

## Implication of Astrologers' Work Ethics for Professional Social Work

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### Abstract

This paper tries to examine how professional astrologers use work ethics to help their clients recover from suffering and eventually become self-reliant and successful. Interestingly, they are not trained in social work, however, they are able to provide professional social service to their clients who are in need of support and care. So much so that even the professional social workers can also learn work ethics from the astrologers in order to enrich their service offerings. Indeed, astrologers' work ethics has wider implications for professional social work practice in India.

**Keywords:** Astrologers' Work Ethics, Professional Social Work, India

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### Introduction

Globalization, the most modern policy and approach towards world's integration and co-ordination in all terms breaks geographical, social, cultural and economic boundaries among countries. Hence, an individual's identity turns to be global. The impacts seem to be multifarious and combine both-good and bad. Globalization helps in emergence of multifarious fields of specialization according to the needs and demands of the growing global society. It facilitates improvement in education system. But the distribution of resources is not equal. It cultivates a world of consumerism on the one hand and unemployment on the other. So the people's suffering is mostly related to earning and livelihood which is prime factor of determination of individual's status and their relationship in extended family and society. There is a crisis of sustainable living and livelihood due to pressures of globalization. In India, most of the people suffer from either poverty or unemployment or both. It inculcates gap between the people who have money and who have not. Poverty and unemployment may also lead to larger incidence of mental illnesses across the country although we do not have ample empirical evidences to support this claim. Impoverished people without sustained livelihood security tend to go for help to the astrologers as they depend more on religious belief and faith on God instead of looking up to the government institutions or non-governmental organizations.

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Besides, there are large number of rich who attribute their suffering to unknown reasons and visit the astrologers for relief through rituals and religious rites.

Interestingly, the astrologers take up cases of their clients –rich or poor –with meticulous professionalism. Their approach is akin to social work practice although they may not have taken any education in the discipline. Social work, on the other hand, is a sharing and caring profession and it is also a problem solving method which deals with helping people in distress so that they overcome their suffering and live a life with dignity and peace. It is a problem solving profession like legal and medical profession (Sheldon & Macdonald, 2009). Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing (Popple & Leighninger, 2011; International Federation of Social Workers, 2014). It makes people self-dependent –self-power/self-energy, co-operation and development (three principles) are the key tools for self-dependent(Sinha, 2011). So, it is a profession concerned with helping individuals, families, groups and communities to enhance their individual and collective well-being. It aims to help people develop their skills and their ability to use their own resources and those of the community to resolve problems. It is concerned with individual and personal problems but also with broader social issues such as poverty, unemployment and domestic violence (Payne, 2011).

However, social problems and erosion of civil life demand the interference of the social work profession. Social workers have the responsibility to facilitate the welfare and self-fulfilment of human beings through utilization of resources at different level to achieve social justice in the society (International Federation of Social Workers, 1994). According to the National Association of Social Worker (1996), social workers pursue social change on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. Thus, lack of values in social work indicates the low level of commitment among its practitioners (Pyne, 2002; McBeath and Webb, 2002). And the values are the central to this profession (Parsons, 2002).

In India, social work profession is confined within a limited periphery where people think that is an intervention for carrying out social welfare programmes (education, health care, women's empowerment and alternative income generation) for underprivileged. It does not cover suffering of the masses due to mental illnesses and other socio-economic problems. On the other hand, astrology (an ancient discipline), the study of the movements of the stars and planets and their influence on people's lives (Culver and Ianna, 1988) occupies a prominent place in the lives of citizen of India as an integral part of popular culture. It is considered to be a New Age belief or practice (York, 1995), paranormal (Rice 2003: 100) or an 'alternative religion' (Hunt 2003: 171-3).

In fact, astrology has scientific, historical, religious, philosophical, and metaphysical foundations. Astrology has also played a significant role in many important aspects of the human experience throughout history (Cornelius, 1994). Astrology forms an aspect of life for most of the Indian populace. Astrological consultations are common during important events like birth, marriage, in matters of education, job, disease etc. There are examples galore to validate astrological predictions (Silverman and Whitman, 1974). But the 'why' and 'how' part being still not understood, skeptics argue that astrology has no scientific basis and that some of the predictions that come true are a matter of chance (Tyson, 1982). It is true that claims based on astrology cannot be tested under controlled laboratory conditions and there is no guarantee on reproducibility. Nevertheless astrological studies based on birth signs can provide a lot of information regarding the possibilities in a person's life (Tyson, 1984). As there has not been much detailed study in this area, the scientific basis of astrology has not yet been understood. But keeping in mind the numerous successes in this

field, it is imperative that a detailed and systematic study be undertaken in order to provide a scientific or systematic basis to this very old aspect of Indian civilization.

