



What is Vedic Astrology?

Vedic Astrology, or Jyotish, originated from The Vedas (Vedic Scriptures) dating back over 6,000 years. The world's most ancient scriptures give evidence of a culture rich in the arts, philosophy, religion, and science. Jyotish was first mentioned in the Rig Veda, and references were also made in the classical Indian epics, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and the classic Bhagavad-Gita.

The Vedas are considered by many to be the most vast and complete system of knowledge known to man, and Jyotish is revered as one of the most important limbs of the Vedas. Jyotish, a Sanskrit word, translates to "Science of Light". Jyotish is the "remover of the darkness of ignorance". It is the "eye of divine knowledge which is pure, supreme, and exalted".

Jyotish is believed to have been conceived by the ancient sages while in a state of super-consciousness which allowed them to cognize life beyond time and space, beyond past, present and future. In this super-conscious state, they recognized the energetic rays of the planets as reflectors or transmitters of light energy. These solar and planetary radio-like waves, sent out at various angles, were seen to bear influence on everything animate and inanimate, affecting humans on both biological and psychological levels. It is said that the sages observed and experimented with their observations in order to codify into rules the formulations which ultimately became the laws by which Jyotish is practiced.

The astronomical genius demonstrated by the Vedic Seers is suggested by the fact that these ancient astronomers conceived of cosmological issues which have remained consistent with the enduring discoveries of science to the present day. It is interesting to note that, whereas medieval Europe still believed that the earth was stationary, Vedic astronomers of antiquity founded a system which stated that the apparent rising and setting of the planets and the stars were due to the movement of the earth.

The Vedas are a composite or holistic knowledge, integrating every part or branch of knowledge to the whole. All the parts are viewed in context of Vedic philosophy such that the sciences are consistent and reinforce the orientation of artistic expression; medicine is consistent with religion and so forth. This integrated philosophical orientation to life opposes

the long popular scientific view embraced by Western culture which has compartmentalized life in an ever-shifting focus or preoccupation with one segment or another. This fragmented approach to life results in the various disciplines of knowledge being in conflict with one another, such that the artist is seen at odds with the scientist, religion, and philosophy are inconsistent with each other, science is at war with religion, and so on.

For the individual, awareness of the inter-relatedness of all phenomena allows one to perceive one's own life in the context of the greater whole, leading to the Vedic concept of karma. It is said that no thought, word or deed escapes the ultimate, inescapable justice of the universe, known simply as *karma*. The understanding of the law of cause and effect, or karma, is expressed in scientific law as follows: "For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction". In various religious and spiritual texts, it is suggested in proverbs like, "As you sow, so shall you reap", or implied in sayings like, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." But nowhere is the law of karma more fundamental as a philosophy of life than in the Vedas.

The emphasis that the Vedas place on karma is another fundamental supposition for understanding astrology. Accepting the fact of one's accountability for one's life helps one to "receive both blessings and adversity with equanimity". The implications of karmic law are fundamental to other Vedic concepts such as, "perform action independent of expectation for reward or punishment", and "accepting with grace what one cannot change".

The concept of karma speaks to one's responsibility for one's self in the most profound terms. You could say that the horoscope offers a means for assessing one's karmic path in order to become more conscious, or self-aware, and, as a consequence, more actively responsible for one's present actions.

Karma and its relationship to astrology has been described in the following, *"A child is born on that day and that hour when the celestial rays are in mathematical harmony with his/her individual karma. The horoscope is a challenging portrait revealing his/her unalterable past and its probable future results. The chart shows what we are now because of what we have thought and done in the past. Astrology, by providing us with a blueprint of our attachments, problems, talents, and mental tendencies, offers us a way of not only realizing in a specific sense, what our karma is, and helping us work with these confrontations within and without, but also a way of beginning to rise above and gain a perspective on this karma."*

What one has to face during life's pilgrimage is due to causes generated by one's past actions. Astrology is not a discipline which promotes a passive acceptance of fate; rather astrology takes an account of one's strengths and weaknesses and various tendencies, with the idea that through self awareness, one can become more conscious of the choices of actions available. In astrology there is no place for the idea of being a "victim", or of being treated unjustly or unfairly. Rather, if someone treats us badly, for example, that person is simply a messenger of our own karmas. The interaction with that person becomes an opportunity for us to reflect, gain insight, or in some manner elevate ourselves either through thought or action.

The above example does not mean to suggest that we simply resign ourselves to accepting mistreatment, for surely in some circumstances, the lesson has more to do with speaking up, defending oneself, dissociating with harmful people and so forth as opposed to the notion that something unpleasant or negative happened to us because we are being punished for something we have done in the past. Sometimes we may be paying a debt and there is a lesson there for us. But it is not necessarily only that, or rather, the idea is that everything that happens to us, great and small is for a reason. Every circumstance presents us with an opportunity to learn something, or to choose a response which is better for us than what we have chosen in the past, or a chance to grow in our resolves, or to strengthen our values, and so forth. It is unproductive to resist or resent any action or person with which we are presented, as all comes as an agent of our own karma.

Astrology is a means of taking stock of one's circumstances, tendencies and natural resources so that one may live more wisely, in tune with one's own karma or life's lessons.

As a science and as an art form, astrology is the study of the subtle energies which make up our world. When we evaluate a horoscope, we are looking at nothing more than the blending of energies which can combine in an infinite variety of ways. As energetic beings, each one of us is comprised of a combination of energies, which makes up the sum total of our self. An astronaut once stated that the planets in the sky exert a certain amount of gravitational force and that this force condenses the ether and gases of space into the material objects we see. It is in this manner that human beings, animals, and all matter are created. The astronaut's words indicate only a fraction of the larger truth. The fact is that each of us is created by a particular combination of planetary gravitational pulls exerted in different degrees, from different angles, and in different quantities. The multitude of possible combinations accounts for the variety of personalities, mentalities, physiques, as well as the emotional and intellectual constitutions that make up the breath of life on earth.

These aphorisms, in fact, have tentacles which reach deep into the essence of Vedic philosophy and can aid the aspirant in their quest to embrace accountability for their own actions and circumstances and to be progressively more moral and ethical in their behaviors.

It is a popular misconception that astrology promotes the idea that the planets "cause" events to happen. The relationship of the influence of the planets on mankind are rather like that of a thermometer and body temperature. The thermometer only indicates, but does not itself bring about the fever. The planets indicate, but do not cause events to happen. The stars do not rule our destiny; they merely record a destiny that has already been formed. They are a symbol, not a force; a transmitting energy, not an originating power. The planets do not dictate, but indicate the energies that are influencing a situation at a given time.

Astrology is determinism to the extent that the unchangeable law of karma shadows it; however, life which is guided by free will does not follow any preordained pattern. It is through free will that humanity may guide the future and thereby take charge of creating its own personal destiny.

