

The Spiritual Life as a Rudder in the Mists of Rahu Mahadasha



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This article is dedicated to Raphael without whose generosity and divine friendship this effort would not be possible

The actual effects of the mahadasha of Rahu are reputedly some of the hardest to predict and understand. Classical texts describe a smorgasbord of possible unpredictable experiences that unfold within a spectrum that range from material gains and losses, amidst mental distress, to spiritual insights and transformation, covering every emotional shade in between (Parashara, Ch. 55 in Pijan, 2013). Such events can be simultaneously exhilarating, but also confusing and daunting; especially the first and the last years. For those who have experienced the dasha, it would be a euphemism to call it a roller coaster. For this reason, the long 18 years of the Rahu life cycle can be described as a period of personal crisis.

The reaction that is immediately evoked when reading the word "crisis" is a negative one, and rightly so. The dictionary defines it as a condition of "instability or danger [...] and a dramatic upheaval" (Webster, 1996, p. 477). However, it also means a "turning point" at which adverse parts reach their highest tension.

It is axiomatic that every tension seeks a resolution of some kind, for better or worse. This is true of the behavior of Rahu because, as the Vedic mythology tells us, it is its nature to agitate the cosmos, creating tension between opposing forces. Rahu opposed the Sun and the Moon when he sought to relieve the tension created by the desire to have the amrita, or nectar of immortality. In the small sphere of our human experience, Rahu creates agitation of our karmic waters provoking inner tensions through our desires. We are born with desires, which Rahu symbolizes. It is in the reign of Rahu that the metaphysical battle described in the Bhagavad-Gita (Yogananda, 2007) is fought to reclaim our kingdom of inner peace and equipoise.

From this brief description we can deduct that Rahu is here to wreak havoc, and he means business. Wherever Rahu is placed natively in the horoscope, he is bound to pull us inexorably in that direction. We feel inextricably drawn and compelled to move towards the affairs of that house.

Right, but then we ask: How does Rahu operate? What are the unpredictable mechanisms used by Rahu for keeping us lured and hypnotized? Can we discipline them? Can we predict the emotional reactions that the events described above might trigger, and thus equip ourselves to handle them with wisdom? Can we develop coping mechanisms to be more in control of our minds, to be more aware during those years?

I believe that the answer to these questions is affirmative. Vedic astrologer Komilla Sutton (2001) advises us to use any knowledge we can gain beforehand to protect ourselves against the anguish and pain that Rahu brings, and to look at life in a more spiritual way.

I believe that when we understand, we can move from fear and perplexity to discrimination onto appreciation. And with appreciation comes gratitude; gratitude for the opportunities to experience life that Rahu offers and for the wisdom that ensues. Rahu, although apparently malefic, is also a divine messenger. He shows us the need for us to re-connect with our dharma – the reason our soul incarnated in this lifetime.

It was this belief that led me to look at a real-life case. So, I asked a client, who is transitioning the very last stages of the Rahu mahadasha, if he would be willing to share his experience with the Vedic astrology community. His name is Raphael (fig.1 shows his natal chart).

Raphael follows the teachings of Paramahansa Yogananda, the founder of Self-Realization Fellowship. This article aims to retrospectively examine his personal trajectory across all the sub-periods of the Rahu mahadasha in order to understand the influence of his spiritual sadhana over the compulsions, obsessions and imbalances symbolized by Rahu.

Raphael was born on August 24, 1990 at 09:35, in Sao Paulo, Brazil. He was born with Libra lagna, Sun and Mercury in Leo in the 11th house, and the Moon in Virgo in the 12th house.

Rahu in the 4th House

The 4th house rules primarily all matters related to the mother, family members, and the home. Rahu in the 4th house promises upheavals in the domestic atmosphere during his formative years. It also rules the mind, heart, feelings and happiness. Some kind of change, either physical and or emotional, is likely to have taken effect during that time, which have impacted the person's emotional well-being.

The 4th house is also the domain of our capacity to be happy. The presence of Rahu suggests someone's dissatisfaction with his emotional nature, and compulsion to hide from the world, to withdraw into contemplation. The sign of Capricorn adds a serious and melancholic tinge to the person's emotional make-up.

Houses, landed property, the home itself, and material comforts all fall in the domain of the 4th house. Rahu is in the sign of Capricorn which is associated with tradition, old structures, name and reputation.

As we shall see in the following analysis, all the indications of the 4th house and its ramifications were consummated in Raphael's life. First of all, Rahu's dispositor Saturn in the 3rd house of willful actions implies that changes incurred in the family and or family estate may have been caused by personal interests leading to much material and emotional upheaval and distress in the lives of all involved.

