

Karma and Ketu: A window to your past

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Have you ever wondered:

Why are we in this universe and in the present form?

What do we need to experience in this life?

What is our soul purpose and why?



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Introduction

Karma is the core foundational principle of Vedic philosophy, which is expounded through specific laws and principles including those of creation, cause and effect, responsibility, and self-realization. Karma is the sum of accumulated deeds of our past and present lives, which are stored in our deep hidden unconscious mind. Our daily actions arise out of these stored memories, or prior karma, which lead us to perform deeds that represent repetitive, compulsive, or addictive type behaviors.

To break free from this cycle requires self-awareness on our part, followed by wilful action. This is known as Karma Yoga, the path of dedicated work in which all actions are performed for their own sake with detachment, rather than for personal reward or gain. Following this path of self-awareness and realization is difficult and requires deep introspection. Yoga and meditation are some of the tools to aid us in this journey.

In Vedic Astrology, the mysterious planet Ketu symbolizes all we have learned in previous incarnations. A study of the placement of Ketu in our natal charts could become the window into our past lives and provide input about our store of karmas, and thus lead to finding a higher purpose in life. This is a powerful tool to aid us in the path of self-actualization.

Vedic philosophy and karma

Karma comprises the actions that we perform in our lives. In Vedic philosophy, this has been given a dynamic concept based on two core ideas:

- Time – Karma expands the frontiers of time and incorporates past (Sanchita Karma), present (Prarabdh Karma), and future states (Agami Karma). The individual self is composed of the exterior body and the inner soul (Atman), the latter being indestructible and taking on new lives after the body undergoes death or destruction.
- Free will – We create much of our own destiny as the co-creators of our karma. This idea encompasses a strong element of self-will and the natural impulse to conduct righteous actions in life. Certain principles within modern humanistic psychology having to do with the inter-relatedness of life events are similar to the laws of karma, particularly personal responsibility, and self-actualization.

These concepts are best described in India's epic *Mahabharata*, where the authors have beautifully encapsulated reality by breathing life into the archetypal personalities of Yudhishtira, Bhima, Arjuna, and others. As a practicing astrologer, I find it a cerebral exercise to try and piece together possible astrological combinations for them.

- ✓ Dharma (duty) is the supreme purpose of the living soul, and fulfilling one's Dharma improves Karma. In other words, only dharmic action is suitable in Karma Yoga, the path of selfless service. The essence of Dharma and Karma working together is seen in Dharma Karma Adhipati Yoga of Vedic astrology. This powerful combination is formed through sambandha

between the lords of trikona and kendra houses in the astrological birth chart, and in particular, the ninth and tenth houses. Dharma Karma Adhipati Yoga is often seen in the horoscopes of advanced spiritualists who choose work or profession as a contribution to the cause of Dharma.

- ✓ It is difficult to harness a restless mind, but this is possible through practice and detachment. Yoga is a helpful tool for this, to help bring focus on mastery of the senses rather than on the fluctuations and desires of the mind.
- ✓ The ultimate goal of our spiritual journey on earth is samadhi, which constitutes a state of equilibrium in times of happiness or sorrow. Samadhi is the highest state of consciousness that a human can attain in life.
- ✓ The cultivation of samadhi through various meditation methods is essential for the attainment of spiritual liberation, known as Moksha. The attainment of Moksha is the ultimate freedom from bondage to karma in our life.