It has been observed that people seek an astrologer's help to improve their current situation (economical mainly) in life. An astrologer analyses strength and weakness of the particular suffering individual and the particular individual believes on this so that he/she is a regular visitor to an astrologer. The astrologer implies the tools and techniques of the social case work. The rapport and relationship with their clients discloses their (clients) every suffering more easily so that they can diagnose their problem according to their subject and the process of treatment is based on some guidance and direction to use one or more precious stone. The logic of uses of the stones what an astrologer states would expedite the solution of their suffering. Therefore, the paper examined the methods and techniques used by an astrologer and its impact for recovery of the individual from his/her suffering. Secondly, this paper looks at how astrological techniques would be implied in social work to make people self-reliant in all terms for a better and happy life.

### **Methods**

For the purpose of this study, the author (himself a professional social worker) met four renowned astrologers who used to provide their services in various parts of India. But author attended their chambers as an apprentice located at Kolkata metro city in the state of West Bengal (India). He did not design any questionnaire/interview schedule for data collection. But he observed the methods of diagnosis and treatment followed by the astrologers. From each astrologer, 25 respondents were selected purposively and total number of respondents was 100 (N). All of them visited at least thrice within a period of one year. The basic demographic information (social, religious, education, occupation as well as economic background of the respondents) was collected during their meeting to astrologers. Secondly, the author recorded the case history/case study to assess the causes of their visit to astrologers and improvement/recovery of their problem after meeting them. Both the quantitative and qualitative data were analysed through tables and case studies.

### **Results**

**Demographic profile of the informants/respondents:** The informants of this study were either permanently living at Kolkata city or they were attached to the city for their very own purpose for a settled life. However, they were from different background in terms of their religion, gender, age and education. The demographic profile of the informants (table 1) showed that they were dominated by Hindu (78%) and rest of them was Muslim. Their gender representation was equal (male = female = 50%). Educationally, 52% of them were graduate including engineering, medical, legal, management and others and out of which 26% of them were female) Nest 31% of these informants possessed their post-graduation in different disciplines including engineering, medical, legal, management and others. Of them, 14% informants were female. The informants of below 20-25 years age group revealed that 7% of them including 3% of the females were graduated. The informants of 26-30 years of age were 26% and out of which, 18% of them were graduate (male & female were equal in percentage). Four percent of them were post graduate. Of these 23% informants of 31-35 years of age, 12% informants were graduates and male and female was equal. And 5% of them were post-graduate where females were 1% more than males. Out of 10% informants of 36-40 years of age, 5% informants were graduates and 4% informants were post graduate. Seven percent of them fallen under the age group of 41-45 years were graduate and 4% of them were post graduate Hindu only. Of these informants of above 45 years, 3% each of them were graduates and post graduate only.

Table 1: Description of informants according to their age, gender, religion and education level

