



Jyotish

VEDIC ASTROLOGY EXPLAINED

Words: John Dudley

Soon after starting our practice of yoga, many of us have noticed that we feel more connected to the plants, animals and people around us. As we move forward on the path of yoga and meditation, we begin to notice not only a connection with our own planet, but also a link with the whole universe. With expanded awareness, we may even catch a glimpse of ‘the unity of all things’ as described by advanced yogis. It may come as a surprise, but modern science also acknowledges this link. It tells us that the iron in our blood and the calcium in our bones did not exist at the start of our universe. These elements were forged later in the stellar furnaces of stars billions of years ago. So science tells us that, quite literally, ‘we are stardust!’

Ancient Vedic sages from the yogic tradition realised the interconnectedness of all things and how we, on earth, are influenced by the stars. So was born another of yoga’s sisters’ subjects – the ancient science of Vedic astrology known as *Jyotish* (pronounced ‘Joe-tish’). The word ‘Jyotish’ comes from the Sanskrit word for light – ‘*Jyoti*’. *Jyotish* astrology therefore shines a light on our past, our present and most importantly our future. Just like yoga, Vedic astrology

helps us live healthier, happier and more fulfilling lives.

There are three key areas in which *Jyotish* can be applied. The most common application looks at the planetary arrangements at the time of our birth. From this arrangement of the nine planets distributed amongst the twelve zodiacal signs, a Vedic astrologer can decode and predict our returning *karmas* – for better or worse. Prediction covers all major life areas such as health, wealth, family, children, status and career, relationships and spiritual growth and progress. In the hands of a skilled astrologer, *Jyotish* can often give a karmic perspective on otherwise intractable health problems too.

As well as being predictive, *Jyotish* is also preventive! Having predicted possible difficulties ahead, *Jyotish* can prescribe remedies. As one enlightened yogi put it ‘to avert the danger that has not yet arisen’. So *Jyotish* has the capabilities of modifying our returning *karmas*. In the modern world, we have software engineering to solve problems, from the ancient world, *Jyotish* brings us karmic engineering to solve problems!

If imbalances of planetary energies are detected in our birth-chart, *Jyotish* has a range of techniques to restore

the balance. These are called ‘remedial measures’ or ‘planetary antidotes’. This could be something as simple as wearing a gemstone that balances a planet’s energy. For example, emeralds will balance energies associated with the planet Mercury. For this to work, the gemstone needs to touch our skin, so it can be worn as a pendant or set in a specially designed ring. This is a very different concept from the ‘birthstone’ used in Western astrology and recommendations depend on a detailed analysis of a person’s birth-chart. Other re-balancing strategies might involve chanting *mantras*, or even performing certain acts of charity. People who have used *Jyotish* often report the removal of major obstacles and difficulties in life. Although not all *karmas* can be completely removed, their effects can certainly be lessened.

There is a saying: “there is a time for every purpose under heaven.” *Jyotish* astrology will find the best time for that purpose, for example, getting married, starting to build a new house, making a major investment or starting a business, etc. By selecting the right time to begin something important, all the laws of nature are assisting the positive evolution and unfoldment of the action. To quote an enlightened yogi, “*well begun is half done.*”

Jyotish can also predict the ability of people to work together in harmony. This is based on an analysis of the planetary positions in their birth-charts. Compatibility analysis has traditionally been used in India to make sure partners in a marriage can work together without too many arguments. However, it can also be usefully applied to business partnerships.

We should be aware however, that not all the problems or difficulties we are now facing are due to our actual returning *karmas*. Some could be the result of our current environment or lifestyle. The application of the other yoga-related Vedic sciences of *Vastu* (yogic design of living spaces) and *Ayurveda* (yogic healthcare) can often help us overcome such problems.

Jyotish comes from a tradition that believes the Creator does not play dice. It says we were not born at a particular time, with a particular arrangement of planets, just by chance. The planetary indicators at the time of our birth reflect how our returning *karmas* from previous lifetimes will unfold in this incarnation. From this viewpoint, we are not victims of our planets. They just represent the 'cosmic postman' delivering the *karmic* packages addressed to us.

Some of us might say we would rather not know what the future holds. However, we should really view the forecasts and predictions made by Vedic astrology in the same way we view a weather forecast. If rain is forecasted, we can take an umbrella. If we see 'clouds' on our own event horizon we can be more cautious, but also know that these too shall pass. Just like a weather forecast, *Jyotish* deals with probabilities, not certainties.

It may seem surprising that *Jyotish* can make predictions entirely from an arrangement of planets in a birth-chart (the 'planetary code'). However, we are not surprised when a scientist reads the genetic code in a seed and predicts how it will grow. The information encoded in the seed's DNA is in a highly condensed form. It

is just like the information encoded in the planetary arrangement at our birth. This can be read and interpreted by a Vedic astrologer who can then predict how life will unfold.

Some people might have difficulty with the view that certain things in our life may be predetermined, rather than subject to our free will. An enlightened Vedic master, when asked about free will and pre-destiny said that life is a mixture of both. He gave a good illustration: "Even though our height as an adult is predetermined, the size of our waist is largely a matter of our own free will!"

If we look at both Vedic astrology and Western astrology, we find both systems have their unique strengths. Western astrology tends to focus more on psychological factors and the mind, so a Western birth-chart is a good starting point for counselling. If we are seeking insights into our thoughts, feelings and psychological inner-self, then Western astrology has a lot to offer. Vedic astrology, on the other hand, focusses more on *karma* and predicting what *karmas* will manifest in our lifetime and when those effects will occur. It is unique in that it offers remedial measures to greatly lessen returning negative *karmas*. So, Vedic astrology is both predictive and preventive and offers real solutions to many of life's problems.

Jyotish also has a totally unique system of prediction to tell us the time periods of major *karmic* influence. This system clearly specifies when the 'cosmic postman' will be delivering 'the next chapter' in our lives and the benefits we might then receive or the obstacles and challenges we might face.

What about the origins of *Jyotish*? Well, all the great Vedic science subjects, including Yoga and *Ayurveda*, involved 'revealed knowledge' or 'cognition' in the consciousness of

highly evolved *sages*, *seers* and *rishis* in a bygone age. A modern analogy for the process of Vedic cognition would be like using the Internet to connect our own computer to a large remote server and downloading all the information we required. Of course, the sages needed to use the correct 'passwords' (*mantras*) to enable them to access the data on 'the cosmic computer'.

We know that the sage Patanjali cognised the foundations of yoga as stated in 'The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali'. The subject of *Jyotish* was cognised by another great seer Maharishi Parashara.

To him, the cosmos was an intelligently organised and interconnected whole, so events could be predicted from the arrangement of the stars. *Jyotish* has certainly withstood the long test of time

and people have derived benefits from it for over five thousand years.

The next time we are doing our yoga outside on a warm summer evening, we need to stop and look up. For not only are the stars beautiful in their own right, they also represent a strong relationship between us, our returning *karmas* and the very cosmos itself. *Jyotish* astrology makes use of this relationship. With its predictive and preventive techniques this ancient wisdom offers us real benefits. By reducing *karmas* and removing obstacles to progress, *Jyotish* can help us lead healthier, happier and more fulfilling lives.

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John Dudley is the editor of the website, **vedicplanet.com** which explains the yoga-related Vedic sciences of *Jyotish*, *Ayurveda* and *Vastu*. He has practised yoga and meditation for over 40 years and has lived at an *ashram* in India.