

Vedic Astrology and Spiritual Life

We will start discussing this topic by going back to the roots of Jyotisha—not in the Jyotisha texts themselves, but in related thought and other important texts.

Vedic Astrology, or *Jyotisha* is considered one of the *Vedangas* or “limbs” of the Vedas. As a matter of fact, it is considered the “eye” of the Vedas. The legends of the Vedas do represent the chief gods of the Vedas as being omniscient beings, such as Varuna, the lord of dharma who encompasses the night sky and who judges everyone’s actions, and Indra (who succeeds Varuna as chief deity) as having a 1,000 eyes:

<http://ancientindians.wordpress.com/indra-deva-the-ancient-indian-hero/>

Indra and Ahalya ...An agriculture story?... An interpretation!

*Ahalya means unploughed and Indra is the God of Rain. Gautama was devoted to the devas. So Indra rained on Gauthama’s fields. When Gautama came back to see his fields at the time of Sri Rama’s visit, all the fields had come to life! **And Sahasraksha is a not a curse, but a praise!** Only God has a thousand eyes with which He keeps watch over the entire universe. The Purusha Suktham describes God as Sahasraksha and Sahasrapad, with a thousand eyes and a thousand feet, who sees everything and is present everywhere. Even Varuna is described as Sahasraksha in some suktams of the Vedas. [Durvasa](#) complained that Gauthama and Vasishtha overly praised Indra and made him arrogant.*

As per the [Kautilya Arthashastra](#) “One thousand sages form [Indra’s](#) assembly of ministers. They are his eyes. Hence he is called thousand-eyed though he possesses only two eyes.”

Varuna was ancestor to both Bhrigu and Shukra and Indra was father of Agni, father of Brihaspati; these are the two great teachers of the Vedic astrology tradition. Shukra, known to those in Greece as Aphrodite and those in Rome as Venus, was the preceptor of the *Asuras*, their mentor and teacher in all matters, including yoga and the knowledge of the stars. Brihaspati or Guru, also known as Jupiter to those in the West, is the preceptor of the *Devas*, or the preservers of order in the universe. All of these beings represent the forces of the universe that work to bring us closer to divinity; for the *Asuras* act to set up obstacles to life that cause us to turn inward, and the *Devas* light the path to the greater light beyond.

The term jyotisha comes out of the term jyothi which means light. This light illuminates all life, all death, all transformation, and reveals the pattern of previous karmas which will or may manifest during this lifetime. It is a simple matter, complicated unnecessarily by levels of discrimination that obscure the meaning of *Karma*.

***Karma* is action, pure and simple. The only thing that is somewhat mysterious about it is why it manifests the way it does. What is our motivation? Modern thought considers two major motivations—biology (genetics) and breeding (environment).**

Astrology, particularly Vedic astrology, reveals life to be a joining of both biology and breeding, as one can look at a chart and see the predispositions in a chart—the manifestation of previous lifetimes' acts, after a manner—and can see how these have manifested for the person in terms of his or her height, overall appearance, hereditary diseases and gifts, and, of course, parents and intellectual predispositions. These are the results of our biology, and some of the environmental factors, that are set before we are born. These are the patterns of life we cannot change, because they are set before we become conscious beings. However, we are born as conscious beings as well, with an intelligence in us and a right to choose, even if within a limited range of options. Even when we do not seem to have an option to choose, we have an option to determine how we react to our circumstances. Do we react with anger, with virtue, with humor, with renewed determination or with resignation? All of these choices are available to us. Some are easier for us, some harder, because of our predispositions. And these predispositions are shown in the Vedic chart.

What does this have to do with yoga and personal growth? Virtually everything....

The concept of yoga is connected with relaxation, happiness, but mostly, spiritual growth. What does the chart have to do with spiritual growth? Basically, the chart reflects the potential karmas and the challenges we have in this lifetime to progress or tread water. The chart shows ways in which a person can live a balanced life, but can also show ways in which a person can accelerate spiritual growth, through adherence to certain behaviors and practices. A bold claim? Not necessarily, once you understand that a chart contains inherited karmic results, but also allows for a person to engage in actions not yet taken, called *agama karmas*.

Agama karmas are, essentially, actions taken to alter direction in life...deliberate actions can really make a difference in a person's life.

Let's look at some examples: Suppose a person is born with a speech impediment. That individual has a choice as to whether he or she can work to correct or minimize that speech impediment, or let it linger and not address it. Many of us know the person who has chosen not to address a problem. Less commonly do we run across someone, such as Demosthenes, the great Greek orator who became tyrant of Athens through his oratory, or James Earl Jones, who had a stammer in his youth, yet who went on to become one of the most recognizable voices in modern entertainment, noted for roles as diverse as Jack Johnson and Darth Vader.

So, while some factors in a chart are given, so are our chances of changing life patterns for the better. A Vedic chart can indeed show a pattern of difficulty, but they can also show a pattern of opportunity connected with that difficulty.

One of the simplest methods a person can use Vedic astrology for is to determine which kind of yoga they are best suited, temperamentally, to pursue, as different types of Yoga correspond to the strengths of different planets. For example, a person with a strong Sun or Moon tends to do well with Raja Yoga, which is a yoga that combines a variety of spiritual paths. People with a strong Sun will do well with Yoga that requires a great deal of personal discipline or self control and will power, as the Sun excels at these things. The Moon is better for people who have a very compassionate or devotional and nurturing

nature. Helping people or charitable work may be a great supplement to spiritual practice for these people.

For people with a strong Mars, which is active energy, some of the more energetic yoga patterns, like the various forms of vigorous asanas, might hold the most promise. These people have a lot of energy, that must be controlled and channeled for effective spiritual growth.

Individuals with a strong Mercury may be drawn to studies like *gnana* yoga, which emphasizes meditation and spiritual discrimination, sometimes learning languages and astrology.

Jupiter is the Guru or teacher planet of the devas, so individuals with this pattern may do well with a strong, lengthy, systematic form of yoga, emphasizing a slow but traditional yoga path with great support and communication with the teacher.

Those with strong Saturn's in their chart may be best served by a path called karma yoga. Karma yoga is essentially a path of selfless service in which the person works without regard for reward.

Strong Venus types are best served by devotion to music or art as a form of worship or even simply through devotion to God, as the love of one's life. Venus types often make good priests because of this natural devotion.

