

THE NAKSHATRA POEM '98

The Intro, or, per Byron, *proem*,
To this neverending poem
Is at the back, and you'll know why
Once you read it, by and by.
So welcome! To this map of Vedic skies,
This half-baked slice of th'astral pie;
It's hoped my verbal feast and festival
Proves both tasty, and digestible!

PART 1¹

1.

Striding swift on level plains,
The twin Kumars, with whipping manes,
Hearts of gold, and guts of steel,
Lightly ride to help or heal.

2.

Bharani's lips conceal the womb
That maintains life and seals its tomb.
To suckle from the Mother's breast
Yields kama's force, and Yama's death:
For that fount of inspiration
Roars with fires of fierce creation.²
(And a word of counsel, from those who know
Having singed their lips by saying "No,"
For ye who court this pitta lass
'Tis well to bow and just say, "Yes!",
-Surrender is the golden key
For those who'd know Her mystery.³)

¹ Underlined words represent qualities traditionally associated with each asterism, as well as specific attributes, such as Nature, Caste, Direction, etc. Gender is implied in the context

² Astronomers have revealed evidence that Venus periodically sheds her entire surface layer, not unlike a snake- or womb. This is believed to take place in fiery, cataclysmic events that perhaps mirror the female body's own periodic purification, and elegantly display the Vidya, or insight, evinced by ancient seers in correlating macrocosm with microcosm, as Venus' traditional, cross-cultural symbolism is infused with images of passion, love, and creation; birth, death and transformation.

Since Bharani is ruled by Venus in the Vimshottari dasha scheme, it also reflects these themes, while preserving its inherent symbolism. The planet's violent paradigm of self-renewal mirrors the internal process of inspiration and creation. Such is the fate of those who live and die by the sword, or pen.

³ It is said in Ayurveda that one should treat Vata like a flower- with gentleness and warmth. One should treat Kapha like an enemy- with force and aggression. And one should treat Pitta like a spouse- always say "Yes, honey!"

3.

The Cutter's caustic, quick critiques
Could foster piercing pains and piques,
But 'ere you scream, "Turn down the heat!"
Remember, that a kapha treat
(Soft 'n cool, unctuous 'n sweet)
Will mix her fiery irritation
Into love- or constipation.
So pray forgive this ferbal feast,
My Pleadies rise in the East!

4

As for Rohini, we all know-
That she's the gal who steals the show;
Since lonely lovers love to laud her,
I'll just say two words about her:
She's nice. Cool Soma's warmest wife,
This growing calf is quite the spice of life.
For even Brahma's plow doth rise
When he spies the red Bull's eye⁴
Unchastely chasing his own daughter
Up through heaven's milky waters
Where, in turn, he ends up slaughtered.

5.

And so, my deer, why don't you just
Give in to father Brahma's lust?
"O! Filthy poet bite thy tongue!"
Quoth Shiva, as He sliced and hung
Mriga's Shir' on heaven's rung.
For ye who seek this doleful doe,
But turn your eyes on Orion's bow,
And like a gem there you will spy
The timid, tender, soft, and shy
Shira wandering the jeweled sky.

⁴ The red star Aldebaran- yoga tara of Rohini.

6.

When Ardra's storm blows through your soul
And lays your ravaged home to waste,
Wipe your tears, and heed the call
To build a castle in its place.
For life will never life betray,
(No matter what French poets say)
And even the most dreadful chance
Can hold a gift there in its hands,
As a carcass in the butcher's tent
Turns Death...into nourishment.

7.

A harmless thought, like a river
When harnessed, can make you quiver.
But Guru's aim is always true
When he sights the mark in Punarvasu;
Whose free and noble soul's at home
Where sattvic mind and fingers roam
Through boundless thought and endless tome!⁵

8.