Age group	Education level												Total (n, %)
	Hindu						Muslim						
	Below Higher Secondary (10+2)		Graduate(10+2+3) including medical, engineering, law and other disciplines		Post graduate (10+2+3+2) including medical, engineering, law and other disciplines		Below Higher Secondary (10+2)		Graduate(10+2+3) including medical, engineering, law and other disciplines		Post graduate (10+2+3+2) including medical, engineering, law and other disciplines		
	M (n, %)	F (n, %)	M (n, %)	F (n, %)	M (n, %)	F (n, %)	M (n, %)	F (n, %)	M (n, %)	F (n, %)	M (n, %)	F (n, %)	
Below 20-25	-	1(1)	2(2)	(2)	4 (4)	3 (3)	-	-	2(2)	1 (1)	1(1)	1(1)	<b>17(17)</b>
26-30 years	1 (1)	2(2)	8(8)	8(8)	1(1)	1(1)	1(1)	-	1 (1)	1(1)	2(2)	-	<b>26(26)</b>
31-35 years	2(2)	1(1)	5(5)	6 (6)	2(2)	3 (3)	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (1)	-	-	1 (1)	<b>23(23)</b>
36-40 years	-	1 (1)	2 (2)	2 (2)	3 (3)	1 (1)	-	-	1 (1)	-	-	-	<b>10(10)</b>
41-45 years	1 (1)	2 (2)	2 (2)	4 (4)	2 (2)	2 (2)	1 (1)	2 (2)	-	1 (1)	-	-	<b>17 (17)</b>
Above 45 years	-	-	1(1)	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (1)	-	-	1 (1)	-	1 (1)	1 (1)	<b>7 (7)</b>
<b>Total (n, %)</b>	<b>4 (4)</b>	<b>7 (7)</b>	<b>20 (20)</b>	<b>23 (23)</b>	<b>13 (13)</b>	<b>11 (11)</b>	<b>3 (3)</b>	<b>3 (3)</b>	<b>6 (6)</b>	<b>3 (3)</b>	<b>4 (4)</b>	<b>3 (3)</b>	<b>100 (100)</b>

Source: Field Work

The table 2 showed that educated people had more faith on astrologers because they had more expectation in their life so far as their social, economic and occupational status were concerned.

Table 2: Age and marital status

Age group	Marital status												Total
	Hindu						Muslim						
	Single		Married		Divorce/others		Single		Married		Divorce/others		
	M (n, %)	F (n, %)	M (n, %)	F (n, %)	M (n, %)	F (n, %)	M (n, %)	F (n, %)	M (n, %)	F (n, %)	M (n, %)	F (n, %)	
Below 20-25 years	4 (4)	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	-	2 (2)	1 (1)	-	2 (2)	2 (2)	-	-	17 (17)
26-30 years	2 (2)	4 (4)	6 (6)	6 (6)	2 (2)	1 (1)	-	-	4 (4)	1 (1)	-	-	26 (26)
31-35 years	4 (4)	2 (2)	5 (5)	6 (6)	-	2 (2)	-	-	2 (2)	1 (1)	-	1 (1)	23 (23)
36-40 years	1 (1)	1 (1)	4 (4)	2 (2)	-	1 (1)	-	-	1 (1)	-	-	-	10 (10)
41 -45 years	-	-	5 (5)	6 (6)	-	2 (2)	-	-	1 (1)	3 (3)	-	-	17 (17)
Above 45 years	1 (1)	-	1 (1)	2 (2)	-	-	-	-	2 (1)	1 (1)	-	-	7 (7)
<b>Total</b>	<b>12 (12)</b>	<b>8 (8)</b>	<b>23 (23)</b>	<b>25 (25)</b>	<b>2 (2)</b>	<b>8 (8)</b>	<b>1 (10)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>12 (12)</b>	<b>8 (8)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1 (1)</b>	<b>100 (100)</b>

Source: Field Work

Majority of them (68%) were married and out of which, 48% of them were Hindu and it was 20% in case of Muslim informants. Among them, 20% (Hindu) informants were single and only one percent of these single informants were Muslim. Rate of divorce or others marital status was high among Hindu (10%) and majority of them (8%) were females. But it was 1% among Muslim respondents.

**Occupation of the informants:** Table 3 described the occupational status of the informants according to their education. We found that 44% of them were unemployed/student and among them, 31% informants were female because they were engaged as housewife when they were married.

Table 3: Occupational pattern of the informants according to their education level

Education level	Occupation						Total (n, %)
	Unemployed or students		Employed in public/private sectors		Business/others		
	M (n, %)	F (n, %)	M (n, %)	F (n, %)	M (n, %)	F (n, %)	
Below Higher Secondary (10+2)	4 (4)	8 (8)	2 (2)	1 (1)	1 (1)	1(1)	17 (17)
Graduate(10+2+3)	6 (6)	15 (15)	14 (14)	8 (8)	6 (6)	3 (1)	52 (52)

including medical, engineering, law and other disciplines							
Post graduate (10+2+3+2) including medical, engineering, law and other disciplines	3 (3)	8 (8)	10 (10)	5 (5)	4 (1)	1 (1)	31 (31)
<b>Total</b>	<b>13 (13)</b>	<b>31(31)</b>	<b>26 (26)</b>	<b>14 (14)</b>	<b>11(11)</b>	<b>5 (5)</b>	<b>100(100)</b>