Rahu is a critical part of Jyotisha and spiritual life as sometimes he will provide frustrations with the material world and incline a person to keep searching for a solution until the person turns towards the spiritual life. He also promotes interest in foreign lands and teachers. This can be a critical point in spiritual evolution for a person. Individuals who are under the extreme influence of Rahu (people with Rahu in the first house or with Rahu and Moon in the same sign) can pursue spiritual life through exotic teachers, magickal practices and visiting sacred sites around the world. These individuals will need to feel spiritual energy and may soon experience boredom with spiritual techniques, so they need a variety of spiritual experiences to keep themselves interested.

Ketu is a planet which leads naturally to union with everything. The challenge with Ketu is to avoid confusion and descent into mysticism as the person is naturally inclined in a spiritual direction. Also, Ketu can cause depression or even feelings of hopelessness or laziness if not watched, so the challenge for Ketu is not to lose entirely interest in the material world, because we still need its gifts to function and support ourselves.

All of the planets have a function to fulfill in promoting or obstructing our spiritual path. Ultimately, each planet is capable of performing both functions and can promote or restrict our spiritual or material development. Also, it should never be assumed that spiritual development and material progress are mutually exclusive. They are also, it should be recalled, not necessarily tied together either. Material security is, for some people, a necessity for spiritual development because its lack produces anxiety which obstructs spiritual development. Alternately, some people never feel materially secure, and their obsession with this part of life mitigates against spiritual progress. The chart which allows a person to feel secure, without anxiety, is the chart which is the most conducive to spiritual progress. Those who

feel no anxiety about this part of life have an advantage, but even so, a lack of anxiety alone is not the sole determinant, as one's life will be disrupted if the person does not fulfill financial responsibilities. So, resources, peacefulness of mind, and appropriate attention to spiritual life should complement each other.

How does astrology fit into all of this?

Basically, astrology in all its forms, provides a viewpoint of the potentials and challenges in a chart. *Jyotisha*, in particular, uses a chart that 1) fits the chart to a zodiac that is more astronomically correct than other systems of astrology currently practiced and 2) sets the time for karmas to manifest with accuracy that is *easy to see*.

Many of you who come to *Jyotisha* from Western forms of astrology may view these statements with some surprise, as you have probably been told that the Indian system is complicated. It is-at first-but it is because of two things. The first is reorienting one's self to the Indian system of a sidereal zodiac. This is a huge psychological adjustment if one is used to looking at one's self as let's say, an Aries and one becomes a Pisces. However, there IS a difference between how the two systems interpret signs, and also, what they emphasize in chart interpretation. We will get on to this later.

The second big complication in *Jyotisha* for Westerners, is, obviously, the use of a different language to represent chart terms. This may seem complicated, unless one understands that most of the terms in the Indian system are *descriptive*. When one understands the translated term, the person will realize that these are very simple terms, actually intended to aid in chart interpretation. Vedic astrology, in its best sense, is clear and obvious. There is no searching the chart for clues. Everything is laid out clearly for you. The learning environment is longer, but once you see a chart in action, it is (or should be) *very obvious* what is happening to the person in the chart. That is how you know you are grasping the chart, and also, to be honest, whether you have the right teacher. This *should not* be complicated; this should be evident to the person who studies and applies the principles taught. If not, the person is not studying or the principles being taught or flawed.

The History of Vedic Astrology

INTRODUCTION:

Compared to approximately 20 years ago, the current availability of both classical and contemporary works on the subject is in fairly good shape, so selecting a manageable number of reference texts is a challenge. One of the problems is that there is dispute about some of the dates of classical Vedic texts (a dispute that will not be settled any time soon) and that some theories about when influences were felt in India don't follow a consistent time line, regardless of the time line you choose. So which books should be chosen for an accurate historical depiction?

For early texts that encompass most of the Vedic tradition, I chose Brihat Jataka by Varahamihira, Bhrigu Sutram (a traditional work attributed to the ancient sage Bhrigu--this is an excellent guide to planets) and

a 16th century work, Mantreswar's Phaladeepika, which I feel encompasses most of the earlier principles found in esteemed books like Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra, but in a more easy to understand fashion for newcomers. (I included Parasara's text in the suggested reading and strongly recommend you get a copy if you can. You will use it for years to come if you do more Vedic astrology. The range of material in it is staggering.) Given the multitude of Indian classical texts (bear in mind that what is published represents a small portion of available Indian texts, I was looking for something that reflected the spirit of interpretation that may have been in existence at that time, since as in the case of Greek texts, some of the earlier Vedic texts are missing or difficult to locate, or, the translations are currently unavailable or just too expensive (in my opinion).

If you can dig through these works, Pandit Gopesh Ojha's (or Ramakrishna Bhatt's) text and the Western texts that I have assigned, you will get a great feel for this subject. It is complicated at first, but if you stick with it, you will grasp chart delineation. There are many approaches to chart delineation by the way; I have chosen what I consider to be a fairly mainstream approach (with my own idiosyncracies), but be aware that as with any living system, folks are devising new approaches every day! I have tried to keep the interpretational principles within the confines of traditional Indian astrology, so you won't see outer planets or even the use of some of the more recent techniques like Krishnamurthi Paddhati, Iyer techniques or Systems Approach, which were all introduced in the 20th century. All of the techniques used originated, as far as we know, before 800 CE.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask. I like a lot of questions and classes usually benefit from this type of exchange. Plus, many of the texts are dense with content, and questions can help sort out what is critical from what is just interesting.

Gary Gomes

Class Expectations

Students are expected to spend five to fifteen hours per week on the Vedic Astrology material. After studying this week's Vedic reading assignments, please ponder the following questions: What are the possible origins of Jyotish and its relationship to the Vedas? Can you think of a reason why there is so much information packed into the first nine pages of Mantreswar's Phaladeepika? These questions do not require a written response.