Nourishing, like softest butter
Pushya is the utter udder.
Richly decked in divine wimple,
Chaste and ample, like his symbol,
In all things giving, and maternal
(Wait 'til Magha for to get paternal!)
In all, abundant, in all things staid,
This guy's really got it made!
But he's also light 'n chatty
Like his *guru*, Brihaspati
(Don't blame me if this seems contrary,
'Cause he's also plump 'n heavy.)
Good for all, excepting marriage,
(See Rohini's wain, or carriage)
Embrace all hope, who enter here!
Abandon *ego*, *hate*, and *fear*,
For even sourest of malefics
Will 'gin to act like sweet benefics

⁵ Though Einstein's 'aim was true,' the harnessed power of his ideas resulted in mass destruction. Einstein's lagna resides in Punarvasu, whose symbol is the quiver.

As the blessed face of love
Turns a hawk into a dove.
(Yuck! I'd resolved to never show
This hackneyed rhyme, but there you go—
Even Byron, once or twice
In the short course of his life
Had no recourse but to address it—
And I'm his Hero... who'd have guessed it?

9.

'Float like a butterfly and sting like a bee'
Quipped Ashlesha's own, Muhammad Ali,
Who wrapped opponents in his dreadful coils...
But to wake this Snake, I'd suffer her toils
For those who've looked into Her eyes
Can't help but to be hypnotized!

And so my friends here we must end
The first part of this three-fold tale;
We'll resume when for my plume
I daign to tame the Lion's tail!

PART II

For this trip I think I'll pick
A pair of feet less dull, more thick,
A furbished room that's more replete
With rhyming schemes... like Byron's beat!
Nay, nay, fear not- I'll not awake
Don Juan's soul, or make to prate
On seedy lovers' tales of woe
(But for a modicum of dough
Be certain that I'll tell them all!)
Instead, the stars will be my game.
'Lord, bless this ship whose prow I've aimed
At your celestial domain
And help me turn My Galley's trip
Into Excursions of a pleasure ship!
Your name is Legion 'mongst my crue,
Sweet lover, Light, I bow to you!' ⁶

⁶ A vain reference to *My Galley*, by Sir Thomas Wyatt, and Wordsworth's *The Excursion*

1.

O! Mighty, regal Magha, you fiercely reign

In royal thrones, Hero's hearts, and tyrants' fists!
And well knew Egypt, Rome, and Greece your name,
But gone is Alexander, in th' Aegean mists;
Pharoah and the Ceasars have been tamed
Like the flame that flares, then ceases to exist,
And all that remains of your sad ambition
Is the dusty memory of your position.⁷

'All that remains is the faces and names...'

Cried the bard of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*,
Who well could have sung Napoleon's fame,
But that's all been done- see *Childe Harold*.
In fact, dear Magha, your tales are the same:
Dees of kings, clay mings, and lionized Pharoahs,
And all the various tawdry intrigues
Requicity of those who play in your leagues...

But basta la pasta!... I won't go on
With rhymes so stout, so fixed, so long;
I need something that won't make me crazy,
I need a rhyme that's a bit more lazy.
- I've never been one to conform
To parent wish or social norm
Much less some crazy poet's form.
Hereon, forthwith, post-haste, I'm free!
Ol' Club-foot's rhymes, they just aren't me
(Although at some point, I was *he*.)
For more of Byron's elegant and terse
Poetic rooms, see Jyeshtha's verse.

Before we go on though, please let
Me finish up this last couplet:
'Magha rules o'er things sublime,
Majestic, just, and leonine...'

Bah! Your truth is far less glib
(Oblige me as I dip my nib

⁷ Magha rules rchaeologists, Egyptologists, and those who study our ancestors and the past.

Into this floating royal fib).
Past Roman nose and curling lip
You view your kingdom as you sip
On goblets filled with peasant blood
(A fuel that's worth no more than wood)
While glazed ambition's glassy eyes
Metre out punishment and prize
But pray forgive this royal bashing-
Though they're all due for a thrashing,
And I could go on at some length,
Why should I spare the strength?
The world is, has been, and will be
The stage for all to learn to see
Kings and kingdoms are frail creations,
But win one heart, you win all nations...
So off I go to my meditations!