Source: *Field Work*

Of course, 21% of these unemployed/students informants were graduates and 11% informants were post graduate. Of them, 40% informants were employed in public/private sectors and females were 14%. They were 22% (including 8% females) graduate and 15% (including 5% females) were post graduate. On the other hand, 16% of these informants (including 5% females) were in business or other jobs. Among them, 9% informants (including 3% females) were graduates and 5% (including 1% females) were post graduate.

**Causes for visit/consultation with an astrologer:** The informants were visiting to an astrologer for various reasons. From the table 4, we found that 18% of them (including 8%) were visiting to resolve their education related problem i.e. better performance in examination and selection of disciplines/subject in higher studies, etc. The second reason was problem with love partner/romantic partner, delayed in marriage and marital/conjugal relation or extra marital relations, etc. However, statistics showed that females (22%) were 8% more than males who were in above problems. Twenty eight percent of them used to consult with the astrologer for a resolution in their career/job because of not getting job, dissatisfaction in job, promotion in job, career advancement and so forth. In the above cases, males were 12% more than females. Eleven percent (including 9% females) was consulting for health related problems and 7% of them were for others (i.e. legal matter and so forth).

**Table 4: Causes for visit/consultation with an astrologer**

Causes for visit/consultation with an astrologer	Informants		Total (n, %)
	Male (n, %)	Female (n, %)	
Education related problem	10(10)	8 (8)	18 (18)
Problem with love partner, marriage and marital/conjugal relations	14 (14)	22 (22)	36 (36)
Job/career related problems	20 (20)	8 (8)	28 (28)
Health related problems	2 (2)	9 (9)	11 (11)
Others(legal matter, etc.	4 (4)	3 (3)	7 (7)
<b>Total (n, %)</b>	<b>50 (50)</b>	<b>50 (50)</b>	<b>100 (100)</b>

Source : *Field Work*

### Discussion

**Faith/views on astrologer's guidance and recovery from their (informants) problems:** Observation stated that the informants had full faith and confidence on astrology as well as astrologers. It was their family practice or they were influenced by their relatives/neighbours/peers/friends who benefited from this service and they were also regular visitors for resolving their problems. They believed it because an astrologer had potentialities to forecast individuals past, present and future in life. However, they felt that any other discipline did not capable to do the same. They did not feel it as a mental illness. They also felt that there was no alternative guide rather than an astrologer.

Their mental state revealed that their fate line was their cause(s) of troubles in their life. Only education and skills were not enough to succeed in life. There were some hidden obstacles which an astrologer could diagnose. Therefore, an astrologer could guide them to rectify their strengths and weakness, and their advice and direction could easily rectify these to reassure it. Further, the astrologer was trustworthy and faithful. They were very much accustomed with the astrological guidance and they learnt these from different media. And they were also well-acquainted with life histories of actors/actress, business men and others who signed after following up of astrologer's guidance.

Some of them shared their recovery in their second or third visit to a particular astrologer. For instance, Lata, a female of 28 years, possessed a post graduate degree and she was in a private sector job. She was worried about her marriage and she did not get a suitable match after various efforts taken by her family members, relatives and other. After visiting an astrologer, she was guided to wear a precious stone and instructed to follow some techniques. The astrologer also stated that her marriage would be fixed within 9-12 months. Later on, she got married with suitable match within the stipulated period of the astrologer.

**Role of astrologers' in dealing with the problems of informants (tools and techniques implied):** The astrologers had no knowledge and ethical value of social work. But they used the basic principles and techniques of social case work, a method of helping people individually through a one to one relationship which helped to know their own strategies for recovery. The astrologists only provided some guidance/direction to be followed to reach their desired goal. Their prescription added to hold precious stone(s) to expedite their change. The rate of recovery was not always very impressive. But astrological guidance changed their mind set to go ahead to resolve their suffering. It also helped to save their life from suicide.