Sidereal Zodiac/Chart Formats/Indian Mythology

I welcome you to Vedic or Hindu Astrology. You will find many similarities to the astrology you know and even more to Hellenistic Astrology. Jyotisha is a Sanskrit word. Although there is some controversy about the literal meaning, it is often translated as: Jyoti= light and Isha= soul or spirit; isha is also sometimes translated as god or lord. A translation provided by the Pandit Gopesh Ojha, whose text some of you may be using this term (it is not as available this year as in the past, so I assigned Ramakrishna Bhatt's excellent, but slightly more complicated, text as a substitute for those who cannot obtain the Ojha book), also states the word "Ishtam" means that which is wished for. Since a Jyotish chart is considered the manifestation of many acts through many life times, the term can also mean that which we create through the lights. More conventional interpretations translate Jyotish as "the lord of light" or "the science of light", but it also reflects our actions in choosing our lives. By understanding the lights (planets, literally, but also divinational systems) in the sky we can understand our lives. Some parts of Jyotish also include looking at the indicators around us, including omens and palmistry. This is called nimhita, and is a separate system of Jyotisha with its own rules.

THE AYANAMSA

All Vedic charts are calculated using an AYANAMSHA, which literally means a division of longevity--or a "long divider". This is an apt summary of the name. Basically, around 285 CE, the sidereal and tropical zodiacs (the seasonal zodiac) were placed in the same location. Since there is a shift in the earth's rotation, the reference points to the fixed stars shift from the earth's orientation. Since the reference point is missing, Indian astrology uses an adjustment based on several different calculations. The most popular is the Chitra Paksha ayanamsa, figured from the lunar mansion Chitra, or the fixed star SPICA. The

difference between the Vedic and Western charts is around 23-24 degrees now. The split changes about 50 minutes every 100 years.

LINKS WITH HINDU CORE BELIEFS AND RELIGION

Jyotish is called a Vedanga or a limb of the Vedas. Specifically it is the eye of the Vedas, and lets us see the pattern of the world, and also our relation and path to the divine.

There are six Angas or explanatory limbs, to the Vedas: the siksha and vyakarana of Panini, the chhandas of Pingalacharya, the nirukta of Yaksha, the Jyotisha of Garga (Garga is an ancient sage or teacher, and is sometimes referred to as the teacher of Parasara--see above for references to Parasara), and the Kalpas (srauta, grihya, dharma and sulba) belonging to the authorship of various rishis.

Siksha is knowledge of phonetics. Siksha deals with pronunciation and accent. The text of the Vedas is arranged in various forms or Pathas. The pada-patha gives each word its separate form. The Kramapatha connects the word in pairs.

Vyakarana is Sanskrit grammar. Panini's books are most famous. Without knowledge of Vyakarana, you cannot understand the Vedas.

Chhandas is meter dealing with prosody.

Nirukta is philology or etymology.

Jyotisha is astronomy and astrology. It deals with the movements of the heavenly bodies, planets, etc., and their influence in human affairs. It includes earthly signs like Nimhita (omens) and the ability to read different parts of the body (palmistry is the most commonly used, but there are others.) (See above.)

Kalpa is the method of ritual. The Srauta sutras which explain the ritual of sacrifices belong to Kalpa. The Sulba Sutras, which treat of the measurements which are necessary for laying out the sacrificial areas, also belong to Kalpa. The Grihya Sutras which concern domestic life, and the Dharma Sutras which deal with ethics, customs and laws, also belong to kalpa.

There are many texts that explore the philosophy of Jyotish, but its basic philosophy is based on Sankhya, a system of thought that categorizes states of existence between spirit and matter. Interestingly enough, Sankhya's complementary discipline is Yoga, which is the process by which we merge again with the divine, while still retaining our identities. Indian philosophy is heavily steeped in the belief in reincarnation, and the astrology chart is seen as an indicator of how far away from, or how close to reunion with God the soul is. (There are six darshans or viewpoints in Hinduism, set into three pairs—Nyaya (logic) and Vaisheshika (discrimination); Samkhya (categorization) and Yoga (Union) and Purva Mimamsa (religious and spiritual ritual) and Vedanta (or the elimination of boundaries between the divine and the human) This is certainly not the only use of Jyotisha—you will see as we study it that Jyotish excels at identifying trends in material life, and is used for that more than anything else—but ease of life is considered the result of past life actions, which lead to reward or suffering. The spiritual aspect to these life events depends on how we deal with the good and bad that life hands us—or that we hand ourselves! Also, the concept of the level of karma a person must face becomes important. Sankhya is considered to be ruled by the Moon (as will be discussed later) and the Moon is probably the most important heavenly body in Jyotisha--the Moon is our mind through which we sense and experience the world and the sensations that the Moon brings keep us reincarnating--and experiencing life in this world.

TYPES OF KARMA

Karma is divided into four primary categories: (1) sanchita, (2) prarabdha, (3) kriyamana, and (4) agama. Sanchita and prarabdha karma can be generally understood as the unchangeable fate or destiny of the individual, with kriyamana and agama karma reflecting the person's free will or choice. The following is a basic description of each type of karma.

- Sanchita can be defined as one's collective karma from all past incarnations. Sanchita basically means "heaped together" and reflects the collection of all karmas due to known and unknown actions of the past.
- Prarabdha karma is the specific karmic lessons that an individual is ready to experience in this lifetime. Thus, it is only a portion of the collective sanchita karma and may be experienced as a person's destiny or fate in the present incarnation.
- Kriyamana karma is created by our current actions in this lifetime. It can be thought of as our free will or effort that we are exerting now. It is our daily behavior and personal actions. As the great Jyotishi, Swami

Sri Yukteswar stated, "The first lesson on the spiritual path is to learn to behave".

- Agama karmas are created by how we envision the future. They are the new actions that are contemplated as you plan your work as a result of personal insight. As the Buddha stated, "As we think, we create our world". (Credit for the above section:: American College of Vedic Astrology on-line program, year one, Module 1)

Books that contain discussions on the history and philosophy of the Vedic system include Dr. David Frawley's *Astrology of the Seers* and Hart DeFouw and Robert Svoboda's *Light on Life*, both excellent tests, but the history of Vedic astrology is a topic of dispute between western and eastern authorities, and will probably not be resolved in my lifetime. Part of the problem rests in how both sides date things. Western academia typically looks for verifiable works, but also looks for works that verify the current academic paradigm—that what we call Vedic astrology originated in India as the result of Greek invasions. An excellent overview of this thought is contained in Valerie Roebuck's excellent—and out of print—book *The Circle of Stars*. *See notes.

