

Jyotish

The Science of Hindu (Vedic) Astrology

By Acharya Bharat

Jyotish from India is the most time-tested and oldest system of astrology in the world. The Sanskrit word “Jyotish” (ja-yo-teesh) means “science of light.” In Western countries, it is called Vedic astrology, which refers to Indian or Hindu astrology. The origin of Jyotish is from the Vedas, the scriptures of Hindus. Jyotish is the science of understanding the subtle influences that come to us from the greater universe.

Vedic astrology reflects the understanding and experience of ancient spiritual teachers regarding the facts of life. Hindu philosophers and sages went into great intricacies to explain God. They explain that world is evolving under the benevolent influence of a Divine Being. The Supreme Intelligence takes care of every individual and puts him under those circumstances that are best suited for his growth. This gives faith and confidence to the individual. Vedic astrology believes in the spiritual nature of man, and guides him in realizing his true self. It helps him realize that each soul is learning his lessons, which he can only learn under those circumstances. Thus, he comes to know that astrological prediction comes true because the soul is guided by Higher Beings, planets whose Judgment is never in error.

Now, you may wonder how these planets and stars can 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 Moon rules the emotional nature. It is well known that the planets with their large magnetic fields and gravitational interaction with the Earth, affect it physically. It is not illogical either that they might have subtler influences.

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 the aspect of fate and that 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 actions.

Vedic astrology does not leave us helpless before the onslaughts of fate. It provides ways of dealing with our Karma. Vedic astrology holds that spiritual practices, like Yoga, prayer and meditation, neutralize the effects of a bad astrological chart. Vedic astrology helps us to realize our true self, and helps us to know the divinity of the soul. It provides a clarification of your Karma. Vedic astrology alleviates what is perhaps the greatest fear for human beings: uncertainty and anxiety about the future. It helps us navigate confidently through the confusing waves of Karma, aware of our outer destiny and our inner timeless self as well.

Vedic astrology uses the sidereal (according to the stars) positions of planets against the backdrop of the relatively fixed stars, as astronomers do. Vedic astrology calculates as the stars appear in the night sky. This is the most important difference between Vedic and tropical Western astrology. Tropical Western astrologers based their zodiac on the Equinox instead.

The arithmetic difference between planetary positions calculated sidereally and tropically is a value for what is called the procession of the equinoxes, or the Ayananush. Today, this difference is 24 degrees. This 24 degrees causes the entire astrological chart to move back about 24 degrees from the Western to the Vedic chart. The positions of most planets go back to the previous sign. This naturally results in a very different chart. It can be confusing for those used to their Western chart, especially with the Sun sign, which is a likely to change in Vedic system.

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), and seven planets (Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn), which they describe in a similar manner. Vedic astrology also uses the Moon's North and South calculated nodes prominently. They are called Rahu and Ketu. The outer planets Uranus, Neptune and Pluto are not part of classical Vedic astrology. But Vedic and Western astrology differ in several ways. The Vedic system is more complicated, with many different types of charts and calculations to consider.

In Jyotisha, the positions of the planets and other significant points are calculated with respect to a person's, or event's, birth data. Based on this information your Vedic astrologer calculates about 100 charts and tables. It is the job of the Vedic astrologer to study them simultaneously and derive useful information based on the rules of interpretation created by ancient sages.

Both systems use the same twelve houses and interpret them similarly (though with variations). The Vedic system makes the cusp the same beginning of the house, while Western astrology makes the cusp the middle of the house. This causes half the planetary positions in the Vedic chart to move forward to the next house relative to the Western chart.

Vedic astrology uses an additional 27-fold division of the zodiac called Nakshatra (constellations). Personality traits are read more through the birth star (Nakshatra of the Moon) than by the Sun sign. Nakshatra positions of planets are examined in the birth chart as well. The use of Nakshatra is very important in Vedic astrology, much more than with zodiac signs.

Vedic astrology uses a system of planetary periods called Dasha, Major Period of various planets. Most important is Vimshottari Dasha, a 120-year-long cycle of planetary positions based upon the birth Nakshatra, stars. With the help of this Dasha, Major Period, system a Vedic astrologer can predict future events very accurately. However, Western astrology does not have the Dasha system, with predictive capabilities as Vedic astrology does.

There are five main uses of Vedic astrology: 1. Kama - family and relationship issues like marriage compatibility, timing of children and domestic happiness; 2. Artha - help with finances, business and investments; 3. Dharma - determination of career and vocation; 4. Moksha - guidance in the spiritual life and cosmic and self-knowledge; and 5. Arogya - physical and mental health.

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