2-3

Now let's resume this once-doomed tale
And hit the sheets to hunt some tail.⁸
- You see I haven't changed that much
These hundred years- I'm still debauched.
But that's my nature, so just sue me...
Tonight I dream of Miss Phalguni!

For who can help but be demurring
When her bed is so alluring?
Her siren's song and sweet ablutions
Erase all sense and resolutions
To write or rhyme- I'd rather listen,
Wooed and cooed by lewd musicians,
And test the tension of her cushions
...This place is just so damned Venusian!

4.

Oh, well, those stars were fun and laughs,
But hanging out in bars is crass,
(Unless you are a Vaishya lass.)
So let's ease up on all the drinking
And do instead some level thinking
While stepping out to greet the sun,

⁸ Zosma and Denebola, yoga taras of Purva and Uttara Phalguni, respectively, mark the beginning and end of the Lion's tail.

For a bit of outdoor fun.
Hasta's grasp of things divine
Belies his secret life of crime.
He'll ask politely, at least once
Until he gets just what he wants.
But don't reproach this flighty mime
His poet's heart and scheming mind,
For like a jester, on a dime,
He'll turn from silly to sublime;
He'll turn from light and passive verse
To fain declaim some high discourse
(And just in case you didn't notice,
It's from experience I know this...
My lagnesha is there... full lotus!)

5.

Chitras are creative dames
With a sultry and artistic bent
Who also like to feel maintained
For diamonds are a girl's best friend.
Yes, Spica's daughters are full of treasures
And, but only for their lover's pleasure,
They'll fan their passions beyond measure.
But don't mistake their tender sweetness
As a bright sign of their weakness;
Within their demon hearts there beats
A spirit that you can't defeat!

6.

O! Swati, you alone have known
The soul's demanding wails and moans,
The dark and blissful interludes,
The price and prize of solitude.
Buffeted by Fate, moved and blown
On winds who lightly steal your home
Yet happily, you remain level,
Ever showering your gust-blown petals
Ever passive, ever meek,
Ever offering the other cheek,
Until Time (who's always chewing
His wound-up tail, and thus renewing
Life)- until Time's deemed you mature
Then, with roots fast and secure,

The fruits of your long winter nights
Appear for everyone's delight!

7.

Vishakha's only goal's to sway
The motley crowd to turn her way
Unlike her kapha constitution
She's down with leading revolutions.
While her forked tongue inspires emotion
And actively creates devotion
'Tis hard to say, among her peers,
Who follows out of love, who fear.
Raised on high her arms and fists
(Unlike her demon-tiger sis)
Lead her great ambitious nations
To victorious, if strained, celebrations.

8.

Anuradha, you're far from home,
Chasing Radha you've roamed and combed
The world for a place to call your own.
Igniting lovely, divine sparks
Of friendship, heart to sacred heart
Your level, passive, tender ways
Invite surrender to your rays
That through the arch of 'no defeat'
Light the way to your lotus feet.
You lead with light and easy laughter-
Not a simple trick to master-
Like pulling numbers from your hat...
And what are the odds of that?

9.

O! Jyeshta, you are the eldest, by far;
 Protector of all who fall neath your Aegis;
Brightest, most dreadful of Vrishchika's stars,
 Your Scorpion's sting is known to be vicious.
Like Indra you're active, daring, and hard
 (Your last navamsha's most inauspicious)
But, in a pinch, more than most others,
I'd have you by my side, if I had my druthers

Your mind is sattvic, but below,
You're demon, baby, neck to toe,

But that's your nature, what the heck!
Your pendant vows to serve, protect,
While round its never-ending dance
Pends the mystic Shaman's trance.

