

[chakra.org][Image] [Image] The Solar Eclipse of 1999 from the Vedic Perspective
[Image] On August 11, 1999, there will be a total eclipse This map shows traversing from England to India. the path of the total solar "In essence it says that it is not a good time," says eclipse on August Jaya Tirtha Charan, an expert on the subject as it 11, 1999. impacts followers of the Vedas.

[Image] He says that one should not do pujas, nor should one cook - even for the Deity. "Nor should one eat or have This animation sex," he says. shows the path of the eclipse as it According to the Vedic scriptures, pregnant women traverses the should not see or look at the eclipsing of the Sun or Earth. Moon as it will harm the baby, and if she sews cloth or garlands, or cuts paper etc., the child will be born with a hair-lip (torn-lip).

[Image] "We have some practical evidence of this being fact also not just injunctions or stories as some may think - I know of two women who had difficulties, one miscarried within a week, one the child has a tear in the upper lip, as the Ayurvedic injunction said it would," says Jaya Tirtha Charan.

But His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami did encourage preaching during eclipses. "And you say that several hundred people joined in chanting and dancing during the eclipse. All these things are very much encouraging to me." (Letter to: Damodara das - Los Angeles 24 March, 1970)

And in the Caitanya-caritamrta, Srila Prabhupada writes: "It is customary in India that all the followers of the Vedic scriptures bathe in the Ganges or the sea as soon as there is a lunar or solar eclipse. All strict followers of the Vedic religion stand up in the water throughout the whole period of the eclipse and chant the Hare Krsna maha-mantra."

But what is an eclipse?

Jaya Tirtha Charan has developed a web page with information about eclipses from a Vedic perspective. The following article from his website was sent to us, and quoted with permission:

"When the Moon passes between the Earth and the Sun, it casts a huge shadow over the Earth as it blocks out the sunlight. For those at the edge of the shadow (the penumbra) the eclipse is partial; the Moon seems to take a bite out of the Sun as it passes. But observers standing in the centre of the shadow (the umbra) see a spectacular solar eclipse. Unfamiliar and beautiful features become visible around the edge of the Sun. The prominences - the reddish spikes that protrude from the Sun beyond the dark edge of the moon - are columns of incandescent hydrogen; they extend thousands of miles above the Sun's surface. The Sun's halo, the pearly white corona, also becomes visible. For less than eight minutes these wondrous aspect of the Sun are revealed in an eerie twilight. Then the moon continues inexorably in its orbit around the Earth, and spectacle is over."(Reader's Digest. 1988. "Facts & Fallacies". page 404.)

Full Moons that occur with Moon (or Sun) near Rahu or Ketu result in eclipses.

If a full Moon, then the eclipse is lunar, if a new Moon, then the eclipse is solar.

”Now our Ph.D must collaborate and study the Fifth Canto to make a model for building the Vedic Planetarium. My final decision is that the universe is just like a tree, with root upwards. Just as a tree has branches and leaves, so the universe is also composed of planets which are fixed up in the tree like the leaves, flowers, fruits etc. So now all you Ph.D’s must carefully study the details of the Fifth Canto and make a working model of the universe. If we can explain the passing seasons, eclipses, phases of the moon, passing of day and night, etc., then it will be very powerful propaganda.”(Letter from Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada to Swarupa Damodara dasa, April 27th 1976. Taken from ”Vedic Cosmography & Astronomy”. Richard L. Thomson - Sadaputa dasa - 1989. page 1.)

