

[JYOTISHA](#)

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JYOTISHA

By outer observation and inner realization our seers developed the timeless science and art of astrology in ancient India. Today it continues to guide us in life's spiritual and material quests.

Astrology is called jyotisha in Sanskrit, which means the "science of light." It is the most important of the Vedangas or limbs of the Vedas, the very eye of the Vedas. Knowledge of astrology is necessary for the proper timing of the rituals and meditations central to Vedic life. Under Jyotisha is also included astronomy, meteorology and forms of divination like palmistry, the reading of omens, svara (reading the breath) and various oracles.

According to Hinduism, jyotisha is the science of understanding the subtle influences that come to us from the greater universe. Jyotisha is a superscience, like the science of yoga, that links us up with the cosmic intelligence ruling the universe. New discoveries in quantum physics show the interrelatedness of the universe, and that there are subtle levels of immediate interaction even at great distances.

The Sun God himself, as a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, is said to have given the knowledge of Jyotisha to mankind, which he passed through the Creator, Brahma, and the twin Gods, the Ashvins, who are regarded as the transmitters of much

esoteric lore, including Ayurveda and many Upanishadic teachings. There are references as early as the Rig Veda, the oldest Vedic text, to a wheel of the Sun in heaven of 360 spokes divided into twelve parts (Rig Veda I.164.11). Surya Narayana, the Sun God, is said to have four times ninety-names (Rig Veda I.155.6), probably reflecting the equinoxes and solstices. The term nakshatra (constellation) occurs commonly, and a few nakshatras are mentioned by name (Rig Veda X.19.1).

There are eighteen traditional systems (siddhantas) mentioned in Hindu astrology, which include the names of many of the greatest sages of Hinduism. Unfortunately, none of these texts has survived intact. Perhaps the greatest astrologer of classical India, Varaha Mihira, in his Pancha Siddhantika, summarizes five of the Siddhantas: Pitamaha (Bhishma), Vasishta, Paulisha, Romaka and Surya. Of these only the Surya Siddhanta has survived in a later form. In addition, the work of Rishi Parashara has endured in an expanded form as the Brihat Parashara Hora Shastra, which is the main text of Vedic astrology and contains all the essential features of the system used today.

How can the stars and planets influence events on Earth? Obviously the Sun is the basis of all life. According to the Vedas, it also projects a force of intelligence and spirituality. The Moon is important to all creatures and governs the fertility cycles of animals. In the Vedic system it rules the emotional nature. That the planets with their large magnetic fields and gravitational interaction with the Earth affect it physically is well known. That they might have subtler influences is not illogical either.

Without the law of karma to explain the pattern of our lives starting from birth, astrology makes little sense.

Philosophically, Vedic astrology reflects the law of karma, which includes both an aspect of fate and one of free will. Fate in karma means that our present condition is the result of our past actions from previous lives. The outer events of our present life are ruled by past karma and can be difficult to change. Free will in karma means that we shape our future by our present action.

Vedic astrology does not teach resignation. First, as part of Vedic knowledge, it teaches that our true Self is eternal and transcends all influences of time and destiny. We can always return to that Self to go beyond outer limitations, which we cannot always change. Second, it teaches that we have some latitude in adapting to our fate--just as we can't change the weather, but an accurate forecast lets us be prepared. Third, it offers remedial measures to help ward off negative planetary influences and increase those that are beneficial. Fourth, it shows us how to use our present condition to improve our future.

According to the Vedas, when the soul takes birth it descends through the heavens and the atmosphere before reaching Earth, taking on heavier sheaths of material density. It can only take birth in the physical plane at a time karmically in harmony with its nature and destiny. The birth chart represents the seed pattern of our lives but, like a seed, how it develops depends upon environment as well.

Vedic astrology does not leave us helpless before the

onslaughts of fate. It provides ways of dealing with our karma. Vedic astrology holds that sadhana helps neutralize the effects of a bad chart. In fact, a chart that is not good for worldly benefits like money or marriage is more likely to be good spiritually. Afflictions to home, family, marriage and money are necessary for a person to renounce the world and devote himself to spiritual practices. Charts that are bad for health can generally benefit from spiritual practices like mantra japa.

The main remedial measures of Vedic astrology are also spiritual and consist of ritual and mantra. Propitiations of the planets are an integral part of Hindu worship. Many temples, particularly in the south of India, have murtis of all nine planets (navagraha) in a small shrine in a corner of the temple. You can worship these or get the temple priest to perform special pujas and homas for you. Stotras to the planets can be found in many Hindu texts like the Puranas. These can be repeated. Other special verses and stotras can be used for the planets. For example, the Santana Gopala Stotra is used to help those whose charts are not good for children, to have children. The Mahamrityunjaya Mantra to Lord Shiva is used to counter injurious influences in the chart, particularly those for the planet Mars. Each planet also has its special names, 108 or 1008, which can be chanted to propitiate the planet. Each planet has a special Vedic verse and Puranic verse used in its worship. Along with this is an image of the planetary deity and a yantra to be meditated upon.