And so enough! Of poetry and art-
Life itself's the poem, for my part
I stop. The Play's the thing and life, the Play;
To write is noble, but to portray
In every moment, every day, works of love
Is nobler yet- the true *chef d'oeuvre*
(Now there's a rhyme you don't hear every day!)
'Tis one thing to write sweet stories
Of once great deeds and ancient glories,
To beat your head for catchy rhymes
That might someday recall those times
When World was stage and Life, the Play-
Another yet to smile and say,
'Never having dipped the plume,
But, sitting quiet in my room,
I live them, every moment, every day.

Then what is all this wasteful rhyme
That's but a slave to line and time?
Poetry, real Poetry is seeing
Through the eye, and simply being;
A Poet's not a man who writes
For country, master, court, or wife,
But who inspires in every breath
The moment's life, then cheers its death!

When all your soul resides in this
You'll know what music and all art is;
Only when you come to see
That Life itself is Poetry.

PART III

Welcome, reader, to our *last ride together*.
And, though Browning could have said it better,

I wish to leave some intimation
Of the model for this creation.
Singing an Ode as I rise up to meet it,
I greet the banners of the Romantic Spirit:⁹

The gusto of Byron's poetic cheek;
Glorious, noble, sad, Mangalik,
-As a poet, triumphant,
As a man, bittersweet.

And there is sweet Shelley, meekest of souls,
Tender and generous, giving to all
-The o'erburdened fruits earliest fall.

Impassioned by flames of o'erwrought emotion,
I burn in the urn of Keats' devotion.
O! parched and unquenched
Vessel and vassal of Beauty's vast ocean!

Engulfed in the flow of eternal libations
Pouring from Spirit's immortal creations
I share the Nature of Wordsworth's elation.

And ancient Coleridge's haunting stanzas
Like the'Eolian harp's whispered romances
Lure my soul into poppy-eyed trances.

Lost to the tyrant who'd gag and bind you,
But *Los* to the Poet who seeks to find you,
'Twas vegetable science who sneered in derision,
'Tis the modern appliance that proves your vision
(And Deepak Chopra, on television)

⁹ 1. Lord Byron- poet, lover, hero. Lived for freedom, died for it in Greece. Mostly stoic in the face of his karma

2. Shelley- idealist, vegetarian, universal soul. Drowned in the din of uncaring voices.

3. Keats- the empty vessel, the purest poet. Who let fire pour into his soul, and soonest returned to the ocean to quench it.

4. Wordsworth- man of nature, born to see, feel, fear its majestic ministry.

5. Coleridge- whose opium trances hypnotized all, like the Ancient Mariner his wedding guest.

6. William Blake- king of the pithy, succinct revelations; lord of the prolix, verbose expostulation:

'Brothels are built on the bricks of religion; prisons, with the stones of law.'

'To see the world in a grain of sand, and Heaven in a wildflower

To hold infinity in the palm of your hand, And eternity in an hour...''

First to sound propriety's knell,
Last to toll conformity's bell,
-O! Blake, caustic bard, whom few knew well,
Ave, Atque, Vale! Hail and farewell!

1.

With roots entwined down in the deep,
It's hard to move your dreadful feet
Or get you up from off your seat¹⁰
Poor Nirriti, your name spells doom,
But as the saying goes, 'for whom?'
Those cats who like to count their moolah
Firmly seated in their sthulah,
And revel in their name and riches
Had better tighten up their britches,
Save their change and never borrow
Lest their greed becomes their sorrow.
Yet those whose wealth cannot be measured
By the lustre of their treasure,
But the depth of their inquiry
Into Creation's endless diary
Can find Mula quite arresting
And helpful to their inner questing.
(At least I hope so, for my sake-
I've twelve years left in Mula's wake!)
And like a dog digs for his bone
I pray, 'O! Mula, take me home,
Into the marrow of my Being-
Burn this tallow of non-seeing
And like the root that splits concrete,
Pierce this veil of worldly sleep!

