

MEET THE PLANETS: JUPITER AND SATURN

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This winter season all eyes are on the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. Ramdas Bill Sinclair's article features this remarkable conjunction, but here I will be introducing the reader to these two grahas or planets as seen from the eyes of Vedic Astrology or Jyotisha. Some of you, dear readers, may already have some knowledge of these two, but this article is also for those of you who may not have much previous knowledge. Each season in 2021 I plan to present some of the planets to you by way of introduction. If you want to learn more, you may wish to have an individual chart reading, purchase a textbook, attend a conference, or even pursue a course of study to learn how to become a Vedic astrologer yourself.



Jupiter and Saturn share many traits as they are the most distant and largest of the visible planets in our Solar System, and also the slowest in motion. In the zodiac of 12 signs, they rule the winter months. (1) Here is a guide to the dates when the Sun is in the winter Zodiac Signs in the Calendar, and how they relate to Jupiter and Saturn.



Zodiac Sign	Dates Sun is in Sign	Planetary Ruler or Lord
Sagittarius/Dhanus	December 15 - January 14	Jupiter
Capricorn/Makara	January 14 - February 13	Saturn
Aquarius/Kumbha	Feb 13 - March 14	Saturn
Pisces/Meena	March 14 - April 13	Jupiter

Remember, in the Northern Hemisphere, the long winter nights give us more time to look at the stars and planets. It is also the time of year we depend upon our foresight of having worked and saved to see ourselves and those around us through the winter. In astrology, Jupiter and Saturn

reflect the longer view, the perspective of elders, and the social values. These are the months of special religious festivals and rituals: Christmas and Lent for Christians, the New Year festivals of China and East Asia, and the great Melas or gatherings of holy men or sadhus in India, plus countless more.

MEET JUPITER

The Sanskrit name for Jupiter, Brhaspati, appeared in the Rig Veda, Book 4, Hymn 50, where he is described as a sage born of the first great light, the one who drove away darkness, is bright and pure, and carries a special bow whose string is Rta, the cosmic order, the basis of dharma. In the Taittiriya Upanishad, he is called the teacher of the gods, whose manifestation in the cosmic body is intellect and breath.(2) His other name, Guru, the revered teacher, refers even more directly to this important teaching role of Jupiter. Beyond the manifestation in the Solar System as the planet Jupiter, Brhaspati's role in the primordial

creation precedes the physical creation of the world we live in. But before discussing the many manifestations of Jupiter on many levels, let's first look at the planet Jupiter from an astronomical point of view.

Jupiter, the largest planet in the Solar System, is a giant mass of gas, and it even generates some of its own heat in its massive core due to the huge gravitational forces. It is so large that it affects the center of gravity of the entire Solar system. It has a huge number of moons, at last count over 60. Five hundred years ago, Galileo turned a telescope toward Jupiter and first viewed the four largest of these moons appearing to orbit around it. The controversy around this event, which added evidence to the heliocentric view of the Solar System, got Galileo into prison for a time. But in India, this was no news, because the *Suyra Siddhanta* had described the motion of planets around the Sun a thousand years before that!

This little story from the history of science illustrates Jupiter's planetary role in Jyotish – the largest, the leader who has influence on the Sun, with many offspring, and the one who brings knowledge. In one of the teaching tales from the ancient texts, the planets are described as members of the king's court – and Jupiter is the wise counsellor to the Sun king.

This connection to the Sun shows up in a number of other ways: one is the the curious coincidence that Jupiter takes about 12 years to make a complete orbit around the Sun, or one sign of the Zodiac per year. As it is very bright in the sky and does not move rapidly, it is easy to observe and track in the sky, and the 12 year cycle correlated well with the 12 month cycle of the Sun. As soon as there were kings, the usefulness of such a connection must have been obvious, and astrologers reported to kings on the movement of Jupiter and marked its motion to predict what the coming year had in store for the king and kingdom. The social sciences of economics and sociology began as astrology, thousands of years before the “modern science” versions. In Chinese astrology, the zodiac sign in which Jupiter is located at the beginning of the Chinese New Year becomes the official name of the year. Thus, in 2020, Jupiter was in Sagittarius, the Year of the Rooster, and in 2021 it will be in Capricorn, the Year of the Ox. In daily life, many teachers and students will notice that groups of students of the same age seem to have a collective personality distinct from those younger or older – Jupiter is a marker for the “Class of 2020” who graduated with Jupiter in Sagittarius. Any collective enterprise for a common purpose, such as an agricultural season, real estate cycles, company stocks in a growth phase, a session of Congress, or a gathering of worshippers, will share this common influence of Jupiter.