Eastern authorities have typically resorted to references of star positions contained in ancient books like the Rig Veda, Puranas, and great epics to date the ancestry of their work, but primary historical texts from the ancient time line seem to be missing. This is not surprising given the purported antiquity of these texts and both sides seem to have drawn lines in the sand as far as sticking to their preferred position. Bill Levacy's excellent text *Beneath A Vedic Sky* contains a reasoned explanation as to why the very old dates are honored. Richard Thompson (see notes) provides a more extreme theory, based on his researches into texts like the *Surya Siddantha*, an ancient Indian astrological text and many Puranas (Puranas were essentially religious texts based around the rich legends and mythology of ancient India. There are supposedly 18 classical Puranic texts, but many more exist and an example of the dating controversy can be seen in this passage discussing the *Bhagavat Purana* from the web source Wikipedia. "European historical scholarship suggests that the text was written in the 9th or 10th century as part of the development of the bhakti traditions.[2] However, Hindu religious tradition holds it to be one of the works of Vyasa written at the beginning of Kali Yuga (about c.3100 BCE). According to Ludo Rocher, in his book *The Puranas*, these texts were referenced extensively by the Arab Al-Biruni, in his researches. Certain respected contemporary authorities on Jyotish, Nalina Kantha Das, and the late Harish Johari, also cite Puranas as the source of information on Jyotisha. From this perspective, regardless of dating issues, Jyotisha can be seen as an integral part of the Indian belief system.

The difficulty we have in validating dates probably has its roots in two factors, one historical and one cultural—the historical part comes to a certain extent from the rise in Buddhism in India. Buddhism did not particularly welcome astrology (if the moderate path is the path, what need do we have of rituals or even an analysis of destiny—whatever astrology was practiced before 400 BCE is not in evidence), and we may have a cultural manifestation as well. Many Brahmins (who were the astrologers in ancient days) allegedly passed along this knowledge orally, and it may be that this knowledge was only written down in the late Hellenistic era—but this is speculation. The main point here is that, it is quite impossible at this point in time, to set an exact date. Certain components of Vedic Astrology, namely the nakshatras, do date back to the Rig Veda and Atharva Veda, which are conservatively dated to 1200 BCE and 500 BCE. Other authorities cite much earlier dates, based upon references to stellar placements contained in the Rig Veda. The first mention of recognizable astrology is in the Atharva Veda. The Atharva Veda is thought to have been transcribed by 500 BCE, although some people consider it to be much older. The most ancient textbook of Vedic Astrology was Lagadha's *Vedanga Jyotisha*. Lagadha's remarkable book outlined the methods of determining the calendar including, it is thought, the first historical reference to the 19 year lunar/solar cycle, which is often attributed to the Greek's Metonic calendar (c440 BCE). The *Vedanga Jyotisha*, which is almost certainly older than the Meton, covers the duration of the year, the position of the luminaries, the solstices and the equinoxes, the days of the full Moon (Purnima) and the new Moon (Amavasya), etc. Also, according to Dr. David Frawley, the *Maitrayani Upanishad* contains references to astrological principles that indicate a fully formed Vedic astrological tradition, and the placement of the signs in the heavens would date back to 1800 BCE. This seems to be an extraordinary amount of effort to fabricate a tradition. (This paragraph references materials found in the American College of Vedic Astrology on-line course. Used with permission.)

On the other side, there is certainly some validity to the argument that ancient Vedic astrological texts contain what appear to be “loan” words from Greek Astrology. Why would this happen if Indian astrology developed as a fully developed, indigenous system of thought? Many Indian texts (including the important Indian text, Brihat Jataka), contain references to the Yavanas, or Ionians, another term for the Greeks—although some authorities maintain this is just a term for foreigners. Could two systems have developed in parallel? Could the subcontinent picked up terms for its own use (there are many additional terms—with one exception—that Vedic astrologers use in addition to Greek terms, however). But the lack of documented texts before Vedanga Jyotish does present a huge gap in evidence.

It is impossible to tell whether the books written in the first 500 years of the current era are a reinvention of the Vedic system, a massive borrowing from Hellenistic astrology, or something else. Certain revered classics, like Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra place such a range of techniques together that the book has the feel of a compendium of knowledge, although it does possess a certain consistency. But these debates will rage on for many years.

Perhaps the Greek influence was limited to having the Indian subcontinent systematize or record its astrological techniques?

See this link about Indian History up to 800 AD:

<http://www.gatewayforindia.com/history.htm>

See this link about the Gupta period in India:

<https://edit.britannica.com/getEditableToc?tocId=46881>

Bill Levacy's *Beneath A Vedic Sky* presents historical material and the three main divisions of Jyotish. These are: (1) Hora- interpretation of horoscopes and prediction, (2) Ganita- astrological/astronomical calculations, and (3) Samhita- mundane astrology such as national or world events, weather and earthquake prediction, omens, and house construction. Many texts also discuss the four aims of life according to the Vedic vision. The four aims or goals of Hindu life are: dharma (right action), artha (prosperity), kama (healthy desires), and moksha (spiritual liberation). These aims or goals are related to the twelve houses of the zodiac.

Some authorities believe that early Indian astrology was used for setting times for rituals or propitiate the gods of the Rig Veda and that it was later used by kings (a king has karma to unfold!) and perhaps later used for other castes, and was used in both worldly and spiritual pursuits. Around the thirteenth century, worship of the Sun became an important part of Indian religion, and evidence of this practice can be seen at the Temple of Konark. The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali also indicate that one can know past, present and future through meditation on the Sun, and this seems to be an aphorism for astrology. Even today, certain mantras which are used as meditation on the Sun are used by astrologers to encourage their proficiency in astrology. The late B.V. Raman, often cited as the greatest Indian astrologer of the 20th century) recited such a mantra—the Gayatri mantra—daily.

Many of the forms of Indian astrology—and the authenticated texts of Indian antiquity—were produced during the years of the Gupta Dynasty, which flourished in India between the third and fourth centuries CE. (Some are dated a bit earlier, and certain texts that we know are earlier, like the Atharva Veda and the Grihya Sutras, make reference to astrology.) Certain reference texts discuss the fact that Chandra Gupta revived certain traditional practices that had fallen out of practice in the comparative chaos that beset India as many small satraps ruled Northern India during Hellenistic times. Included among these were the Bactrian Greeks who engaged in active trade with the rest of India at that time. Could part of the revival of techniques also include a revival of Indian astrology? Details are sketchy, but scholars such as Aryabhatta and Varahamihira (after Parasara, Varahamihira is the most respected classical Vedic astrologer), two of the most widely respected astrologers of India, were active during this time. It was during this period that Indian mathematicians were credited with the invention of the concept of zero,

which did not make its way to the West until several hundred years later.

