

The Esoteric Aspect of the Zodiac

~ By Acharya Bharat

Astrology has a unique place among the scientific subjects inquiring into the affairs of men. It does not deny any experience, mystical to mundane. Astrology assumes from the very outset that the sphere of human experience does not extend merely up to the physical perceptible dimensions. The hidden sides of things are as much real as the concrete observable in a crucible of scientific laboratories. It is therefore logical and rational to consider the esoteric aspects of things for a balanced understanding of the problems of life.

Astrology as practiced in India is called Jyotish (Vedic or Hindu astrology). Jyotish is the oldest form astrology in the world. The Sanskrit word "jyoti" means light, as in "light of knowledge." The purpose of Vedic astrology is to understand our Karma, what our lessons are, and what we are good at. If we know that we will be challenged in some area that helps us not to identify with that thing. We can see ourselves as the soul, separate from the Karma, and with that knowledge, fight the bad influences, and evolve towards God. It can provide you the insight of your potentials in guiding all matters of life that may have troubled you for years.

Vedic astrology does differ somewhat from Western or Tropical astrology. It employs the sidereal zodiac or the zodiac of the fixed stars. This causes its sign positions to shift backwards about 23 degrees from tropical positions. The relationships of the stars and planets with the practice of Yoga, with the different chakras or force-centers of the subtle body, and so on, can be found in Vedic and Hindu tradition. Vedic and Western astrology share a common heritage of 12 zodiac signs (Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces).

The esoteric natures of the zodiac as well as occult significance of astrology were well known to the ancient seers of India. But, predictive astrology was not held high esteem by them; the main interest of the seers in this science was to discover the clues for unraveling the hidden mysteries of the cosmos and the role of men in it. The various zodiacs are an embodiment of profound occult teachings, which were concealed from the profane.

To study the deeper meaning of these zodiacs, we have to assume these stars represent a circle, the field of our manifestation, which has been divided into several groups to indicate the channels of differentiated Divine Energy. Now, let us look at the zodiacs and how they are classified in many ways. Among the twelve signs, there are three animals, namely, Ram, Bull and Lion. The Ram or Aries is the first sign of the zodiac. In early civilizations, Ram was assigned divine status. In Iran, the Ram gave strength to the diseased. In Egypt, it symbolized the power of procreation. In Sanskrit, ram is *aja*, which means that has no birth. It implies that this sign symbolizes the Self-Existence Absolute. Considered this way, Aries suggests the source, the fountainhead of all life forces, the source of the Nile symbolically.

The second sign of zodiac is Taurus, the Bull. In the Indian pantheon, Lord Siva, the Great God, has a bull for his vehicle. Veneration to the bull which arose in pre-historic times in the pre-dynastic Egypt is evident from the colossal bulls painted in the caves of Lascaux. In Egypt, the bull was worshipped for its power of procreation. As we explore the deeper symbolic meanings of Taurus, it represents Divine Energy, which makes the manifestation a possibility.

The ancient scriptures mentioned that this creation was possible with the male and female, the two offsprings of the Divine, from which further creation was possible. Gemini represents these two differentiated Creative Energies which produce the world. The duality or the polarization between the positive and negative forms of energies is known as *Purush*, consciousness and *Prakriti*, Energy. Gemini refers to this aspect of the Manifestation.

The process of manifestation from Cancer and onward is the process of becoming more complicated as it becomes many from the Absolute One. Cancer represents the *pranava*, four state of consciousness, as well as four states of Brahman called *Vaisvanara*, *Hiranyagarbha*, *Prajna*, and *Isvara*. And they are presented by Brahma, Vishnu, Maheshvara, and Sadasiva.

Leo is the most occult of all signs. Leo is represented by Sun, which is your *Atma*, self. The Lion - the animal in man - is represented as concealing or obscuring the Divine Father.

Virgo was rising or was in Eastern direction when Jesus Christ was born. Esoterically, this sign is the storehouse of all creative faculties: it represents *Parvati* (the consort of Lord Shiva) who is considered the World Mother and who is the Primordial Energy.

Libra is balance, poise, harmony or equilibrium in nature. Sir Isaac Newton emphasized the simultaneous existence of centrifugal as well as centripetal forces in the cosmos. As a consequence of these opposing forces, the cosmos exists. This state of creative equilibrium is symbolized by Libra.

Scorpio is a very mystical sign. Scorpio can be intensely material or spiritual depending upon the soul's development. One has a marked spiritualistic bent of mind; the other is the pit of materialism. In either case, their external behavior is often at variance with what is boiling within them. It creates divine discontent in the aspirant.

Sagittarius is the centaur, and the human horse under this sign shoots an arrow into the unknown mystery. This sign is the bridge between the divine and the human, the twilight zone of the celestial and terrestrial regions. During the process of creation, the Prajapati, Mighty Intelligence, who carry out the plan of God, pour those forces, which transform matter into Spirit.

Capricorn is represented as Unicorn, an extinct animal, but has special significance in ancient myths. Capricorn is known as *Makar* in Sanskrit denoting the pentagon, which symbolizes the microcosm. This sign is said to represent simultaneously the microcosm, the human body, and the macrocosm, the world of external objects of perception. It is under this sign of the zodiac that unity between the inner man and the outer Cosmic Man begins to be established.

Aquarius represents the pitcher from which water flows out. Pitcher is the *Upadhi*--vehicle of consciousness, and the water is *Mool Prakati*, the Primordial Substance, of which everything is made. It is a state of consciousness where the activity of consciousness is not limited by the form of the *Upadhi*, or the organism of life through which consciousness is usually expressed. In a way, this sign reflects the ultimate liberation, which is possible, when cycle of evolution is completed.

Pisces symbolizes that level of consciousness where individual soul has merged itself into *Atma*, spirit. Here ends the cycle of spirit and again starts with Aries.

By studying the twelve zodiacs signs from the Vedic (Hindu) astrological perspective, we can understand the significance of happy and unhappy events in life from their deeper aspects. In this article, the esoteric nature of the zodiacs as well as the occult significance of Vedic astrology was discussed rather than just a peripheral understanding of the zodiac.

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