We see the connection with the zodiac sign Sagittarius in Brhaspati's bow, as Sagittarius' symbol is a mounted archer. In Vedic

astrology the father is symbolized in a number of ways, but one of the important ones is as the guru or teacher of his children. This is how important knowledge was passed from one generation to the next, especially when all knowledge and scriptures were memorized and recited. Jupiter therefore is a significator, or karaka, for higher education, wisdom, the father, children, the king's advisor, dharma and law.

The other Zodiac sign ruled by Jupiter is Pisces, the pair of fishes. Jupiter has a special connection with our spiritual nature through this sign, in which logic and law is set aside for compassion and a feeling of universal connection, as in the fish which swim in the sea. In the vocabulary of the sadhus, Pisces is the sign of Moksha or surrender. Just as in the Solar half of the Zodiac Jupiter is connected with Sagittarius, here in the Lunar half it is connected with Pisces. Other meanings for Jupiter show up here in the desire for enlightenment, in concern for others, in charity. Jupiter has third important positive sign connection: its exaltation in the Moon's sign of Cancer, where we see the planet's manifestation as a kind parent and caretaker.

The ancient texts describe the planets in a series of lists which help to flesh out Jupiter's profile. Jupiter is one of the benefic or generally beneficial planets, and is associated with the light yellow color of the dawn and the eastern direction, with yellow-colored and golden objects and foods, a lavish and crowded party table with sweet flavors and with fruits, and the golden offering of clarified butter or ghee. Other connections are with tall people, elliptical shapes, living beings, the element of ether, the Ayurvedic dosha of kapha, and the healthy years of late middle age. If you visit a Hindu temple, you might see Jupiter displayed as one of the Navagrahas or nine planets, garbed in a bright yellow robe. His day of the week or Dina is Thursday. In the ACVA curriculum, one of the first tasks of the astrology student is to learn these characteristics of each of the planets.

These are the positive manifestations of Jupiter, but there are times when Jupiter is ineffective or harmful for a particular person. Too much Jupiter means excess – of ambition, over-consumption, over-optimism, or pride. Think of times when the drinking party went on too long, the feast was excessive, or people imagined the stock market would go up forever. The exact way in which Jupiter manifests in a particular birth chart is beyond the scope of this article. But in a general way, when Jupiter is in its sign of debilitation of Capricorn, it is at its weakest and least effective, overcome by the pessimism and slow nature of this sign. The location of Jupiter by house is also important. Depending on the Lagna of the chart (the Ascendant or rising sign), Jupiter may be the lord of a difficult bhava or house and not bring good things. For instance, if the rising sign is Taurus, Jupiter will be the house ruler of the 8th house of Sagittarius, and the person may have chronic illness or losses connected with excess consumption – as in an addiction to alcohol, or a tendency to spend himself into debt.

Based upon a particular birth chart and a particular situation, at times a Vedic astrologer might recommend to a client to improve a situation with an astrological remedy related to Jupiter. Such remedies might involve a high quality yellow-colored gem or gold jewelry worn on a particular finger. But on an everyday level, the use of the qualities and days of Jupiter can be useful in many ways. One might plan a teaching event or conference on a Thursday, or make a donation to a charity focused on the activities of Jupiter such as an educational institution. One might wear yellow or make special prayers at certain hours, or hold a lavish feast or festive and joyous event. These remedy traditions are very old and can be found in regions far from India, but this remedy tradition is particularly well developed in Vedic astrology. The remedial measures are just one of many tools in the kit of the skilled Vedic astrologer.

MEET SATURN

If Jupiter is like the cosmic Santa Claus, “Dr. Yes,” then Saturn is the cosmic “Dr. No.” The Sanskrit name is Shani. In one teaching tale, it is said that the Sun had such an appetite for sexual pleasures that he literally wore out his wife, the Moon. The Moon arranged for Chaya, (“Shadow”) to take her form and take her place in the marital bed for a time so she could retire to the forest for religious practices. Out of this union, Shani, Son of the Shadow, was born, thus he is the illegitimate son of the Sun. When the Moon returned, things did not go well, and Shani became lame when his mother kicked him in a rage. He was cursed by the Earth Mother Parvati, but was granted a boon that no important work would succeed unless Saturn was given his proper due. (3) He had other names in other ancient civilizations who followed the planets, but has always been associated with disease, difficulties, drought, famine, death, low social status and age. In Hindu tradition he is associated with Yama, the lord of death, and with the great Lord Shiva.