The Chola Dynasty came much later (about 1100 AD) and succeeded in spreading its conquests throughout Southeast Asia, reaching as far as Malaysia, becoming one of the rare sea empires to sustain itself—an accomplishment not matched again until the 1500's. Both this and the Gupta dynasties spread Vedic thought throughout large areas, but, more importantly for us, they spread the influence of the Brahmin caste throughout Southeast Asia, and with it, Jyotish. Since the Brahmins influenced Gupta social life directly through the codification of the caste system, and, left a permanent record of their influence through the temples that were built during the Chola dynasty, a stable and established foundation was established for Jyotish, leading to consistency of institutional support that was not as variable as that which existed in the West—and, more importantly, with a strong religious base supporting it, even though India was later threatened by and succumbed to Muslim invasions.

Contemporary Forms of Vedic Astrology

PARASARI Astrology -- This is the predominant form of astrology practiced in India and is the most prevalent form practiced in the United States, by far. The major text in this tradition is the Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra which is considered the Bible of Vedic Astrology. The Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra is an encyclopedic collection of astrological techniques, many of which are only sparsely used or investigated by many contemporary astrologers. The other major reference texts in this tradition are Phaladeepika by Mantreswara; the Brihat Jataka (a curious collection which seems very much influenced by Greek astrology) by Varaha Mihira; the Jataka Parijata (a compendium of collected knowledge from various sources); the Uttara Kalamrita (a much later text, but clearly derived from earlier works) by Kalidas -- a little gem of astrological knowledge which contains a wealth of astrological gems; and the Saravali (a medieval text). These texts are the backbone of Jyotish. The problem with many of these texts is that the translations of many of these texts have been relatively disorganized -- many astrology students have found the experience of approaching these texts very daunting because the techniques are often presented in a very random fashion. In my opinion, it is extremely important for the student to start to familiarize him or herself with these texts, primarily for the purpose of getting closer to the source. Perhaps, as some have insisted, these techniques were not meant to be studied without the aid of a Guru. However, this belies the number of successful and accurate astrologers who are able to utilize Jyotish techniques successfully without a Jyotish Guru. This does not mean that I downgrade the importance of learning from those who have come before us, but I think that the Jyotir Vidya reveals itself to the sincere soul. Jyotish has rules, of that there is no doubt, but after the rules are learned, creativity can be introduced, and tested. I have seen quite a few eminent teachers disagree with each other. Every teacher has something of value to teach us. But keep in mind that the most important teacher is the Ishta Devata -- the teacher inside.

JAIMINI Astrology

Jaimini astrology is a fascinating system of Vedic Astrology which has NO apparent parallels in the West—although there seem to be some overlap with ancient Greek astrology in the way it measures time using signs rather than planets.. In many ways it strikes me as a more thoroughly integrated system than the Parasara Vimshottri dasa system taught to most beginning Jyotishis (and from which many astrologers believe it originally It also strikes me as being a more forgiving of birth time inaccuracies, and easier to learn, than Parasari astrology. The reason that it is not taught more often is that the system is not even that well understood by many Indians, and it does require some familiarity with the Parasara system of astrology in order for full understanding. Jaimini has several unique qualities which reveal at a glance those things which require a great deal of investigation using Parasara astrology, especially when considering spiritual potential in the chart. Jaimini uses sign dasas (periods of our lives which are under the influence of signs) rather than planetary dasas. So when one is going through a dasa the individual is not only influenced by the sign, but also the planets in the signs as well. There are certain idiosyncrasies within this system, and it is, as yet, rather incompletely understood in the West. Indeed, even in India. It is thought that there exist some million Sanskrit slokas, 20,000 translated into Indian languages and about (optimistically) a little more than 5,000 Sanskrit Slokas translated into English. Of the 20,000 Sanskrit slokas which are devoted to Jaimini, there are only about 500 translated into English, so vast stores of existing knowledge have not been translated nor interpreted. Large parts of Jyotish are not written, but

are passed along orally, and significant interpretational clues are contained in other holy literature, including the Puranas, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Upanishads. But even in its incomplete state, it is extremely powerful when used properly. Please note that there are currently major differences of opinion regarding Jaimini indicators and how to calculate mahadasas; try to learn the shells of the systems and then reach your own conclusions regarding which of the systems seems more correct for you.

TAJIKI Astrology -

This is also referred to as Varshaphal, or “the fruits of the year”. This system, practiced extensively in Northern India (and showing a certain interesting similarity to the techniques of Arabian astrology), uses annual returns (the movement of the Sun to the same position it was when you were born) in order to fine tune predictions for the current year. There is also a rather interesting system of calculations called “sahams” which identify sensitive points on the horoscope in both the birth and annual charts. I have personally seen Tajika charts reveal extremely accurate predictions, particularly in health matters. Although not as complicated as Parasari astrology, it is extremely detailed, and the interpretation is less free flowing than in Parasari astrology. There is a precedent for using Parasari astrology principles in Tajika charts, and it would be interesting to see if the interpretational accuracy worked both ways -- in the interests of research.

BHRIGU ASTROLOGY -- The term Bhrigu astrology actually encompasses several discrete systems of astrology which co-exist in India. The most familiar type is the system of palm leaves which are kept in custodial capacity and passed down among families from generation to generation. This system was discussed in one of Swami Kriyananda's texts, and is supposed to give a reading for certain individuals destined to experience such readings. These palm leaf readings apparently developed when the astrologers of India began to get so proficient in Jyotish they were able to generate the charts of those not yet born. This is not so amazing when one realizes that the paths of the planets are set, so generating a chart becomes a mathematical process. Apparently these families pass down certain techniques for finding and interpreting charts (including the seemingly fantastic ability to generate names, which is actually a part of chart interpretation called namakaran. Although a bit beyond the scope of this text (I may include it in an intermediate level text), namakaran, or “making names” or identifying people and places by name from astrology charts is theoretically possible through the use of a standard natal chart, as all the Devanagari Sanskrit vowels and consonants are assigned to the nakshatras.