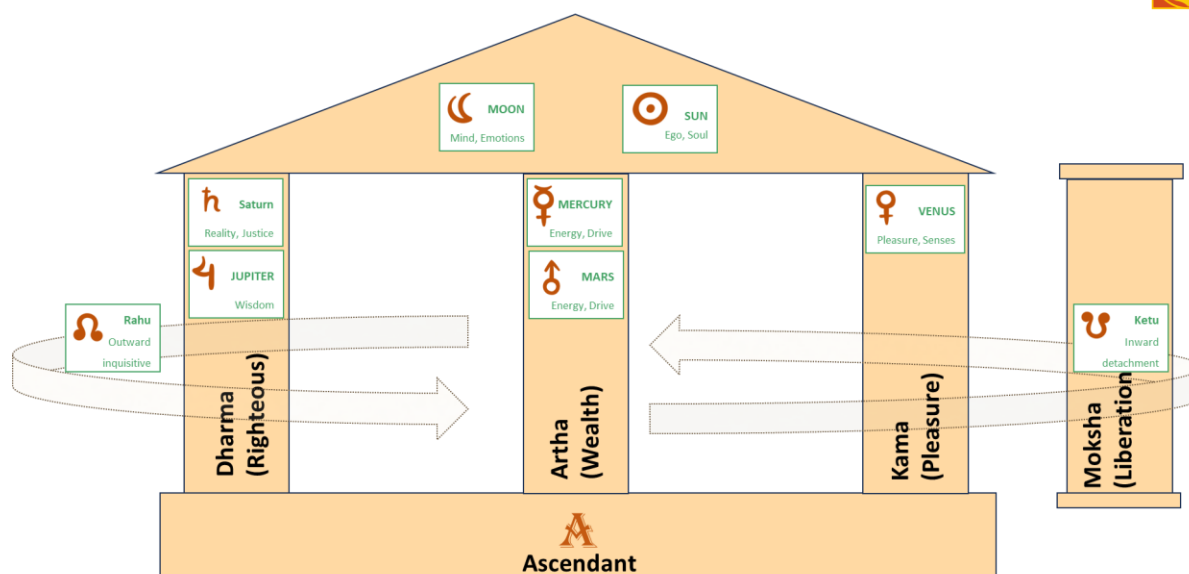
Just after the end of the *Mahabharata War*, Arjuna queried Krishna on his previous *Gita* discourse, pleading lapse of memory. Krishna chastised him, but then summed it up in a few words – go past the exterior body, see Atman, unite with Atman, and then Atman will unite with Brahman. The eternal Brahman is the supreme destination for all of us. The practices of yoga and mindfulness can help us in this path.

Vedic astrology and Rahu/ Ketu

The essential motivations or aims of life are known as the Purusharthas. These include dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha.

- Dharma is the pursuit of the righteous path, by upholding the conscious and seeking deeper values.
- Artha entails setting and fulfilling dharmic goals and acquiring the resources needed for this achievement.
- Kama indicates desires and wishes. In a dharmic sense, Kama is the will and the intention to fulfil our Dharma through Artha.
- Moksha is the final stage of attainment where we find liberation of our consciousness from the bondage of Karma and Samsara, which is the cycle of birth and rebirth (reincarnation).

The Purusharthas can be correlated to the Ascendant and the grahas (the heavenly bodies and deities) of Vedic Astrology, as depicted in this diagram below:



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The Ascendant forms the base foundation. The Sun and Moon are the guiding forces of our soul/ego and mind, respectively. Saturn and Jupiter align with Dharma; Mercury and Mars with Artha; and Venus with Kama.

Please note that in this model, a special place is occupied by Rahu and Ketu, the lunar nodes of the Moon. A contemporary view is that these lunar nodes help link together the powers of the Ascendant, Sun, and Moon. To understand this concept, first we must understand what the lunar nodes represent astronomically.

Quite simply, the lunar nodes are the two points where the Moon's orbital path crosses the ecliptic, the Sun's apparent yearly path on the celestial sphere. The lunar nodes thus mark the astronomical points where eclipses occur on the northern and southern points of intersection (the North Node or Rahu in the north, and the South Node or Ketu in the south).

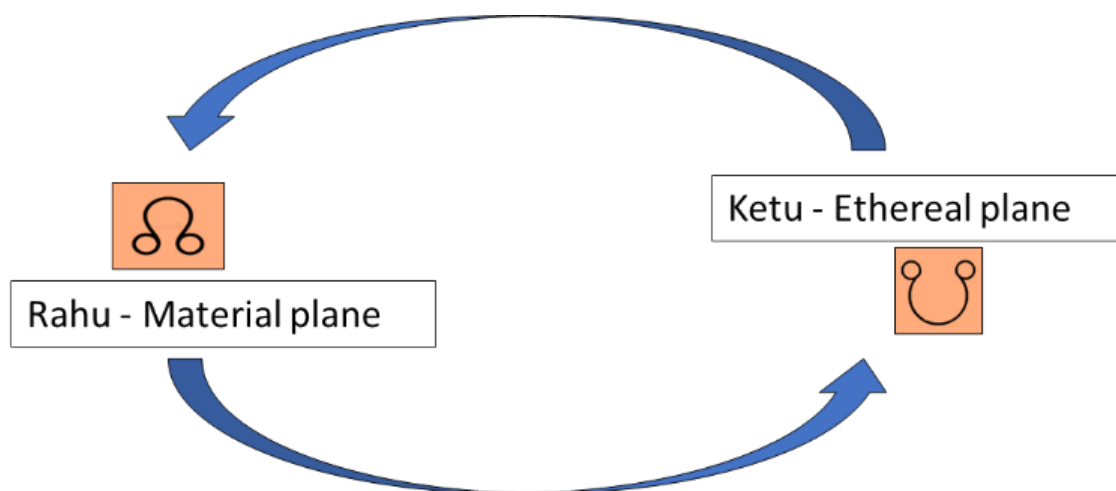
Just as the lunar nodes link the planes of the orbital paths of the Sun and Moon, they symbolize the astrological relationship of the Sun and the Moon with the Earth, which is indicated by the Ascendant. Thus, the lunar nodes indicate the tension between the soul and the mind (Sun and Moon) which ultimately brings lessons of integration (the Ascendant).