In astronomy, we know Saturn as the most distant and faintest of the visible planets, the one whose beautiful rings were first seen by Galileo's telescope. Like Jupiter, Saturn is a gas giant but not as hot or as large. Saturn takes over 29 years to make a circuit around the Sun , so from our viewpoint on Earth, he spends about 2.5 years in a sign on average. Ancient astronomers were fascinated with how Saturn took 29 years to return to the same place in the Zodiac, the same distance covered by the Moon in 29 days. Astrologers pay a great deal of attention to how Saturn interacts with the Moon and its impact upon the emotions and mental health, and its slow passage through the years is a useful marker for our life stages of youth, maturity and age.

Saturn rules the Zodiac signs Capricorn and Aquarius, at the coldest winter time of the year. It is thus in the opposite signs to Leo and

Cancer, ruled by the Sun and Moon. Capricorn, or Makara, is the one Zodiac sign whose signature symbol differs from the Western Zodiac. Instead of the “Sea-goat,” Indians refer to the sea crocodile, a fearsome creature well known to the rivers and seashores of the tropics from Africa to Australia. Aquarius, Kumbha, is the pot of water being dumped out, reminiscent of cold rainy weather. They both capture the discomforts of winter in differing ways and both imply flood. People familiar with Western astrology should note that the future-oriented Aquarius as an agent of social change or revolution was coined in the last 200 years in England and is not part of the Vedic tradition.

Saturn's profile in the planetary lists is as the old person or servant or monk, who moves at the periphery and keeps the boundaries. The elements of air and earth, the guna of tamas or inertia, and the dosha



of vata or wind are associated with Saturn. In the body, the skin and joints, literally the boundaries of the body. Too much vata and we dry out and die, but it is also connected with the prana of vital breath. It's colors are blue and black, its gem the blue sapphire, its day Saturday. Saturn is associated with air and water elements, and shares a friendship connection with Mercury and Venus who are also planetary lords of the earth and air signs. Among the flavors, the bitter and astringent, among foods the dry and burnt, among

animals the vulture, the water buffalo and the crow. In yoga practice, the ruler of the Muladhara, the root chakra at the base of the sacrum. In images of the Navagrahas, he is pictured riding a crow, and garbed in black. Saturn is the greater malefic, the signifier for chronic illness, for ingrained social attitudes, for rules, limits and boundaries. Saturn is the lord of karma and of time.

When Saturn is in either sign it rules, its power to slow things down and demand limits and stability increase – for ascetics and the humble workers, those who persist in a goal, this is a boon. A person born with one of Saturn's signs in the Ascendant and well-placed in the chart may thrive on hard work, solitude and self-discipline. Physicians, athletes, and others who deal with difficult circumstances, often have Saturn strong and well-placed in the birth chart. Saturn does shine stunningly bright when it is at its place of exaltation in the sign Libra, particularly when it is close to the marker star Chitra at the beginning of Libra. In this sign, Saturn's humility and desire for fairness becomes a shining virtue, and his role as law-giver can be seen. But at other times and in certain charts, Saturn brings lack, illness and sorrow, particularly when it is in detriment in Aires, or if it is the sign ruler for the difficult houses in a birth chart, as happens with some Ascendants such as Leo.

There is a long tradition of how to give Shani his due through astrological ritual. For Saturn, one does the polar opposite of for Jupiter – the worshipper is humble, dressed in dark simple garments, and seeks out an isolated place to offer something black or burnt to crows, to a water buffalo, or to a poor person. Parasara states that for a poor man, burying an iron nail on the roadway of a bridge might be sufficient. One time I did a remedy consultation for a poor man whose guru had died and who had no family, who lived on disability in housing provided for the mentally ill. He had had a stroke and had lost motivation. In his chart a Saturn remedy was appropriate, and he agreed he could take his black dog out for walks, and feed some black sesame seeds or sunflower seeds to the birds on Crow Creek, near his apartment. He had had far too much of Jupiter in his youth, but the lessons of Saturn were being accepted, and the remedy was within his means. Getting out doors in contact with the earth and sky helped him pull out of gloom.

So I hope you will take time to reflect this winter on the gifts of hope and endurance the great planets Jupiter and Saturn may have

brought into your life. Winters, eclipses, long nights and trying times come to an end and light comes again.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

(1) Vedic astrology uses the Sidereal method of dividing up the Zodiac, based upon where the constellations actually are in the sky. Most Western astrologers use the Tropical Zodiac based upon where the constellations were a few thousand years ago. The two differ by about 25 degrees longitude at this time – so if you are used to thinking in the Western Tropical Zodiac, mentally subtract those 25 degrees to get where a planet or sign will be in this discussion.

(2) See Danielou, Alain, *The Myths and Gods of India*, Inner Traditions, Rochester, Vermont.

(3) Bill Levacy *Vedic Astrology Simply Put*, Hay House, page 68-69.