2-3

The cat who crooned, 'Hakuna matata'
Coined the motto of the Ashadhas.
Though mostly Uttara's got it right,
And as for Purva, well, not quite-
(Hey, it's not easy to rhyme with 'adha'
...Unless you're from Boston, where it's no bother!)
But if you can't lose, then why worry,
Fret, or fear, or even hurry?

¹⁰ The quality of *tamas*, or inertia

Unless you're pitta, in which case
Never mind- all life's a race!
Though that's not true of this star's fire,
Whose patience fans its strong desire
And, when the shit does hit the fan,
Ensures that she'll do all she can
To keep her head up above water
(Expect no less of Apah's daughter)

Maintined on her solid thighs,
She gives balanced, sound advice
And if you want the winning side
Don't argue, friend, just join the ride,
'Cause those who cross her roll the dice
And risk a quick and fierce demise.
Yes, once you challenge you're in store
For nothing less than total war,
Though that's not true of Purva's fellow
Victor, Uttara, who's mellow
Owing to her kapha nature;
Despite the mutual nomenclature
And kshatriya stature, she's quite nice
And valued for her good advice
(More so than her brahmin neighbour)
Ganesha gives her a sweeter flavor,
Whose tusk if well-fixed in the earth
Gives any project gracious birth.
And once the seeds have well been sown
Look up! For they can only grow.

And let's not forget the often jipped
Star of stars, Krishna's Abhijit,
Who once rode high the milky shores
But in our age, is used no more!

4.

With grin that spreads from ear to ear,
Shravana people love to hear
Tales of glory, tales of woe,
And tales of learning most of all.
Divine preserver, lord Vishnu
Every step You take renews

What Kala's sands have just erased.
You move with grace to match his pace;
Your divine, passive, tireless gait
Keeps up with Kala to create
Impressions so that all may know
The timeless stitches you have sewn
And read your passage to encrypt
The meter of your sandy script.
Though Time erodes them endlessly
Your footprints in the sand are three;
The past is now, and now, a memory.

5.

Now for Dhanishta we must slip
Into a British sort of trip...
And stiffen our upper lips.
That these stanzas come out suasible...
And my rhymes, more plausible.

Always reaching for the highest steeples,
Dhanishtas are type A people:
Asuric, active, pitta 'A's,
Whose stomping ground's the USA,
They're mostly one big Bal'Avastha
Who, like kids without a master,
Can be anal when they're older
And turn a lover the cold shoulder
When she won't do what they have told her.
(And therein the affinity
With Indian masculinity-
But 'ere some fingers loose their joints
Let he who first the finger points
Avow that he's the first to blame-
Myself am guilty of the same,
For passion stopped becomes repression,
And guilty of the worst transgressions)

In Art they're forceful and austere;
-- Less Rembrandt, more Vermeer,
They want for softness, grace, and charm,
That female power to disarm
So well-prized in the boudoir

(It's Shani's sign and Kuja's star!)
That makes their romantic antics
Seem to most like strong-arm tactics.

They've got money, sure, and fast Corvettes
And gemstones on their epaulettes,
And when it's time to take control,
They're the ones who lead the show,
And you can't fault their charity,
Ambition or prosperity-
But there's a certain grace they lack,
On which they shouldn't turn their backs,
For Ambition's other face is Fear,
Which in the bedroom becomes clear.

6.

The boy in the bubble's final wish was
To know why he as born Shatabhisha's.
This star's kids are on a mission,
Which often comes to fruition,
For they're active and move quickly,
Unless fate turns and makes them sickly.
They're the types who through the bars
Of any window, count the stars,
Who like to have their panchang handy,
Sit alone, and sip their brandy,
And ponder maps of time and space,
Musing if our jets will win the race.
Their self-enclosed, raw behaviour
Gives this star a Rahu flavor,
Which can make its gents myopic,
And, at times, seem misanthropic.
Their lesson is coming to grips
(Like Dhanishta and relationships)
With this world's endless boundaries
(Aditi helps resolve these quandries;
The paradox is that they will
Find all contained within the nil.)

