

Letter from the President

Solstice, December 2024



By **Professor Charlotte Benson,**
ACVA President

Dear Friends of ACVA –

Happy holidays to all who celebrate them at year's end. Hope all is well with you and your families, and that you are managing to deal with your local weather – no matter what that looks like at the moment. I happen to be writing to you from the warm and sunny desert of Phoenix, Arizona.

All is well here at the college. We are celebrating our **25th Anniversary** of ACVA online! As of 11/22/1999 ACVA has been growing and sending well-qualified students out into the world to practice Jyotish. ACVA has endured, and matured, into a world-class Institution. Well done!

Our most recent graduates received their diplomas, virtually, at our annual Graduation and Awards Ceremony on December 14, 2024. Two special awards were presented: the Jyotish Navaratna for 2024 to **Mr. Marc Boney**, and the ACVA Lifetime Achievement Award, the ACVA Vibhusan title, to **Sri K.N. Rao**.

Speaking on Zoom, **Dr. David Frawley (Vamadeva Shastri)**, founding president of American Council of Vedic Astrology (then ACVA - the original parent organization of current ACVA), joined us for a typically fascinating address. We were honored with his company, speaking so eloquently after his recent return from India. **Vaughn Paul Manley** offered his charming words of wisdom. **Christina Collins**, among the founders of ACVA, shared heart-felt words of affection for her special friend and teacher, Sri Rao. Former CEO of ACVA, **Mrs. Shoba Mohan**, shared words about a mutual family connection with the Rao family. And **Dr. Dennis Harness**, our dear president emeritus, offered his loving and respectful *pranams* to Sri Rao, too. Dennis also reminded us of the profound and lasting positive effect on ACVA's online curriculum, contributed by the late **Dr. William Levacy**.

Alumni and Friend of ACVA, **Mr. Marc Boney** offered a thoughtful and moving commencement address, offering more clear and profound advice, flowing through him from his guru, Raoji. What a magnificent *parampara* – K.N. Rao and Marc Boney, his devoted student – sharing a screen

together! It was beautiful. It's uplifting to witness and document this rare kind of respect and grace.

Marc is the recipient of ACVA's 2024 annual **Navaratna Award** for excellent contributions to the field of astrology. The Jyotish Navaratna Award reflects ACVA's vision of promoting excellence in Vedic astrology while fostering a global community of learners and practitioners. *Navaratna* translates to "nine gems," symbolizing brilliance and preciousness, qualities embodied by the award's recipients. The honor is a testament to their invaluable contributions and unwavering dedication to advancing the field of Jyotish. Very well deserved, Mr. Boney!

Mr. K.N. Rao, one of the most distinguished jyotishis of modern times, joined us from India, to accept ACVA's Lifetime Achievement award. The **Jyotish Vibhushan** ("Beautiful Ornament of Jyotish") is conferred on masters of Jyotish who have contributed significantly to practicing, teaching, and furthering the beauty of our Sacred Science.

The Jyotish Vibhushan Lifetime Achievement Award reflects ACVA's mission to honor those whose lifetime achievements have enriched and inspired the global Jyotish community. It is a tribute to those whose contributions go beyond technical mastery to include the profound spiritual wisdom and insights that form the essence of Vedic astrology. Congratulations, dear Raoji!

ACVA Provost **Professor Juliana Swanson** made the following comments during the Awards Ceremony:

"Raoji (K.N. Rao) describes Yogi Bhaskarananda as the last of the Rishi astrologers in the purest classical mold.

"Raoji has revealed some of the mysteries he learned from his teachers and through his own experiences in his book, *Yogis, Destiny, and the Wheel of Time*. One very simple yet profound message stated in this book is that 'the supranormal can be experienced anytime, anywhere, and by anyone, because the Omnipresent God reposes in every heart, which is the true temple, church, mosque, or synagogue.'

"One of my own favorites among Raoji's many books is a profound spiritual book called *Astrology and Faith: Actual Case Studies of Cures through Astromedical Diagnosis*. My copy is well worn from much use, but very special as it was an autographed gift from him!

"The book emphasizes the importance of surrender to God along with daily mantras, pujas and prayers performed for yourself and others, known as Nitya Karma. Raoji says in the introduction, 'When you neglect Nitya Karma, your *tapobalam* (spiritual power and protective force acquired by religious austerities) goes down, and in times of distress, you are like one without a spiritual bank balance.'"

The interplay of Vedic Astrology, Ayurveda and Yoga: Illuminating the Path to Holistic Wellness was the title of Friend of ACVA, and past president of NAMA, **Dr. Jayarajan Kodikannath's** address

to the assembly. He spoke of the essential interconnectedness of Jyotish and Ayurveda. Dr. J's words were a brilliant contribution to the ceremony.

ACVA Registrar, **Dr. Lynn Bootes**, presented the recipients of Jyotish Ratna diplomas, **Hanya Gartner, Jeffrey Hutchens, and Guilia Avvanzini**. All students passed their rigorous written exam, and the daunting oral exam. Congratulations again to all!

This brief description of the Graduation and Awards ceremony doesn't really do it justice. However, you can view the entire event on YouTube by following the link below:

<https://youtu.be/U73dAQgR9N8>

The Maharishi Parasara Conference last month was a huge success – congratulations to **Ksanati Nakshatra** for carrying on the ACVA/SVAC conference tradition instituted by ACVA President Emeritus **Dr. Dennis Harness**, from decades past. Another conference will be held in late 2025.

Speaking of conferences, the **United Astrology Conference** will take place in Chicago in early September 2026. ACVA is a proud sponsor of this epic multi-organization conference and is the exclusive representative of the Jyotish curriculum there. ACVA will soon be issuing a call for speakers to this event, so please stay connected with us here through our publications, if you would like to be considered as a speaker.

With every best wish for peace and prosperity in the new year,

Professor Charlotte Benson