Rahu-Rahu – The Overture

Raphael was at the tender age of five years old at the beginning of the Rahu mahadasha in 1996. The months preceding that actual start of the dasha set the scenario for Rahu to make its presence felt in Raphael's 4th house. First, owing to miscalculations and wasteful practices, severe losses in the family patrimony occurred. Saturn, the 4th house ruler, symbolizes the past. Old traditions and ways of being were broken down; this resulted in Raphael's being pulled apart from one mode of living and thrown into an entirely new situation. Shortly after that, his mother left him in the care of his grandparents, with whom he lives to this day. His father was completely absent even before his birth. We see Rahu being activated. As a little boy, Raphael did not have a voice of his own, so his wishes and inner needs were completely ignored. Saturn also signifies grandparents, who in fact turned out to be the source of stability, consistency and order in Raphael's life. As the 4th house deals with the karmic past, and Rahu deals with the future direction (Sutton, 2001), these events were carried over from a previous life and are repeating themselves in order to be worked out.

The circumstances in the home environment coincided with his ingress in pre-school, one year before he was at school age. It was right there in that microcosm of the school grounds that his next 18 years were revealed to him. Here Raphael experienced what life had in store, including the personal

challenges he would have to face both in the external world and within himself.

His 4th house Rahu in Capricorn, with Saturn in the 3rd house, shows an excessively introverted temperament, which was definitely not suited to the demands of the world. The lethargy described by Trivedi (2002) as typical of Rahu periods was not strange to Raphael. These two factors coupled with being the youngest among all the other children made it very difficult for him to make friends.

The emotional turbulence and angst that these events generated were never apparent to those around him, which is very much in keeping with the fourth house significations of the heart and one's deepest self. Despite Raphael's herculean efforts to fit in and belong, the other children would not accept him. Not being noticed, recognized and accepted was a total disgrace for his Leo Sun and Mercury. The lack of emotional nurturing at home and a total absence of channels of expression suitable to a child's development created a void between the home and the world, which he could not surmount. Sometimes, he would bellow for hours until somebody took pity; however, for the most part, nobody heard the roars of that lion cub.

Rahu-Jupiter — Seeking the Loftiest Guiding Light

It was during the Jupiter bhukti that Raphael began to develop his ideals and archetypes of feminine and masculine behavior. Jupiter represents our ideals and principles. The Hamsa Yoga formed by exalted Jupiter in the 10th house reflects a philosophical and creative personality. It was by watching animated movies that Raphael sought refuge from the drudgery and loneliness of his domestic atmosphere and came into contact with the guiding principles of his life. This can be seen by the 3rd house of artistry where he has Saturn in the philosophical sign of Sagittarius, and by the 12th house of fantasy and dreams (movies) where he has the Moon in Chitra. Chitra is ruled by Mars, which is in the transcendental 8th house. Raphael was fascinated by the superhuman courage shown by the heroes and heroines depicted in those videos. These idols personified the highest standards of physical beauty, subtlety, refinement and love, symbolized by Venus, his Lagna ruler, which is conjoined Jupiter in the 10th house. Venus is also the ruler of Poorvashadha in the 3rd house.

The mental constructs formed in those early years set the foundation for what would become the standard against which he judges himself and everything else, and the blueprint for his goals and future achievements.

Rahu-Saturn – Living Life On the Mental Plane

The social exclusion, loneliness and uneventfulness that marked those years allowed Raphael the possibility to create and experience, if only in his mind, his ideal life as an exuberant, fearless and charismatic prince and warrior. Saturn in the 3rd house can paralyze the will and cause the person “to fall prey to fantasies and phobias” says Frawley (2000, p. 79). Saturn gave form to his Sagittarian-Jupiterian unlimited ideals.

During this period, the 3rd house Saturn in Poorvashadha produced results. Poorvashadha is ruled by Venus, significator of the arts, and is placed in the 10th house of the public. Raphael started taking violoncello lessons. His prowess led him to play in a young boys’ orchestra and to make several public performances.

Rahu-Mercury – Spiritual Discovery

Mercury rules the spiritual 9th and 12th houses. It was during the sub-period of Mercury that he had his first encounter with spiritual teachings by way of a book about Taoism. Raphael says that the author said everything that he had always longed to hear before. What he sought at home and in school was manifested in the words of Lao Tse. The 9th house is also the house of dharma, where lie our principal values, philosophical and spiritual inclinations. Raphael felt an immediate identification with the spiritual teachings and philosophical ideals expressed in that book.