7.

O! Sorcerer, your vile brew's
The angry bile in which you stew.
But jumping from the pan is dire

Since what awaits is searing fire;
And all the brahmins on your side
Cannot make your fears subside.
Unparalleled in your ferocity,
And unmatched in your raucity,
Let's hope your sattvic mind creates
A passive outlet for your hate!

8.

O! Pegasus,¹¹ your rear good feet
Tap fountains of primordial Heat
And the mountains whence they flow
Become your source of Self control.
Your god's the serpent of the deep
Who likes to wake us from our sleep
With lines from never-published poems
(Although some day I'm sure we'll show 'em!)
That I write with heart unfettered...
But to ride your back is even better;
In fact, you're the acme of Aghoris,
But for that, see Robert's stories.

9.

Patron star of roads and taverns,
The bhogi's Ritz, the yogi's cavern,
Revati, your cadence measures
The hours of my worldly pleasures.
And when your foster time runs out,
There's no need to scream and shout,
For long as there are souls on earth
You'll give them shelter, food, and mirth,
(There's nothing like the tender cushions
Of the ever-genial Pushan
Who, like any happening host
Brings the party wherever he goes!)
And those who wish to take a seat
Will find their bellies quite replete
With sattvic, sweet, and divine treats
Brought on the wings of Budha's feet!¹²

¹¹ "The fountain Hippocrene, on the Muses' mountain Helicon, was opened by a kick from his hoof." – *Myths of Greece and Rome*, by Thomas Bulfinch, p. 144

¹² Mixed mythologies; this star is ruled by Mercury in the Vimshottari dasha scheme, who in Greek myth is often represented with winged ankles.

Epilogue- Song of the Spirit

Yet I'm no slave of drummed-up time,
For moon and stars and sun are mine;
I've wound them here to tick away
The hours of my worldly play,
And when my shine with toys is done,
Through timeless climes, for *home* I run.

INTRODUCTION

'Tis not to swell the sated banks
Of poetry, or fill the ranks
Of thankless poets writing today
That I compose this astral lay.
It's not for merit or high fame
Or to bed some hard-won dame...
(Rather, 'immortalize her name')
That I invite my pen to play
(Though cash would be good- but I stray)
Indeed, 'tis not infatuation
With mental rhyming masturbation
Or a yen for sleepless anguish;
In fact, I'd rather sit and languish.
But 'tis to teach and help impart
A knowledge nearer to my heart
In a style that might to some
Seem affected, crass, or un-
Becoming of the subject matter
(-Excuse me while I drain my bladder!)
For those who grok my inspiration's
Own immortal intimations
Will remember the Romantic credo
That *all* is life, and life is neat-o,
And find every word of its creation
Amenable to versification...
Even *bladder*, and *masturbation*.
So pray forgive my imperfections,
For my style and my inflection
Is *archaic-modern-Simon-slang*...
On its threads I weave my life- or hang.

*“Singing is sweet, but be sure of this:
Lips only sing when they cannot kiss.”¹³*

Had I some speck of social life,
A girlfriend, consort, or a wife,
I wouldn't beat my brains to write
What- at best- will be called 'trite'
But since I have, oh well, hotdamn!
I'll make at as long as I can...
No, no- I'll *load each rift* and term¹⁴
With meaning's ore to help you learn.

If now you know from end to end,
Who is who, and what was meant,
Then you, my friend like Frank Sinatra
Are *king of the hill*... or at least Nakshatras!

¹³ From James Thomson's poem *Art*- also the precious final lines:
*Statues and pictures and verse may be grand,
But they are not the Life for which they stand.*

¹⁴ Keats, in a letter to Shelley on the topic of writing, wrote- "You must load every rift with ore!"