”If we go 80,000 miles above the region of the Siddhas, Charanas, and Vidyaadharas, we come to the level of the planet called Rahu. Some 80,000 miles above Rahu we reach the level of the Sun, which is said to lie between Bhurloka and Bhuvanloka in the middle of antariksha (S.B.5:20:43., S.B. 5:24:1.) We note that these measurements account for only part of the distance from Bhu-mandala to the Sun, since this is given as 100,000 yojanas (or 800,000 miles) in S.B. 5:23:9 purport.) In the Vedic literature it is often mentioned that Rahu causes solar and lunar eclipses by passing in front of the Sun or Moon. To many people, this seems to blatantly contradict the modern explanation of eclipses which holds that a solar eclipse is caused by the passage of the moon in front of the Sun and a lunar eclipse is caused by the Moon’s passage through the Earth’s shadow. However, the actual situation is somewhat more complicated than this simple analysis assumes. The reason for this is that the Surya-siddhanta presents an explanation of eclipses that agrees with the modern explanation but also brings Rahu into the picture. This work explicitly assumes that eclipses are caused by the passage of the Moon in front of the Sun or into the Earth’s shadow. It describes calculations based on this model that make it possible to predict the occurrence of both lunar and solar eclipses and compute the degree to which the disc of the Sun or Moon will be obscured. At the same time, rules are also given for calculating the position of Rahu and another, similar planet named Ketu. It turns out that either Rahu or Ketu will always be lined up in the direction of any solar or lunar eclipse. In Chapter One (Richard L. Thomson - Sadaputa dasa - 1989. ”Vedic Cosmography & Astronomy”.) we have already described how the astronomical siddhantas define the orbit of Rahu and Ketu, and a similar definition is given for Ketu. The positions assigned to Rahu and Ketu correspond to the ascending and descending nodes of the Moon - the points where the orbit of the Moon (projected onto the celestial sphere) intersects the ecliptic, or the orbit of the Sun. These nodal points rotate around the ecliptic from east to west, with a period of about 18.6 years. One of them must always point in the direction of an eclipse, since the Moon can pass in front of the Sun or in the Earth’s shadow only if the Sun, Moon and the Earth lie in a straight line. Thus, by placing Rahu and Ketu at the nodal points of the Moon, the Surya-siddhanta conforms both with the modern theory of eclipses and the

Vedic explanation involving Rahu and Ketu. One objection that may be raised to the explanation given in the Surya-siddhanta seems to be a cheap compromise between the Vedic account of eclipses (which many will regard as mythological) and the modern account (which many will regard as an import into India from the Greeks). It is true that Rahu and Ketu seem to play a rather superfluous role in the eclipse calculations given in the Surya-siddhanta. However, there are reasons for supposing that these planet do not appear in these calculations as a mere decoration. The principle reason for this is that the positions of Rahu and Ketu plays an important role in astrology. This means that astrologers need some system of calculation that will tell them where Rahu and Ketu are at any given time. We have argued in Chapter One (Richard L. Thomson - Sadaputa dasa - 1989. "Vedic Cosmography & Astronomy") that astrology has traditionally played an important role in Vedic culture. From this it follows that some methods for calculating the positions of Rahu and Ketu have traditionally been required in Vedic society. Since we have no evidence that any other method of calculating these positions has ever been used, this can be taken as an indirect indication that the method used in the Surya-siddhanta has coexisted with the Vedic shastras for a very long time. Of course, by this argument we cannot conclude definitely that this particular method of calculation has always been used. But we can at least be sure that the Vedic society, with its emphasis on astrology and the astronomical timings of religious ceremonies, has always needed more than a mere qualitative story to account for eclipses and other astronomical phenomena.

In the West there is also a long tradition ascribing solar and lunar eclipses to the action of some celestial beings of a demonic nature. There these beings have also been associated with the nodes of the Moon, and they are known as the head and tail of the dragon. The story of this eclipse-dragon may help give us some indication of how little we really know about history. Figure 16 (Richard L. Thomson - Sadaputa dasa - 1989. "Vedic Cosmography & Astronomy" page 98.) is a medieval Islamic picture showing an angel severing the head of the eclipse-dragon. (This is reminiscent of the story of the decapitation of Rahu by Lord Vishnu) Figure 17 (Richard L. Thomson - Sadaputa dasa - 1989. "Vedic Cosmography & Astronomy" page 99.) is a strikingly similar picture showing St George, the patron saint of England, slaying a dragon. Unless this is a complete coincidence, it would seem that the story of the eclipse-dragon was somehow woven into the iconography of early Christianity without any indication of its significance being preserved. (St. George is said to have been born in Asia Minor in about A.D. 300. but there is apparently no information indicating how he came to be connected with a dragon (Chambers R. 1967. The Book of Days, page 539.) Unfortunately, our knowledge of the ancient history of this story is practically nonexistent. (Richard L. Thomson - Sadaputa dasa - 1989. "Vedic Cosmography & Astronomy" pages 97-101.)