The second system referred to as a “Bhrigu technique” is the Nadi readings. Nadis are points on the Zodiac -- there are at least 1200 such points -- all possessing some character or trait. Obviously the use of such a technique requires an extremely accurate birth time, but Nadi techniques are said to produce incredibly accurate results. However, as in the palm leaves, there are several different Nadi traditions -- some through systems legendarily attributed to the Sun, others to the Moon (contained in the text Chandra Kala Nadi); some to Mars; and some to other planets.

A third set of techniques is standard astrological techniques pulled from Bhrigu astrology. There are certain techniques which are culled from the Bhrigu system which are unique and not in basic Parasara texts; this system is still being revealed at this time and it will probably be many generations before significant parts of this system are released, although there have been several interesting initial steps taken in this direction by Narendra Desai, Nalini Kanta Das (Tom Hopke), and K. N. Rao and R. G. Rao from India.

Panchpakshi (five bird) This is a type of biorhythm system developed in India by Tamil saints, in which the various lunar mansions are assigned the qualities of birds in Vedic astrology. These birds (peacock, cock, vulture, owl, crow) are assigned to times of the day (which change during the days of the week) and individuals will either have good or bad days depending on the state of their “bird”. I have seen several analyses using the Panchpakshi system, and feel that this system should be used more extensively, particularly for the purpose of evaluating the ability of an individual to withstand illnesses and setbacks in life.

MUHURTHA—This very complicated system of astrology sets the timing of events, such as when to start a ritual, when to marry a person, when to start a job, when to start a voyage, when to conceive. Every

aspect of life can be chosen for a beginning using electional astrology. Muhurtha (literally, this means a 48 minute interval and is a basic unit of time in Vedic Astrology) is an extremely involved system that requires intense study and has many rules. Some astrologers have speculated that, because of its emphasis on nakshatras—which are irrefutably Indian in origin—and its use in timing rituals to the Gods, that this system may be the oldest form of Jyotisha, with horoscopic astrology developing later. Its complexity does indicate that the system has had a substantial period of time to develop.

PRASHNA—This is what is known as horary astrology in the West. Prashna is considered a discipline by itself in India, and certain astrologers specialize solely in this system of astrology. It is used to answer specific questions based upon the time the petitioner asks the question. Prashna can also involve the interpretation of omens, such as a dog barking (called NIMHITA) although some experts consider Nimhita to be a separate discipline from Prashna.

PALMISTRY—This is considered a part of Jyotish as the indications of the stars are also in evidence in our hands and certain planets rule certain parts of the body.

TYPES OF VEDIC CHART STYLES

Although this class will mostly use the South Indian chart format, it is useful to become familiar with both styles. The North Indian chart looks very similar to some charts used in Europe in the middle ages. It is a square chart, with interesting lines drawn from the corners and with lines drawn from mid-point to mid-point of each side. It is a house based chart. The ascendant is usually marked by a number in the top opening (1=Aries; 2 = Taurus; 3=Gemini; and so forth. To give examples, a Libra rising would be marked 7, a Sagittarius would be marked 9, and a Pisces 12)) and the chart is read counterclockwise, so the top left side opening is the 2nd house and the top right hand opening the 12th house.

The South Indian chart is a bit simpler in conception in that it is a series of twelve squares, around an open space. It is a sign based chart and is read clockwise. Pisces (we'll get to the Sanskrit terms for these signs a bit later) always sits in the upper left side of the chart, Aries is in the next box, Taurus follows, and Gemini sits in the upper right hand corner.

You can see examples of both chart styles in James Braha's and William Levacy's books. I would encourage you to experiment with both, to see which style you prefer.

Planetary Yogas and Drishtis (Aspects)

One element that cannot be overlooked in chart interpretation are graha and rasi aspects. In the simplest possible terms:

All planets aspect houses 7 houses away from themselves:

Jupiter also aspects houses 5 and 9 houses away

Saturn also aspects houses 3 and 10 houses away

Mars also aspects houses 4 and 8 houses away

Some hold that Rahu and Ketu share the aspects of Jupiter and others do not.

The following is for your information. We will not be using Rasi analysis in this course.

Aspects exist between signs regardless of the degree of Rasis: All mutable signs (Gemini, Sagittarius, Virgo and Pisces) aspect each other.

All fixed signs (Scorpio, Leo, Aquarius) aspect all movable/cardinal signs (Aries, Libra, Cancer) except the adjacent sign.

Most Vedic astrologers evaluate aspects regardless of the degrees of the planets in question, although they do concede the closer the aspect the more pronounced the effect. Also refer to Levacy's text for a comprehensive analysis of two planet combinations.

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The Lunar Mansions of Vedic Astrology

Nakshatra translates as “that which does not decay”. These represent the primordial zodiac of ancient Vedic culture. Research of the Indus Valley scripts indicates that the nakshatras may have been the original Hindu zodiac that predated the use of the twelve signs

The Nakshatras are a standard feature of Vedic Astrology and can be used for determining the sequence of events in a person’s life (see Week 9); for selecting an auspicious time to start an event (this is a practice called electional astrology or muhurtha, which is not covered in Term 202); for Prasna (or Horary astrology), for relationship compatibility (see lesson 10) and for analyzing personality traits, especially for personal points in the Vedic chart like the Ascendant and the Moon. Many Vedic astrologers use these 27 nakshatras (which cover exactly 13 degrees and 20 minutes) as personality trait indicators, much the way that Western astrology uses the constellations.

The Nakshatras sometimes extend over more than one sign, and they are often judged to have planetary rulers (I must caution the students that this is not universally accepted,.). Looking at the planetary ruler of a nakshatras will often tell you more about a planet located in a sign, and some astrologers look to see where the lords of nakshatras are located to tell them more about the chart. There is a list of the meanings of the nakshatras in the Beckman, Levacy and Roebuck (now out of print—see readings)) books. Please refer to these and to the following list of nakshatras.

