportunities, and Chakrapani cooperated with and moved in harmony with the flow from whence those opportunities came. I observed this up close across the many years we shared together. He was in easy, open communion with the guidance that directed him...moved with ease and trust in the ebb and flow of it. Undoubtedly, the equanimity reflective of his stability and faith in a higher power was further enlivened by the grace that surrounded him.

Ultimately, I think Chakrapani would want to be remembered as a simple man and a good man. He knew who he was; he stayed true to his roots, and if he ever did anything heroic, it was within the realm of what is possible as an ordinary person. He elevated the practice of Vedic astrology through devoted, consistent work which brought a kind of inspiration that took it to another level. He took great pleasure in serving his clients, which he did day-by-day with a consistency that earned him the reputation of being a dedicated astrologer. In return for his loyal service, clients embraced him as family. He reveled in the study of his beloved Jyotish and forged long-term friendships with colleagues and friends amidst their shared studies as well as many joint forays into the domains of related spiritual interests which nurtured lifetime friendships as well. Chakrapani was nothing if not consistent and grounded throughout the many years, grateful to God for his blessings, and moved to express gratitude for those gifts. This is how I would describe our friend Chakrapani.

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Dianne Brown, born and raised in Pasadena, attended USC graduating with a B.S. in psychology. Thereafter she worked in advertising, first in commercial photography, subsequently owning a production company making commercials. On selling her company she worked off and on as a decorator, gradually taking more and more interest in undertaking writing and marketing projects for Chakrapani, especially on becoming a mom. Dianne shared that she always enjoys reminiscing and sharing memories with friends and clients of Chakrapani and can be reached at: diannebrown11@sbcglobal.net