The Effects of Eclipses: Eclipses are, from an astrological point of view, often described as inauspicious events, and we know of recent cases where educated people stayed in their homes and even kept their children from going to class

because of a partial solar eclipse. In our perusal of the literature, we found that eclipses that occur near Rahu tend to be favorable, while those that occur near Ketu tend to cause roughness. The problem with using these rules is that there is not a lot of research to validate what works and what does not. Furthermore, eclipses are somewhat unique in that they become a point in the chart, but not a permanent one. That is, take the eclipse point and mark it on the chart. Now look for conjunctions or oppositions with that point involving transiting grahas, and see if they act as trigger points. This point is supposed to last for as many years as the solar eclipse lasted in hours, so after some time this point should be removed from consideration. In this sense, the eclipse point acts as a point of time-varying influence, with the influence generally decreasing with time. We know of no measure of this decrease, but perhaps it is possible to define an exponentially-decaying strength (bala) value to eclipse points. It would be an interesting research project.

In Regard To The Lunar Eclipse At The Time Of Lord Chaitanya's Birth. "The pious Sri Jagannatha Misra, Chaitanya's father, lived in Navadvipa. Like Vasudeva, he conscientiously performed his spiritual duties. His devout and faithful wife Srimati Sacidevi was a second Devaki - the beloved mother of everyone. The Supreme Personality of Godhead Lord Narayana appeared in the womb of Srimati Sacidevi, and as Sri Krsna Chaitanya, He became the most precious possession of everyone's heart. The Adi Khanda of Sri Chaitanya Bhagavat begins by describing the appearance of Lord Chaitanya on an auspicious full moon evening in the month of Phalguna when the moon went into eclipse. The tumultuous chanting of Lord Hari's holy name filled all directions, inspiring everyone to sing together. The Supreme Lord Chaitanya was born amidst the chanting."(Sarvabhavana dasa. 1984. English trans. Sri Chaitanya Bhagavat.)

"The Supreme Proprietor of the entire creation remained in the womb of Srimati Sacidevi, and on the full moon night in the month of Phalguna He appeared. That full moon night was the summum bonum of all the auspicious holy occasions of the cosmic manifestation combined. The Supreme Personality descended, accompanied by the process of congregational chanting of the holy name. He propagated this process by practicing it Himself. Who is able to know the wonderful pastimes of the Supreme Lord? He arranged a lunar eclipse at the time of His birth. Upon seeing the lunar eclipse the residents of Navadvipa began to loudly chant the Lord's holy name and make other auspicious sounds. Endless teeming millions convulsed on the Ganges for holy ablutions and filled the air with loud chanting of the Lord's name. The tumultuous sound of their chanting penetrated the coverings of this material universe and travelled beyond Brahmaloaka. All the saintly persons marvelled at this wonderful chanting and prayed for a perennial eclipse. All the devotees experienced deep exhilaration and exclaimed, "Such great joy! Maybe the Supreme Lord Krsna is making His appearance. The devotees went to the Ganges for their ablutions followed by the roar of chanting from all directions. Women, children, aged, pious, and impious - everyone loudly chanted Lord Hari's holy name during the lunar eclipse. The only sound within the universe was the all-prevailing chanting of "Hari! Hari!"