Ashwini: Natives of Ashwini are usually beautiful in appearance. They love to be adorned in good jewelry and cloths. They are sharp-witted, accomplished and unperturbed. Usually they have a calm temperament, they belong to Mesha (Aries) rasi. Ruler: Ketu

Bharani: Natives of Bharani usually have an immense zest for life. They are intellectually inclined, and have scientific bend of mind. They enjoy good health and prosperity. They have a steady mind, and they seldom tell lies. They belong to Mesha (Aries) rasi. Ruler: Venus

Krittika: Natives of Krittika have a strong physique and they enjoy good health and long life, usually they have insatiable lust, and they are greedy in there eating habits. As a rule they are very cunning and deceitful. However they are inclined to enjoy fame and socially they move in high circles. Krittika Nakshatra 1st pada belongs to Mesha (Aries) rasi and the rest 3 padas to Vrishabha (Taurus) rasi. Ruler: Sun

Rohini: Natives of Rohini usually have exceptional large eyes. They are honest and truthful in there dealings, and generally they are generous and charitable. Talent conversationalists, they have an unperturbed mind. They belong to Vrishabha (Taurus) rasi. Ruler: Moon

Mrigasira: Natives of Mrigasira generally suffer from inferiority complex. They are persevering in nature, but love an easy way of life. Money comes to them easily. The first two-Nakshatra padas are belonging to Vrishabha (Taurus) rasi and the next two belong to Mithuna (Gemini) rasi. Ruler: Mars

Ardra: natives of Ardra are usually not very trust worth. Generally they are not very sincere. They are proud and often self-centered. They are given to quick temper. These natives belong to Mithuna (Gemini) rasi. Ruler: Rahu

Punarvasu: natives of unnerves rarely enjoy good health. They can easily become addicted to alcohol and drugs. Though they are generally polite and tactful, when aroused, they may easily loose control over their tongues. In business dealings they are usually clever and cunning, if necessary arises. The first 3 padas belong to Mithuna (Gemini) rasi and the rest to Karka (Cancer) rasi. Ruler: Jupiter

Pushya: natives of Pushya casually have a calm mind highly intellectual, they are usually dutiful, law abiding and righteous. They are noble in their outlook and they are philanthropic. They belong to Karka (Cancer) rasi. Ruler: Saturn

Ashlesha: natives of Ashlesha generally have a robust physique. They are of a cheerful temperament, and they have a great zest for life. However it is not unusual to find some of them insincere and cunning. Gratefulness is not a quality associated with the native of Ashlesha. They belong to Karka (Cancer) rasi. Ruler: Mercury.

Magha: natives of Magha love an easy luxurious life. It is rare to find industrious people among them. They love to surround themselves with beautiful things, particularly flowers of co lour and fragrance. Prosperity comes to them rather easily. They belong to Simha (Leo) rasi. Ruler: Ketu

Purva Phalguni: natives of Purva Phalguni are philanthropic minded and noble hearted. They are generally pleasant in their behavior, and tactful in their speech. They have the knack to see ahead and therefore they make very good businessman. At times they suffer from unsteady mind. They belong to Simha rasi (Leo). Ruler: Venus

Uttara Phalguni: natives of Uttara Phalguni usually suffer from poor appetite. They are intellectually inclined and healthy minded. Generally, they are sincere, truthful and noble hearted, though short-tempered. The first pada falls in Simha (Leo) rasi and the rest three in Kanya (Virgo) rasi. Ruler: Sun

Hasta: Natives of Hasta are usually brave and chivalrous. Besides other noble qualities, they are grateful and charitable. However at times they can be merciless and stealthy. They are usually prosperous in the later part of life. they belong to Kanya (Virgo) rasi. Ruler: Moon

Chitra: Natives of are especially distinguished for their beautiful physique. They are noted for their shapely figure and attractive features, particularly eyes. They are fond of good clothes and ornaments. Though they can be considered good-natured in general, they are not usually sharp-witted and bright. It is not unusual to find being stringy. The first two padas belong to Kanya (Virgo) Rasi and the other two belongs to Thula (Libra) rasi. Ruler: Mars

Swathi: Natives of Swathi are well known for there dignified and polishing manners. They are intelligent, scholarly and are able administrators. Tactful in their behavior, they have great self-

control. Dutiful and generally law abiding, they make excellent citizens. They belong to Thula (Libra) rasi. Ruler: Rahu

Vishakha: Natives of Vishakha are well known for their jealousy and stringiness. They are short tempered, but at the same time they are god fearing and honest. The first three padas belong to Thula (Libra) rasi and the next one belongs to Vrischika (Scorpio) rasi. Ruler: Jupiter.

Anuradha: Natives of Anuradha are distinguished for their beautiful hair and eyes lashes. Dutiful and god fearing they have great attraction for the opposite sex. They will be prosperous and honored by the great. However, natives of Anuradha will find themselves luckier in a foreign county. They belong to Vrischika (Scorpio) rasi. Ruler: Saturn

Jyeshtha: Natives of Jyeshtha have very bad tempers, giving way to violent outbursts at times. Generally they are not very prosperous, though they are charitable. They belong to Vrischika (Scorpio) rasi. Ruler: Mercury.

Moola: Natives of Moola are very proud people. They have bad tempers and not favorable disposed towards relatives. They have a constant, steady mind and they love discipline. They belong to Dhanus (Sagittarius) rasi. Ruler: Ketu.

Purva Ashada: Natives of Purva Ashada stand out in a crowd because of their stature. Generally they are proud and noble minded. Kind to people, and generous to the poor and the needy, natives of Purva-Ashada are loyal friends, but dangerous enemies. They belong to Dhanus (Sagittarius) rasi. Ruler: Venus.

Uttara Ashada: Natives of Uttara Ashada are distinguished by their majestic appearance. Strong and muscular they usually have long nose and chiseled features. They have good discerning eyes and they are generally gentle and kind. Fond of good food and good company, they are of a pleasant disposition. The first pada belongs to Dhanus (Sagittarius) rasi and the rest three Makara (Capricorn) rasi. Ruler: Sun.

Shravana: Natives of Shravana distinguish themselves for their high intellect and noble qualities. They are generally of polished manners and dignified behavior. They have great enthusiasm for life. They belong to Makara (Capricorn) rasi. Ruler: Moon

Dhanishta: Natives of Dhanishta are known for their independent nature and liberal outlook. Highly esteemed for their courage and valor, natives of Dhanishta are also generally fond of music. The first and second pada belongs to Makara (Capricorn) rasi, and the third and fourth belong to Kumbha (Aquarius) rasi. Ruler: Mars

Satabishak: These natives possess high intellect and virtuous conduct. Always truthful and uncompromising, they are the beloveds of everyone. They belong to Kumbha (Aquarius) rasi. Ruler: Rahu.

Purva Bhadra: Natives of Purva Bhadra are easily given to melancholy. They usually think lesser of themselves than they are actually worth. They are intelligent and are usually gifted speakers.