Rahu and Ketu do not have physical bodies, which is why they are called shadow planets, or “Chaya Graha” according to Vedic astrology. Symbolically, they have a shadowy effect as they work on our lives at a deep psychological level through our emotional fabric. They bring forth our inner hidden potential and wisdom, thus making them among the most influential points in Vedic Astrology.

The lunar nodes are responsible for our karmic lessons, and simultaneously create our biggest challenges and burdens, as well as opportunities, lessons, and ultimately, spiritual liberation. They

represent the forces that lead us to the awakening of consciousness and return to Oneness, but the ways in which they operate often seem at odds with each other.

- Rahu leads us into the desires and activities that we must experience in order to master the parts of ourselves that need development. Just like the nozzle of a vacuum cleaner, which is ever intrusive and throwing up the dust, Rahu represents the karmic lessons, obsessions, and desires that push us to our limits in the unfolding journey of life.
- As the opposite of Rahu, Ketu embodies the store of all past-life Karma, and is also responsible for helping us resolve this Karma. In this process, Ketu acts through all life processes to give only what we need and take what we do not need for our soul to evolve. Ketu symbolizes the wisdom that leads to non-attachment and ultimately Moksha.



The store of our Karmas is also our soul, which then becomes our life's purpose.

Understanding Karma through Ketu

At some point in life, most of us end up questioning why we are in this universe and why we are within our present form. What is the purpose of our soul; and why are we here? What must we experience in this life to fulfil our soul's desire?

One of the ways to examine these questions is to understand our karma, which includes that of our past lives. This may be accomplished through the analysis of the Ketu placement in the natal astrology chart, as Ketu is known as the "inlet point" for our past-life karma. However, Ketu is like a vacuum, devoid of matter or substance, and therefore deciphering its astrological influence can be challenging for the astrologer.

An astrological technique that is useful in this process is to delineate and analyze previous life events and experiences that took place when Ketu's influence was prominent. In other words, first note the periods in which a Ketu Mahadasha or Antardasha was at play, or when there was a significant transit of Ketu in the natal chart. Then, correlate Ketu's influence and the events and experiences during these times into themes or patterns of occurrences.

The use of Past-Life Regression to supplement an astrological reading

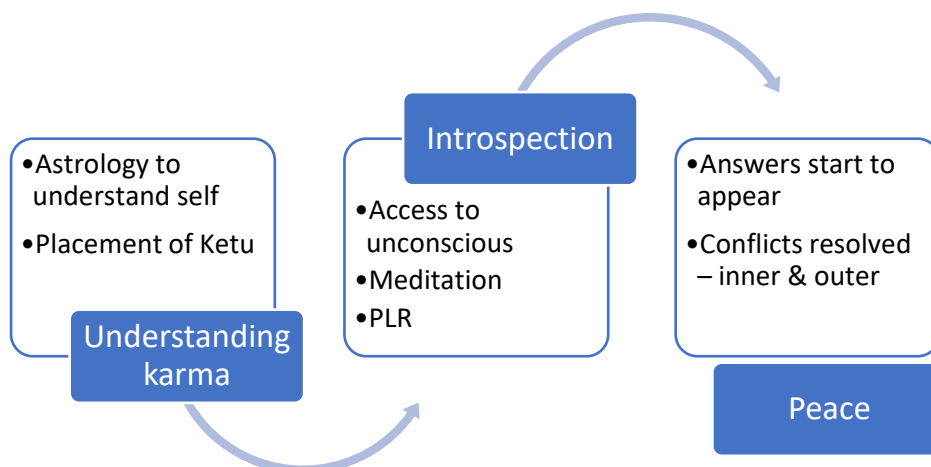
Quite often, an astrological analysis of Ketu is not fully sufficient for constructing a person's Karma, soul, and life purpose. Fortunately, we have other techniques, including Past Life Regression (PLR). This method, which uses hypnotherapy, can be an excellent complement to an astrological reading.

PLR assists in exploring the unconscious mind, which may then bring clarity and understanding about inner and outer struggles and conflicts. In this approach, one accesses parts of the memory that are in the preconscious stage – likes, dislikes, hurt, anger, pain, etc, and then analyzes the current actions and emotions in the context of the past or parallel lives. This is a way to decipher the past-life karmas.