The demigods showered flower confetti everywhere and proclaimed victory as they beat clamorously on their dundubhi drums. Amidst the resounding adulations, the Lord and the very soul of the universe appeared as the son of Srimati Sacidevi. The moon was eclipsed by Rahu; the ocean of the holy name inundated Navadvipa, drowning and subduing the darkness of Kali Yuga. The Supreme Lord was manifest! All the fourteen worlds resounded with the profound news. The moon-like Lord Chaitanya, Gauranga, had arisen; the residents of Nadia were freed from all sorrows just seeing the Lord. Their happiness and prosperity increased day by day. The roll of the dundubhi drums, the trumpeting of thousand conch shells, the shrill of flutes and horns, accompanied Vrndavana dasa's songs of praise to their Lordship Sri Chaitanya and Sri Nityananda Prabhu. His beautifully brilliant lustre overshadowed the sun's shining rays and dazzled my eyes. His drawn out, slightly drooping eyes defied description. The air was surcharged with joy; Lord Chaitanya had descended to the material world! One roaring sound of Lord Hari's name reverberated throughout the universe, beyond Brahmaloaka carrying the tidings of Lord Chaitanya's birth. His exquisite complexion was the colour of sandalwood paste. His all expansive chest was decorated with a gently swaying wildflower garland and His iridescent, moon-like face is pleasing, cooling and comforting. His elongated arms reached down to His knees. Sounds of victory and praise permeated all directions and the earth felt especially blessed at the advent of Lord Chaitanya. Some sang in great joy while others danced in ecstasy. But for Kali it was a calamity in the midst of spiritual revelry. The crown jewels of all Vedic conclusions are the Supreme Lords Chaitanya and Nityananda Prabhus. Their causeless mercy made no discrimination between the ignorant or the derelict. I, Vrndavana dasa, offer this song to them. The Golden moon, Lord Chaitanya, had arisen as sounds of great joy filled the air. His beauty humbled a million cupids, and He smiled at His own dancing and singing. His lovely face and charming eyes added to the list of other marks of divinity on His transcendental person; His feet were marked with the signs of flag, lightning etc. His entire exquisite form was decorated to enchant the minds of everyone. All fear and despondency was dissipated and the world was showered with immense fortunes. I, Vrndavana dasa, offer this song to my very life and soul, Lord Chaitanya and Lord Nityananda. The demigods became overjoyed and sang in praise of Lord Chaitanya's appearance. A mere glance at the Lord's beatific, moon like face was enough to extirpate all miseries. This was a glorious and happy occasion. Lord Ananta Shesha, Lord Brahma, Lord Shiva and other demigods all took up their new forms and, using the lunar eclipse as an excuse, continuously sang Lord Hari's name. I cannot fully describe their exultation. Milling crowds poured in to Nadia with shouts of "Hari, Hari". Navadvipa was in the grips of unbounded bliss. The Supreme Lord, the demigods and the human beings had all come together to frolic with one another.

The demigods came to the Srimati Sacidevi's house in the darkness of the eclipse and, unseen by humans, fell to the ground and offered obeisances to Lord Chaitanya. Who can describe these abstruse pastimes of the Lord. Some broke out

in types of glorification, some held the umbrella and some fanned the Lord with a chamara, while others showered flowers in ecstasy and still others sang and danced exuberantly. Lord Chaitanya appeared with all His pure devotees and the atheist will never understand it. I, Vrndavana dasa sing the nectarine glories of Lord Chaitanya and Lord Nityananda. The rumble of Dundubhi drums, hymns, prayers and sweet music mingled and resounded in the air. Today, without delay, we can meet that Supreme Personality who is a mystery even in the Vedas. The demigods in Indrapura were tumultuously happy; busily decorating themselves, they felt extremely fortunate that they could receive Lord Chaitanya's blessed association in Navadvipa. They embraced and kissed each other without shame in exultation that the Lord of Navadvipa, Lord Chaitanya, had taken His birth. There was no distinction of friend or foe. In great curiosity the demigods came to Navadvipa amidst loud chanting of God's name. Infected by the transcendental mellow of Lord Chaitanya they became almost unconscious in ecstasy and joined in singing the glories of Lord Chaitanya. They saw the beautiful form of Lord Chaitanya. He was more exquisite than a thousand rising full moons. He accepted the human form and made everyone loudly chant the Lord's holy name, using the eclipse as a good excuse. The Lord descended with all his energies and expansions; this is incomprehensible to the atheists. Vrndavana dasa Thakura says, "Let me sing in adulation about my life and soul, Lord Sri Chaitanya and Sri Nityananda Prabhu."