They easily give in to jealousy and greed. Generally they have very little faith in god. The first three padas belong to Kumbha (Aquarius) rasi and the fourth one Meena (Pisces) rasi. Ruler: Jupiter.

Uttara Bhadra: Natives of Uttara Bhadra have a great aptitude for arts and science. Usually talkative they are argumentative, but tactful and diplomatic. They are generally charitable and kind. They belong to Meena (Pisces) rasi. Ruler: Saturn.

Revati: Natives of Revati possess a perfect build and a robust constitution. They are popular heroic and have a great attraction for the opposite sex. Tactful and diplomatic they have a wandering mind. They belong to Meena (Pisces) rasi. Ruler: Mercury.

Nakshatras are also emphasized in relationship compatibility analysis that will be explored later. We will explore their use for muhurtha or electional astrology in 300B. Since there is so much material to read this week, focus primarily on moon and ascendant nakshatras.

Week's Goals:

This week we will be:

- 1) reviewing key elements of chart interpretation
- 2) developing a strategy for successful chart interpretation

This week's class:

I expect and really want you to be contacting me a lot during this week, as the interpretation process involves balancing everything you already know.

This week will focus on the keys to natal chart analysis. You will be pulling together basic principles you have learned in earlier weeks (and may have already started to draw some conclusions about). The Levacy book provides some basic steps in chart interpretation. First, he divides the planets in natural benefics (Moon, Mercury, Venus, and Jupiter) and malefics (Sun, Mars, Saturn, Rahu and Ketu). Next, the methods of determining whether a planet is favorable or unfavorable are presented. This is following by a section on analyzing the strength or weakness of a house. Levacy concludes by providing a step-by-step guide to analyzing a natal chart and a method to measure planetary strength (pages 254-255). Try measuring an ascendant ruler using this planetary strength and benefic analysis chart. Pick any chart you like.

The Beckman book provides a detailed analysis of what the lords of certain houses do in other houses. James Braha's book Ancient Hindu Astrology for the Modern Western Astrologer provides a marvelous exposition of this technique on pp. 71-215, and Pandit Gopesh Ojha offers good examples of chart interpretation techniques on pp. 219 to 249 of his text.

The Braha text demonstrates natal chart interpretation through the analysis of famous personalities. Peruse pp. 251-337 in particular for interpretation techniques and to avoid interpretational errors.

On

I would suggest the following strategy in analyzing the natal chart.

- 1) Use the Levacy principles for determining the favorability of a planet and strength of a house.

2) Use the Beckman, Levacy, and (if you have it), Braha's *Ancient Hindu Astrology for the Modern Western Astrologer* text for chart analysis. Apply some of Ojha's principles for a sample. Also, focus on the disposition of the benefic and malefic planets for each rising sign as shown in the table in Week 4. These will give you the best short cut to assessing the overall luck in the chart.

3) See if you can identify prominent yogas and aspects in the chart (refer to Week 6) and interpret them.

4) Identify the Ascendant and Moon nakshatras and see what these tell you.

I expect there will be a good deal of interaction with the class this week. Chart synthesis is as much an art as a science, so don't be overwhelmed by the level of detail here. Part of the skill of interpretation comes from knowing what to omit.

Forecasting and Prediction- Dashas (Planetary Periods), Gochara (Transits) and Ashtakavarga

Dasas (planetary periods) and Gocharas (transits)

Dasas or planetary periods of Vedic Astrology constitute a comprehensive system of revealing the developmental life cycle unfoldment. Dasha means a "stage or condition in life". These planetary periods are very helpful in understanding the seasons of life and planning long term goals. This dynamic assessment technique estimates when positive potentials as well as life challenges may occur. The dashas are indicators of when certain karmas have matured or ripened.

In the most commonly used system of mahadasas in the Vedic System, called the Vimshottri mahadasa system, the planets are assigned a certain number of years for their karma to manifest in a chart. There are MANY mahadasa systems in Jyotish, most of which work, from my humble experience. This is the place to start though.

The years assigned to the various planets, based upon where the Moon sits in your chart, are as follows:

Aswini, Magha, and Moola, : Ketu- 7 Years
Bharani, Purva Phalguni, Purva Shadha -Venus 20 years
Krittika, Uttara Phalguni, Uttara Shadha – Sun 6 years
Rohini, Hasta, Shrivana – Moon 10 years
Mrigasira, Chitra, Dhanistha – Mars 7 years
Ardra, Swati, Satabishak – Rahu 18 years
Punavarsu, Vishaka, Purva Bhadra -- Jupiter 16 years
Pushya, Anuradha, Uttara Bhadra – Saturn 19 years
Ashlesha, Jyestha, Revati – Mercury 17 years

The degree at which a planet is placed in the nakshatras is important; if placed in the middle of a nakshatra, the dasas will start from the planetary subperiod represented by that point. It usually happens that a person does not start life from the very beginning of one dasa. Almost always, time will have elapsed from the beginning of that dasa.

Subperiod planets: Mahadasas shift all the time as the years pass. Basically, when you go through the subperiod of a major planet, such as Jupiter-Saturn, you should note when planets are well-placed from each other (in the same sign, or four, five, seven, nine, ten or eleven signs away). If they are good effects

will show. If not, difficulties and struggles will show.

In terms of priority, the following produce good overall planetary periods:

The lords of the first, fourth, fifth, ninth and tenth houses.

Planets well placed by sign and house (in one of the above houses), even if not one of these lords.

The following tend to give bad effects:

Planets that are lords of the 8th, 12th, 6th and 3rd and 11th houses.

Planets located in these houses (except planets placed in the 3rd and 11th houses can produce good results)

The general rule of interpretation is as follows:

If these planets are well-placed, strong and favorable to the rising sign, they will give good results. If they are weak, afflicted by malefic planets or unfavorable to the rising sign, they will give bad results. If they are a mix of these two extremes, they will give mixed results. Pay close attention to planets that are moving over the lord of the mahadasa, will provide good effects or bad effects, depending on whether they are benefic or malefic planets and whether the sarvastakavarga (see below) points for that house are high.

Subperiod planets: Mahadasas shift all the time as the years pass. Basically, when you go through the subperiod of a major planet, such as Jupiter-Saturn, you should note whether planets are well-placed from each other (in the same sign, or four, five, seven, nine, ten or eleven signs away). If they are good effects will show. If not, difficulties and struggles will show.