Hindus commonly wear gemstones to help counter negative planetary influences and promote those which are positive. Some, but not all astrologers prescribe gemstones. Mantras and rituals are preferable but take more time to do on the part

of the person. Each planet has a particular gemstone that corresponds to it, e.g. ruby for the Sun, pearl for the Moon, red coral for Mars and emerald for Mercury. High quality gemstones can be quite expensive. Though less effective, substitutes are allowed. Gemstones, which can be very helpful, should be chosen with care and preferably with a good astrologer's approval.

There are five main uses of Vedic astrology: kama, family and relationship issues like marriage compatibility, timing of children and domestic happiness; artha, help with finances, business and investments; dharma, determination of career and vocation; moksha, guidance in the spiritual life and for cosmic and self-knowledge; and arogya, physical and mental health.

In addition, mundane astrology examines the charts of nations or political leaders to predict social and political events. It can be used to predict weather and earthquakes. Prashna ["question"] astrology provides answers to specific questions. Muhurta ["moment"] is used to choose favorable times of action of all types, mundane and spiritual, individual or collective. All Hindu holy days are determined by astrological calculations recorded in the Hindu calendar, or Panchanga, which must be recalculated each year.

Astrology is of tremendous benefit. It clarifies our nature, destiny and karma, revealing our svadharma ["own" or "unique path"], so that we know how to pursue the right development for our lives. It helps us deal with the limitations of destiny which are there for everyone. It shows us how to optimize the

potentials we have. It gives us the key to right timing of our actions. It helps us understand the most fundamental laws of the universe.

Some people are of the opinion that if we are on a spiritual path we can dispense with astrology altogether, which, they say, concerns only the personal self. Hinduism holds that astrology is still of great benefit for the spiritual path, which remains under subtle karmic influences, but that it must be used differently. Even God-Realized souls have to live out their parabdha karma, which is the experiences to come in the outer events of their present lives that are indicated in the birthchart. A planet which is very bad in a materialistic way can be spiritually very elevating. Saturn, a malefic that harms our prospects at achieving the outer goals of life, like wealth or relationship, can be very good in giving us detachment and renunciation. Ketu, which harms ordinary potentials, is a supreme knowledge and liberation giver.

Most people go to astrologers for an examination of their birth chart. This can be looked at for a general life examination, or specific domains of life, like career or health, can be examined within it. Along with the birth chart, the Vedic astrologer will examine various divisional (amsha) charts, particularly the navamsha, Nakshatra positions, and planetary periods (dashas and bhuktis).

A reading of your natal chart should yield an understanding of trends and periods of your life, with favorable times for action. It should provide a clarification of your karma. It may include remedial measures to follow, such as gems, mantras, yajnas

and pujas. A good astrologer can predict specific events likely to occur, but even the best will only be 80% correct, and may go wrong completely if the birth time is incorrect. Because not all birth times are accurate, the astrologer will ask questions of the client to see if the events in the person's life agree with their chart as calculated. Sometimes a change or "rectification" of a few minutes in the birth time will yield a much more accurate chart. Follow-up consultations should include a review of previous readings, their predictions and any remedial measures suggested, along with appropriate adjustments.

Vedic astrology emphasizes a strong ethical and spiritual foundation in the astrologer. Traditional astrologers were required to live in sacred surroundings, never leave their asana or travel to give readings (people had to come to them), and not charge money (only accepting donations), taking all clients who come (whether rich or poor), only giving predictions during daylight hours, and only teaching astrology to disciples of long standing.

Once one has found a good astrologer [see page 14], it is best to maintain an on-going relationship with him, like a close friend and advisor. There is probably no one as helpful as a good astrologer, except a good guru. The right use of Vedic astrology alleviates what is perhaps the greatest fear for human beings--uncertainty and anxiety about the future. It helps us confidently navigate through the confusing waves of prarabdha karma, aware of our outer destiny, and our timeless inner Self as well.

Sidebar: Choosing an Astrologer

Go to astrologers with good reputations, both for their predictions and their spiritual insight, and who are recommended by people you know and respect. There are traditional Vedic astrologers today who do not charge for a reading, but accept whatever donation is given. Most, however, particularly in the West, charge for their work. Be sure to compensate the astrologer appropriately. An astrologer should follow a strict ethical life-regimen. He should begin and end his work with some mantra or worship and live and work in a sanctified environment. He must maintain a good sense of humor, humility and give counselling that is beneficial, not harmful to the client. Beware of astrologers who claim to give quick, fantastic, and accurate predictions, particularly without any detailed examination of your chart or who claim that they can magically solve your problems through mantras done by them, gems they sell to you, or rituals they perform for you, particularly if these are expensive.

It is best to look upon an astrologer like a counselor, doctor or therapist. We don't expect one session to be enough, even with a good or experienced practitioner. An astrologer may need an hour or more to examine the chart before seeing a client. Initial readings may take over an hour and may require several followups. Astrological counselling must have an element of spirituality in it to be real. Jyotisha, a limb of the Veda, should lead us to spirituality or it has not served its real purpose.

Rama is the avatar of the Sun, Krishna of the Moon, Naraisimha of Mars, Buddha of Mercury, Vamana (dwarf) of Jupiter, Parashurama of Venus, Kurma (tortoise) of Saturn, Varaha (boar) of Rahu, and Matsya (fish) of Ketu.--Brihat

Parashara Hora Shastra II.3-4