Generally throughout India devotees take pre-caution to not perform any kind of activity such as rituals; Deity puja; cooking; any samskaras etc, during a lunar or solar eclipse. Rather following in the footsteps of Lord Sri Krishna Who along with the cowherds visited Kurukshetra, and the above mentioned instant, and as Srila Prabhupad himself showed by example, devotees take full shelter of the Holy Names of the Lord and if in India submerge themselves in sacred rivers such as the Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati, Namadi, Sind, Kaveri, Tungabhadra, Godavari, etc., whilst jubilantly chanting the Holy Names of God - hare krishna hare krishna krishna krishna hare hare / hare rama hare rama rama rama hare hare.

Furthermore it is mentioned as a pre-cautionary thing that women who are bearing children in their wombs should neither sew, make garlands, or look at the eclipsing sun or moon least it be detrimental to the health and well being of the unborn child. Ayurved mentions that a pregnant woman looking at the eclipsing sun or moon is often born with a child with a hair-lip (torn or scared upper lip), if she sews, piercing anything or cuts anything this too may cause impairment of internal organs of the child. Consequently pregnant women stay in doors and chant the Holy names of the Lord and or read shastra during these times, being careful not to also fall asleep. Falling asleep or taking rest during these times can leave one subjected to the attacks of ghosts (bhuta, preetas, etc.). Some people don't believe in ghosts, but that still doesn't make them go away.

The performance of Rituals at the time of Graha-Grastah eclipse: Gen-

erally it is to be understood that what you are proposing to do for rituals/pujas/ceremonies, etc are NEVER to be done during a lunar or solar eclipse - graha-grastah. Rather if you notice ALL TEMPLES CLOSE at the time of an eclipse, nothing is cooked, no offerings are made, etc. Instead as we recollect in the life and birth of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu everyone goes to the Ganga and chants the Hare Krishna mahamantra. Devotees do not even study during an eclipse. As stated in Sanatan Goswami and Gopal Bhatta Goswami's Dik Darshini tika; in connection with Quotes from the Visnu Purana about how the Grhastha should work in this world "(text 44) At the time of thundering in the sky, or on the eighth day of the waxing or waning moon, in an unclean condition, and during an eclipse, a learned person does not study scriptures".

Otherwise it is customary according to the shastra to go to a Holy place and take shelter there to be free from the contaminating effects of Rahu (Rahu is the cause of eclipses not Ketu). "In this connection, the darkness occurring before the full moon, the lunar eclipse, can be explained as being another planet, known as Rāhu. According to Vedic astronomy, the Rāhu planet, which is not visible, is accepted. Sometimes the Rāhu planet is visible in the presence of full moonlight. It then appears that this Rāhu planet exists somewhere near the orbit of the moon. The failure of modern moon excursionists may be due to the Rāhu planet. In other words, those who are supposed to be going to the moon may actually be going to this invisible planet Rāhu."(A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. SB 4:29:69. purport.)

"The controlling demigods are most obedient to Lord Viñëu, although they also want material sense enjoyment, and that is why they are called demigods, or almost godly. Although Rāhu attempts to attack both the sun and the moon, they are protected by Lord Viñëu. Being very afraid of Lord Viñëu's cakra, Rāhu cannot stay in front of the sun or moon for more than a muhūrta (forty-eight minutes). The phenomenon that occurs when Rāhu blocks the light of the sun or moon is called an eclipse."(A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. SB 5:24:3. purport.)

"During the hours of eclipse it was the custom of the Hindu public to take bath in the Ganges or any other sacred river and chant the Vedic mantras for purification. When Lord Caitanya was born during the lunar eclipse, all India was roaring with the holy sound of Hare Kāñëa, Hare Kāñëa, Kāñëa Kāñëa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare."(A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. Srimad Bhagavatam Canto 1 Introduction.)