PLR is akin to looking into the mind, which is like a body of water. For instance, if you want to look deep inside, try looking at the bottom of a lake. This can only be done if the water is clear and still. All the answers are there if only you can learn to still the mind and look beneath the surface.



I find that receiving a natal chart reading focused on Ketu can be immensely helpful, especially if done before a PLR, since the reading itself also helps to still the mind. Rahu-Ketu or Ketu-Rahu dashas can be some of the most introspective periods in life and studying these gives insight about the soul's highest purpose.



If Ketu is the carrier of our karma, PLR/ hypnotherapy is the tool for us to access our innermost memories and pull out why certain actions have taken place.

Modern psychology and astrology – what do these have in common?

The prior activity of the soul comes through in this lifetime as unconscious behavior patterns. These past-life actions have created a groove in the soul's memory, and we are prone to fall back into that groove by the repetitive actions that we often perform in life. In our daily lives, we seek comfort with familiarity and repetitive actions, with inertia to change.

Parallels exist between the concept of karma and Sigmund Freud's psychological theory of the unconscious. Freud believed that our lives are driven by the unresolved energy of past experiences held deeply within the unconscious. In Vedic Astrology, the conscious mind can be represented by the omnipresent Rahu. Alternately, the hidden unconscious mind is indicated by Ketu, the repository of deeply buried thoughts and impressions that connect to our past lives.

In an astrological analysis of the birth chart, it is possible to uncover the soul's deepest purpose as opposed to the ego's shallower needs and desires, as explained earlier by analyzing the placement of Rahu and Ketu. This knowledge can bring higher awareness to help overcome certain existential anxieties.

This astrological process ties in with the traditional psychotherapeutic approach to self-actualization as developed by American psychologist Abraham Maslow, who believed that the essential goal of psychotherapy should be the integration of the self. A similar view was held by Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl. He believed that the primary motivation of an individual is the search for meaning in life, and that the primary purpose of psychotherapy should be to help the individual find that meaning.

Conclusion

It has been said that we choose our experiences—the good, the bad and the ugly. Our souls have no emotions, only a desire for experience. Just as we choose the movies and books we want to view and read, our souls choose lives in order to experience emotions, pain, and pleasure.

- ✓ The difficulties and struggles within our lives then start to make sense as we understand they are lessons and opportunities for our soul's growth and development.
- ✓ Knowledge leads us to adjust our thoughts and behaviors, ultimately leading to inner peace and calm.

The thought we would like to leave with you is: When faced with an existential conundrum, what should one do? Study the natal horoscope. Rahu will reveal the exterior, the symptoms perhaps. At the opposite side sits Ketu, the cause, and the interior. Rahu brings to light what you do, and Ketu answers why you do it, and when, where, and how to bring about any necessary changes.

The authors thank Professor Juliana Swanson of the American College of Vedic Astrology for her encouragement, direction, and editing support.

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Authors' Bios

Smitha Venkatesh is a registered counsellor and teacher with more than 25 years of experience in various countries, including India, Taiwan, Australia, and Singapore. Fostering better human relationships and communication is her passion and area of expertise. She believes that most of us have the power to help and heal ourselves, given the support and direction.

She holds a BA (Hons) and Masters' degree in English Literature from Delhi University, and a B Psychology (Hons) from James Cook University. She is a Registered Counsellor with the SAC, after the completion of a Post Graduate Diploma in Counselling Psychology.

She is also an accredited mediator with SIMI and on the panel of CMC. Smitha has worked for various organizations, like Bombay (now Mumbai) University, The Times of India, the Australian Govt. Dept. of Foreign Affairs and Trade and International Schools in Singapore.

Venky Narasiah is a practicing Vedic Astrologer, after having qualified as Jyotisha Ratna™ (Essentials of Jyotish) and Jyotisha Prabhakara™ (Advanced Jyotish) from the American College of Vedic Astrology. He has worked with numerous clients on matters related to relationships, career, and life-path.

Venky is a gold medalist from the prestigious Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIMA), and holds CPA, FCPA (Australia) and CFA charter. He is also an Accredited Mediator with the SMC and SIMI.

A banker with more than 30 years of experience, Venky has in-depth knowledge of the banking business & infrastructure. A chance venture led him to manage a charity where he designed strategies and implemented programs for the community, in partnership with the Government, pharmaceutical companies, and healthcare providers. And that's when a transformation took place.

He has used his analytical strength and gift in mathematics to gain insight into the science of Astrology and is fully invested in helping individuals gain insight into their lives using astrology.