**Case 1:** Sutapa (34) was a housewife married to an electronic media professional. It was a love marriage solemnized six years ago. She was also post graduate in arts subject. She did not search any job because she decided to manage her household properly. They had no issue. She was only child of her parents and she got her parents' properties (movable and immovable). She shifted from Kolkata (West Bengal) to Pune (Maharashtra). Her husband earned a handsome salary. But he did not incur any expense for their family. Her husband had some bad habits of taking alcohol and others. They were in trouble in their relations. That's why she attended an astrologer for consultation to resolve their problem and a better living. The astrologer diagnosed according to his learned system that her husband would die within 6 months to one year after sudden heart attack. So, he advised that she had no way to escape from it. But he guided her to involve herself in job which might be small business of boutique (ladies garments) and it would start immediately for her own future. Accordingly, she started a business at Pune and but her husband was alive. This was a case where astrologer counseled her to be self-reliant and it helped her to use her time properly for self-progress and prosperity. It was step for women's empowerment.

The astrologer mainly was focused on individual client's problem, mental state and other tools to deal with the problem of the particular client. They basically interviewed the client and their listening and observation skills helped to judge and assess the client's problem. Thereafter, he/she used to provide advocacy, counselling, advice, clarification with guidance to recover oneself from his/her present state.

**Case 2:** Kanani (50 years) was graduate single man living with his elder brothers. He had friend circle of rich and elite people of Kolkata. He was mentally ill and was suffering from stomachache. He basically involved in money laundering profession and the money was usually sponsored by his friend circle to whom he convinced to get money to start a business. But he did not. He had a colossal faith on astrology and astrologer. He attended the astrology centre to know the treatment of his chronic illness of stomach and when he might be a rich having at least one or two crore rupees. He also discussed how and when he would recover his money given to some of his clients. The astrologer simply told him that his illness was due to hidden reason and it might be cured within a year. Regarding his recovery of money, he advised him to adopt some techniques of soft behavior and regular attachment to his client. He also stated that he would be a rich man with rupees one or two crores within 2 -3 years provided that he should be active in his work. Gradually, he recovered some of his money from his clients and he was active in his work. So, his stomachache was not so far serious. This case tells us the simple techniques of improvement of mental illness.

**Case 3:** Dr. Dasgupta (44 years) was an M.B.B.S & D.G.O (general physicians) and he once practiced in government health service. But he left it due to low income from this job. He started private practice in Kolkata and he is associated with some private nursing home and hospital. But his earning was not increasing according to his expectation. Number of patient in his chamber was poor. So, he visited an astrologer who diagnosed that it was bad phase in his life. It would continue up to his age of 48 years because he was a late riser. But he should be more sincere and caring towards his patients. He should study more and gather knowledge about his profession. It would improve his reputation so that his number of patients per day would increase gradually. Dr. Dasgupta was pleased and he used to maintain the astrologer's advice.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

Present global era depends on science. The progress of people is determined by the progress of science and its implication. But people are not ready to change their cultural habits. Astrology is such a domain. There might be argument about truth and myths in astrology. In India, a large number of people of different social, economic and cultural background have full faith on it. They have faith on fate line and hidden causes which might be causes of obstacles in their life. Thus we find in this study that educated people of different professional background were consulting with astrologer for betterment of their life. Their problems were multifarious from education to legal matter. They have faith on astrologer who even diagnose and guide the possible date of marriage and marriage partner. Thus, we found the various aspects of an individual's life dealt by astrologer. They were meeting success also. That was the prime cause of dependence on the discipline. They did not find any alternative profession/discipline which could produce same result for their betterment.

Interestingly, the astrologers today work with greater professionalism and integrity and engage passionately with their clients. They ensure privacy of their clients and always try to ensure their wellness through use of stones and other ritualistic interventions. They maintain a very good rapport with their clients. Astrologers' tactics might be used in social work at large scale. This might strengthen the importance of social work profession so far as work ethics is concerned in dealing with the client. It would help change the people's notion about a professional social worker and



their role and responsibilities in the society. Further, this would promote the professional development and recognition of social work. There is one big reason for the social workers to learn from astrologers –indomitable faith of the clients in them and their huge following in terms of numbers and diversity. If the social workers can also follow the nuances of astrologers' tactics, they can build a sustainable social support mechanism for the people.

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