Certainly there are some places in the Bhagavatam and other shastras that prescribe certain activities as being auspicious. However, we need to also understand the difference in something being auspicious as in the Janma-asthami of Lord Krishna's "birth", Radha-asthami of Srimati Radhika's appearance, the Nrisimha-Chaturdasi and why they are auspicious. The function that rules their auspiciousness is not their qualitative potency, but their being blessed by the appearance of the Lord on those tithis. The tithis themselves are not used for creating good in this world otherwise. Rather some Vama-tantriks and other

karmakhandis utilise their potency for other things, closer to the nature of the tithi. In a similar manner we would like to suggest to you that these days such as Fullmoons/Purnimas, and Amavasyas/Newmoons are not to be utilised to celebrate functionary activities of a samskarik nature as their auspiciousness is based upon the appearance of the Lord UNDER CERTAIN full or new moons and NOT ALL.

(SB 1:10:9-10 purport.)

you may even notice that where it is said in the Srimad bhagavatam that one should perform the Shraddha ceremony on the ekadasi tithi in the text, Prabhupada cites Srila Jiva Goswami as saying that: "Çréla Jéva Gosvámé has given quotations from many çāstras stating that the çrāddha ceremony of oblations to the forefathers should not be performed on Ekādaçé tithi. When the tithi of the death anniversary falls on the Ekādaçé day, the çrāddha ceremony should be held not on Ekādaçé but on the next day, or dvādaçé. In the Brahma-vaivarta purāëa it is said: If one performs the çrāddha ceremony of oblations to the forefathers on the Ekādaçé tithi, then the performer, the forefathers for whom the çrāddha is observed, and the purohita, or the family priest who encourages the ceremony, all go to hell."(A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. SB 7:14:20-23. purport.)

Similarly Kalaprakashika and the Grhya Sutras advise that one should NOT perform yajnas, pujas, iniations, installations, conceive children, get married, or even cook - any activity that is considered Sat Kriya karmani during either a solar sankranti or solar or lunar eclipse.

"Hearing that a total eclipse of the sun was soon to occur, people from all over Bhārata-varña, including the Yādavas, converged at Kurukñetra to earn special pious credit. After the Yadus had bathed and performed other obligatory rituals, they noticed that kings of Matsya, Uçénara and other places had also come, as well as Nanda Mahārāja and the cowherd community of Vraja, who were always feeling the intense anxiety of separation from Kāñëa. The Yādavas, overjoyed to see all these old friends, embraced them one by one as they shed tears of happiness. Their wives also embraced one another with great pleasure."(A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. SB 10:82nd chapter summary.)

What I suggest to you here is that the devotee gathered at the Holy place of pilgrimage bathed in the Holy Tirthas there, and then after the eclipse had passed then purified performed their sacrifices and pujas. My reason for saying this is also that one MUST NEVER bathe directly after a yajna or sacrifice or experiencing some auspicious event, rather even religious avavrtya baths are taken some time after a sacrificial event.

And supporting that theory " At the Rājasüya-yajña, on the other hand, Duryodhana s jealousy against the Pāëòavas became irrevocably inflamed. Soon after this, Duryodhana challenged Yudhiñöhira and his brothers to the gambling match, in which he cheated them of their kingdom and exiled them to the forest. Right after the Pāëòavas return from exile, the great Battle of Kurukñetra

took place, during which Bhéñma and Droëa were killed. So it is not logically possible for the solar eclipse at Kurukñetra to have happened after the Rājasūya sacrifice.”(A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. SB 10:82:1. purport.)

Although it is mentioned by Srila Prabhupad that it is auspicious to fast and perform worship during ekadasi and an eclipse (SB 10:82:2. purport), the kind of worship prescribed is Harinam and not ritual as paraphernalia/dravya is subjected to dravya suddhi and would become impure in itself and unofferable.

There is reference made to this on a Morning Walk with Srila Prabhupada (Dr. Patel. 17th November 1975, Bombay).