Raphael’s Mercury is in Leo, in the star of Uttaraphalguni, and the Sun rules both this sign and the nakshatra. The Sun is the ultimate guiding light in the chart, symbolizing the spiritual authority as well as the spiritual teaching one is more likely to pursue (Frawley, 2000). Raphael began to avidly read other books by the same author. All dealt with the Eastern philosophies, which stressed that material and spiritual prosperity do not have to clash. Such concepts struck him like lightning as they contrasted with the traditional notions of Western religion. He took Eastern philosophy classes and began to notice that slowly the contact with those new ways of thinking was triggering a very profound shift in his inner consciousness. These initial changes fueled his need for a complete transformation. He was intuitively aware that this would be the path for him, to help him become what he longed for, what he should be.

Rahu-Ketu – Calmness Before the Boon

The Ketu bhukti was uneventful for the most part. Raphael aptly described it as a year of deathlike monotony. Ketu is the graha of endings, so this is a fitting illustration. He spent his time reading every spiritual book that he could find. His attraction and affinity toward the Eastern philosophies grew, thus strengthening his convictions that if he followed the precepts taught by those masters, he could achieve all his dreams. It was here that he began to take Kung fu lessons. Subjecting the body to a rigorous discipline was very helpful to his spiritual sadhana.

Ketu is in Pushya nakshatra in the 10th house of action. Pushya's ruler Saturn is in the 3rd house of effort and bravery. Raphael realized that the higher the goal, the stronger must be the will to achieve it. The 3rd house is a house that shows the motivations driving our actions and choices, where we put our energy. As a result of his continued spiritual studies, Raphael felt a new surge of energy and impulse to pursue his goals. He believes that things that are easy to attain are not worth his time. He idealistically believes that it is very stimulating to aim at the seemingly impossible, a characteristic of his Libra lagna.

As Ketu falls in Cancer, the Ketu bhukti shares its rulership with the 12th house Moon. This cycle marked the end of a period of searching and inaction, and had a liberating effect on his psyche.

Rahu-Venus — A Glimpse of the Future

Venus bhukti was a positive period. As soon as the Venus sub-period began, Raphael discovered that the translator of the book about the Tao was a disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda. A series of unexpected events led him to read Paramahansa's Autobiography of a Yogi. Reading that book was nectar to his soul. The reaction it provoked exceeded that of reading the Tao Te Ching. The miracles described in the book, the wisdom of the guru Sri Yukteswar, and Lahiri Mahasaya's devotion to the Divine were real-life examples that he too could achieve perfection. He realized that Yogananda's teachings could give him everything he was seeking, and that the meditation techniques taught by the Master represented the key to absolute success. Although still very young and naïve, Raphael was already very conscious that everything originated in the mind. Learning how to control it, he could control his experiences.

These events show the activation and results produced by Rahu's placement in the 4th house of moksha; the 10th house of purpose and the power that follows, containing Venus; and, the 12th house spiritually-oriented Moon.

Saturn, the dispositor of the dasha ruler, in the 3rd house produced results related to the significations of that house. The 3rd house indicates one's passions, interests, artistic talents and initiatives. Raphael discovered that he loved to sing and decided to engage in a choir, with the aim of becoming a professional singer in the future. The 3rd is also a martial house, and that year, Raphael began to learn the martial art of Kung fu.

Saturn is a yoga karaka for Libra rising, as it rules the 4th house and the 5th house of devotion. The Self-Realization Fellowship path, founded by Paramahansa Yogananda, is essentially one of bhakti or devotion. The 5th house is the realm of the intelligence and the thinking mind. Raphael was becoming increasingly aware that devotion to God and the gurus sublimated his feelings and purified his thoughts and emotions from the previous distortions and confusion. His resolve (Saturn in the 3rd house) to perfect himself (Jupiter/Venus in 10th house) can be seen clearly. Slowly, the meditation practices were helping him to build a new mind. With it, came the growing realization of the healing role that art (Venus and the 3rd house) in all its forms had played in his life until now. He felt that his destiny was inextricably linked to some form of artistic expression. He was also feeling that both the arts and the spiritual practices had one characteristic in common: to uplift and to heal.

Venus is dispoited by the 12th house Moon. This signifies that the area of romance was not as promising. Towards the end of the bhukti, Raphael lost contact with his sweetheart, leaving him to pine for her. The months that followed were filled with sorrow.