”The Lord has described the purity and impurity of [Image] different places, times and material objects. According to the laws of nature, that which is impure contaminates a particular person in accordance with that person’s situation, as described here. For example, on certain occasions, such as a solar eclipse or just after childbirth, one must restrict the intake of food according to ritualistic injunctions.”(Hridayananda das Goswami. SB 11:21:11. purport.)

”According to the Jyotir-veda, the Rāhu planet comes in front of the full moon, and thus a lunar eclipse takes place. It is customary in India that all the followers of the Vedic scriptures bathe in the Ganges or the sea as soon as there is a lunar or solar eclipse. All strict followers of Vedic religion stand up in the water throughout the whole period of the eclipse and chant the Hare Kāñëa mahā-mantra. At the time of the birth of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu such a lunar eclipse took place, and naturally all the people standing in the water were chanting Hare Kāñëa, Hare Kāñëa, Kāñëa Kāñëa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.”(A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. Chaitanya charitamrta Adi-lila 13:92. purport.)

”Seeing the lunar eclipse and laughing, both Advaita Ācārya and Haridāsa Ōhākura immediately went to the bank of the Ganges and bathed in the Ganges in great jubilation. Taking advantage of the occasion of the lunar eclipse, Advaita Ācārya, by His own mental strength, distributed various types of charity to the brāhmaëas.”(CC Adi-lila 13:100 txt.) PURPORT ”It is the custom of Hindus to give in charity to the poor as much as possible during the time of a lunar or solar eclipse. Advaita Ācārya, therefore, taking advantage of this eclipse, distributed many varieties of charity to the brāhmaëas. In the Çrémad-Bhāgavatam there is a statement in the Tenth Canto, Third Chapter, verse 11, that when Kāñëa took His birth, immediately Vasudeva, taking advantage of this moment, distributed ten thousand cows to the brāhmaëas. It is customary among Hindus that at the time a child is born, especially a male child, the parents distribute great charity in jubilation. Advaita Ācārya was actually interested in distributing charity because of Lord Caitanya’s birth at the time of the lunar eclipse. People could not understand, however, why Advaita Ācārya was giving such a great variety of things in charity. He did so not because of the lunar eclipse but because of the Lord’s taking birth at that moment. He distributed charity exactly as Vasudeva did at the time of Lord Kāñëa’s

appearance.”(A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. Chaitanya Charitamrta Adi-lila 13:100. purport.)

Then just as my conclusion (because i’ve run out of time allotted for this) Prabhupad outlines the sequence of events so that the pilgrimage involved in visiting a Holy Tirtha at the time of an eclipse is NOT for ACTUAL RITUALS but for cleansing and remembering the Lord, THEN when the eclipse has passed again one takes bath and begins to cook etc., for the actual service of the Lord. ”After arriving in Kurukñetra, the members of the Yadu dynasty took their baths ceremoniously, with self-control, as enjoined in the ġāstras, and they observed fasting for the whole period of the eclipse in order to nullify the reactions of their sinful activities. Since it is a Vedic custom to give in charity as much as possible during the hours of the eclipse, the members of the Yadu dynasty distributed many hundreds of cows in charity to the brāhmaēas. All those cows were fully decorated with nice dress and ornaments. The special feature of these cows was that they had golden ankle bells and flower garlands on their necks. After the eclipse, all the members of the Yadu dynasty again took their baths in the lakes created by Lord Paraçurāma. Then they sumptuously fed the brāhmaēas with first-class cooked food, all prepared in butter. According to the Vedic system, there are two classes of food. One is called raw food, and the other is called cooked food. Raw food does not include raw vegetables and raw grains but food boiled in water, whereas cooked food is made in ghee. Capātés, dhal, rice and ordinary vegetables are called raw foods, as are fruits and salads. But purés, kachaurés, samosās, sweet balls and so on are called cooked foods. All the brāhmaēas invited on that occasion by the members of the Yadu dynasty were fed sumptuously with cooked food. The ceremonial functions performed by the members of the Yadu dynasty externally resembled the ritualistic ceremonies performed by the karmés. When a karmé performs some ritualistic ceremony, his ambition is sense gratification good position, good wife, good house, good children or good wealth but the ambition of the members of the Yadu dynasty was different. Their ambition was to offer perpetual faith and devotion to Kāñēa. All the members of the Yadu dynasty were great devotees. As such, after many births of accumulated pious activities, they were given the chance to associate with Lord Kāñēa. In going to take their baths in the place of pilgrimage at Kurukñetra, in observing the regulative principles during the solar eclipse, or in feeding the brāhmaēas in all their activities they simply thought of devotion to Kāñēa. Their ideal worshipable Lord was Kāñēa, and no one else.”(A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. Krsna Book chapter 82. Krishna and Balaram meet the inhabitants of Vrindavan.)