Rahu-Sun – Fulfillment

Resolved to shake his inertia once and for all and to counteract his forlorn emotions, he decided to intensify his meditation efforts and offer service at the local temple. The bhukti of the Sun activates the 11th house of groups and organizations, including temples. The Sun in Magha nakshatra is ruled by Ketu, the karaka for moksha. Ketu in Cancer in the 10th house of occupation and the public is dispoited by the Moon in the 12th house of moksha, revealing his disposition to work with large groups of people for spiritual purposes. At the temple he served as a singer, manifesting his ascendant ruler Venus in the 10th house along with his 3rd house qualities. His glorious Hamsa Yoga also in the 10th house reflects his gifts as a teacher. It is important to note that it was during this period that he received his initiation in high meditation techniques.

The Sun's drishti on the 5th house shows that the intensity of his sadhana coupled with selfless service –bhakti yoga – to large groups of people – 11th house -- were the catalysts to a complete transformation in his behavior. In the span of a little over one year, Raphael went from being socially inadequate and distracted to one of the most competent, efficient and resourceful persons in the group.

The victories and spiritual gains represented by his 11th house Sun impelled him to apply himself even harder in his second-grade studies. He spent the remainder of the Sun bhukti preparing to undertake his college entrance exams. Education and diplomas fall within the domains of the 4th house. His Rahu in Capricorn shows ambitious thoughts and drives. Raphael aimed to be accepted at the most prestigious university in Brazil, and he succeeded.

Rahu-Moon --

January of 2012 heralded the beginning of the sub-period of the Moon. This is the time that students take the college entrance exam. Raphael took it and passed. Entering the academic world was and continues to be very beneficial to Raphael. However, as usually happens to those who are pursuing a degree, academic demands removed him from the world. His time is spent in solitude meditating and studying. Since the Moon rules his auspicious 10th house of practicality and objectivity, that period marked an increase in his ability to achieve greater equilibrium between his inner emotions and the ability to manifest them in the outer world. His reputation as a dedicated devotee became firmly established in those years.

Rahu-Mars – The Last Push

Various astrologers interpret differently the last portion of these long 18 years. Komilla Sutton (2001) warns us against the temptations thrown by Rahu in our path, cautioning that whatever Rahu promises is an illusion. Trivedi (2002) believes that the transition from Rahu mahadasha into Jupiter mahadasha can be a smooth one if we are following our dharmic path. This supposedly protects us from Rahu's spell.

On the physical level, the bhukti of Mars in Taurus in the 8th house of sexual passion finds Raphael discovering sexuality. His incursions in this realm are done in an abstract and refined manner, as Venus, lagna lord and Mars' dispositor, would not allow otherwise.

The 8th house also relates to obstacles and crisis. The effects of these significations manifested when Raphael lost the opportunity to participate in

a Kung fu championship abroad. Simultaneously, he still finds it difficult to engage in a love relationship, though he longs for and values the companionship, camaraderie, support and sharing that comes along with it. Venus as the karaka of partnerships and money is tainted by the rulership of the Moon in the 12th house of losses and decrease.

On the other hand, it was in that year that he was determined to eradicate once and for all the personal flaws and drawbacks responsible for (in his view) so many of his previous failures.

As the dasha comes to a close, Raphael intuitively feels that he has been hammering at a huge reservoir of water. So far, he has only been able to create a crack in it, but not to crack it open yet. Nonetheless, he feels increased levels of energy and optimism as time passes, which are underpinned by a sensation that all will be well and that things are going to work out.

He remains steady in his resolve to continuously improve himself and achieve higher and higher levels of excellence in all his endeavors. At the risk of sounding biased, I would say that his commitment is sincere, as I have worked with him in various capacities before.

What is most important to note is that Raphael has navigated this challenging and feared dasha without incurring any extreme and risky sensorial experiences, but instead maintaining his equanimity and emerging relatively unscathed. In his own words, credit must be given to the spiritual guidance received at the transitional age of 17, which helped him become aware of the limitations and smallness of the human ego.

Jupiter mahadasha will make his grand entrance on the stage of Raphael's life finding him still holding fast to the ideal that ever increasing spiritual efforts that accelerate his personal growth and the expansion of his consciousness must precede every initiative.

everything is just an illusion. An experiment or test that our soul just wants to see, "how," we'll ultimately handle any given situation. When we are blessed to receive the teachings of an enlightened master, we gradually develop the ability to exercise our will power and free choice to act according to the dictates of our soul guidance not the dictates of our

undisciplined desires and habits. This happens very slowly but it is possible. It is like developing a muscle or training a puppy. Expansion of our consciousness to deal with the challenges posed by Rahu.

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