B. V. Raman’s book on Muhurtha Astrology (1986.) says that one should not perform auspicious ceremonies upon [Image] such days least one creates a Granathpatha Dosha, and especially if the day was chosen for a wedding/marriage such a constellation must be avoided by six months.

There are certainly rites that can be performed during an eclipse, and even in the cemetery at mid-night, or seated upon the body of a corpse, or standing

naked to invoke Vashi Karan upon someone, but generally we don't get involved in these too much.

Generally in the Vaishnava sampradayas Mantra Diksha is done under the following co-ordinates, the idea being to get as many of them as possible right. I know that in Iskcon these things haven't been so much emphasised, and from the understanding of what Srila Prabhupad was doing, and the man-power that he had to work with he didn't overburden the devotees with so many rules and injunctions, just to get on with it. This doesn't mean that the times mentioned in shastra, and even in Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada's Navadwip Panjika are not applicable or dare someone say wrong. I think not.

Traditionally a guru would find an astrologically auspicious day for his disciples to take diksha, or to take sannyas (under Vrishabh lagna/Taurus, with a steady nakshatra), etc.

MONTHS. VAISAKHA, ASHADHA, SRAVANA, KARTIKA, MRGASIRSA, PHALGUNA.

[Image] PAKSA. KRSNA & nbs SUKLA TITHI. 2, 3, 5. 2, 3, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13*.

* The Sri Vaisnava diksa is generally done on the trayodasi (13).

VARJITAM: (forbidden tithis) Full moon and Dark Moon Amavasya (this takes into account any likelihood of an eclipse, as they only come on Full Moons and Dark Moons.)

VARAM. SUNDAY, MONDAY WEDNESDAY, FRIDAY.

NAKSHATRAM. Asvini, Rohini, Mrgasirsa, Punarvasu, Pushyami, Magha, Uttara Phalguni, Uttara Ashadha, Uttara Bhadrapada, Hasta, Citra, Svati, Visakha, Anuradha, Mula, Sravana, Satabhisakam, Dhanistha, Revathi.

I hope that this is of some use to you so that you don't go about performing marriages, yajnas, pujas, etc., during the solar and lunar eclipses, rather utilise that time in taking shelter ONLY in the HOLY NAME of the Lord. The time period that an eclipse is around for, it is suggested is like that of the Sankranti, where after six hours of an eclipse, then the turbulence has passed.

[Image]

All Temples remain closed during Surya Grahan. Temples open only after proper rituals are performed to get rid of the ill effects of the Surya Grahan.

Fasting During Surya Grahan

Stop eating 12 hours before a solar eclipse. Children, old people and those who are ill stop eating 3 hours before the beginning of a solar eclipse. If the solar eclipse ends after sunset, then people fast during night and consume food only next day morning.

One should not take food at the time of Grahan because it is said that at this time the most harmful rays from the sun can be seen and absorbed.

Food items such as milk, curd, pickles, grains must be protected either by a piece of kusa grass or Tulasi. After the eclipse, one should take bath, clean the home and temple with water and offer abhishek to all deities.

Avoid eating the food which is cooked before Grahan. Take the food which is cooked after Grahan.

Vedics do not perform any work during Surya or Chandra Grahan and they purify themselves by taking a bath and chant Mantra's dedicated to Shri Krishna and Lord Vishnu.

People in large number take holy dip in Rivers like Ganges and other tirthas especially at Brahasarovar in Kurukshetra.